

AGENDA

ITEM # 16

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Hartford Board of Education

Minutes

Public Hearing – April 19, 2011

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of the State, the Hartford Board of Education (hereinafter “Board” met on Tuesday, April 19, 2011. The meeting was held at Capital Preparatory Magnet School, 1304 Main Street, Hartford, Connecticut 06103.

I. Call to Order

Mr. MacDonald called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. A quorum was present.

<u>Present:</u> Mr. David MacDonald, Chair Ms. Sharon Patterson-Stallings, Secretary Ms. Elizabeth Brad Noel Ms. Ada Miranda Mr. Israel Flores Mr. Luis Rodríguez-Dávila Mr. Robert Cotto, Jr.	<u>Absent:</u> Ms. Pamela Richmond, Vice Chair Ms. Lori L. Hudson, Second Vice Chair
Superintendent Steven Adamowski	

Ms. Paula Altieri, Chief Financial Officer, explained that the 2011-12 budget was built with three goals:

2011-12 Budget Goals

I. Further Increase School Capacity to Raise Student Achievement

- a. More instructional time for all schools
- b. Further shift of funds to schools and classrooms through SBB 75/25
- c. 2% net gain in school budgets relative to enrollment
- d. Further Central Services/Central Office average reduction of 6%

II. Increase Efficiency through Innovation

- a. Budget Task Force Recommendations
 1. Employee Benefits
 2. Transportation
 3. Special Education Tuition
 4. Further Central Office “Right-Sizing”

III. A “No-tax Increase” Budget for the Taxpayers of Hartford

- a. No request for increased funding by the City of Hartford
- b. Teacher Jobs Bill Federal Stimulus
- c. Flat funding of ECS

2011-12 Proposed All Funds Budget

\$ 283.4M	General Budget	- (\$ 2.4m) or (.9%)
\$ 112.4M	Special Funds	- (\$ 2.1m) or (1.8%)
\$ 395.8M	Total	- \$(4.5m) or (1.1%)

II. Public Participation

1. **Hyacinth Yennie**, resident, raised concerns for the elimination of paraprofessionals. Ms. Yennie spoke in favor of adequate maintenance in the schools. She stated that more people in Central office should be eliminated and some of the items such maintenance should not be deferred. She also raised her concerns for public safety and transportation.

Dr. Adamowski stated that the paraprofessional issue was one of the questions of the Board and that will be further discuss.

2. **Shonta' Browdy**, parent, raised concerns for the deferment of construction projects. She also raised concerns for the SGC team in the school where her daughter is enrolled. Decisions are taken prior to presenting to the School councils. Ms. Browdy also stated her concerns for transportation and safety.
3. **Milly Arciniegas**, HAPC, president, raised concerns for the lack of timely communication between parents and principals. She recommended setting a standard for response to parents that everyone has to follow. School administrators need to be held accountable. She spoke in favor of parental engagement and paraprofessionals.
4. **Melissa Torres and Marcelino Meza**, parents, spoke in favor of one-on-one paraprofessionals. She raised concerns for the elimination of paraprofessionals. Her children are enrolled at McDonough School and they both need paraprofessionals.
5. **Tracy L. Carter**, paraprofessional, spoke in support of paraprofessionals. She requested to the Board reconsidering the para's elimination. She stated that paraprofessionals work really hard and are dedicated to their students.
6. **Shellye Davis**, Hartford Federation of Paraprofessionals, Co-Chair, raised concerns for the elimination of 27 paraprofessionals. She stated that the Board proposed the elimination of 19 paraprofessionals last year, and in fact 65 were eliminated making a total of 92 paraprofessional eliminations. Ms. Aviles advocated for special needs children and the legality of IEP's. She raised concerns for the distribution of bonuses and the creation of a Chief Talent Officer position in the midst of paraprofessional eliminations.
7. **Jackie Aviles**, Hartford Federation of Paraprofessionals, Co-Chair, raised concerns for the laid off of paraprofessionals. She asked the Board to reconsider the elimination of 27 paraprofessionals who work directly with the students. She expressed her disagreement for the hiring of more central office administrators and the paying of bonuses.
8. **Lore Minich**, Pre K teacher at Batchelder, raised concerns with the elimination of Pre K teachers. She stated that her position has been eliminated for budgetary reasons and will be replaced with a CDA position. She stated that certified teachers provide the students with a strong academic foundation; the degree, training and expertise of a certified teacher cannot be replaced with a CDA position. She also raised concerns for the inequity of resources between magnet schools and neighborhood schools. Not every child has the opportunity to attend magnet programs. Neighborhood schools do not offer the same opportunities.

9. **Tani Cooper**, parent, referred to the budget book and the letter submitted by Dr. Adamowski. She commended the success in increasing enrollment and she raised concerns for the decrease in enrollment for the north end. She asked if the Board has a plan to revert that.

Dr. Adamowski explained that there is a general population trend in the City. There is lower city population in the North End and a growing population in the South End. That trend is reflected in the schools. There is concern for two schools in the north end, Simpson Waverly and Clark that are under enrolled. There are plans for a multi-school campus and that requires substantial planning and consideration of options.

10. **Larry Deutsch**, Councilman, City of Hartford, stated that the budget was available on the website, but there are many people who do not have access to the internet. He stated that City Council has not received the budget books yet. He raised concerns for the allocation of monies for building renovations at M.D. Fox while at the same time a second school in the Blue Hills neighborhood is being neglected. He recommended readjusting the plan to serve both buildings.

Mr. Deutsch raised concerns for bonuses and performance incentives, and stated that bonuses should not be paid to people for doing their job. He recommended eliminating the bonuses. He also raised concerns for the temporary hold on the wage increases for school bus drivers and monitors.

11. **Gwenath Douglas**, parent, spoke in support of the paraprofessionals, and raised concerns for their elimination. She shared her own childhood experience as a special need student and the caring she received in the schools. She stated that there are many students who need assistance, but services are being cut.

12. **David Ionno**, parent of former HPS students, and Hartford Public Library Board Vice President, spoke in support of public education. He stated that he attended public schools and his four children graduated from HPS. He also raised concerns for the graduations at Hartford High and recommended having one graduation only instead of four different graduations.

13. **James Starr**, Achieve Hartford!, Executive Director, commended the Board for the development of the budget and for trying to cut expending. These are difficult times for all districts across the State. He stated that there are \$11 million of stimulus funds that are available today and will not be available next year. He stated that as relieved as we are today, it will be harder next year at this time. He recommended the creation of a task force to start the work to address the budget projections for next school year.

14. **Gwen Morgan, Payne and Sharon E. Hamilton**, representing bus drivers and monitors attending the meeting, raised concerns for the proposed freeze of the living wage. They spoke in favor of the living wage. They recommended looking at other ways to save money.

Dr. Adamowski stated that the Board is trying to accomplish a reduction of \$1.6 million in transportation cost for next year. Hartford has the highest cost per student, per capita in the State of Connecticut for transportation. He stated that the Logisticare contract is about to expire and there is no certainty that they will be the provider for magnet and special services next year. There are also other issues relatively to the State transportation guidelines, and others.

Ms. Payne, bus monitor, stated that bus monitors are middle class people and the cuts should start from the top.

15. **Lionel Flipper**, bus monitor, Hartford resident, spoke in favor of the living wage. He stated that the cuts affect the consistency of the service and that will result in mediocre services.

III. Questions around the budget

1. Why does Achievement First not show all of the staffing and enrollment information?
We are able to show staffing detail for our neighborhood and magnets schools because the funding sources are linked to their staffing decisions in our system. Thus, when a school decides to fund a teacher with general budget funds, our system can link the funds with the FTE.

Achievement First is a district affiliated charter school. They do not use our financial or budgeting systems and are not funded on an SBB basis as are our neighborhood and magnet schools. The budget reflects our contribution pursuant to state law and the affiliation agreement. The staffing shown reflects Hartford Public Schools' employees provided pursuant to state law and the affiliation agreement. All other staffing for Achievement First are employees Achievement First and are not reflected in our financial systems or budget documents.

We could ask them to supply this data and add it to our budget document for future versions.

2. Proposed staffing change of a 6.0 FTE decrease in FRAs: Are these the result of losing the ARRA funding? I remember we rehired them using those funds with the understanding that it was a temporary fix. Please explain.

The staffing change of 6.0 FRA reduction are offset by the increase of 6 School and Family Support providers. These upgrade decisions were made at the school level in concert with the School Governance Councils.

3. Impacted by a 27.00 FTE reduction, Paraprofessionals are the hardest hit in the proposed staffing changes. Please explain how we are filling that service gap for our students.

The 2011-12 Recommended Budget includes a total of 343.5 paraprofessional positions. The decrease of 27 paraprofessional positions are a result of the following:

- Six (6) reductions are the result of the graduation of the last class at Weaver Senior.
- Seven (4) are the result of projected enrollment variances in kindergarten and pre-k.
- The balance of 17 are the result of the elimination of adult support paraprofessional provided on a temporary basis to support students with a particular academic or behavior need who have successfully responded to intervention.

4. Could I get a breakdown of the salary lines that shows how much is budgeted for performance pay for both school-based staff and central office staff?

In previous years and in previous budget documents, variable performance pay was inclusive in the calculation of the district's average salaries.

In an effort to advance our goal of transparency, the 2011-12 budget and budget document reflect separate budgets for these projections.

The Schools Sundry detail provides information on our projection for variable performance pay for school-level staff. This reflects \$1,650,000 in projected performance pay for school staff.

The Central Sundry detail reflects \$250,000 in projected performance pay for central staff in 2011-12.

In the past we have paid everyone the same and presumably for failure. A tenet of our reform includes linking compensation to performance and thereby rewarding success.

Our recommendation for further alignment of compensation to student achievement could include the examination of longevity payments, which in 2010 totaled in excess of \$1.44m. These payments are paid exclusively based on years of service irrespective of student outcomes.

5. I understand that there are federal grant funds available for districts providing performance pay to their teachers. Have we explored obtaining these funds and can we apply for them for this upcoming budget year?

There is a federal competitive grant that aligns with individual performance pay reforms, the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF).

This grant support efforts to develop and implement performance-based compensation systems in high-need schools.

Performance-based compensation systems must consider gains in student academic achievement as well as classroom evaluations conducted multiple times during each school year among other factors and provide educators with incentives to take on additional responsibilities and leadership roles."

We anticipate this grant and application will be available in the late spring or early summer of 20 11. We fully intend to apply for the 2011-12 school year.

Depending on congressional appropriations, awards will likely range from \$500,000 to \$5,000,000.

Mr. MacDonald stated that he is in support of performance pay, but given the current staff reductions, he recommended that any performance pay should be limited to school-based staff.

Mr. Cotto, Jr. concurred with Mr. MacDonald on restricting for a year or so, any performance pay to non-school staff. He stated that there are a number of studies that find performance bonuses to be ineffective and a waste of money.

Mr. Flores stated that there are many studies that support one thing and do not support another, but the Board does have core beliefs and believe that teachers make a difference in the classrooms. Teachers need support; they need support from central office and they need support services. He spoke in favor of performance pay. He stated that when corporate America believes in something, they put their money behind. He expressed his disagreement with Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Cotto, and stated that the central office staff should be supported.

Ms. Noel stated that that when the Board started discussion on performance pay, it was at a time when Hartford's salary schedules were much lower than neighboring districts; the performance pay was one way to address that difference. She stated that the cost of that now is \$2.4 million and the Board was not aware of it. The District was showing growth, but one of the reasons for that growth was that special needs children were removed from the testing; therefore, the testing results at some schools were higher that it would have been if those students were included in the count. Ms. Noel concluded that bonuses have created an environment of resentment in the community.

Dr. Adamowski explained that there are areas that involved cabinet members and non-bargaining employees in central office where we do have some flexibility.

Ms. Miranda explained that the Board is dealing with a perception issue. It does not look right that we are proposing freezing salaries of low pay employees and giving bonuses to others. She stated that central office has worked above and beyond and they are the back bone of the organization, but

giving bonuses does not look right and does not feel right. She recommended coming back with a proposal and keeping in mind that the Board is dealing with the perception issue.

6. I support the idea of expanding High Roads but am concerned about losing swing space for the MD Fox renovation. What other low to no cost options do we have to find other swing space for MD Fox?

The current plan calls for 245 Locust St. being used as a shared space with both High Roads and a portion of the MD Fox students there for swing space. This is possible because 245 Locust St. has one separate annex that High Roads uses. In the annex there is space for High Roads to grow about 20 students. High Roads and MD Fox will be on two separate schedules during the day.

We can put 2/3s of MD Fox on the other side of the building (most likely the youngest grades) and we will use the vacant space at Twain for the remainder of the MD Fox students. This will bring the Twain building to full capacity with Breakthrough II and MD Fox sharing the building.

We need an additional mitigation of \$1.9 million to avoid the deferment of the MD Fox renovation. Among those options includes mandated vocational programs for high school students and infusing models into existing academies.

IV. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.