

Jordana Bloom  
Phil Carroll  
Dan Honan  
Kelley Johnson  
Paul Lundquist  
Dan Wiedemann



## TOWN OF NEWTOWN

### LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL EDUCATION COMMITTEE

#### Minutes of the Legislative Council Education Committee Meeting

The Education Committee met on Tuesday March 13, 2018 in Meeting Room 1 of the Municipal Center. Committee Chairman Dan Honan called the meeting to order at 7:05pm.

Present: Phil Carroll, Kelley Johnson, Dan Wiedemann, Paul Lundquist, Jordana Bloom, Dan Honan. Also present were Michelle Ku, Board of Education Chair and Dr. Lorrie Rodrigue, Interim Superintendent of Schools.

Discussion of Board of Education Finance Board approved budget for 2018-2019. Dr. Rodrigue and Michelle Ku discussed with committee members the answers to the questions presented to the Board of Education by committee member Dan Wiedemann. (see attached)

Kelley Johnson moved to adjourn meeting at 9:30pm. Seconded by Dan Wiedemann.

Dan Honan, Chairman

*If you plan to attend this meeting and require assisted hearing devices, please contact the Office of the First Selectman (203)270-4201 at least forty-eight (48) hours prior to the meeting.*

# LC Education Committee

## **BOE Q&A 3/13/2018**

Pg 28 – In last year's budget discussions there was mention of a reduction of one SSO for the HS, was there a change of thought?

*During the preparation for the 2016-2017 BOE budget, the previous Superintendent and Director of Security (M. Pompano), per the legislative council (LC), met in executive session. There was a question of whether one of the two armed security officers could be eliminated from the high school. (At that time, the armed officers were employees of the town/ Newtown PD).*

*The only way to ensure an armed presence at NHS during the hours when classes were in session (including the TAP program) was to employ two armed security officers. Also, at that time and which continues today, the second armed officer serves as the substitute armed officer for the district (each armed officer gets five sick/personal days per school year).*

*Prior to the armed security officers becoming BOE employees at the beginning of this current school year, the Newtown PD retained another armed school security officer (ASSO) to serve per diem as a substitute armed security officer. This officer continues to serve in this capacity with the BOE. However, this ASSO has other employment and cannot be readily available to work on short term notice. Absent the availability of this ASSO or the second NHS armed security officer to fill in for either the other armed security officers when they are out on leave, the police department ends up providing off-duty police officers paid over-time to provide coverage.*

Pgs 61-70 – Why is the budget for MG approximately \$70,000 higher than SH when SH is bigger?

*The difference in budget between these two schools is mainly due to differences in certified and non-certified salaries (p. 61 and 70). Given that the numbers of staff are nearly identical (p. 68 and 79), the differences are explained by the salary level of the staff in each building (as determined by contracts).*

Pgs 93-111 – Why is the budget for MS approximately \$630,000 higher than Reed when they are roughly the same size?

*The difference in budget between these two schools is mainly due to the differences in certified salaries (p. 93 and 111) which can be attributed to the difference in the number of teachers at each school. There are 41 FTE teachers at Reed (p. 105) and 52.29 FTE teachers at the Middle School (p. 124). There are 57 more students in the Middle School than Reed (p. 18,) and the schedule and cluster structure is different between the schools.*

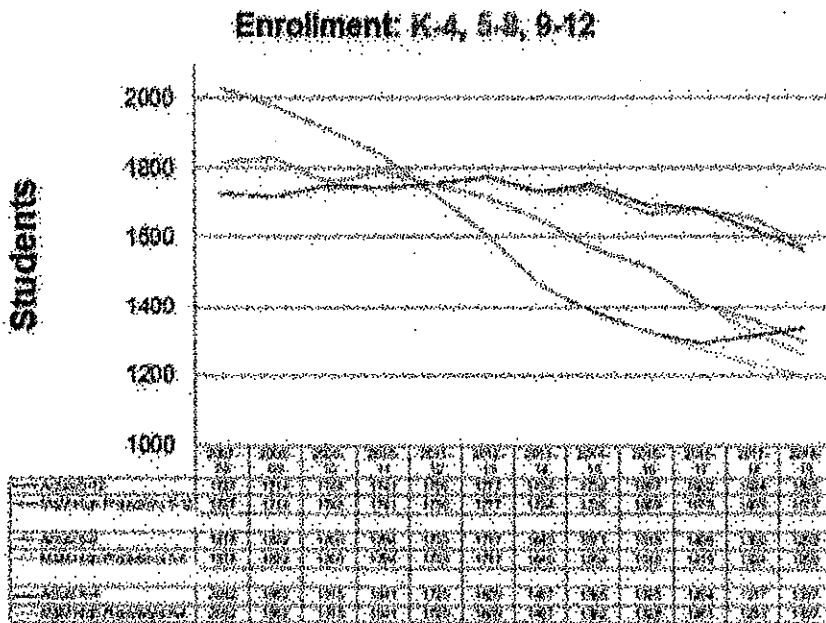
Pg 131.— The HS is experiencing the most rapid decrease in students yet their budget continues to increase. How can we find further savings there?

#### Influences on 2018-19 Budget

- Budget Priorities and Educational Goals
- Contractual obligations and economic factors
  - Maintenance
  - Salaries
  - Benefits
  - Supplies
- Enrollment -- number of staff
- Changes in programs or services

Changes in enrollment (-61 students) have allowed the reduction of four teachers at the high school. This reduction in staff is the realized savings, in part, due to declining enrollment

However, enrollment is just one factor that influences the budget and the reduction in staff did not provide savings greater than the increase due to contractual obligations, economic factors, educational goals or changes in programs or services



Pgs 175 & 180— Specialist formally funded by grants can we discontinue these services?

- ☐ The BOE has made counselors and social workers a priority, notably, including mental health support services in its budget goals this year.

Pg 193 – Please explain \$30,000 computer repair & maintenance: (ie what type of both and what type of equipment & are we better replacing)

*If you look at the expenditure of the \$30,000 in repairs for last year and this year, the dollars were or have been spent on cabling repairs, laptop batteries, Universal Power Supply batteries, server hard drives and projectors. In the case of the projectors, they are failed projectors that would not be due for replacement under obsolescence and yes, we replace them in lieu of repair because it is the more cost effective solution.*

Pg 226 – With our school population decreasing by almost 300 students or 6% since 15-16 why is the cost of our transportation increasing by over \$300,000 or 7.2% over the same period with an increase in the number of buses? (also during that period is a decrease of \$40,000 in fuel)

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- Educational goals included changing the school start time – part of this was a goal of doing so without any addition to the budget.
- Contractual obligations – Newtown's average of 2.67% increase/year for the bus contract over last 3 years is not dissimilar to other towns (see the spreadsheet from CASBO).
  - – Fuel savings have been realized because the two-tier system is more efficient than a three-tier system and the fleet is being changed to natural gas.
- Enrollment – declined by 6% since 2015-16, but this does not change the 57.8 square miles we cover or the low population density.
- Changes in programs or services – the change from a three tier system to a two tier system was a cost-savings but necessitated adding buses (resulting in no additional cost to the district).