

**APPROVED/BOARD OF FINANCE MINUTES – BUDGET DELIBERATIONS  
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 29, 2017**

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A budget deliberations meeting of the Board of Finance was held on Wednesday, March 29, 2017 in the large conference room in Town Hall at 7:30 p.m.

Members Present: David Ulmer, Chairman; Jessica Mancini, Vice Chairman; Marty Heiser; Mike Raduazzo and Sean Connelly

Town Officials: Rudy Marconi, First Selectman; Maureen Kozlark, Selectman; Kevin Redmond, Controller; Dr. Karen Baldwin, Supt. Of Schools; Joe Morits, ; Dr. Robert Miller, Director of Technology and Operations Development; Terry Ali, Data Coordinator  
Dr. Kim Hapken, Supt. Of Special Services

Board of Education: Frances Walton, Chairman; Dr. Stephanie Bell; David Cordisco; Sharon D'Orso; Tracey O'Connor; Doug Silver and Margaret Stamatis, Members

**A G E N D A**

- Capital Request – Energy Conservation Measures (\$378,770.)
- Capital Request – Technology Infrastructure, Comprehensive Telephone System Replacement (\$550,000.00)
- Health and Employee Benefits Budget (+7.18%, + \$1,238,588)
- Special Education “Carve Out” Budget (+9.22%, + \$1,212,942.00)
- Paraprofessionals/Non-Certified Salaries
- Targeted Investments Budget Drivers (+19.32%, + \$62,562.00)
- Certified Salaries/Personnel (+0.80%, + \$365,066.00)
- Remaining Board of Finance Questions – General Budget Discussion
- Takeaway Items/Questions for Monday, April 3, 2017

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Mr. Ulmer called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Capital Request – Energy Conservation Measures (\$378,770.00)

Dr. Baldwin and Joe Morits explained the energy conservation program undertaken with Eversource which included twenty-five projects, all of which had to be completed and verified, to earn the \$170k bonus. The bulk of the work in year one of the three-year program was done at the High School, which earned an \$11k bonus which was turned back to the Town. All the projects had good paybacks. Year two earned an incentive payback of \$81,357.00 which was returned to the Town. Fiscal 2017/2018 is the third year with the potential for a \$84,909.00 incentive once completed. Total incentives = \$348,964.00, all returned to the Town. If the third-year projects are not completed, the Town will give up an \$84k bonus in addition to the \$170k bonus.

Capital Request – Technology Infrastructure, Comprehensive Telephone System Replacement (\$550,000.00)

Mr. Miller stated that the current phone system was put in prior to 2008 and its use has been over extended. Now the health and safety of students and teachers is in jeopardy when the phone system is off line, which happens with regularity. There are close to 900 phones across the entire school district.

Mr. Connelly asked if the current phone could be used with the new systems and Dr. Miller stated that the majority of the current phones are digital and are not compatible with the new system. He added that some vendors will do a buy back.

Health and Employee Benefits Budget (+7.18%, + \$1,238,588)

Currently there are:

172	People with single coverage
132	With couple coverage
301	With family coverage
605	Total

Some employees have declined coverage.

Dr. Baldwin stated that the BOE anticipates moving to Anthem but continues to work with the insurance consultant. Dental insurance will stay with Cigna.

In response to Mr. Raduazzo's inquiry about the 70% increase in long-term disability, Dr. Baldwin said it is "corrective" because it has been underfunded.

Special Education "Carve Out" Budget (+9.22%, + \$1,212,942.00)

Dr. Baldwin explained that this "carve out" is new (special education costs are exempt for the 2.5% cap on budget increases imposed by the State) and there are no guidelines as to what is/is not to be included.

Roughly 10% of Ridgefield students have an IEP, far lower than the average of 13.9%. Currently nineteen students are in out-of-district placements, some as a result of settlements, some placed by the planning and placement team. Dr. Hapken stated that she hopes to bring some of these outplacements back in future years.

Mr. Heiser noted that special education represents 15% to 20% of the BOE's budget, an ever-increasing percentage and wondered where it ends. Dr. Baldwin noted that the BOE is aware of this and is taking corrective measures to stabilize that, adding that some of those increases are "leveling off".

The Board discussed the recent Supreme Court case: *Andrew F. v. Douglas County School District* which mandates "... a child's educational program must be appropriately ambitious in light of his circumstances... and every child should have a chance to meet challenging objectives." Ridgefield currently does not have a program for gifted students.

The Board of Finance asked if closing a school or redistricting was being considered in light of the declining enrollment. Ms. Walton said both had been considered and the BOE decided not to do either at this time.

Average salary, not including benefits, for a new teacher is \$71,900.00.

Ms. Mancini asked why the number of administrators is not being reduced. Dr. Baldwin responded that standards and expectations have changed and that leadership makes a difference. Graduation requirements at the high school have changed from 21 to 25 credits, which requires additional staff.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made by Ms. Mancini and seconded by Mr. Heiser to adjourn the meeting at 10:45 p.m.

Vote 5-0. **Motion APPROVED.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Karen Rodgers, Recording Secretary