

**TOWN OF NEWTOWN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2014
NEWTOWN MUNICIPAL CENTER, NEWTOWN, CT**

PRESENT: MaryAnn Jacob, Lisa Romano (left at 8:45), Joe Girgasky, Paul Lundquist, Neil Chaudhary, Tony Filiato, Bob Merola Ryan Knapp, Dan Amaral (arrived 7:10) Phil Carroll (arrived 7:15).

ABSENT: George Ferguson, Dan Honan.

ALSO PRESENT: First Selectman Pat Llodra, Board of Education members Debbie Leidlein, Laura Roche, Kathy Hamilton, Michelle Ku, John Vouros, Keith Alexander, and David Freedman, Board of Finance members John Kortze, Joseph Kearney, James Filan, Harry Waterbury, John Godin, and Michael Portnoy, Superintendent John Reed, Assistant Superintendent Linda Gejda, Director of Technology Carmella Amodeo, Director of Facilities Gino Faiella, Finance Director Bob Tait, Director of Security Mark Pompano, Attorney David Grogins, 9 members of the public, 2 Press.

Ms. Jacob called the Legislative Council meeting to order at 7:10 pm.

VOTER PARTICIPATION: Karen Holden, Berkshire Rd., spoke on Newtown teacher salaries compared to DRG B, declining enrollment at the high school. She asked high school class size be maintained and to give the Superintendent time to review enrollment, class scheduling, graduation requirements, and the teacher evaluation process. Security is needed for the long term. She suggested the Superintendent and school Business Director be included at Board of Finance meetings.

COMMUNICATIONS: Mr. Kortze reported the BOF continues to receive emails from the public. He received a letter from Ms. Jacob regarding the upcoming Charter Revision asking for input from the Finance Board.

NEW BUSINESS

ENROLLMENT: Mr. Kortze asked Dr. Reed and Mrs. Leidlein to speak to the enrollment study and strategic plan and the calendar for completion. Mrs. Leidlein said the BOE is looking to have an enrollment study completed November 1, 2014 and a comprehensive strategic plan completed March 15, 2015. Looking to solidify the consultants for both studies by May 1 and contracts complete May 15. Part of the strategic plan will be looking at facilities, to identify the needs of the school system, prioritize them and establish plans for meeting those needs. The population report will help in determining space needs.

Mr. Kortze asked if the BOE is going to redo the space needs. Mrs. Leidlein said yes with the help of the consultant.

Mr. Kortze asked if the study would be in concert with the towns space needs. Mrs. Llodra said they haven't decided how to integrate the Municipal space needs study with the schools, but they will.

Dr. Reed thinks the challenge isn't just talking about space; there are variables that must be considered. His thoughts on the enrollment study. ATTACHMENT1 Technology; need to determine the direction, will technology go into the classrooms or will significant space be needed outside of the classroom.

Special Ed; will outplaced students be brought back to town. What programs can we do locally, what is in the best interest of students, and what is cost effective. SERV grants; currently we don't have guidance counselors in elementary schools, thinks it should be considered. Alternative high school; past 3 attempts have not worked well. One reason is they did not have appropriate space.

Dr. Reed noted other districts have sold school buildings and then regretted it.

Dr. Reeds would like to see a consultant that will work with the BOE as much as the town, and with some experience in schools. Declining enrollment is not going away.

Mr. Llodra said in this complicated and layered process, the first step for the BOE is to determine their space needs. What is the highest and best use for municipal buildings? Which should be repurposed and in what way. Need to give the BOE time to answer their questions before the town can decide on their needs. We have a plethora of buildings, not all are in great shape. Should we sell or lease. Need good consultative work and voices of the community. Last study done in 1999.

Joe Kearney asked if strategic plan begins in May, what will we do for 6 months while we wait to find out how many students we have, should we move up the enrollment study? Dr. Reed thinks we should not. Doesn't think we know all the impact 12/14 has had on in/out migration of Newtown. Thinks we need the spring and summer for one more opportunity to gauge in/out of students. The consultant can look at many variables that impact move and growth and will be ready on November 1. He doesn't think any changes should be made before 2016 when Sandy Hook School open. We will have the information this year and will have a year to plan implementation.

Ms. Jacob agrees the shooting has impacted peoples decisions to leave, stay or move into town, and believes it will continue for years. The consultant should recognize and weigh that information. Ms. Jacob said it makes sense to make changes with the opening of Sandy Hook School. Need to aggressively address staffing issues.

Dr. Reed thinks because the tragedy was at an elementary school is significantly different from other shootings. He agrees it will continue; the question is will it moderate. He thinks it has a lot to do with how Newtown represents itself.

Ms. Romano said Ms. Jacob thinks (the tragedy) will affect us for a long time. But Ms. Romano believes it will diminish once Sandy Hook School opens, a brand new state of the art school. She predicts enrollment will go down until the school opens then it could spike. There is no way of knowing unless we study it. Ms. Romano asked if there is a way to ask people in town if they are putting their kids in private schools and if they will bring them back at some point, it the only way to know. And ask people why they are leaving town.

Dr. Reed said we do have some info on kids who are now in private schools. We could send out a questionnaire, but some people could be uncomfortable being questioned. Thinks the distance to Monroe has made a difference, once school is back in town it will be more convenient.

Mr. Kortze asked if the BOE and town are planning on using same consultant. Mrs. Llodra said probably not. She is looking for an architect engineering firm. Mr. Kortze asked if the BOE is redoing the same process as a couple years ago. Dr. Reed said we need a master facilitator. Not just about space needs, it is about educational programing. We have had a large administrative turnover. Before starting a comprehensive process, need the superintendent in place and time for him to assemble his team.

Mr. Knapp asked if before 12/14 we saw declining enrollment. Mr. Kortze said yes we have been having this conversation for a while. Enrollment was declining twice as fast as other districts prior to 12/14.

Mr. Knapp believes there are other factors. Newtown is a commuter town and with rising fuel costs, increased traffic and no connection to MTA, many people think Newtown is no longer feasible for commuting.

Mr. Kortze met with board of realtors and they continue to highlight the school district as major attractor to town. The demographics of Sandy Hook are attractive to young families. They said there is an equilibrium that has been reached and taxes have become a tipping point. You can live in Southbury or Brookfield for equivalent school system and pay less in taxes and that accounts for some decline.

Mr. Kortze asked Dr. Reed how incoming Kindergarten enrollment is determined.

Dr. Reed said they use an analysis of the last 5 years and knowledge of the birthrates.

Mr. Kortze asked if they can track predicted verses actual enrollment.

Dr. Reed said he has no particular insight into kindergarten. It will be interesting to see what 2nd year of FDK will look like. Deciding late on FDK could have made a difference. We are going to be managing our way through a declining enrollment every month. Every time there is a resignation, will look at it as an opportunity to reevaluate and won't post a job without looking forward to see if it needs to be filled. If we don't get the kids we think we will, a decision will be made in the summer on changes. Jobs won't be filled.

Mr. Kortze asked if the Board of Ed has addressed enrollment up to this point. Dr. Reed said it continues to be addressed. Eighteen positions have been eliminated, but there could be more.

Mr. Merola reviewed the high school enrollment numbers since 05-06. He noted in the past, the budget was based on the middle enrollment projections. The high school addition was based on the high projection of 2022 high school students in 2014-2015. From the budget book, in 2006-2007 there were 1714 students and 103.85 teachers. This fall there were 1717 students and 118.17 teachers. He contends the high school is overstaffed. He noted the tremendous drop in house starts. Mr. Merola took fall start numbers and moved them from grade to grade. We have plateaued at the high school and will soon begin to decline. The Middle School class of 500, that was a driver for the high school addition, started high school with 464 and graduated with 436 students. Mr. Merola said using the high projections cost the taxpayers a lot of money. He asked that the district look at staffing at the high school.

Dr. Reed said they have begun to look at it. ATTACHMENT 2 From the state website, they compared to Newtown high school to similar schools, Farmington, Avon, and Simsbury. Two have larger class sizes, one has smaller. Dr. Reed said he has nothing to gain by not looking at staffing. In the US we have the American Comprehensive High School. We have programs to appeal to broad spectrum of students. The budget is a collection of values. Students have a right to have what is found in other school districts. Class sizes vary. Some have doubled up; there are classes where multiple courses are being taught to have enough students.

Ms. Jacob disagrees with Mr. Merola on the high school addition, but agrees with looking staffing. She does not believe the high school can be everything to every student. Decisions need to be made on the breadth of courses offered.

Mrs. Gejda said we are competitive in terms of numbers with similar districts in our DRG. Attachment 2

Dr. Reed said Farmington and Simsbury are not near the top of per pupil expenditures, they are frugal districts. They are similar demographics.

Mrs. Leidlein said the average number of courses students are taking has grown. For class of 2011, a

science and an elective credit were added as graduation requirement. Science classes are a maximum of 24, based on state recommendations and safety. For the class of 2018, a world language credit was added but is a non-budget issue as most students already have 2 world language credits.

Mr. Kortze said the issue of credits keeps coming up as reason for additional staffing. Is it realistic to say most students were already taking the credits needed prior to the new requirements?

Mrs. Leidlein said yes that is why some new credits will not affect the budget.

Dr. Reed said the students are in class more, there is more necessary teacher time. NEASC recommended we broaden our offerings and in some classes we had too many students. He does not see any reason to generalize the high school is overstaffed.

Mrs. Gejda reviewed the chart on Average Academic Courses Scheduled per Student, per year.

Attachment 2 She noted this is for English, Math, Science, Social Studies and Language and does not include electives.

Dr. Reed said many schools have science classes that meet 5 times. In Newtown they meet 6 periods with double labs, this increases teacher time.

Ms. Jacob clarified her concern is historically we have not scrutinized the high school the way elementary schools have been. Would like to see the data on the number of credits students have been graduating with and compare it to the credits required including the years before the requirements were increased.

Mrs. Gejda said we need to consider value piece. A larger number of students are taking AP courses.

Ms. Jacob agreed, but some basic questions are not being answered.

Dr. Reed doesn't think the increased requirements are being used as major driver for why there is more staff. It is course offering, reduced class sizes and students taking more courses. He doesn't agree the elementary schools are taking the brunt of anything; it is where the decline in enrollment was. Reserve judgment until the enrollment decline hits the high school. Elementary staff has declined by 19 from last year, this year and next year, due to enrollment.

Ms. Jacob said the data in this budget cycle is the best work the administration and BOE have ever done. She is talking about historical perspective over the long term.

Dr. Reed said they will ask appropriate questions and get appropriate answers. They will look at all the buildings. We are an effective district.

Mr. Kortze noted he has been saying we are an effective district. For per pupil expenditures, we get a good value for the dollar.

Dr. Reed asked can we be more effective and efficient. What organization can't?

Mr. Portnoy thinks some frustration has built up over a number of years and is pleased they are moving forward with the enrollment study and taking a hard look at things. He agreed with Mr. Merola on the high school addition.

Mr. Waterbury asked Dr. Reed if he has shared this info with new superintendent and is he and the BOE on board?

Dr. Reed said yes. The BOE goals articulate the importance of the enrollment study and the strategic plan. He has discussed the issues with Mrs. Llodra. He won't speak for Dr. Erardi, but he seems to be a thorough, competent person. He is articulate and interested in people. We need stability in the Superintendent. Dr. Erardi wasn't out applying for jobs, the consultant knocked on his door. He thought long and hard before applying.

Mr. Waterbury noted questions have been asked for a long time, are never answered and recycled the next year. Based on the presentation tonight, the questions are beginning to be answered.

Dr. Reed thinks it is a good idea for the Superintendent and business director to regularly meet with the Board of Finance to have discussions and ask questions.

Mr. Lundquist asked if the date of November for the enrollment study is something the BOE has already discussed. Can the study be accelerated?

Dr. Reed said the study is part of BOE goals and he thinks Dr. Erardi will be leading this study. He needs to become acquainted with staff and boards before attacking this study. This is a very comprehensive study. This is a fair timetable.

SECURITY:

Mrs. Llodra said the challenge has been finding a model that meets the needs of Newtown. What is right and best for Newtown and where the funding sources are; a model that commits the entire community to safe schools. They have come up with a model that best represents the commitment to each other, the share of the cost, and structure to compel an approach going forward. We have grant support this year, but how would it be represented in the budget without grants. They wanted to position it in the budget, even with grant support, so that it is real. Concept is two frameworks. One is security guard; the other is school security officers (SSO's). (Unarmed) Security guards and Director of Security continue to be school employees. Their roll is decided by administration under the supervision of the director of security. The number of security guards was increased after 12/14. How do we manage armed personal in schools? A short term decision made after 12/14 to use contingency to pay for overtime for police. Believe the best model is School Safety Officers (SSO). The state legislature created a different police position, an armed school based officer, a specialist in school culture. Retired police officers only are eligible for the position. There are certification requirements for them to maintain the positions. They are trained by state police. Recommendation is the SSO's be in the municipal budget. Have not clarified yet what the agreement will be regarding the partnership between town and district so there is clarity as to supervision, accountability, and who is in charge of SSO's while in the school building. An MOU was written for SRO's in schools. Need to develop one for the SSO's. Mrs. Llodra reviewed school security staffing for the 2014-2015 budget. School resource officers and youth officer have been in the budget for years. ATTACHEMENT 3

Mr. Tait spoke to the budget numbers for security. He is recommending putting the full cost of the 9 SSO's in the Selectman's budget and then offset it in general fund revenues with the grants received. You will see the amount in the general fund revenues disappear eventually. Hopes the amount will be replaced by grand list growth.

Mrs. Llodra said there is no impact this year due to grants that cover entire package. Include costs in budget now to show how accounted for. There will be no effect on taxes. Grants listed are amounts for security.

Ms. Jacob asked if the reimbursements will be in next year's budget. Mr. Tait said yes. Ms. Jacob said we will have \$851,000 in the "bank" for security and next year will be spending roughly \$279,000. Mr. Tait said the 2014-2015 numbers are grant applications. Ms. Jacob asked if additional revenue be carried forward to offset future security costs. Mr. Tait said yes.

Dr. Reed said security is not limited to personnel. They are anticipating almost \$700,000 for building

hardening. He noted Monroe is responsible for security at Sandy Hook School (Chalk Hill) and they need to be comfortable with what we do with security next year. Sandy Hook School continues to have an increased number of people wanting to visit. That is the reason for continuing with 2 armed guards. If we are going to lock the buildings during school hours, we need to carry over to afterschool hours when students are there for other activities like Parks & Rec. Some kind of fee structure is needed so BOE is not subsidizing. The reason for 9 SSO's is the availability to move one SSO if someone is sick etc.

Mr. Kearney asked who the SSO's would report to, who is responsible for them. Mrs. Llodra said the details have not been completed. The SSO's would be town employees under Pat's jurisdiction. The hiring process would be a collaboration including Chief Kehoe and Dr. Erardi.

Dr. Reed noted this is a profound example of town/school collaboration. The model was developed to save money. This is a very attractive job for retired policemen. Everyone will apply new to carry a gun. There will be a screening process. Enfield conducted a sophisticated testing with defined physical requirements. Our director of security is a retired police officer.

Mrs. Llodra said there were considerable conversations with Chief Kehoe about this approach and he is in concert with decision. The Chief is very confident he will be able to work in a collaborative way with district and identify the right people.

Mr. Kortze asked if there is a cost to training. Mrs. Llodra said training is included.

Mr. Portnoy asked why both armed and unarmed guards in the same school. Are there different duties?

Mrs. Llodra said yes they have different responsibilities.

Dr. Reed said there are duties security can do without being armed. You can be in contact with students in different ways. You wouldn't necessarily want an armed person breaking up a fight between students. Buzzing people into a building and cameras on outside of schools, someone needs to monitor and they don't need to be armed.

Mr. Portnoy asked if the Director of Security is the director of Board of Ed personnel only. Mrs. Llodra said yes.

Dr. Reed said the trend for monitors, they have interactive technology to call attention to the screen when then there is something out of the ordinary.

Mr. Amaral asked if custodians can be trained as security. Dr. Reed said no, but all schools do have emergency response teams receiving unique training.

Mrs. Ku asked about the cost associated with hiring of personal with background checks, physicals etc.

Mrs. Llodra said it is part of the normal hiring protocol and would be absorbed.

Mr. Freedman would like a team to develop a long term plan for security staffing including the financial implications.

Mrs. Llodra said she is an advocate for long term plans. There are many elements of security and need to review them each year. What do we need in personnel, building hardening, and technology to be sure we have a safe school system, involving people from all of our agencies. We do not want security to be at risk if a budget fails.

Ms. Hamilton said we currently have support from Monroe for one officer in the school driveway and one in the school. What is their future involvement? Mrs. Llodra said they will be meeting on March 26th about our plan. Monroe will likely continue to commit to have an officer in driveway as it serves multiple facilities there. Mrs. Llodra and Dr. Reed have talked about concept of SSO's with Monroe counterparts, and they are very interested. Ms. Hamilton asked if the SSO's plan was run by the ad hoc

security group. Mrs. Llodra said the security group has discussed SSO's many times, but the distribution of resources is not a security group decision. Dr. Reed said the group voted in favor of the concept. It is important to come up with a comprehensive agreement that is a framework for common sense, the BOE and Police Dept. working together. If either party determines a person is not appropriate, the person will be terminated, with cause.

Ms. Jacob likes the model. She believes, especially at SHS, SSO's should be tightly tied to the Police Dept. on a day to day basis in the event there was anything they needed to respond to. There are ongoing daily incidents that current officers know how to deal with. Mrs. Llodra said that is part of the discussion they will be having with Monroe and they will be very helpful in describing the role of SSO's at SHS (Chalk Hill). It is likely the SSO's will under the jurisdiction of Monroe Police Dept. and Monroe Superintendent of schools. Ms. Jacob asked if we will pay for those officers. Mrs. Llodra said grants for the Monroe police ended in 12/2013 and we now pay for them. Ms. Jacob clarified the officer in the driveway will be paid by Monroe.

Mrs. Llodra said she will present this plan at the Board of Selectman meeting. The BOS will have to motion to add this to the BOS budget.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:35pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carey Schierloh
Recording Secretary

Attachment 1: Dr. Reeds Comments on Enrollment Forecasting and Technology

Attachment 2: Board of Ed Enrollment Presentation

Attachment 3: 2014-2015 School Security Staffing

These are draft minutes and as such are subject to correction by the Legislative Council at the next regular meeting. All corrections will be determined in minutes of the meeting at which they were corrected.

Communication to BOF Regarding Plans for Enrollment Forecasting and Technology

Both the Newtown Coherence Plan and the Board of Education goal statements which are part of the 2014-2015 budget have addressed the Board of Education's commitment to an enrollment study to be completed by November 1, 2014 and a comprehensive strategic plan which will be completed by March 15, 2015. It is likely that the firm of Milone and MacBroom will be selected to do the enrollment forecast. The study they recently completed last year in Ridgefield has been reviewed by the superintendent of schools and found to be very comprehensive. In conversations with Ridgefield's Superintendent of Schools Deborah Low, they felt that this firm was a very worthy successor to Dr. Chung, who has retired. It is planned that the arrangements with the consultant will be completed on or before May 1st with the contract finalized by May 15th so the firm may begin the collection of data that will be an important part of their analysis. They will include enrollment data from the end of the second full week of school next September rather than waiting for the October 1st data.

Another reason for choosing the same firm that has done Ridgefield's study is to gain some type of an insight which would help us understand why that district's enrollment is only down four students for this school year and Newtown's is down 248. It is understood that enrollment forecasting for the next five years tend to be a relatively straightforward job to do. The birth rate is known and you have established a historical pattern of in-and-out migration of residents. The forecast beyond five years in Newtown's case will be very important because it will be used to make decisions about future space needs involving some speculation. This is particularly true because Newtown is dealing with the variable of the tragedy at Sandy Hook School for which there is little in the way of precedents for enrollment forecasters to model the impact of this terrible event upon both short term (1 to 5 years) and long term (6 to 15 years) population change.

The consultant for the strategic plan will also be selected and hired by May 15th of this year. The purpose of a strategic plan is to identify the needs of the school system, prioritize them and establish plans for addressing those needs. One of the needs that will be addressed within the strategic plan is the study and identification of future space needs for the Newtown School System. Having the population projections completed will provide valuable assistance to this task.

- In identifying future space needs, many variables will be assessed including the evolving role of technology related to the use of computer labs using a full classroom versus utilization of technology within the individual classrooms.

- Special education will also be addressed to determine if there are programmatic needs i.e. will we establish programs to bring back some of our tuition students that are currently outplaced. If so, what will be the space requirements?
- What will happen after the SERV Grant ends? What will be the transition plan to go from this valuable resource to continue necessary services and what will be the space requirements?
- What cooperative ventures will there be with the town in the future which would have space implications for the school system. One obvious example would be for the school system's facilities and maintenance department to take over some of the responsibilities for the Town of Newtown which would require an expansion of staff and additional room for inventory and equipment.
- Is there a need for an alternative educational program for students at the high school level? This programmatic change, with some very limited efforts, has been made over the last 20 years. In most cases, the limitation of space had a significant negative impact on these efforts. Some models used in school systems place such programs in a separate location from the high school for all or a part of the school day.
- Is there a need to follow the Monroe model of using classroom space to develop a daycare program for the employees of the Board of Education and the Town of Newtown? This is a particular interest to the school system because a significant number of our employees are impacted by daycare needs. The operational costs are covered by fees paid by the users.
- Another question to be asked about the long term space needs pertains to the Municipal Building. Will there be a need for the Board of Education to relocate to available space within a school in order to provide space for the Town functions such as Parks and Rec, social services and possible expansion of selected Town functions should Newtown's population grow to 33,000?
- As a part of the study of future needs there will also be the investigation of the cost impact if grade level configurations were changed and students would attend a different school. Among the variables which would be considered are transportation costs, possible efficiencies in staffing, and what, if any, physical modifications would need to be made to a specific school, i.e. if it is to accommodate educational functions for what it was not designed.

The Board of Education shall have a clear understanding of what it considers to be legitimate and appropriate space needs for the school system before it can participate in discussions about the options that are available to deal with space in a school or schools determined to be available for other uses. The Board of Education understands that the Town of Newtown owns the school buildings as well as its important role of defining the needs of the school system at subsequent discussions when options available for possible space utilizations will each be comprehensively studied prior to a final decision being reached.

An important part of this dialog will be whether available space will be leased to produce revenue for the Town, sold, or used by the Town of Newtown for other needs. If the answer is the space will be used by the Town of Newtown for other needs, a clear understanding should be reached as to whether this is a permanent decision or the plan contains the possibility that the building can revert to use as a school at some future time.

Once the ultimate decisions are made, it is a likely that redistricting will be necessary for some students. It is important when addressing redistricting that it be well-planned and done infrequently during a student's elementary career. Planning for the impact of possible redistribution of staff, as well as parent and student orientation to possible changes, will be a part of the strategic plan. Throughout the process of strategic planning, it is the intention of the Board of Education to initiate a process that helps maximize public involvement which is very necessary because of the high stakes decisions within the strategic plan and the resulting action which will be undertaken to implement the structured changes deemed necessary for the school system.

