

TOWN COUNCIL WORK SESSION
WITH SCHOOL COMMITTEE ON
FISCAL 2011-2012 BUDGET
April 4, 2011 – 6:00 P.M.

Present: President Gary Cote, Vice-President Kerry McGee, Ted Jendzejec, Raymond Spear

Town Manager Thomas Hoover
Town Solicitor Frederick Tobin

Review of Emergency Evacuation Plan

School Superintendent Michael Convery and School Finance Director Robin Reasor Pelletier gave presentation of needs and requests for the FY 2011-2012 school year. (See full presentation in Council folder).

Mrs. Pelletier began with a summary of the evolution of the school department budget up to the creation of the 2012 requested budget of \$63,962,000, constituting an increase of \$2.1 million (3.47%) over the 2011 budget. She added that the school department has been level funded for fiscal years 2006-07; 2009-10; and 2010-11.

A list of all items which have been cut from the school budget since 2002 was presented.

- Elementary gifted education program
- High school freshmen sports
- High school interact program
- Closed Flat River Middle School
- Eliminated 16 teachers from Feinstein Middle School
- Closed Oak Haven Elementary school
- Certified staff gave back contractual raise of approx. \$1,000,000
- Reduced an administrative position: \$160,000
- Cuts of \$605,000 to classified staff
- Reduced bus monitors, approx. \$95,000
- Reduced certified staff, approx. \$280,000

In the upcoming fiscal year, an increase in the school budget is necessary due to increases (by contract) in salary for certified staff projected at \$596,740; certified staff step increases projected at \$516,326; a 3% increase in health care and 4% in dental projected at \$137,124; and pension contributions projected at \$827,351, which is imposed by the State of Rhode Island. Eighty percent (80%) of our teachers are on top step.

Non-certified staff will receive no pay raises in FY 2012 and there will be no increase in staffing.

President Cote asked the money amount that is actually requested. Mrs. Pelletier replied an increase of \$1,663,229 and if the schools are level funded again, we would have to cut about \$2,000,000. When President Cote asked where the cuts would come from, Mr. Convery advised that the School Committee would have to meet and address that issue.

Mrs. Pelletier added, however, that cuts would have to come from places where something is not required by law, such as sports.

Manager Hoover advised of a shortfall of \$3.8 million between the town and the school that would have to be addressed.

When President Cote asked about teacher layoffs, Mr. Convery replied that we have the enrollment to require those teachers and will probably have to call back some of the 23 who are laid off now.

There was discussion with regard to amounts for legal services. Mr. Convery stated that there are several special education cases in litigation now. Councilman Jendzejec pointed out the legal line on Page 1 of requested budget; Mrs. Pelletier added that there is more money in the special education budget for legal of \$20,000, with a request of \$149,445 for 2012.

Councilman Jendzejec asked if raising funds had been considered, for example students paying to park at the high school. Mr. Convery replied that Mr. Morris at the high school has come up with a plan that he thinks will work out. Councilman Jendzejec also asked about

retirements and projected savings. Mrs. Pelletier responded that they don't expect many retirees, could maybe save \$200,000.

School Committee member Nancy Sprengelmeyer remarked that the first responsibility is to educate the children. We have to have teachers in the classroom; cuts will have to come from items not required by law.

President of the Coventry Teacher's Alliance, Kelly Erinakes, said she also represents non-classified personnel, of which 80% are Coventry residents. Their bargaining unit has been cut to the bone already. By cutting them you would be putting them out of work and they would lose their healthcare. Ms. Erinakes asked Council to reanalyze the budget.

Councilman Spear remarked that Rhode Island is a top salary state for teachers. In addition, we are the only state with bus monitors and the State is imposing costs on us.

President Cote said this Council will work together with the School Committee, create a partnership and get Coventry through this.

Manager Hoover reminded residents that there is a municipal budget work session on Thursday, April 7 at 6 p.m.

President Cote declared work session adjourned.

Town Clerk