

**Litchfield Board of Finance
Special Meeting Minutes
March 17, 2014**

Call to Order: Vice Chairman David Wilson called the meeting to order in the LIS Art Room at 7:03pm with Ed Gadomski, Mitchell Fishman, Brenda Barnes, Ed Weik, (Alt.), and Sky Post (Alt.) present.

Absent: David Geiger

Late: Anne Dranginis

Also present were Frank Simone and Jason Lathrop.

Appointment of Alternates:

Vice Chairman Wilson appointed Sky Post a full voting member for David Geiger and appointed Ed Weik a full voting member pending Anne Dranginis' arrival.

Proposed BOE Budget Presentation:

Jason Lathrop and Frank Simone presented the BOE total proposed budget for 2014-2015 of \$16,600,641 with \$742,096 in new dollars which represents a 4.68% percentage increase as compared to last year's 1.32% percentage increase in the adopted budget.

Priorities included \$68,000 in new financing to lease equipment to expand capacity for using technology to deliver and access the curriculum; to increase support for struggling students including expanding the Pre-K program and by adding two FTEs (Pre-K teacher and a School Social Worker for in-district counseling); continue regional collaboration and maintain reasonable class size through enrolment-based reductions.

One of the areas of significant savings was a \$10,600 utilities savings through the use of LP Gas and two areas of greatest increase were Health/Benefits (\$278,455) and Technology (\$91,000). Food services costs will rise by \$45,000 since Education Connection no longer provides school meals and transportation contractual costs will rise by \$67,000.

A \$60,000 item for security cameras and phones is in the town's capital budget and the BOE continues discussion with the town concerning responsibility for operating expenses.

In a breakdown of Discretionary vs. Required Increases for the 2014-2015 budget increase, \$548,722 is identified as "required" and \$193,374 is identified as "discretionary."

BOF Discussion on Proposed BOE Budget:

Questions and comments from BOF members included: the rationale for the Pre-K class expanding from one class to two and whether this program could be delayed, whether Litchfield received state funds for computers to be used for Common Core, progress on regionalization, unpredictability of the line item for substitutes, increased costs for food service, whether the schools are subsidizing lunches and whether sandwiches could be served in lieu of hot meals, what constitutes the \$173,500 listed for technology maintenance costs, the necessity for computer labs, manageability of the rising

medical costs, annual increases in teachers' contracts and educational reimbursement for degrees, breakdown in regular transportation costs increase, the need for four principals in three schools, whether coaches for the sports program would be eliminated, and whether the 4.68% increase was absolutely necessary since the BOE traditionally has had a much lower proposed increase and then returned unspent funds.

Vice Chairman Wilson said the BOF is charged with deciding what is best for the school system, the taxpayers and the students. Following the results of the public budget hearing on April 23, the BOF will take that feedback into consideration before voting on the BOE proposed budget. He noted that Chairman David Geiger had expressed his opinion that the BOE proposed budget was too high.

Anne Dranginis left the meeting at 8:20pm.

Motion: Ed Weik moved that the BOE consider where they might make cuts in their budget and that the proposed BOE 2014-2015 budget be sent to a town budget hearing to be held on April 23 so that comments from town residents can help the BOF determine if the proposal should be reduced prior to a town budget meeting on May 7. Brenda Barnes seconded the motion. All voted aye and the motion carried.

Adjournment:

Motion: Ed Weik moved to adjourn at 8:50pm and Mitchell Fishman seconded the motion. All voted aye and the motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Jo Ann Jaacks
Recording Secretary

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