



Thomaston Board of Education
Special Meeting
Wednesday, February 11, 2009
Thomaston Town Hall
Teen Center, Level 2
5:00 p.m.

Board Members Present:

Laurie Barrett, **Deborah April, Lucy Santopietro, Joanne Gilland, Holly Herbert and Cheryl Roberts

Board Members Absent:

Beth Yaffe, Steve Catania and Laura Rieley

Also Present:

Superintendent, Lynda Mitchell; Business Manager, Susan Laone; Principal, Paul Johnson; Principal, James Wenker; Pupil Services Director, Nancy Schnyer; Board Clerk, Patricia George

I. Call to Order:

Board Chair, Laurie Barrett, called to order the Special Meeting of the Board of Education at 5:04 p.m.

II. Approval of Agenda:

On a motion made by Cheryl Roberts and seconded by Joanne Gilland to approve/accept the agenda as presented. No further discussion; motion carried unanimously.

III. 2009/2010 Budget Discussions:

Board Chair, Laurie Barrett, began the meeting by reading an e-mail from John Scheppard of the Finance Board. Mr. Scheppard indicated that he would “like to appeal to the TEA to reconsider their stance on salary increases.” The e-mail also stated that he would “like to do so appropriately/correctly.” He then went on to justify his request by stating that the first selectman has returned budgets that have increases asking the budget makers to reconsider; that the town is probably looking at a 4%-5% increase if every department came in flat – due to capital projects that were put off in the last budget round.

Laurie Barrett responded to his e-mail by stating that she would discuss his request at this evening’s Special Board meeting.

Business Manager, Sue Laone, gave further consideration to the proposed budget brought to the Board at Monday's meeting to see where additional cuts may be made. She made the following notes:

Benefits	\$20,000
*Electricity	\$19,000
*Diesel	\$15,000
Contingency	<u>\$10,000</u>
	\$64,000 additional savings

*Based on the downward trend of current utilization

She then added the music, arts and athletic dollars back into the budget based on the consensus of Board members from a prior meeting. This figure added back to the budget \$158,000, less the \$64,000 additional savings noted above, for a net of \$94,612.

Pupil Services Director, Nancy Schnyer, indicated that her budget currently supports the salary of a Speech Pathologist from an outside agency at a cost of \$84,000 annually. She felt that having the Board consider the hiring of a Speech Pathologist as a regular employee versus utilizing an outside agency should save the Board between \$13,000 and \$28,000. Ms. Schnyer was then given the approval of the Board to hire a Speech Pathologist.

Board Chair, Laurie Barrett, asked the Board to reconsider the Administrators' concession, which included an additional 10 non-work days. The salary deferral would net the Board approximately \$19,000 however, the additional 10 non-work days, when converted to dollars would compute to an additional \$22,979. The Board asked the Administrators to factor out the 10 non-work days and thanked them for salary deferral. The administrators' union representative, Paul Johnson, said he would attempt to meet with the administrative team to discuss their options further.

Superintendent Mitchell provided hand-outs which outlined a "Schoolwide K-6 Planning Process – Two Schools – Two Campuses = One Unified Program."

The design included possible benefits, challenges, and possible questions. Superintendent Mitchell will continue drafting a plan for presentation to the Board.

The Board discussed what percentage range they could offer to the Board of Finance. Business Manager, Sue Laone, noted that the Board of Education's benefits are increasing; the town's departments do not reflect benefits in their individual budgets. She also noted that there is a large increase in tuition. This increase is a DCF placement that the Board has no control over.

Various scenarios were discussed including the elimination of teachers, adjustments in class sizes, a monetary increase in pay-to-play, and cutting low volume participating sports.

**Deborah April adjourned the meeting at 6:27 p.m.

After much discussion, the Board decided that a 1.25% increase was the lowest they could bring forward. This percentage computes to a \$639,000 reduction from the originally proposed budget, which had an increase of 5.9%. The new budget proposal would now need to be reduced an additional \$331,000 from the 3.35% budget proposal submitted as part of Monday night's meeting.

Before concluding, the Board was provided information from the AFSCME Union which included both monetary concessions and stipulations. These would be discussed at a later meeting.

Two Special Meeting dates were tentatively set by the Board:
Wednesday, February 18, 2009 at 6:30 p.m. and Friday, February 20, 2009 at 8:00 a.m.

IV. Adjournment:

On a motion made by Lucy Santopietro and seconded by Joanne Gilland to adjourn the Special Meeting of the Board of Education at 7:00 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.