

WINDHAM BOARD OF EDUCATION
WILLIMANTIC, CONNECTICUT
BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING and BUDGET HEARING MINUTES
March 6, 2013

BOARD PRESENT: Chair Dr. Sewall, Vice-chair Mrs. Collins, Mrs. Osuba, Mrs. Lambert, Dr. Switchenko, Mr. Desaulniers, Mr. French, Ms. Tinker, Mr. Adamo

BOARD ABSENT: No one

ADMINISTRATION

PRESENT: Superintendent Ms. Ortiz, Deputy Superintendent Ms. England, Assistant Superintendent Ms. Barker-Jones, Directors Mrs. Banks and Mr. Nelson, Communications Officer Ms. Markey

STUDENT

REPRESENTATIVES: None

OTHERS PRESENT: General public; staff; administrators; news media

CALL TO ORDER

Dr. Sewall called the March 6, 2013, Special Meeting of the Board of Education and Budget Hearing to order at 7:00 P.M. in the Windham High School's Library Media Center.

ACTION ITEM

Transportation Policy (Ref. 1)

Ms. Tinker asked that the Transportation policy be revised as follows on page 1, number 1, under **A. Students Entitled to and Privileged to Transportation**: "All resident children will be entitled to transportation from the designated bus stop near their homes to the closest school they attend in accordance with the following table of ~~riding~~ **walking** limits. If a student chooses another school outside of their home area transportation will be provided to that school from a designated pick-up area. It will be the Parent or Guardian's responsibility to provide transportation of the student to **and from** the designated pick-up area.

Motion by Ms. Tinker, seconded by Dr. Switchenko, that the Board approve the amendments to the Transportation Policy.

On the motion: **Aye:** **Mrs. Osuba, Mrs. Collins, Dr. Switchenko, Ms. Tinker, Mr. Adamo, Mr. French, Mr. Desaulniers**
Abstained: **Mrs. Lambert**
The motion passes.

Dr. Sewall asked for a vote on the policy as amended.

Policy as amended: **Aye:** **Mrs. Osuba, Mrs. Collins, Dr. Switchenko, Ms. Tinker, Mr. Adamo, Mr. French, Mr. Desaulniers**
Abstained: **Mrs. Lambert**
Policy is approved as amended.

PRESENTATION OF THE 2013-2014 SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDED BUDGET

Ms. Ortiz presented her recommended budget for the 2013-2014 school year. She highlighted the goals as they related to the Strategic Operating Plan. Ms. Ortiz explained that the budget is an all funds budget

which includes both general budget and special funds at the federal, state and local levels. The budget for next year was created with parameters for the funding level provided by the Finance and Audit Committee. When developing the budget, the Town's needs and ability to pay for the appropriation of education were taken into consideration. The schedule calls for the Board of Education to adopt the recommended budget at the March 13, 2013, Board meeting and per Town Charter, the final budget will be delivered to the Town Board of Finance on March 15, 2013. Budget principles were reviewed, as well as Strategic Operating Plan goals that are supported by the 2013-2014 recommended budget. Major assumptions affecting the budget were also highlighted. The projected increase is \$561,557, which is a 1.3% increase. There was discussion throughout the presentation.

BUDGET HEARING AND QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

James Flores, Willimantic, Alma Negron, Windham, and Agnes Bernard Windham, spoke together. Mr. Flores said the budget is for the children and he supports the budget. He spoke about the large number of children riding one of the buses which exceeds its capacity. The other issue he spoke about was school uniforms. People would save money by having children wear school uniforms and then they could support the budget. Ms. Bernard said over 300 signatures were collected to support the idea of having school uniforms. She asked the Board to consider school uniforms as well. Ms. Negron said she is on the School Governance Council at Windham Center School. She said that the children are not safe on the bus and they want to prevent an accident from happening. Mr. Flores said safety on the buses is his priority.

Mary Gallucci, Willimantic, asked how equity for students can be ensured if special education students are invisible in the funding allocation. She would think it would be positive to have a self-contained classroom at the Magnet School. She would like to see a plan for teacher retention. Ms. Gallucci cited a study by university professors on cultural impact on high teacher turnover and its negative impact especially to student achievement. Buses are part of educating children in the district. She asked how the goals are being maintained in next year's funding that were set at the time of the SIG application. She also asked how the redesign of the Middle School can be determined without input from the committee which hasn't convened. She has been on the WMS SGC, which is a very professional group, since it began and it has been bypassed for these designs. Thirty percent for central office is too high.

David Fenn, Windham, spoke about equity and the arts. He compared budget line items for the Arts and Humanities and STEM programs, as well as the line item for the athletic transportation budget. He said that the arts program budget at the high school is the lowest in the State and the elementary schools are not fulfilling the mandated State recommendation by ten minutes per week in music. In the Middle School music meets only once a week and there is no instrumental program at the elementary school level. This will affect the whole program because students will have a poor set of skills required by the State, and this will affect their ability to read, understand and play music when they reach the middle and high schools. \$230,000 dollars were returned to the Town last year; however, it would cost about \$39,000 to repair or replace all the instruments in the district. Mr. Fenn said that the arts have been getting the short end in the school system for a very long time. The band is placed in the Arts and Humanities section; however, two thirds of students in the band are in the STEM program. Music is fundamental to developing brain power.

Allison Cullinan, Eastern Connecticut State University, had a question about the gifted and talented program. She is concerned about students who need extra time and feels there is not enough support for students who have learning disabilities especially at the elementary school level. She asked how programs can be applied to students in the elementary school to help those students and provide them with necessary support. As students get older, students can ask for help. She volunteers for Positive Steps and she is concerned about motivational support that students need.

Questions were answered by Dr. Sewall and Ms. Ortiz

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr. Adamo, seconded by Mrs. Lambert, that the Board meeting adjourn at 8:11 P.M.

On the motion: Unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Mrs. Luz Osuba, Secretary