A special meeting of the Groton Board of Education was held on February 25, 2013, in Room 111 of the School Administration Building, for the purpose of discussing the proposed 2013-2014 budget.

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Kirsten Hoyt, Chairperson of the Board, at 6:37 p.m.

PRESENT

Dr. Kirsten Hoyt, Chairperson
Mrs. Elizabeth Gianacoplos, Vice Chairperson
Mrs. Patricia Doyle
Mrs. Shelley Gardner
Mr. Robert Peruzzotti
Mrs. Kim Shepardson Watson
Mrs. Rita Volkmann
Mr. Chaz Zezulka

Dr. John Ramos, Interim Superintendent of Schools
Mrs. Carolyn Dickey, Business Manager
Mrs. Denise Doolittle, Director of Pupil Personnel Services
Mrs. Laurie LePine, Director of Human Resources
Mr. Sean McKenna, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction
Mr. William Robarge, Director of Buildings and Grounds
Mr. Paul Sikorski, Director of Technology Services
Mr. Joseph Arcarese, Principal, Fitch High School
Mrs. Jamie Giordano, Principal, Claude Chester School
Dr. Monica Franzone, Principal, Mary Morrisson School
Mr. Paul Esposito, Principal, Northeast Academy School
Mrs. Kathleen Miner, Principal, Pleasant Valley School
Mr. Monson Lane, Principal, S. B. Butler School
Mr. Robert Pendolphi, Principal, Cutler Middle School
Mr. John Jones, Principal, West Side Middle School
Mrs. Beth Horler, GEA Co-Chair
Mr. Larry Croxton, GEA Co-Chair

ABSENT

Mrs. Beverly Washington

(*Attachments are available upon request in the Superintendent’s Office.)
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1. Discussion of request for FHS to have an early dismissal on April 5. This would compensate for the two-hour Parent/Teacher Conference to be held on April 25.

Mr. Arcarese explained the reason for the request noting that the first scheduled dismissal had been cancelled due to the snow storm and the second one would be on April 5, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. He stated that parents would be notified and encouraged to attend through the School Messenger and the web page. He also stated that this is a State law which has been in effect since 2011 and requires that it occur twice a year.

2. Budget

Dr. Ramos noted:

- 1 position was removed from the reduction – Middle School Music
- Transportation – The administration has met with STA and STA is willing to work with the district. An option presented was to extend the contract to a full 5 years with increases as follows:
  - 0% increase next year
  - 2.5% in the 2nd year
  - 2% in the 3rd year
  - 2% in the 4th year
  - 2% in the 5th

This will result in an 8% increase in cost over the 5 years. The payoff for the district will be the 0% increase for next year.

Mr. Peruzzotti stated that the contract needs to be reviewed by the Finance Committee.

It was suggested that the $100,000 be left in the budget until the contract has been fully renegotiated.

Mrs. Volkmann noted that LEARN is working on regional busing and that the Board should keep this in mind as an option.

Dr. Ramos noted that any cut translates to a reduction in services and programs.

Dr. Ramos reiterated the charge from the Board in the preparation of the budget.

Dr. Ramos shared the answers to questions raised by the Board at the last meeting:

1. Flipped classroom – Karen Bryer gave an overview of the Flipped Mathematics Classroom Grant [ATTACHMENT #1] and explained the desire to add the cost of iPads for grade 7 students into the budget. Ms. Bryer shared highlights of the implementation of iPads at West Side Middle and Cutler Middle Schools.
2. IB Program

Mr. McKenna shared the number of schools in Connecticut that offer an IB Program, noting that Fitch is one of four schools with an IB Program:

- East Hartford has an Intra-district Magnet School and 167 students are enrolled, grades 9-12
- Cheshire Academy has 350 students enrolled, grades 8-12 and post graduate year
- Warren Harding has 100 students enrolled, grades 9-12

Mr. Arcarese shared the number of students taking AP and IB courses:

- AP only = 161 juniors and seniors are in the program
- IB only = 38 juniors and seniors are in the program
- AP & IB = 35 juniors and seniors are in the program

234 total which equals 498 courses = 40% = 2+% per students

Mr. Peruzzotti asked what was the number of grade 9 and 10 students being prepared for AP & IB courses.

Board members weighed in on the IB Program issue.

It was the consensus of the Board to move the IB Program from yellow to red on the list.

3. Health – Where it can be taught?

Mr. McKenna stated that Health has its own certification endorsement and curriculum which requires that it be taught by a certified Health Teacher. He noted that it was a State requirement that Health have its own curriculum.

4. World Language Teachers at the Middle School Level

Mr. Pendolphi gave an overview of World Language at the middle school level. Mr. Jones stated that it was the same at West Side Middle as it is at Cutler Middle.

5. Media Specialist

Mr. Jones explained that one media specialist is shared between each middle school. Mr. Jones noted that it would be ideal if there were either a full-time medial specialist or a full-time LTA at each middle school. It was explained that the Media Specialist is part of the exploratory rotation.

Mrs. Volkmann stated that she would like to see the second Media Specialist position filled at the high school and have one Media Specialist at each middle school.
6. $800,000 for Purchased Services and what it means

Mrs. Dickey explained the process regarding the 20% reduction in purchased services.

7. LTA at the elementary level and its impact

Mr. Lane explained that at S.B. Butler there is a full-time Media Specialist and the services of a LTA for 3 days a week.

This item was moved from green to yellow.

8. Strings – Elementary position

Mr. McKenna shared data on strings in the district:
- MM has 39 grade 3 students with 12 students who dropped from last year.
- CB has 28 grade 3 students with 16 students who dropped from last year.
- CC has 19 grade 3 students; out of 17 students who took strings in grade 3 and returned to CB for grade 4, 3 students continued with strings.
- CK has 41 grade 2 students and 34 grade 3 students; retention of strings students from grade 3 to grade 4, 12/28 continued strings. NOTE: Of the 36 students – 8 moved out of district – 28 potential continuing students.
- NEA has 40 grade 3 students with 22 students who dropped from last year.
- SB has 30 grade 3 students with 14 third grade students who dropped from last year.

9. Para cuts – [ATTACHMENTS #2 & 3]

Mrs. Doolittle reviewed the spreadsheet of paras in the district and the narratives of self-contained programs in the district.

Mrs. Volkmann asked for the number of Speech Pathologist and their case load.

This item will remain in yellow.

Review of the Budget Line by Line

The Board reviewed the following pages in the proposed budget:
- Other Special Instruction K-12
- Special Education K-12
- Blind K-12
ARRA Support and Remedial Instruction K-12
Support and Remedial Instruction K-12
Hearing Impaired K-12
High School Completion
Adult Education
Summer School
Student Activities
Support Services PreK-12
Social Worker Services K-12
Guidance Services
Health Services K-12
Psychologist Services K-12
Speech and Language Services PreK-12
Support Services for Instructional Staff
Improvement of Instruction
Educational Media K-12
General Administration
School Administration
Operation & Maintenance of Plant
Pupil Transportation

- Several Board members were in favor of ceasing transportation for Magnet School students.

- Computer Support Services
- Health Services
- Tuition

The budget meeting was recessed at 9:43 p.m.