

I thought it important to reflect on the past budget process, now that it has passed. We have also reached some other important benchmarks regarding factors in the budgeting process that would allow one to compare then versus now. That's what I did and I think its worth mentioning and putting it in the record:

1) The Bd of Finance, for the last few years has been concerned about the declining student population numbers and the corresponding actions by the Bd of Ed in reductions of staff. It has long been our view that overhead is the largest expense in the town's budgets. It's also been our view and recommendation that in order to manage this largest expense, that the Bd of Ed should manage employment by attrition. This would allow the Bd to reduce overhead and not "put anyone out of work" Unfortunately this has not happened over the last few years despite the clear decline in enrollment. And I'm not talking about projections, I'm talking about actuals. We believe this issue demands more intense focus as we move forward and can be balanced with class size. Even the Council Subcommittee, as reported in the 2-19 version of the Bee, the subcommittee chair Pat Llodra is quoted as saying "The numbers projected, looked to us, higher than expected versus what we have come to believe given recent discussion with demographers" She the was further quoted to say "If the numbers are overstated, we need to understand how the district plans to deal with it" The Bd did reduce some staff this year which should help. The other point I'd like to make on this issue is to compare the budget commentary to now. During budget deliberations, the tape and the video illustrate a Bd of Ed and administration decrying our potential budget reductions for fear of loosing more teachers. It was clearly stated that cuts mean teachers. The superintendent is on record twice saying that a million dollar cut could be 30+ teachers. Numbers twice that were communicated to the Bd of Ed and to the PTA's. More importantly, the public was lead to believe that class size would increase as teachers would be let go. Let's compare to now. The Bd of Ed reductions, as represented from there minutes and a spreadsheet delivered to this board today, equate to a net reduction of .5 FTE's over what the Bd of Ed presented to us.

2) The Bd of Finance<sup>Chair</sup> questioned the electricity projections presented in the Bd of Ed's budget. The increases were arbitrary and inconsistent between schools, despite the fact that CL&P had a singular and standard increase as reported by Fred Hurley. The answers, as illustrated on the video tape, were vague but centered around grants or savings that would not be continued, hence the increase. There was no explanation for the arbitrary and varying percentages per school. I, to remind you all, received a scathing letter from the districts financial director borating me for my comments in the Bee as to the unclear answers and that I should "be happy" with the found savings and respond accordingly. I'll be happy when the answers are accurate and the Bee accurately stated my comments when I said that any money would absolutely help.

Our questions were appropriate and spoke to a glaring inconsistency. Let's compare to now. The Bd of Ed's further budget cuts to account for the \$866,667 further reduction to the Bd of Ed's budget, included \$278,000 in electricity savings.

3) For as long as I can remember, Mr. Portnoy and this board have been trying to get a handle on the Bd of Ed's Benefits line. As illustrated in the video of our meetings, the Superintendent and Mary from TR Paul stated that the administration had taken down the assumption to 5% increase. The adjectives used to describe that action were "dangerous and scary". This board spent the better part of a half an hour on this issue alone trying to understand why, for the last number of years, we are told a number that has never gone up...and has only come down from what was presented. Let's compare to now. The assumption used in the Bd of Ed's budget and passed by the board is an increase of 2.34%

4) The Bd of Ed and the Bd of Finance discussed at length, the issue of stimulus funds. We are not about to turn away financial help, but it should be made clear that the understanding during our budget deliberations as well as the Council's deliberations was that any of these funds, described as ARRA funds, could not "supplant" any budget items. Let's compare to now. According to the Bd of Ed Actions, \$274,010 of those funds is included in their reductions.

5) Despite the letter to the editor from a town employee, the school district business manager, the Town did a tremendous job of communicating information. Bob Tait was publically taken to task for the budget information in the Bee ...but the notice was required and in compliance with the charter. The letter from the business manager said...and I quote... "We cannot instill confidence and accurately inform the community if important information is not being disseminated". What can be more accurate than a video of the administrations responses. Never before has the Town had more exposure to Newtown's budget process. From The Bee reporting, to the YouTube video recordings, to the recordings made available on the Bee's website...not to mention the public meetings and participation....if you wanted to be informed, it was everywhere.

6) Enrollment has been our issue. We've often been or urged to "Not debate the numbers again" Lets compare to know. The projections are much higher than the actuals. This is a very debatable issue, but the facts should be made known.

7) The Bd of Finance brought up the issue of the Town's Pension. It's an issue that needs to be discussed but the inquiry has obviously created some heat. We hope and trust that the questions we've posed will be given worthwhile thought and lead to further discussions. There are many issues to be highlighted.

The most recent Selectmen's meeting minutes indicated that we may be ok... We hope so, but the questions are beyond the market. Let's compare to now. Despite the markets rebound, we have a letter from David Leonard of TR Paul dated April 16 stating the need for \$444k in additional funding. Also worth mentioning is the minutes from the last Bd of Selectmen's

meeting were a selectmen indicated that "If anyone thinks there is a conflict of interest they should speak up" We did. We wrote a letter.....to the Fiduciaries of the plan.

Lastly, in the Feb 12 edition of the Bee, a member of the Bd of Ed is quoted...responding to my quote saying that "The Selectmen get it" referring to there budget cuts. The comment as reported was "When I hear that the Bd of Selectmen get it, its clear that our superintendent gets it too" My only comment would be to offer another quote from Warner Wolf..."Lets go to the video tape"

All back and forth aside, I wanted to provide a comparison from then to know. The facts are the facts...and this year they are on tape. The intent is not to create conflict, but to illustrate the issues and practices we need to get away from and improve upon. We could do amazing things if the public had more comfort in their government. And they would be more comfortable...and more supportive with clarity.

**NEWTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
BOARD OF EDUCATION ADJUSTMENTS TO BUDGET  
JUNE 2, 2009**

A4. B

6/25/2009

**SHORTENING SCHOOL/WORK YEAR \***

TEACHERS (SHORTENED WORK YEAR 5 DAYS INSTEAD OF 6)	160,000
NURSES - UNION VOLUNTEERED 3 DAYS LESS	(7,731)
SECRETARIAL - UNION VOLUNTEERED 1.5 DAYS LESS	(9,358)
SHORTENING SCHOOL/WORK YEAR SUBTOTAL	142,911

**STAFFING - CURRENT STAFFING REDUCTIONS \***

DISTRICT	<u>F.T.E.</u>	<u>POSITIONS</u>	
		STAFFING TURNOVER	(30,316)
HEAD O'MEADOW	0.50	TEACHER - KINDERGARTEN	(42,134)
PLANT OPERATION & MAINTENANCE	1.00	REDUCTION OF CUSTODIAL POSITION	(60,309)
CONTINUING EDUCATION		REDUCE SUMMER SCHOOL PROGRAM	(39,792)
			(172,551)

**EMPLOYEE BENEFITS**

MEDICAL INSURANCE RATE INCREASE FROM 5% TO ACTUAL RATES (2.34% - 1	(88,245)
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**USE OF ARRA FUNDS**

0.40	TEACHER - FLEX PROGRAM	(24,010)
	SPECIALIST - PRESCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST	(22,824)
	ED. ASSISTANTS SALARIES	(183,929)
	JOB COACH	(31,259)
	CONTRACTED SERVICES - SPEECH & HEARING	(10,488)
	EQUIPMENT - SPEECH & HEARING	(1,500)
USE OF ARRA FUNDS SUBTOTAL		(274,010)

**CORRECTION/ADJUSTMENT**

CORRECTION - SECURITY LINE ITEMS NOT IN TOTAL BUDGET	4,240
ADJUSTMENT - TUITION FOR ADDITIONAL OUT OF DISTRICT STUDENTS	81,694
CORRECTION/ADJUSTMENT SUBTOTAL	85,934

**OTHER REDUCTIONS**

HIGH SCHOOL		
ADMIN.	EQUIPMENT REPAIRS	(1,000)
	OFFICE SUPPLIES	(2,000)
CLASSRC	STAFF & STUDENT TRAVEL	(2,000)
	INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPLIES	(5,001)
MATH	TEXTBOOKS	(3,000)
	EQUIPMENT - 4 TI OVERHEAD PROJECTORS & INSTRUCTION CALCULATORS	(4,000)
MUSIC	INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPLIES	(1,000)
	EQUIPMENT - 2 MARCHING TENOR DRUMS	(2,000)
P.E.	INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPLIES	(1,500)
	EQUIPMENT - PRECOR ELLIPTICAL MACHINE	(3,495)
SCIENCE	EQUIPMENT REPAIRS	(1,000)
	STAFF & STUDENT TRAVEL	(500)
	TEXTBOOKS	(2,500)
SPORTS	EQUIPMENT REPAIRS	(4,000)
	CONTRACTED SERVICES	(4,000)
	STUDENT TRAVEL	(1,000)
	INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPLIES	(4,000)
	EQUIPMENT - PHASE 1 FOR REPLACEMENT OF POOL TIMING SYSTEM	(7,454)
	GUIDANC CONTRACTED SERVICES	(3,000)
		(52,450)
TECHNOLOGY	EQUIPMENT	(50,000)
PLANT OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE	ELECTRICITY - NEW LOWER PRICE LOCKED IN	(278,000)
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES	CONTRACT NEGOTIATION & SERVICE MODIFICATIONS	(180,256)
OTHER REDUCTIONS SUBTOTAL		(560,706)
TOTAL REDUCTIONS		(866,667)

\* AMOUNTS FOR POSITIONS CUT/DECREASED INCLUDE THE RELATED BENEFITS

AH-C

**Newtown Board of Education**  
31 Pecks Lane  
Newtown, CT 06470

June 10, 2009

Mr. John Kortze, Chair  
Board of Finance  
52 Cobblers Mill Road  
Sandy Hook, CT 06482

Dear John:

I am delighted that Mike Portnoy will be the liaison and observer from the Board of Finance for the teacher contract negotiations as he has been very helpful in the past. However, under the advice of our attorney, only one representative from the Board of Finance and Legislative Council should be present during the negotiations.

Regarding your request for an itemized list of our budget reductions, the Superintendent is aware of your request but unfortunately this week the person who would prepare that document is out of the office. Dr. Robinson will respond with that information as soon as possible.

Thank you for your patience.

Sincerely,



Elaine McClure  
Chair



Att-D

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**NEWTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
31 PECKS LANE  
NEWTOWN, CT 06470

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT  
(203) 426-7620  
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BUSINESS OFFICE  
(203) 426-7618  
FAX (203) 426-2368

June 10, 2009

Mr. John Kortze, Chair  
Board of Finance  
52 Cobblers Mill Road  
Sandy Hook, CT 06482

Dear John:

The Board of Education would like to have a joint meeting with the Legislative Council and Board of Finance for their financial input regarding the upcoming teacher contract negotiations. This special meeting will be held in executive session on Wednesday, June 17, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. in the C.H. Booth Library.

Thank you for your consideration on this matter.

Sincerely,

Janet Robinson, Ph.D.  
Superintendent

cc: W. Rodgers

Att. E

Number 09-56

June 19, 2009



# Legislative Update



THE VOICE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

RECEIVED

JUN 22 2009

OFFICE OF THE FIRST SELECTMAN

PLEASE DELIVER IMMEDIATELY TO ALL CCM-MEMBER MAYORS, FIRST SELECTMEN, AND TOWN/CITY MANAGERS

## General Assembly Passes CCM Legislation To Allow Municipalities To Re-Open Budgets To Account For ARRA Education Funds

The General Assembly today, in Special Session, passed legislation sponsored by CCM to allow municipalities to reduce their adopted budgeted appropriations up to the amount of funding boards of education will receive directly from the stabilization portion of the federal stimulus act (ARRA).

The legislation is found in Section 19 of HB 6901. It reads:

For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2010, notwithstanding any provision of the general statutes or any special act, municipal charter, home rule ordinance or other ordinance, the board of finance in each town having a board of finance, the board of selectmen in each town having no board of finance or the authority making appropriations for the school district for each town may reduce its budgeted appropriation to the local or regional board of education by an amount up to the limit of funds received directly by such board from the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund pursuant to Title XIV of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, P.L. 111-5, for such fiscal year, provided that upon passage of the municipal budget prior to June 30, 2009, such board of finance or such authority making appropriations for the school district for each town failed to account for the direct provision of such fiscal stabilization funds to such local or regional boards of education.

The bill, which contained several education-related matters, passed the House 127-1 and the Senate 35-0. House Deputy Speaker Emil "Buddy" Altobello and Senate Education Committee Chairman Tom Gaffey shepherded the bill through their respective chambers. It was immediately transmitted to the Governor.

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For more information, please contact Jim Finley ([jfinley@ccm-ct.org](mailto:jfinley@ccm-ct.org)) or Gian-Carl Casa ([gcasa@ccm-ct.org](mailto:gcasa@ccm-ct.org)) of CCM, or (203) 498-3000.

For the most up-to-date news on legislative issues affecting municipalities ---  
see CCM's *Legislative Action Center* at [www.ccmlac.org](http://www.ccmlac.org)