

Neil Chaudhary, Chair
Dan Amaral
Phil Carroll
Tony Filiato, Secretary
Paul Lundquist, Vice Chair
Dan Wiedemann



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TOWN OF NEWTOWN

Draft Minutes of the Legislative Council Education Committee Meeting.

The Education Committee met on Thursday, March 16, 2017, in Room 1, Newtown Municipal Center, 3 Primrose Lane, Newtown. Chairman Neil Chaudhary called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

Present: Mr. Amaral, Mr. Carroll, Mr. Chaudhary, Mr. Filiato, Mr. Lundquist, and Mr. Wiedemann

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

The meeting commenced with a conversation concerning the presentation the prior evening at the Legislative Council meeting by Secretary Barnes of OPM concerning the Governor's plan to move 1/3 of teacher pension costs from the state to the municipalities. It was agreed that the draconian measure required heightened diligence this budget season.

Mr. Lundquist raised the question as to whether the "surplus" in this year's BOE budget could be put to some use to be impactful for next year's budget. Dr. Erardi believed that approximately two thirds of the surplus—considering the remainder of the school year—could possibly be allocated in a manner to lower next year's budget.

A discussion was held on the proposed initiative to phase out "pay for play" for the sports programs over the next five years. Dr. Erardi explained the BOE initiative and noted that it was proposed that 20% of the fees were scheduled to be rolled back in the next budget. After discussion there was general consensus that this was an initiative that could possibly be pushed back a year in light of the state budget proposal. Further discussion was held as to whether the sports programs parent groups could bear the cost of coach stipends as does, for example, the Band and Guard for most of its instructors.

The discussion moved to the question of staffing in the High School. Dr. Erardi explained that although the district is clearly seeing a down turn in student enrollment, the down turn has not yet reached the HS in any appreciable numbers. The introduction of further credits and particularly an increasing number of AP courses was discussed. Dr. Erardi confirmed that certain AP course may only have 4-5 students enrolled, but in such cases it is likely that the course is combined with another class in the same subject matter. Also, more traditional AP courses, such as language courses, sometimes fluctuate heavily year to year, but the administration does its best to estimate interest from Middle School participation in the subjects.

Mr. Chaudhary led a discussion of Excess Cost Sharing grants from the state. There was some confusion as to the terminology. Dr. Erardi agreed to clarify the issue for the next meeting.

Mr. Filiato began a discussion on the level of bussing in the district and Mr. Carrol added the possibility of changing the tier system, particularly if the HS delays start times, which would save money. Dr. Erardi noted that costs of bussing only now have reached the previous cost levels of the owner operator system in place 6 years ago. Mr. Chaudhary pointed out that the issue isn't whether the current system is less expensive than the owner operator system; the issue is whether the current system is as efficient as it could be in light of the drop in enrollment.

Mr. Chaudhary asked about the use of I-Pads and evidence for educational effectiveness. He also asked about the source of funding for additional hires (primarily in Special Education) not included in the budget. Dr. Erardi described hiring practices and retirement attrition as allowing for the funding.

A summary of asks from Dr. Erardi for the next meeting was noted as below:

- Possible capital items available to be funded by “surplus.”
- Details regarding Excess Cost Grant
- Role of I-Pads/Chrome books
- HS Staffing

PUBLIC COMMENT: Melissa Beylouni (?), 15 Equestrian Ridge, Newtown. Understood the concerns of the impact of the Governor’s proposed budget and recognized the difficulty in anticipating the true cost of the impact.

Date of Next Meeting: The date of the next meeting was noted to be Tuesday, March 21 at 7 pm in Room 1 of the Municipal Center.

Upon the motion of Mr. Lundquist and seconded by Mr. Filiato, the meeting adjourned at 9:10 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Anthony R. Filiato, Esq.
Legislative Council Education Committee
&
Neil Chaudhary, PhD
Chairman Legislative Council Education Committee