

**EAST HAVEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING  
BUDGET WORKSHOP**

**EAST HAVEN HIGH SCHOOL BOARDROOM  
35 WHEELBARROW LANE  
EAST HAVEN, CONNECTICUT 06513**

**MINUTES TUESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2009 6:30 P.M.**

**PRESENT:** Mrs. Vitale, Mr. Finkle, Mr. Hammell, Mr. Inglese,  
Mrs. Padua and Mrs. Vineyard

**ABSENT:** Mr. DeNuzzo  
Mrs. Acquarulo, Director of Pupil Services

**ARRIVED LATE:** Mrs. Geraci-Anastasio and Mr. Hennessey

**ALSO PRESENT:** Mr. Serio, Superintendent of Schools  
Mr. Martorella, Administrative Consultant to the  
Superintendent  
Mr. Meoli, Assistant Superintendent  
Mrs. Lewis, Finance Manager  
Mr. Rizza, Director of Finance

**1. OPEN MEETING**

Mrs. Vitale called to order of the Finance Subcommittee at 6:35 p.m.

**2. Discussion of Proposed Budget for the 2009-10 Fiscal Year**

Mr. Serio explained that they had worked today on reducing the budget down to the new figure on their new budget packets handed out tonight. They had reduced it to 3.73%, a little over a two percent difference. There was discussion on how ECS and grants would most likely be cut by the State. If there were cuts to the ECS it would be approximately 12% and if they cut

from the grants, it would be around 18%. Cuts like these would drastically affect their budget. Mr. Serio originally had put personnel paid from grants into the budget based on what he thought would happen to the grants. They did not have the room in this budget to absorb the people they pay out of grants which included literacy aides, reading consultants, math/science coaches and professional development. They did not know what the consequences would be. Unfortunately, they were forced to set their budget before the State decides what to do. If he put the \$2 million back into the original budget, they would be back at the 6% figure.

Mrs. Geraci-Anastasio arrived at 6:42 p.m.

Mr. Hammell suggested that they have a contingency plan in place in a percentage-wise basis. If the State cuts “x” number of dollars, then this would be what they needed to do. Mrs. Vitale felt that’s what they needed to do. Mr. Serio stated depending on how deep the cuts were would decide on teacher layoffs. He meant certified staff layoffs such as administrators and non-certified staff programs. This also included athletic programs. At some point they needed to talk to the PTA councils and they should be involved in some of these budget talks such as the consequences they may face. Mr. Serio stated he had an obligation and the Board had an obligation to provide the best education for the students in East Haven. They needed to fight for the staff and students. Mrs. Vitale stated they needed to provide the best educational opportunities.

Mr. Hammell asked out of that 3.73%, what was the obligation of the contractual, medical and all of that opposed to this number. Mr. Finkle explained that he was asking how much of that 3.73% was new money. There was discussion on what the actual figure was. Mr. Rizza explained it was approximately 80%. They were looking in the neighborhood of \$35-36 million that they could call contractual. Mr. Rizza explained that salaries and benefits alone were 75% of the budget and purchase services, transportation and utilities were 10%. Mr. Hammell just wanted to make sure a layperson that was not

familiar with the budget process and read it in the paper, that out of that 3.73% increase, what amount was not new money. Mr. Rizza spoke about the budget process and how around May 1<sup>st</sup>, they would begin this whole process again. There was further discussion on the obligation amount and the new money amount. Mr. Rizza stated that 80% of \$1.2 million becomes contractual obligations.

Mr. Serio stated they had cut two other items significantly which were out-of-district tuitions and special education. They were taking a risk because most likely their special education costs would exceed what they budgeted for. They tried to look at the numbers where they were overspent in this year's current budget. (Mr. Hennessey arrived at 7:00 p.m.) The two combined produced somewhere in the area of a \$400,000 cut. The cost share they received through Special Ed excess cost was proposed to be cut possibly by 20%.

Mrs. Vitale stated that all of the towns were in the same boat. She suggested that perhaps the public would like to know what and where they have either eliminated, partially funded or were giving up in order to meet the amount of money they were putting in for. They did not know if they were going to get anything in this budget; there had to be some savings somewhere. They needed to make an effort to find some things they could do without. Mrs. Vitale brought up the fact that they have Whitsons right now for their cafeteria. Why couldn't they hire their own manager and manage their own girls and do this in-house. It was stated that this food service company had not run this budget into the red. Mrs. Vitale stated that everyone was complaining about the food. Mr. Serio stated the same people would be cooking it. They had very highly paid cafeteria workers. They were in the process of also shopping for food service companies. It could be an option. Mr. Hammell stated they should also look at the option of looking at their own manager. Mr. Rizza stated the food service has no impact on the general fund.

Mr. Serio explained if they had to take a \$2 million hit on ECS, he was getting the message that they, the Board, had to absorb

that \$2 million without the Town's help. He did not think that was at all fair. The money goes back to the general fund. Mr. Serio stated they were looking at a number that was less than what they got last year dollar-wise. Mr. Rizza stated dollar-wise yes, it was a little less than \$50,000. Come June 30<sup>th</sup>, these numbers could change again.

Mrs. Vitale suggested that they look into some type of Early Retirement Incentive or something to do with their medical payments. Mr. Rizza stated that that was a work-in-progress. Mr. Hammell asked about the security end of it. Mr. Serio explained that right now they were down to a minimal amount for U.S. Securities' staff. A few new security guards/monitors worked the days right now and U.S. Securities worked evenings, weekends and events/rentals. They were doing a cost analysis of what monies they were saving currently and the projection of what it would cost them to do it all themselves. The cost of the monitors was \$90,000. The SRO cost of \$50,000 was listed separately.

Mr. Serio stated he did not think a zero increase would be the way to go. They needed a contingency plan in anticipation of an ECS cut. By April 1<sup>st</sup> the teachers needed to be notified. Just notifying non-tenured people of possible layoffs may not be a big enough number. They would probably have to go back four or five years to at least put them on notice of possible layoffs. This would be one of the drastic things that might have to be done.

There was some discussion on the upcoming NESDEC meeting on Monday, January 26, 2009. This would be a preliminary report.

Mr. Finkle asked Mr. Serio when they went to the Board of Finance and then the Mayor proposed a budget of \$500,000 and they received extra funding from the Board of Finance, from that budget to our proposed budget, what was it in this fiscal year he had to cut that they didn't have this year that they had last year. Mr. Serio responded if people retired and he could combine classes and if he didn't replace teachers. They

had a proposal to add reading consultants because of their reading scores and implemented RTI which would influence and reduce their numbers in special education. There were no new reading consultants, math or science coaches in there. They were not able to fill ELL positions this year. The athletic director position was cut out of the administration and Central Office was cut back. It was about \$60-80,000 less.

Mr. Hammell asked Mr. Serio what he was doing with the athletic position as a whole. Mr. Hammell stated he felt the program had already started to suffer from what was going on with it. How much more would it suffer from this type of action? Mr. Serio asked him to define what he meant by "suffer". Mr. Serio asked Mrs. Reale if she saw any "suffering" at all. Mrs. Reale stated no, not at all. Mr. Hammell asked if all the coaches were getting evaluated and Mrs. Reale stated she believed they were. There was discussion on the position, evaluations and what the position's duties were. Mrs. Reale stated she had not heard anything but good things. Mr. Hammell asked if the coaches had been evaluated. Mrs. Reale stated it was an ongoing process depending on the season they were coaching. Mr. Hammell asked when they were done normally and by whom. Mrs. Reale stated she would need to check into that and look at the time schedule. Mr. Hammell asked if the appropriate contacts to colleges were being made and letters for the kids ongoing as it was before. Mrs. Reale stated she did not see evidence of it before and they see someone in Guidance if they need help.

Mrs. Geraci-Anastasio asked Mr. Serio who evaluated the coaches at this point. Mr. Serio stated he did not know, but he wanted people to be upfront with him as far as the way they were going about things. Mr. Serio explained how he had received a letter from the State Certification Board regarding the concerns of a couple of parents questioning the certification of the athletic director and what was still on the website with the previous director's information. It has now been changed and they were in the process of getting information from the State Certification Board as to whether an athletic director who is not an administrator was a doable thing. They would prefer he not

handle district-wide affairs and concentrate on the high school. There was discussion on high school administrators handling the coaching evaluations. Mrs. Geraci-Anastasio asked if they had to change the job description and Mr. Serio responded yes.

Mr. Hammell stated he was very concerned about Mrs. Reale's and Mr. Serio's answers to him such as, I think they are being done and we don't know if they are being done and we don't know who is doing them. Mr. Hammell stated that what the coaches respected in an AD or an acting AD was what the evaluations said about them from their input. If the evaluations were not being done properly, then a lot of the respect goes out the window. Mr. Serio stated if Mrs. Vitale was correct about a zero budget or the cuts in ECS were \$2 million, and they fought for the money and got it, he would get him anything he wanted. Mr. Hammell stated he wanted it to be workable. Mr. Serio stated right now he was working with the State and evaluations were going to be done by the high school administration. Mr. Serio felt they had hit a "home run" with Mr. Marone in there because of his dedication and the pay he was doing it for. Mr. Hammell stated he felt Mr. Marone should be applauded for the job he was doing. He was not complaining about him or his job. Mr. Martorella explained his new title was Athletic Coordinator. Mr. Hennessey stated he was their AD not Athletic Coordinator. Mr. Hennessey felt they did not have to agree to it, but they were agreeing to do it. There was discussion on what could be done or not done when the State was involved. Mr. Martorella explained if you were to argue with the State, and do it our way, they control your budget and funding. Mr. Hennessey stated he would like to see that. Mr. Martorella stated he would show him. Mrs. Goodale spoke about a situation that had happened to her where the State had stated that to her when she spoke about not participating in a certain program.

**Mr. Hammell requested sometime soon, he would like to know who was doing the evaluations and if they had been done.**

**Mr. Hennessey requested Mr. Rizza provide them with some numbers of teachers per student or students per**

**teacher and the number of students per square foot. This way they would have baseline reference numbers on what the budget was saying basically. This way they would not be ballooning up on salaries or people.**

There was discussion on busing and the cost for Special Ed being around \$400,000. There was discussion on going out to bid earlier this year on a number of contracts. Enrollments were discussed and how they needed to reduce staff. Mr. Hennessey felt the bus contract would go higher because there was less competition and the price of fuel had changed a lot since they went out to bid last time. A number of vendors had shown an interest in bidding on the bus contract. The timeline was important.

**Mrs. Vitale stated she did not see why they couldn't cut their legal services bill. It was too high. They should take the Town Hall up on their offer of using their labor negotiator at no cost to us for any of their negotiations. Mr. Serio stated they would look into that. Mrs. Vitale stated that she and Mrs. Vineyard would like to sit in on the cafeteria negotiations.**

Mr. Hammell asked what they did about Workmen's Compensation before they as an administration would take some sort of action. Mr. Serio stated he would like to know when they could just say, "You're fired." He stated he was getting an answer that you couldn't. There was some further discussion on workmen's compensation. Mr. Meoli explained that the Town Hall had instituted some changes "x" number of months ago, and all new claims have to go to network doctors. The ones that predate that have to be looked into.

Mr. Finkle asked Mr. Rizza a question regarding the budget for fiscal year 2007-08 and the expended budget for 2007-08, why there was a spread of \$310,000. Mr. Rizza explained that the audit was not in yet. Once the audit was issued and you get your numbers, you would see some changes throughout. Any adjustments made by the auditors come through and then it is done. They should be wrapped up in two

or three weeks. Mr. Finkle asked if they had under spent the budget by \$300,000. Mr. Rizza stated it could be, but he doubted it.

Mr. Finkle asked about the principals' accounts on Page 3 and why there was a 15% increase or \$117,000. Mr. Serio stated it was for a high school instructional leader position. It was not in last year's budget and there were also salary increases. It was just put back in.

Mr. Finkle asked if they were going to eliminate a lot of library aides on Page 5. This amount was \$51,000. Mr. Rizza explained these were based on experience levels of expenditure. Mrs. Geraci-Anastasio asked if anyone had been cut. Mr. Rizza responded not a person had been cut, no. These were just reflective of money never expended. They were budgeted and never filled or somebody left.

Mr. Finkle asked about Purchase Services on Page 9, Repairs and Maintenance. He asked if they were looking at a net reduction of \$1,192, 000. Mrs. Lewis explained that was a formula and it should be a percentage. It was an increase of \$74,000.

Mrs. Vitale asked that they send an invitation to the Town Council for our next budget workshop meeting.

There was discussion on when there should be another budget meeting. It was decided that there would be discussion and possible approval of the proposed operating budget on January 27<sup>th</sup>. There was discussion on where the final percentage should fall.

**3. Any other business that might rightfully come before this subcommittee.**

There was no other business discussed this evening

**4. ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Hammell made a motion to adjourn the Finance/Budget Workshop Subcommittee meeting and it was seconded by Mrs. Geraci-Anastasio. The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

**RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,**

**MR. THOMAS HENNESSEY, CHAIRPERSON  
FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE**