

Board of Finance Public Budget Hearing #1
Thursday, March 9, 2023, 7:30 pm
Via Webex & In Person
At BOE Conference Room 295 A/B
501 Kings Hwy E., Fairfield, CT 06825

A recording of this meeting can be found here: [BOF Budget #2 3.9.2023.](#)

FINAL MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairwoman Lori Charlton, Vice-Chair John Mitola, Secretary Sheila Marmion, Craig Curley, Mary LeClerc, Kevin Starke, Jack Testani, James Walsh

MEMBERS ABSENT: Christopher DeWitt

OTHERS PRESENT: Fairfield Schools Superintendent Mike Testani, CFO Fairfield Schools Courtney LeBorious, BOE Chairwoman Jennifer Jacobsen, BOE Liaison Jeff Peterson, Executive Director of Special Education and Student Services Rob Mancusi, BOE Vice-Chair Nick Aysseh, Town CAO Tom Bremer, Town CFO Jared Schmitt, FairTV, members of the public.

1. Call to Order
Chairwoman Lori Charlton called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.
2. Pledge of Allegiance
Chairwoman Charlton led the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Discussion on the Following Budget:

Board of Education:

8010 Board of Education- The BOE Budget Book can be found here: [BOE Budget Book FY24.](#)

BOE Chairwoman Jennifer Jacobsen and Superintendent Mike Testani gave a presentation which can be found here: [BOE Budget FY24 Presentation](#). Superintendent Testani opened his presentation to questions from the BOF. Sheila Marmion asked how the budget shows how staff is dealing with the learning loss from COVID. Mr. Testani said staff is focused on maintaining grade level content, grade level instruction and support for those who struggle.

James Walsh asked how much money was in the budget for learning loss catchup. Mr. Testani said all money in the budget is used to have teaching in place. He said the school district will have a better understanding through the spring assessment of smarter balance. Mr. Walsh also asked about summer programs that were not offered or needed prior to COVID and if the school system was still offering those programs. Mr. Testani said there is ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund) money that will be used for summer programs. He said data shows Fairfield students are doing well post-COVID. He said there will always be children who struggle, and they will receive the help they need. Jack Testani asked for an explanation of how it is determined that Fairfield students are doing well. Mr. Mike Testani said test scores are used to determine this.

Craig Curley asked about the Health Insurance estimate and when it will be finalized.

Fairfield Schools CFO Courtney LeBoriosis said it was updated a week ago and the final number will be released in April, but she is estimating it to be \$500,000. Mr. Curley also asked about the grant that First Selectwoman Kupchick referred to that the schools will be receiving. Mr. Testani said it is FEMA reimbursement for \$350,000 for PPE (per pupil expenses) during COVID. Mr. Testani said this reimbursement would not affect this budget.

Mr. Walsh started a discussion about using the \$350,000 toward next year's budget. In the past, he said there was a joint agreement between the Town and BOE to use funds specifically for something in the FY24 budget. BOE Chairwoman Jacobsen said she was concerned with terms and when the money had to be spent, but Ms. LeBoriosis said there are no terms to the reimbursement, and it will actually go to the Town and the boards will determine how it is used.

Mr. Curley asked about the nursing budget being reduced and the Town nursing budget increasing and if the two budgets were connected. Special Ed Director Rob Mancusi said they are not connected, and his budget is based on one on one placement with a student. There was a discussion about the salaries for Paras and Teachers and the need for increases in comparison to surrounding towns. Mr. Testani asked Superintendent Testani for data on Fairfield salaries versus other towns. Superintendent Testani said insurance costs have increased as well. He said he is concerned that teachers will leave to work in other towns.

Kevin Starke talked about inflation, salaries and the percentage of teachers who live in Fairfield. Mr. Starke referred to page 12 of the BOE budget book and the reclassification of some staff to Assistant Principals. Mr. Testani said an Assistant Principal can help teachers and staff. There was a discussion about reduction in staff at some schools and school population in some areas being reduced. There was a discussion about costs related to redistricting (page 49 Contracted Services) and the process.

Chairwoman Charlton inquired about the Early Literacy Program. Mr. Mancusi explained that this program is intended for the most severely disabled students with language-based disabilities. He said it is an elementary program and will help keep these children in district so they do not have to be placed in an outside school which will add tuition costs. Mr. Mancusi said there are 15 students in the program now and he projects increasing it to 18 next year. There was also a discussion about outplacement tuition and how the needs have increased. Ms. LeBoriosis said she will supply DRGBs. (Diagnosis Related Groups).

11030 Health and Welfare Services
There were no questions.

2531 Private School Bus Transportation
There is a tiered bus system as they have increased the number of runs but have a shortage of drivers. There was a discussion about how many routes and drivers are needed.

4. Adjourn

John Mitola made a motion to adjourn. Craig Curley seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Pru O'Brien
Recording Secretary