

TOWN OF WALLINGFORD, CONNECTICUT

*Special Town Council Meeting
Town Council Chambers*

APRIL 9, 2014

FY 2014 – 2015 BUDGET WORKSHOP

MINUTES

The Special Budget Workshop Meeting of the Wallingford Town Council was called to order at 6:35 P.M. A Moment of Silence was observed, and the Pledge of Allegiance was said. Councilors in attendance were as follows: Chairman Vincent Cervoni, Craig Fishbein, Thomas Laffin, John Letourneau, Christine Mansfield, Robert F. Parisi, Larry Russo, John Sullivan and Vincent F. Testa, Jr. Mayor William W. Dickinson, Jr. and James Bowes, Comptroller were also present at the meeting.

3. BUDGET WORKSHOPS

FOOD SERVICES (Cafeteria)

*In attendance: Dr. Salvatore Menzo, Superintendent of Schools
Sharlene Wong, Director, Food Services
Roxane McKay, Chairperson, Board of Education*

Ms. Wong reviewed the history and progress of the Food Services Department over the years from a point of self-sustenance to one of having to depend upon the department's fund balance to support operating costs with help from the board of Education as well.

Contributing to the loss of revenue in Food Services are Federal and State mandates; compliance with a new meal program; cost and delivery of good -prices are up and rising for milk, beef and pork due myriad reasons; failure of a snack program; and a noticeable decrease in sales with a loss of 70,000 meals equaling \$160K. She noted that the food truck sales do not go into the Food Services budget.

Ms. Wong informed the Council that 16.5% of students qualify for free and reduced meals. She reported that she is approaching how she purchases and how her products are delivered in order to realize savings to her department. Her department operates on reduced staff due to unfilled positions and other measures that have implemented, such as that of reducing hours in full-time staff.

Councilor Laffin asked Ms. Wong what if she were to forgo the federal aid that Food Services receives, would she then be able to run her own business? Ms. Wong explained that she is not bound to remove the entire district and that she is permitted to remove certain schools. She indicated that the two high schools would be a possibility, and if she took those two schools off, she would increase the food served. Schools that opt to remove themselves from federal reimbursement have a free and reduced percentage below 5%, which is not the case for Wallingford. She said that her new software will enable her to track activity in individual schools, which ties into reporting and assists in determining each school's sales as well as other aspects that are followed.

She has had a 30% increase in personnel benefits since more people are opting to take the insurance instead of a waiver. She said that she will need \$127,000 from the Board of Education. She declared that this will be the first time in 21-years of managing the Food Service Department that she has made such a request.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

*In attendance: Dr. Salvatore Menzo, Superintendent of Schools
Linda Winters, Business Manager
Roxane McKay, Chairperson, Board of Education*

Using a slide presentation Dr. Menzo reviewed the budget request to the Town, which falls short by \$1,943,000 of the Mayor’s recommended budget for the Board of Education. He then described the impact of this shortfall to the school system. Many projects and items would be cut totaling \$980,800, among them the Preschool Component of Early Childhood Recommendations, the Athletic Complex Project and Administrative Interns. He detailed the instructional areas in the preschool component which would not be funded and reviewed the three-year phase in plan and the reasons in providing an early childhood education. Those reasons include in social/emotional and academic need and readiness, future achievements and graduation rates to name a few. Other areas include teacher and administrator evaluation and that impact. He reviewed the areas of the Strategic Plan that would not be funded including, Instructional Requests and Facilities/Capital Requests. In order to make up for the decrease in funds as recommended by the Mayor the School system is considering increasing elementary class sizes; eliminating middle school athletics; reducing high school athletics and increasing the Open Choice reimbursable program in Wallingford. He spoke of grants awarded in the 2013-14 School Year that total \$776,272 and of charitable contributions to the district that total \$170,325. He pointed out capital projects that would be deferred, carry-over funds, use on unencumbered funds, which he forecasted. He also listed the various collaborations the school system has.

(The slide presentation is part of the record of the meeting.)

The Council spoke with the panel on ways the Board of Education could consider from private ownership on computers by teachers to how to fund capital projects. Even with cuts projected, Dr. Menzo stated that they still will need \$515,000. Bonding was discussed with a look to more discussion on the subject. Provided enrollment decreases causing staff and other reductions there is the possibility in 5 to 10 years of closing a high school. Dr. Menzo said that talks should begin soon on this subject. With regard to bonding for school system needs, the Mayor commented that borrowing is a slippery road.

MOTION TO APPROVE ADJOURNMENT

MADE BY: SULLIVAN
SECONDED BY: FISHBEIN
VOTE: ALL AYE (9)
MOTION PASSED. The meeting adjourned at 9:12 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandra R. Weekes
Town Council Secretary
Meeting digitally recorded

Vincent Cervoni, Chairman Date

Barbara Thompson, Town Clerk Date
Wallingford Town Hall, 45 South Main Street