

**TRUMBULL BOARD OF FINANCE
BUSINESS EDUCATION INITIATIVE
BOARD OF EDUCATION
BUDGET HEARING
February 16, 2011**

**Business Education Initiative
Edward Lovely**

page 284 BOF Book

Presenting the portion of the Business Education Initiative which includes the Business Ed Initiative and the Trumbull Educational channel; charter channel 17 and ATT U-verse channel 99. There are actually 4 parts to this budget:

- Business Education Initiative
- Utilities – set through the Director of Finance.
- \$20,000 – For the Trumbull Educational channel. This represents the payment for videographers covering events; i.e. Town Elections. We currently have 10 part time individuals taping 11 Boards and Committees, as well as live sporting events, live town elections, etc.
- \$10,000 - Capital expenditure for improving the sound quality at the Town Council Chambers, in addition to installing a permanent projector and screen. Trying to find a grant and trying to get funding from our 2 cable providers. Recently learned that funds can only come through Charter. Waiting to see if we can get funds from Charter for operating our station. Also, the DPUC has grant money available. There 3 state legislatures in sync with us getting this grant money and if the grant is approved this line item will be eliminated. WE have a >50% chance of getting these funds. We will then receive the permanent camera in the Long Hill Room; speakers, projector and screen in the Town Council Chambers. 2002 was the last time we received funds for capital expenditures.

Mallard Trust – Initially we thought we might be able to obtain funds; however, after speaking with Dan Nelson this is not an option.

Issue: Is there is a maintenance cost involved and variable costs for film?

Response: The studio is under the BOE; pays ½ of studio director other ½ goes for the operation of the station; tapes are purchased by the BOE. No maintenance costs in this budget.

Issue: Has anyone approached ATT and/or Charter for any type of investment?

Response: Charter put in the original equipment; that was their initial investment. Charter never gave us any funds. Each company is supposed to be paying into a fund per resident per customer so much money. Charter took that money and decided to operate its internship in Newton and establish a studio out of a truck. We thought we were going to get this customer fee. We received it once and then it stopped. We learned that all this money goes to Charter. We are going to try to motivate and encourage Charter to give us this money, but they don't have to.

Issue: Would they then have to give us a government channel?

Response: I do not believe so based on the precedence they set when they installed the system.

Issue: What do you currently lack?

Response: Ability to have a program writer. We would like to have someone to write a script and we are expending very little money editing a program. We could offer more variety. Also would like equipment to improve sound. We have not been able to find an intern despite our best efforts contacting the local universities. We have a local woman who retired from a major network that we are talking to about becoming script writer.

**Board of Education
Edward Lovely**

We have a high quality school system:

- 93% of our Trumbull High School graduates, class of 2010, are attending higher education institutions.
- 73 acceptances at competitive colleges
- 358 acceptances at very competitive colleges
- SAT Reasoning Test was administered to 445 members of class of 2010. This represents 88% of the class compared to 84% of graduates in Connecticut and 47% in the nation.
- The class scores in Critical Reading, Mathematics and Writing were all higher than those for the State and the nation.
- The mean score for math increased by 15 points from 529 to 543 compared to 516 nationally and 514 in Connecticut.
- The passing scores for the Advanced Placement test are 3-4-5. The district with the highest percentage of passing in the state – 1st Ridgefield, followed by Darien, New Canaan and Trumbull in that order. Almost 91% of our students scored 3 or better on the Advanced Placement test.
- All of our CAPT scores have improved. The 2010 scores from Trumbull HS were the highest in 5 years.
- The CMT middle school test results were very good; all scores in 80-90% range.
- Math scores for the K-5 CMT were strong; grade 5 scores were the highest in our DRG (District Reference Group).

It is our intention to keep a strong focus on improving student achievement at all levels and in all areas of the curriculum.

The superintendent requested a 5.77% budget increase over last year. 3.6% of this increase is for the following:

- Funding cliff 1.96%
- Increase in insurance 1.39%
- Transportation costs .25%

This request was reduced to 5.38% with the FS suggesting it be reduced further to 2.375%

Concerns:

- Safety – special education students require bus aides; 2 of these positions are mandated by the state; maintenance of building and grounds; security; safe transportation.
- Education – curriculum; class size; professional development; books; technology
- Prudent use of resources

Areas to note:

Pointing out these items to highlight the vital educational tools – teaching supplies, textbooks, workbooks, testing materials that have been significantly reduced in the last 3 years. We can no longer continue to ignore professional development; textbooks and supplies

- Section 3 page 6 – BOE Book
Code 320 – Professional Development has been decreased 49%
- Section 6 page15
Energy Costs have increased especially now that we have increased the square footage of Trumbull HS

- Section 6 page 16
Operational Accounts
- Section 6 page 16
Project planning; projects have been scaled back
- Section 6 page 17
Building Improvements included to be funded this year \$161,000.
- Section 3 page 7
Code 640 – Textbooks and workbooks reduced 100%. Used last year's ECS funds.
- Section 3 page 7
Code 650 - Testing materials - 66.54% reduction
- Section 3 page 8
Code 660 – Software request reduced by 100%; used ECS funds
- Section 3 page 7
Code 610 - Teaching supplies reduced by 24% - hard to do things in the elementary schools without supplies and they really try to conserve what they do have. Used ECS funds this past year to partially makeup the loss.
- Section 6 page 4
Professional Development

The State of Connecticut mandates that each school district provide, in a 5 year period, 90 hours of Professional Development for each staff member.

Implementation of the 5th grade math curriculum. This curriculum has already been written and the books have been pre-purchased and have been piloted by some teachers this year. Professional development will be needed all of next year so that grade 5 teachers can use the materials consistently to achieve consistent results. Without this training, student achievement will most likely not be favorable. We will not be able to meet state curriculum requirements and students will not be ready for new state testing which will negatively impact their scores.

NEASC – visiting in 2013 for 3 or 4 days and if we do not meet standards, our schools would not be looked upon favorably by some colleges, with some colleges not accepting students from THS

Based upon the state mandates for CMT and CPT scores, if a student or group fails to meet the mandate for 2 consecutive years, students fall further behind in their learning and the district needs to hire state of Connecticut approved tutors to be paid for by the school district. Pay now to keep students from falling behind or pay later after they fall behind. Cannot place a dollar value on what this could cost the school system.

- Section 6 page 12
Technology
60 % of our computers are out of date; problems running up to date software on these machines.
- Personnel increases kept to a minimum

- Section 2 page 2
These are the various steps we have taken and efforts made to reduce costs, which include:
 - In house programs for special education students; eliminating need to send to a different school district
 - Increasing the number of paraprofessionals
 - Increasing team teaching

- Section 6 page 10
Transportation
 - Tremendous increase in bus riders due to new teen driving laws
 - Addressed situation through shuttle bus routing; did not buy a new bus

- Section 2 page 5
Further Relevant Information
 - \$177,282 - for the Federal Jobs program which will fund our TAG teachers. This amount can become a funding cliff for next year
 - Teacher turn over account - 8 teachers will retire this year for a net savings \$296,000
 - Increased participate
 - Raised pay to participate fees
 - Our per pupil cost when compared to 11 districts is in the middle
 - Must provide funds to cover in school suspension (state mandated)

**Board of Education
Ralph lassogna**

The Board of Education has made every attempt to be thorough, accountable, and transparent in dealing with any topic. The more information we can disseminate to the parents, the better off the school system will be. Section 2 outlines what efficiencies that we have achieved. We earmarked funds for TAG program. Pay to participate has increased again.

Even if we increase the band pay to play to \$500 we cannot make that revenue neutral. We have several programs that do not breakeven. We do give out scholarships for those that can't afford to pay. We are short \$60,000 to \$70,000 each year.

Of the 17 schools in Fairfield County that we are really compared with, we are in the lowest quadrant at 13. We are striving for the best because we have a phenomenal staff, from the administration to the custodians.

We are willing to pursue and stand by any avenue to cut the budget; we are open and receptive; we have 7,000 children to consider.

Issue:

I need to understand with some specificity what reductions of certain percentages in the budget would mean and how does it affect class size?

Response:

- You should a good feel for these answers February 28
- Anything less than 4.58% will result in a reduction in staff – across the Board; teaching, secretarial, custodial.
- Under 3%, large scale staff reductions such as double digit teaching positions.

Issue:

Several years ago, scores were not going up and now they are increasing despite the lean budgets. Can we get another lean year or is it too late and it will catch up with us?

Response:

- There was a time when our budget was lean and it did not allow us to compete with other towns and it took us years to recover
- Increased budget funding in the past years enabled us to start competing with our colleagues in other towns because we had everything in place and we were able to meet new mandates.
- The needs of children have changed dramatically, both socially and academically (i.e. bullying)
- It has taken a number of years to roll out the Math curriculum making it consistent throughout the town so that all schools are on the same page.
- Staff development was provided as we rolled out curriculum for each grade level.

- Teachers meet with specialists to address issues of falling performance. The same goes on in the areas of reading and writing. Without these specialists we would not have this support and we would not be in the place we are now, which has taken years to achieve. To cutback in those areas would be very detrimental.
- Math and reading specialists also teach the children; teachers and children are learning from the specialists.
- Sets the ground work for our children to achieve the high scores on the next levels.
- Our AYP is currently 100% proficient for all schools; the bar is being raised to the point that based upon our scores from last year we are hovering close to not making AYP.
- Unfunded mandates regarding students with disabilities and economically disadvantaged students have placed us on the cusp of being deficient several times in the middle schools.
- Expecting new tests CAPT and CMT - new state standards based upon new curriculum in math and reading arts.
- We must now adjust curriculum – what needs to be moved either up or down a grade.
- Can result in new books being needed and professional development in reading and math.
- We have an accreditation in 2 years – need to be in sync with 21 century learning.

Issue:

Please address the following ideas to reduce costs provided by the FS

- Pooling insurance with the town employees
- Use of cooperative purchasing
- Merge town and education custodial and outside staffs
- Energy

Response:

- **Pooling insurance with the town employees**

Insurance rates are going to rise; we have a very good agent and he has confirmed this. Rates going up due to claim experience. In November, he recommended we include 11% in our budget; now they are telling us we are at 15%. Right now we are at 9%, and the contract will be signed by the next BOE meeting. Scenario will be provided to Mr. Smith. During an insurance meeting with the town the suggestion was made that we go with Anthem under a one umbrella plan. As of 1/24/2011, this will cost the town and the Board more due to pooling expenditures; therefore, we are not pursuing it at this time. Mr. Smith asked for a copy.

The rate with Anthem is very good in the 3 tier when compared to the other companies. We used Health Net since 1996; Anthem offered a better opportunity than Health Net, now United Healthcare; United Health Care costs were less than Anthem but did not equate to equal or better as stated in the bargaining unit's contract.

- **Purchasing**
 - Currently use the Department of Revenue Services State Bid List; anything over \$10,000 goes out for bid.
 - Adheres to Town Charter policy regarding 3 bids, etc
 - Recently pursued cooperative purchasing through CREC; now members. All supply books have been sent to all principals.
 - In addition, we use a consortium for technology and do comparison shopping with outside vendors.

- **Merge town and education custodial and outside staffs**
 - You must negotiate with bargaining units for town and teachers unions to initiate merges.
 - Board initiated this about 8 years ago. The union agreed to take over the custodial and the town union would take over the outside maintenance crew (landscaping, etc.) Unions backed out because there was a concern over a supervisor.
 - Still trying to pursue it again now that it has been mentioned again. The unions have not embraced this yet. However, we do not know how much would be saved but the lawns and buildings would definitely look better.

- **Energy**
 - Steve worked 2 years ago with Bill Crooks in the area of energy savings that we are currently reaping the benefits of now.
 - We have been working with UI since the 80's and 90's; we have gone outside and hired consultants to assist with energy saving.
 - Computer management to cut waste of electricity at night.
 - We have gone way beyond on efficiency efforts; pushed through the Green initiative and were largely criticized at the time.
 - Built more efficient buildings.
 - Continually trying to keep costs down – pricing out energy sources.
 - CCM – CT Conference of Municipalities – bid for electricity and decided to go for a 5 year contract because of the fluctuation in the market and the surge of prices at that time.
 - Rely on vendors to assist us with finding better and less expensive ways to manage our energy.
 - Problems exist with buildings; windows, heating and air conditioning systems are outdated. We have been testing the use of a window insert to cut down on heating waste.
 - Looking at all schools being dual fueled in the case of an emergency. Gas is cheaper now; looking into cost to convert 4 or 5 that are still oil.

Issue:

What would it take to simply maintain last year's budget with mandatory expenses?

Response:

To maintain this year's budget over last year with only mandatory expenses it would be 5.3%. If you back out the 2.0 special education teachers and the 4.0 paraprofessionals, it would be between 5.0-5.2% listed on page 2-4.

- Last year the BOE received funds from ERA and ECS totaling \$1,262,000. These funds were earmarked to supplement Board funds. Last year, we were awarded 1.08% in the budget, and \$175,000 from the BOF. When learning that the budget was going to be cut we decided to use +/- \$825,000 or so on textbooks and one-time costs, such as the final payment for the six modular classrooms. In the end, we had \$225,000 left and it was returned to the town. We were slightly in the black for the 2010 budget. The BOE is responsible for budget deficiencies. If the Board overspends, it can be held personally liable only if it is done knowingly. If there is a surplus, it is very clear where variances have occurred and the money diverts back to the town. Onetime expenditures are clearly indicated in the budget.

- In an education budget, you do not find onetime expenditures, other than capital expenditures.

- Guidelines were clear that you must use funds for programs that provide a direct service to children and that would not include a heating system, which is an indirect service.

Issue:

Where can the BOF find a list of mandates required?

Response:

Everything is state mandated. We must provide each child with an elementary and high school education.

- There are 60 bills currently waiting to be passed and will need to be acted upon.
- We are supposed to receive 40% of special education expenses; it actually turns out to be about 8%.
- CT is only one of two states where the Board of education has to provide the burden of proof of compliance.
- Items on the list are hard to define; i.e. truancy records.
 - Unemployment is not on the list.
 - The items on the budget are mandatory.
- In house suspension 1-9 days, we did not provide home schooling, now we must provide.
- New Employee is the most significant budget item
- We monitor the surplus very closely. Make sure we come out in the black; too high then there is a problem.

Issue:

Since the math did not change, we are changing the way we teach and the textbooks we use. If this adds cost why does it change? Can you please explain?

Response:

There is a move to standardize curriculum across the US. Students in CT, for example, should not have a better curriculum than other states so we agreed to create a curriculum that emphasizes skills and help them to succeed. According to SRBI research, typically 15% of students do not fall into Tier 1; therefore, we need to provide extra support to Tier 2 & 3 students so they will get to an adequate level. We are teaching math so the students can conceptualize it better and use it as they progress up to and through their calculus class. We want to reach the Tier 1 students and provide extra support for those students in Tier 2 and 3. It is not just to pass a test, but to make sure the students have the knowledge needed for the test. This might mean tweaking the curriculum possibly moving information up or down a grade as needed.

Issue:

Is it not wasteful for each school system to create a curriculum?

Response:

We have reps that go to meetings and then evaluate and work with other towns. It takes time since not all schools use the same books or purchase additional materials in order to support the curriculum.

Issue:

What is the financial impact based on these changes?

Response:

We need curriculum writing; we look at the number of hours that will be needed at the hourly rate. This is not a staffing issue. Section 4 page 2 - This year we are requesting \$72,510 in order to go back and cover issues not covered last year.

Curriculum development is necessary due to the changes in testing standards. Children do learn differently and do things differently. How do you streamline the plan when everyone learns differently. There was a 5 year plan curriculum writing that was disrupted several years ago and we are still trying to catch up from the lack of funding from previous years for this item.

We are dealing with a need to have vs nice to have. We need to meet the state demands. There are programs that we offer that have state mandates we need to follow.

Issue:

What is the impact of one additional child in each classroom. What is the difference between contract numbers and strive for numbers?

Response:

During contract negotiations, there is a lot of give and take. You go into mediation and then arbitration and when this occurs, everything goes off the table except salaries and benefits, and contract language is not changed. The Board did not want to lock in specific numbers years ago because it might hurt the Board, and the language remains the same. Since then, the needs in the classroom have changed so much that class size is now important so we use guidelines to determine class size, i.e. the number of special needs children or disciplinary problems or the number of esl students is increasing. Using specific numbers could force a school to add a new teacher and then redistribute the classes. This is very disruptive. You want to keep the contract as flexible as possible.

Once we reached 3%, the Board had to consider other alternatives and closing a school was one option. When you use strive for numbers, we look at everything when deciding how many children will be in each class. If we close a school, we would have to evaluate how it would impact the size of the classes.

Issue:

Why are there inconsistencies going from a kindergarten class size to 1st grade class?

Response:

There are several factors, one being the transfer of children from full day kindergarten in private schools to the Trumbull school system. We do not currently offer full day kindergarten. We use 2 outside agencies and their projections are very close.

Issue:

Some school show increases in class numbers whereas other show decreases. What are the reasons?

Response:

Possible has to do with people moving out of the area. If you drop a class, the teacher may be eliminated or moved to a different school.

Issue:

Has any consideration been given to redistricting to compensate for disproportionate number of students.

Response:

Yes; it is called a surgical redistricting. We had considered moving children from Frenchtown to Middlebrook.

We currently have 8 teachers who have indicated that they will retire at the end of this year. Last year we projected 12 and only 6 actually retired. Trumbull has the lowest number of teachers per administrator than the state average. The Board is preparing to move to a full day kindergarten in the year 2012.

Issue:

Why is Monroe only seeking less than 1% this year, and yet it is well rated.

Response:

Trumbull is a very high achieving school district. Not all other systems do what we do. We are 17th in spending in our area; we are 11th out of 21 where we spend only \$11,000 per pupil whereas the other districts average is \$12,500. It depends on who you compare us with. We offer 29 sports and 56 teams; we also bus all children whereas Monroe may not.

Issue:

Why should we pass off deficits in Driver's Education, Continuing Education and Summer School to the taxpayers?

Response:

These items do not run at a deficit. Funds were moved from these accounts to offset deficits in other accounts.

Issue:

Why create a deficit if the program can support itself?

Response:

We are creating more of a deficit because we are charging these programs for items that we did not charge before, for example, secretarial service.

If there is no breakeven, Continuing Education might be affected. Summer school is no longer providing bus service to the students. Students that attend due to failing are charged.

Respectfully submitted

Phyllis Collier