

Town of Ridgefield
Board of Selectmen Budget Meeting
Tuesday, March 5, 2018 - 7:00 pm
Town Hall (Large Conference Room)
400 Main Street, Ridgefield, Connecticut
APPROVED MINUTES

These minutes are a general summary of the meeting and are not intended to be a verbatim transcription.

In attendance: R. Marconi, B. Hebert, B. Manners, S. Zemo and M. Kozlark

Agenda

- **Board of Education Budget**
- **General Budget Discussion**
- **Possible Non-binding Recommendation on Board of Education Budget to Board of Finance**

R. Marconi called the Budget Meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

1. Board of Education Budget

Board of Education (BOE) Superintendent Karen Baldwin and BOE Chairman Francis Walton and Tracy O'Connor came forward to present the BOE budget. Superintendent K. Baldwin stated the budget BOE adopted meets the state statutory guidelines. There are some essential drivers that are leading to the increase. The overall increase is a little more than \$3,900,000 in spending over the current year. The drivers leading to the increase are in the area of contractual obligations such as Health Insurance, Special Education, Energy and Transportation. When comparing to other towns, Ridgefield has the lowest per people expenditure, our students are doing very well and there is a return on investment.

This budget serves the need of 4,838 students. There is an enrollment decline in the middle school. This year's budget anticipates the decline and BOE eliminated a seventh grade team. We went from three teams of seventh graders to two teams which resulted in a little over \$210,000 in savings. M. Kozlark stated that these savings are not listed anywhere in the BOE budget. K. Baldwin stated that she does not have an evident number as of right now but she will look into it.

The contractual obligation is \$1,495,590 contribution to the increase. Health benefits \$1,043,426. –We are working with the insurance consultants to look at pooling all of our insurances which can result in big savings. B. Hebert stated if the BOE has looked at State Partnership Plan. K. Baldwin stated that BOE is looking into that plan and meetings to discuss insurances have been scheduled. There is a 7.3% increase in health benefits and there is a risk that it might increase to 8.6%. S. Zemo asked when the BOE anticipates having a firm number? K. Baldwin stated that we will have a firm number when the Board of Finance makes the decision. Health Insurance is a significant driver to the increase-about 26%. Special Education is another significant driver – new families have moved to Ridgefield recently due to the good special education program we have. K. Baldwin stated BOE is creating a Special Education Task Force. B. Hebert asked what is the goal, mission statement or the objective of this task force? – K. Baldwin stated the task force will look at the root cause analysis of the unplanned supplements and to develop a stronger service delivering model for the district. Our data shows that in the past year the prevalence rate has gone from 10.1% of students identified as having IEP special needs to 11.3%. Ridgefield School District needs programs that address anxiety, depression and school avoidance. B. Hebert asked if there is any federal funding for special needs students. K. Baldwin stated that there is a grant reimbursement formula that states if 4½ times per person expenditure is reached, the state will reimburse every money spent after the 4 ½. The state hasn't been able to reimburse those monies.

B. Hebert asked how confident is the BOE for this year's budget? K. Baldwin stated BOE is budgeting based on the actuals known as of today. S. Zemo asked what the increase would be if Special Education is pulled out of the total budget? K. Baldwin stated it would be 2.5%.

M. Kozlark asked if we are getting any payback from the contributions that we are making? K. Baldwin stated that we reduced the contract with the Center for Children with Special Needs which resulted in \$100,000 in savings and we replaced it with a Board Certified Behavior Analyst.

There were positions hired off budget – Special Education teacher at East Ridge, we have also hired 5 para educators. Elementary Level anticipates to have 100 teachers, compared to last year there is a reduction of one teacher. There is a reduction of 4.9 positions at East Ridge. We are also adding 2.0 school psychologists and 3 Special Ed teachers. Total staff for 2018 is 721 people.

B. Hebert asked what percentage of the current benefits is factored into this budget vs the pension benefits? K. Baldwin stated that no teacher retirement benefits are included in this budget.

BOE Capital Budget

Joe Morits, BOE Facilities Manager and Bob Miller, IT Manager came forward to discuss BOE Capital Budget. J. Morits stated that the BOE has approved pushing forward 5 projects for 2018-19 school year.

1) Removal of an oil tank at Scotland Elementary school. This project will cost \$100,000: \$20,000 for the removal of the old oil tank; \$45,000 for the installation of the new oil tank; \$35, 000 for site installation, bringing in materials and pouring a new concrete pad, and Liquid Disposal fee of \$.75 per gallon – estimated 1000 gallons.

2) Scotland Elementary School asbestos abatement

3) Trane automation system replacement. The system is outdated and needs to be replaced.

4) Cooling tower at the High School needs to be replaced.

5) New upgrades on our security/school safety and the technology that supports it, consisting of: a) Constructing a vestibule in the inside of the front entrance of ERMS; b) installation of 47 surveillance cameras in six elementary schools; c) installation of 12 Mil ballistic film on the entry ways, doorways and first floor glass windows in every school. Price range from \$25 -\$35 Square Foot.

R. Marconi asked do we need to look at replacing windows first. J. Morits said we will need to do an audit and check what windows need to be changed.

Bob Miller, IT Manager stated that we have 222 wireless access points that are out of date and no longer supported by the vendor and need to be upgraded. We also have 6 elementary servers that are past life and need to be upgraded as well. S. Zemo asked if BOE is looking to partner and work with other municipalities to save money? K. Baldwin stated that BOE is working on a consortium for health insurance with other municipalities.

2. General Budget Discussion

K. Redmond came forward to discuss General Budget. Town budget is at 2.49%; Mill Rate is 4.28% increase; and our fund balance is at 8.7%.

B. Manners moved and M. Kozlark seconded a motion to adjourn the BOS budget meeting at 9:20 pm. Motion Carried 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted,
Nita Asani