

REGION 9 BOARD OF EDUCATION
FINANCIAL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

March 11, 2010
Meeting Minutes

Attendance:

Region 9 Board: Baker, Gombos, Hocker, Karvelis, Lewis, Logie, Macchio, Neidenbach

Administration: Cicchetti, Mas, Sullivan, McMorrان, Kipp, Pin and additional JBHS staff members

Financial Oversight Committee: Gombos, Karvelis, Hocker, DeSalvo, Gold, Hanczor

Others: eight in the audience and a representative of the Redding Pilot/Easton Courier

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Lewis called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm in Room B109 of the Joel Barlow High School. The Financial Oversight Committee was called to order by Mr. Hocker at 7:04 pm.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Kim Breda, Easton: asked that the board approve the original budget submitted, one that maintains the excellence of education.

Frank DeSalvo, Redding: commented on the difficult economic times and the problems many families face with layoffs and reductions in salary.

Jeannie Wendschuh, Redding: commented that she hopes the board can find other ways to reduce the budget increase without reducing the English, Social Studies and Reading positions; these subjects are the core of the curriculum and the responsibility of the board.

2010-2011 PROPOSED OPERATING BUDGET

Mr. McMorrان presented a revised list of tiered reductions to the proposed budget. Discussion of the budget followed.

Savings from debt refinancing: board members discussed the potential use of the \$83,000 in savings from the refinancing of the debt. Mr. DeSalvo suggested that the funds be used for some of the needed improvements/repairs such as the lower gym bleachers. Other board members added that the chorus risers and stadium bleachers are also in need of improvement/repair. Other uses for the money were discussed. Mr. Lewis suggested the FOC discuss the use of the \$83,000 at their meeting next week and make a recommendation to the Board of Education.

Computer purchase: Mr. Crowley reviewed the planned purchase of 100 laptops for use by the certified staff. This is year one of the replacement program (a 3-year cycle). The teachers use the laptops as their personal office. In addition, 25 iMacs would be purchased for a computer lab. The lease/purchase is \$59,000 for these items.

Mr. Logie stated that he would prefer to see a 2.5% increase in the budget. He noted that because of the shift in enrollment, this increase is actually a 0.87% increase for Redding and a 4.36% increase for Easton. He suggested that the debt refinancing savings be allocated to the work planned for Field A, software & equipment, textbooks, and supplies. Other reductions could include the

elimination of the literacy/reading position and reduction of the library specialist position as outlined. He commented that this would be a difficult year for the residents of Easton.

Mr. DeSalvo commented on his concern about salary increases in Redding. The First Selectman did not take an increase for this year and the proposed Town budget includes a 2% increase for non-union employees. The Central Office budget includes a 3% increase for employees, and potential 6% increase for two positions. He commented that the difference in increases was morally unfair.

Mr. Hocker asked what options were available for the use of the savings from the debt refinancing. Mrs. Sullivan responded that the funds could be used for work that is done during the current fiscal year, but could not be used to purchase texts or supplies for use in the next fiscal year.

Central Office budget: Mr. Lewis noted that the increase to the budget for Central Office is \$37,000. The budget was approved at the Tri-board meeting and the number cannot be changed. The budget can be revisited should the budgets be turned down in the referendum. The salary increase of 6% for two employees is a placeholder and the actual salary increase will be based on a recommendation by Dr. Cicchetti and negotiated by the Board of Education with the employees. He added that both Mrs. Mas and Mrs. Sullivan are very valuable employees.

Mrs. Gombos commented that in the future, the Central Office budget information be submitted in advance of the Tri-board information to allow the FOC to review the proposed budget and make a recommendation to the board.

Motion: move that the Central Office budget proposal be submitted to the Region 9 Board of Education and Financial Oversight Committee for review a minimum of one-week prior to the meeting to the Tri-board meeting. Gombos, Logie. Approved. Unanimous.

Mr. Lewis asked each board member to comment on the proposed budget.

Dr. Baker commented that the 2.5% increase is reasonable and he is worried about getting an approval from the Easton voters. He also expressed a concern about the unknowns, primarily in regard to building maintenance and safety.

Mr. DeSalvo (FOC) commented that he is not in favor of cutting or adding teaching positions, he favors finding a use for the \$83,000 savings from the debt refinancing, and feels a 2.5-3% increase would be approved.

Mr. Neidenbach commented that he would like to see the increase under 3%.

Mr. Hanczor (FOC) commented that he would like to see the quality of education preserved and teaching positions maintained.

Mr. Macchio commented that of the 4% increase, 3.5% was contractual or non-controllable, so the actual increase is only 0.5%, and the public needs to understand that.

Mr. Hocker commented that he is not in favor of eliminating teaching positions. He stated the board should propose a budget that has a good chance of passing in the referendum, but he is not opposed to sending out a budget that may be defeated as he believes that last year's budget was too

low and likely would have passed at a higher percentage increase. He would support a budget increase in the low 3% range.

Mrs. Gombos commented on the difficulty the Easton residents will face this year and that a 3.5% increase would not be successful. She could not support more than a 2.5% increase and urged the board to develop a budget that will pass on the first vote.

Mr. Logie commented that he would support a 2.5% increase.

Mrs. Gold (FOC) commented that the Easton Board of Finance will be asking the Town to reduce the budget and services, including fire, police, highway, etc. A 2.5% increase for Region 9 would be difficult when the Easton departments were asked to present budget increases at zero. She would like to preserve the budget increase for the Easton lower schools, an increase of 2.79% because a good K-8 education is good for the high school.

Mr. Karvelis commented that the budget increase is primarily due to contractual obligations. He would support an increase in the low 3% range.

Mr. Lewis commented that last year's budget was approved overwhelmingly with a 1.96% increase. He would support a budget increase just short of 3%.

Dr. Cicchetti complimented the board members on their thoroughness of review and the questions asked, their pride in the school, and their care for what is being done in the school.

Mr. McMorran and his team will revise their budget reductions based on the discussion and will prepare options for budget increases ranging between 2.5% and 3% for the meeting next week.

AGENDA ADDITION

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education add Public Comment to the agenda at this time. Gombos, Logie. Approved. Unanimous.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Alice Smith, Redding: she expressed her gratitude for the amazing job that the administration and staff does, and that she is not thrilled with the proposed reductions in the proposed 4.0% increase to the budget.

Kim Breda, Easton: she thanked the members of the Board and FOC for their thoroughness of review and added that the PTSA was ready and willing to do what they could to bring in the vote on the budget.

BREAK

A brief recess was taken from 9:10 pm to 9:25 pm.

SPECIAL EDUCATION PRESENTATION

Special Education Director, Patti Roszko, presented information on Special Education, including the number of students and levels of service, the costs of services, in-district and outplacement numbers and costs, historical data, Excess Cost Sharing Grants and comparison by DRG. The presentation was a dialogue with board members.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion: move that the Region 9 meeting recess to executive session for a discussion involving a confidential student matter. Gombos, Karvelis. Approved. Unanimous.

Motion: move that the Financial Oversight Committee recess their meeting to join the Region 9 Board of Education in executive session. Gombos, Hanczor. Approved. Unanimous.

The meeting recessed at 10:16 pm.

Mr. DeSalvo (FOC) left the meeting at this time.

Dr. Cicchetti, Mr. McMorrان, Ms. Roszko, Mrs. Shutt, Mrs. Kipp and Mrs. Mas were invited to attend the Executive Session.

RECONVENE

Mr. Lewis reconvened the meeting of the Board of Education at 10:55 pm.

Mr. Hocker reconvened the meeting of the Financial Oversight Committee at 10:55 pm.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: move to adjourn the Region 9 meeting. Macchio, Karvelis. Approved. Unanimous.

Motion: move to adjourn the FOC meeting. Gombos, Hocker. Approved. Unanimous.

The joint meeting of the Region 9 Board of Education and Financial Oversight Committee then adjourned at 10:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

William A. Baker, Region 9 Board of Education Secretary
Catherine W. Gombos, FOC Secretary
Recorded by Mary Maday