

City of Shelton
Board of Apportionment & Taxation
Budget Workshop
March 5, 2009



MINUTES OF BOARD OF A&T BUDGET WORKSHOP
7:00 PM Thursday, March 5, 2009
SHELTON CITY HALL
54 HILL STREET
Auditorium REVISION 1
SHELTON CT 06484

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Roll Call

Board of A&T:

Mark Holden, Chair, present
Judson Crawford, present
Vinny Capece, present
Nancy Dickal, present
Greg Kodz, present
Charlotte Madar, present

Other Persons Present:

Board of Aldermen:

Alderman John Anglace
Alderman Lynn S. Farrell
Alderman John "Jack" Finn
Alderman Stanley Kudej
Alderman Eric McPherson
Alderman Ken Olin
Alderman John Papa
Alderman Anthony Simonetti

Shelton Board of Education

Win Oppel, Chairman
Robin Willink, Superintendent
Allan Cameron, Director of Finance
Patricia Curran, Director of Instruction
Dr. Beth Smith, PhD, Headmaster, Shelton High School
William Banfe, BOE Director of Facilities/Operations
Arlene Liscinsky, BOE Secretary

Call To Order

Chairman Mark Holden called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:00 p.m. He stated that tonight's interviews would be with the Board of Education.

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He reviewed the meeting process and indicated that they would have opening presentations followed by questions from the Board of A&T and the Board of Alderman.

Win Oppel, Chairman of the Shelton BOE provided his opening statement in regard to the 2009-2010 Board of Education Budget Request.

He highlighted that their request asks for no new funds other than those required to cover the increased costs of their employee health insurance.

Chairman Oppel distributed a pamphlet (Shelton BOE Proposed Operating & Capital Improvement Budgets 2009-2010) and other supporting documents to Board of A&T members and members of the Board of Alderman outlining their initiatives, efforts and future opportunities to reduce costs.

Robin Willink, Superintendent of Schools, provided her opening statement by prefacing that this year, she asked her Staff to present budgets with no increase; to present only those requests that they could pay for by making cuts in their current budgets or re-prioritizing their spending. This year, for the first time, they did not go to the PTA and ask them for everything they wanted to improve their schools because they knew that realistically, those items would not be included in the budget. They concentrated on presenting a budget with no increase in spending. As a result, in the preparation of their budget they cut over \$1M from last year's budget number. They reduced Staff, deferred hiring and made significant cuts in a number of other accounts. The Board approved a budget that showed no increase with the exception of health care costs.

Although they've made significant cuts, they will still strive to continue to offer an excellent school system with some growth. They will continue to focus on academic achievement and continue to provide those programs, often at little cost, that produce the greatest result for their students.

Ms. Willink responded to Chairman Holden's request that they speak about what they are doing to improve academic achievement. All of their schools are results oriented; school improvement plans are the foundation of each department or building. The plans are updated every year, establish measurable goals and are based on specific areas that need to be improved. They help to build a climate that sets high expectations for all students. Data, including test scores, common assessments, pre- and post tests are analyzed and discussed in a timely manner in order to allow them to make changes in instruction if the results aren't satisfactory.

Ms. Willink indicated that they use something called data walls and they are constantly changing exhibits as the progress is being made; they are visible to parents, teachers, and students. They've placed instructional coaches in the classroom to work with the teachers to ensure that everything being asked for in the curriculum is being done. They've negotiated for additional meeting time after school so that they can continually work with Staff to improve their teaching and allow for collaboration and professional dialogue. Focused professional development enables their teachers to become most proficient. They are doing frequent classroom walk-throughs to look at instructional

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strategies. They are followed by analysis and discussion at the school and district level to make sure that everyone is held accountable.

Ms. Willink stated that they are trying to meet the needs of every student. They are using a Web-based program that serves those students who can't hear the sounds when

they are trying to learn to read. They have tutors who individualize materials for small groups of students; they have counselors who run study skills groups for those who need help with mastery tests; new computers for grades 1-3 that enhance learning; they have demanded more time for reading and writing in the classroom and maximized the amount of time spent on instruction. Individualized and educational plans for special education students are linked to the CMT and the CAT. They introduced pre-algebra in Grade 7 so that more children can take algebra in Grade 8; they've increased the number of advanced placement courses and early college experience courses at the high school level. They have reinstated a teacher for talented/gifted students that meets the needs of those students. They've applied all these strategies to make sure they are meeting the needs of all children. Those strategies along with the many strong programs they offer as well as gifted teachers and administrators have resulted in caps in CMT and CAT scores that are above the average regardless of the fact that 11% of their students are eligible for free and reduced lunch; 2% are not fluent in English and 10% come from homes where English is not the primary language; 91% of their students took the SAT; 89% of their students are pursuing higher education; their attendance is strong; they communicate well in many modes with parents and community; they continue to make strong effort to reduce racial, economic and ethnic isolation.

In conclusion, Ms. Willink indicated that they realize how much of the City budget is consumed by education and they want to make sure that the City realizes what an excellent school system they have. She added that they will not be able to continue what they have without help in funding the significant increase in healthcare costs. Obviously, they are working with the City to address those increases and currently they are out to bid.

Ms. Willink stated that they have already cut over a million dollars from last year's budget and it would be impossible to find an additional million dollars for healthcare without significantly impacting all that is good about their schools.

Chairman Holden announced that it has been suggested, that in the interest of full disclosure, he would like to mention that Alderman Papa, Alderman Finn, and Alderman Simonetti have spouses that work for the school system; additionally, Alderman Lynn Farrell sits on the State Board of Education Commission.

Chairman Win Oppel stated that Allan Cameron, Director of Finance for the Shelton BOE would address the documents that had been distributed regarding cost saving initiatives.

Mr. Allan Cameron, Director of Finance indicated that the former Chairman of the BOE Finance Committee, Bernie Simons, felt strongly that they should present some of the initiatives taken over the recent years to save money. Mr. Cameron stated that Mr. Simons could not attend this meeting; however, he will speak in his behalf.

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Mr. Cameron reviewed the "Summary of Savings Initiatives" which included Staff reductions of Certified and Non-Certified Positions, Elimination of Alternative Ed Programs, and the Talented and Gifted Program. He explained savings from BOE employee health insurance employee cost sharing, and reduced hours of operation and reductions in utility usage. Further reductions occurred with transportation savings that

resulted from bus route efficiencies, and continued savings from maintaining low Administration and Support Services expenditures.

Mr. Cameron discussed the initiatives taken by the BOE to assess their Health Insurance renewals and act as an independent 3rd party. This resulted in a change in their insurance carrier.

In conclusion, Mr. Cameron discussed the BOE initiatives to save electricity by negotiating lower rates per KWHr; they recently completed an energy conservation and re-lighting project at SHS that resulted in considerable savings.

Chairman Holden opened the floor to questions from members of the Board of A&T.

Greg Kodz, Board of A&T asked about the Non-Resident students that have been removed from the schools.

Superintendent Robin Willink responded that through the Hotline they've removed 5 – 7 students (all levels) this year. She added that the Outreach investigations have made the issue more public and have discouraged non-residents from attending Shelton schools.

Judd Crawford, Board of A&T, asked how the BOE was preparing for the accreditation of Shelton High School in 2010. Ms. Willink asked Dr. Smith from the High School to address this issue.

Dr. Beth Smith, PhD, Headmaster, Shelton High School, responded that right now they have all their Standards Committees established and they're completing their studies. At the end of this year and the beginning of next school year, they will be completed and voted on by the Faculty as a whole and presented to the BOE for approval. Yesterday, The Mission & Expectations Committee passed and revised a new Mission Statement and they are on target with that. Dr. Smith added that each of the Standards Committees are made up of School Staff, Parents, Students, members of the Community and members of the BOE.

Ms. Willink added that the financial implication is for \$20K set aside in the SHS budget to pay for the actual Visiting Committee to come here.

Judd Crawford asked when the last accreditation took place. Ms. Willink responded that it was 10 years ago. Judd asked what the results were and if she has them available.

Ms. Willink responded that there were 79 recommendations that needed to be addressed. Some of them more critical than others that needed to be addressed within ten years. A number of the recommendations had to do with the physical buildings, and because they've had the renovation, many of those things will be addressed. Other

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recommendations included adding additional guidance counselors, additional curriculum leaders at high school, smaller classes, more technology, etc. These recommendations were addressed.

Judd Crawford asked if the final report had been passed on to the BOA.

Dr. Smith responded that the last report to the BOE was 10 years ago; however, in response to the 79 recommendations, the school system had to submit a two-year and five-year report to the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. They will be completing their Self Studies Committee next year around February 2010 and the Visiting Committee will come in April 2010. It will be a period of time after that before they receive their report.

Charlotte Madar asked about the salary and certification requirement for the BOE Human Resources Director.

Ms. Willink indicated that the Human Resources Director that they hired happened to be a certified teacher.

Charlotte Madar asked what her salary was.

Ms. Willink responded that it was \$118K. She introduced Rita McDougald-Campbell, the Director of Human Resources who was present in the audience.

Mr. Oppel added that the position did not require a certification; she just happens to be certified.

Charlotte Madar asked if that was why she was selected. Mr. Oppel responded that she was selected because she was good – the best candidate.

Nancy Dickal asked about the health benefits that the BOE has gone out to bid on and they've received an estimate of 19.8 – she asked when they might know for sure.

Mr. Cameron responded that the bids will be opened on 3/26/09 and there will be an exhaustive evaluation process after that. He thinks they may know by mid April or May.

Nancy Dickal asked if they would be expected to pay a higher deductible than normal – will it be a significant jump in their co-pay.

Mr. Cameron responded that they have to keep the plan the same but their people – everybody has at least a 10%; the teachers and administrators have a 13%. They call it an employee cost share and in addition everyone has co-pays at the doctor's office – both features are in their plan and both features are increasing next year.

Because they all have contracts with different bargaining units, the bidders have to provide plans that are comparable to the existing plan in the benefits that they offer. This was one of the points that Mr. Simons wanted them to point out – next year they will collect over \$870K from employees from bi-weekly withholdings that go toward that insurance. He indicated that was more than 1% of their budget.

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Mr. Oppel added that the cost sharing is designed as a percentage so as the overall dollar amount increases, then the dollar impact to the employee also increases. All of the BOE employees have a cost sharing component.

Mr. Cameron stated that they are hoping for a lot of good, competitive bids by lots of bidders. Ms. Willink added that she thinks a lot of people are surprised that they went out for bid because they've been with Blue Cross for a long time.

Charlotte Madar asked for clarification about Bernie Simon's Cost Savings Initiatives Sheet in regard to the reduction in custodial staff of two positions and the savings listed as \$270K – do they each make \$135K? She'll said she'd take that job...

Mr. Cameron explained that they eliminated the third shift custodians which allowed them to reduce three people, then they added back a floater which allowed them to eliminate Overtime and they eliminated the part time custodians.

Charlotte Madar commented about the Operations Staff of 61 people covering 8 buildings for a student population of 5500. She asked if the BOE ever did a comparative analysis to see if outsourcing custodial services would reduce costs.

Mr. Oppel responded that it was a million square feet.

Mr. Cameron responded that yes they had gone out to compare costs and they were told that they couldn't do it – they couldn't afford it. He explained that they had to use a standard that translates into the number of workers required for a certain amount of square feet – and they have a million square feet that they are responsible for – after calculating it out – the cost was too high.

Mr. Cameron indicated that the Mayor arranged for an independent consultant, Al Barbaratta, to meet with them and get information about the size of their buildings, their custodial staff and he determined it would be more expensive than what the BOE was getting it done for.

Charlotte Madar commented about the list of positions on the maintenance and custodial staff – she read a long list of different maintenance and custodial positions.

Mr. Cameron responded that the list did not reflect the cuts that were made in Staff – the charts are dated November 2007.

Mr. Oppel added that there were 35 people that have to take care of a million square feet that are used by almost 6000 people everyday from 5 a.m. to 11 p.m. at night.

Mr. Cameron clarified that they would be interested in pursuing any alternatives - and they have looked into it.

Chairman Holden asked questions in regard to their 6-year capital outlay request. He asked about the plan in place for window replacements and energy efficiency. He

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relayed some information about area towns that have studies indicating that the energy savings for their windows have a pay-pack period of 40 years.

William Banfe, Director of Facilities/Operations responded that many of the windows in the schools, especially the elementary schools are almost 40 years old – single pane glass, poorly sealed, many don't open and many don't shut. They need to replace the windows with insulated glass to cut down on heat loss. The energy savings formula is to try to figure how much oil will be saved with insulated glass. Additionally, they have to be cognizant of Indoor Air Quality Laws – because if they have windows that don't open and close properly than they have to install ones that do. They are presently looking at different vendors to get a handle on the different window ratings for sunlight, heat, insulation, etc.

Chairman Holden summarized that obviously then - it wasn't just an energy conservation initiative; it was also time to replace old, worn out windows.

Mr. Banfe stressed that the entire Capital Outlay Package for replacement projects should be looked together – windows, HVAC, boiler replacements, etc. because it was designed to make the whole system more energy efficient.

Chairman Holden indicated that in the BOA portion of the budget process last year – in the Public Hearings – someone complained about granite countertops, cherry wood furniture and crown molding. He's heard similar comments from other residents about similar things. He indicated that he checked with the Building Department today and found out what things had been done – they had an a/c system for 98K that went out for bid recently; and some reconfiguration of storage space. He didn't see anything for the private bathroom or crown moldings and so forth. He asked if there were any other projects that did not have building permits.

Ms. Willink responded that she wasn't hands-on with that – Bill has been doing it for the last four years.

Mr. Banfe responded that Building Inspector, Electrical Inspector come in and visit every project they have going on and give them the authorization to proceed. The most recent portion of what they did was with the Technology Center – all the way through that project the Building Inspector and the Electrical Inspector visited them as many times as they had to at certain points in construction to give them the OK that everything was done according to code.

Mr. Banfe commented that he thinks some of the things brought up by Chairman Holden have been exaggerated. All they've done there is make an energy-efficient usable space for the central office staff. They took some walls down and reconfigured them because the original structure did not lend itself to an efficient use of space for their personnel. Every person that is on that first floor, the square footage that was assigned to them was done in concert with the Superintendent, to give them the space they needed to do their job but not go beyond that. They were able to fit quite a number of people on that first level.

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Mr. Oppel added that most of the molding they see was done by in-house Staff. Mr. Banfe added that all they did was put together a decorative square that was glued on to sheet rock to break up the look of the straight hallway.

Chairman Holden summarized that the comments he has gotten indicate a concern that money is being spent on the administrative office building instead of being spent on the students; so he thought it would be good to provide the BOE an opportunity to address that.

Chairman Holden asked if they used Building Committees whenever they have a project that is at a \$100K or above.

Mr. Oppel responded that those are BOA Building Committees not BOE Building Committees. The BOA are required to have Building Committee when they authorize funding.

Chairman Holden stated that according to the Charter, there needs to be a Building Committee that...

An angry BOE member, name not provided, commented from the audience that any bonded project, it's in the City Charter, the magic word is bonded...

Chairman Holden responded that actually it says bonded or reasonably may exceed \$100K or ...

The same BOE member interrupted and commented that Chairman Holden wasn't focusing on what they were really here for (inaudible) ...she commented that he needs to look at what they are doing for students in this City... because this sounds like a witch hunt... (inaudible)

Chairman Holden responded that as a citizen, actually, she is entitled...yes, this is meeting held in public but it's not a public meeting.

The BOE member said that she was (inaudible)...She suggested that he discuss curriculum, teachers, technology (inaudible)...

Ms. Willink clarified that for the last 10 years the BOE has had a Project Account of approx. \$350K that is used for projects in all their buildings. There is no Building Committee that oversees those things. The caveat is that the BOA has their own budget to do their own things, and they establish their own Building Committees, for instance for the High School Renovation or Fire Rehabilitation. But for the project money that they can move, and need to move from account to account, the BOE has control of that money. If they use it for one thing, than it's not available to do another thing – it is the amount that they have to do what needs to be done.

Mr. Oppel suggested that to put things in perspective, for four years the BOE has responsibly spent more than \$200M – this is of greater significance than a granite countertop.

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Chairman Holden clarified that the reason he brings this up is because it came up in a public meetings last year. He felt that it made sense to give the BOE members an opportunity to address these comments in public meeting.

Ms. Willink asked if that addressed his question.

Chairman Holden responded yes, but he thinks that they need to look at the Building Committee issue.

Ms. Willink responded that they have looked at the issue exhaustively; however, the BOE needs to have a certain pocket of money, \$63M, they need to have the ability to spend where they need to spend it – for teachers, books, bus lots, whatever, etc...

Ms. Willink added that for over 4 years, their maintenance people have used materials to make a great office space. She commented that she's delighted to have a private bathroom; however, it was formerly a nurse's office with a bathroom already there; it would have been economically foolish to tear it out rather than to just use it. It was absolutely economical project done with a building that was too small to be used as a school yet it offered much needed office space.

Chairman Holden responded that it was good that Ms. Willink pointed out that was a pre-existing bathroom – that is not something that had been mentioned to him before. He maintained that he felt it was in the best interests of all involved to address some of these issues.

There was discussion about the negotiations that took place regarding the early closing of the schools, keeping schools closed on the weekends to save money on heating costs and working with the City's Parks & Rec. Department to find solutions. This lead to further comments from BOE members regarding their continued efforts, past and present, to work with the City to find cost savings for health care as well as reduced costs for heating fuel, diesel and electricity.

Chairman Holden asked about encumbered funds at the end of the year; he had some historical data but did not have the most recent year figures. He knew the total amount encumbered for the City indicates that the amount encumbered at the end of last year went down significantly.

Mr. Cameron responded that by June 30th last year they had not received their insurance bill for June, so they had to encumber that – it's about \$.5M. In their bookkeeping they don't post Social Security or Merit Pension until they receive those expenses back from the City in a document once a month. Mr. Cameron discussed other encumbrances taken at the end of June for audit purposes.

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Chairman Holden responded that it looks like the amount went down for this year and thought Mr. Cameron might be overstating the amount based on what the audit report shows. He asked him to look into that and get back to him with the information.

Charlotte Madar inquired about the 2003 – 2008 CMT scores for Grade 4 Reading that shows a drop in score (63 to 60) and Math (67 – 60.3); Grade 6 Reading (74 remains 74) Math (73 up to 73 1/10). She asked for some clarification about what was being done to increase scores because between 2004 and 2008 there are 241 fewer students and yet the budget is \$8,716,575 more for 241 less students when there's been no improvement in the scores.

Ms. Willink responded that one thing that happened was that the test changed; she asked Mrs. Curran to respond about how every year, or every three years, the bar is being raised – this makes a difference. She indicated that they have shared this information before as to the different groups of students and how they've progressed and how they've gone up in scores over the years. The test does change, and with any group, some students go up and some students go down.

Ms. Patricia Curran, Director of Instruction agreed with Ms. Willink that the test does change every five years ... (the rest of her comments were from the back of the room and inaudible).

Ms. Willink added that they are educating so many more children and different kinds of children. She provided the example of the rise in autism that puts an increase into the amount of money they are spending. They have a lot more aides, tutors, more equipment, and reduction in the number of children per class – all of these things increase the budget.

Alderman Papa asked about the issue of scores, such as those from CMT's and how they test special needs children with those children that are not special needs. He inquired if that affects the overall scoring.

Ms. Willink responded that all of the children have to be tested and she asked Patricia Curran, Director of Instruction for her comments again.

Ms. Curran commented that within the last several years the State requires all secular students, unless they have severe needs, to take the same tests as the general population. Special Education students used to take them at a different level but that isn't the case anymore. The Principals have been working very hard with the teachers to look at that data - the CMT data – to keep digging to see what the needs of the students are. They also have school improvement plans, common assessment data and curriculum goals based on (more comments, inaudible)

Vinny Capece, Board of A&T complimented the BOE on the budget plan that they put together. It was very easy to read, and he complimented the fact that they found some substantial savings in their plan. He commented that he did not have an issue with the salaries of teachers, because he thinks it is a difficult job that requires well-educated

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professionals. Additionally, the administrative level people such as principals, have a high level of responsibility for a large number of students. While looking at the Budget and being aware of a lot of the perception of the public, he doesn't think there are any issues with the core educational aspects. However, there does seem to be the building of a lot ancillary types of activities outside of it that he feels, and many other people feel

and fear, will be unsustainable. He comments that he has no issue with the core spending - he is referring to the support systems and the salaries associated with it and the difficulties of sustaining it in these difficult economic times.

Mr. Capece asked if the BOE ever considered that the increases for 2010 be held off. He inquired if they had ever had that discussion, at the table with unions and administrators, due to the economic situation. Mr. Capece commented that the 19% increase will be passed directly onto the taxpayers – who are already in trouble. He commented that he thought it was time to open up a conversation about that 3%, 3 ½ % or 4%, even on the City side...

Ms. Willink asked what his question was...

Mr. Capece asked if there had been a conversation with the administrators or unions at a contractual level about pausing on any increases that are scheduled in this budget for 2010.

Ms. Willink responded that they have not had that conversation. They negotiated four major contracts in the last year that will start at the end of this year. Truthfully, they just came away from the negotiating table, for instance with the teachers and administrators, nurses, paraprofessionals, custodians and have agreed to a certain contract. Ms. Willink responded that no, as a Superintendent, she has not gone back to ask the Union to consider freezing their salaries. She asked if that was the question he was asking...?

Mr. Capece responded that was what it amounts to – it would be more than a good faith effort. It would make up some ground because obviously, it's difficult to support this in these economic times because he's fearful of being able to sustain it.

Ms. Willink referenced that when she worked in Thomaston before coming to Shelton and they asked their Teacher's Union to vote on freezing their raises, they voted and it was 100-0 not to do that. The BOE has not asked her to do that. She added that she understands his point; however, they've just signed a contract, that's a promise with them, it's difficult to ask people to break that.

Mr. Capece indicated that he thinks they are going to have a gap if they don't support this. The subject should be broached; he thinks the taxpayers need to know that these efforts are taking place. They should be known on the City side as well. The key to 2009 and hopefully only until 2010 in getting through this is to keep people employed. He thinks that the City in good faith - just needs to keep people employed. Mr. Capece concluded that to make up gaps, the subject should be broached.

Arlene Liscinsky, BOE responded that she sat in on two or three negotiations – most of the contracts were negotiated this past summer. She indicated that they expressed to

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the unions that this was going to be a tight budget year. They also had to push for an increase in cost sharing because that was where they really needed to have some savings...On the City side, there are different plans, they just recently negotiated a 3.6% for maintenance/custodial, but there's no cost share. When she looks at the budget for the City side she says - (inaudible...) if you had a 10% cost percentage you'd be saving quite a bit of money. Both sides have to look at it...it doesn't matter what bargaining

rules you have, where you work, or what job – everyone feels the feels the impact health insurance costs.

Chairman Holden pointed out that on the City side the custodians aren't sharing in the employee benefits; the difference in the rate of pay between the City side and ...

Ms. Liscinsky interjected that she would challenge him on that because if it is factored in for their paraprofessionals, secretaries pay...(inaudible)and you factor in the cost sharing of their side versus the other side --- it would be found that the dollar values are extremely close... She'd bet one paycheck (inaudible);;;

Chairman Holden responded that her point is that the City side doesn't contribute, but their base pay is lower, and when things are factored in it may be a leveling point; but on the other hand, they can't be asked to take less pay and to contribute as though that is going to be something that is fair. He asked to move on to another question.

Alderman Finn indicated that he went through the Budget and saw that the only increase was in the benefits at 1.4. He asked the BOE, if they had a back-up budget - if they aren't funded the 1.4.

Mr. Oppel responded that they did not at the moment.

Greg Kodz commented that 89% go on to higher education; the other 11% - he asked what the dropout rate was.

Ms. Willink responded that there were two different ways of computing that rate – 1.8% - 32 children over 4 years. It is in the Budget Book on page 8, Section 3...

Greg Kodz inquired as to how that percentage would equate to the number of students or to any reductions (because 1 child is \$10K) that may result in the BOE budget per dropped-out student.

Ms. Willink and Mr. Oppel tried to explain the formula they use to arrive at the percentage and what grade levels are included in the calculation.

Mr. Oppel explained that one less student doesn't reduce the budget by \$10K – it isn't computed in that fashion. It is based upon classroom thresholds – one less student per school would not realistically impact the budget; except for maybe one less ream of paper. He added that with the dropouts – it gets about 32 students over a 4 year cycle.

Alderman Simonetti inquired about money they receive as grants, which may very easily dry up because the Government is putting money in other places; if that money did dry up, he asked if they would be willing to let go of some people.

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Mr. Oppel and Ms. Willink responded that they would do that.

Alderman McPherson asked if there were any positions that were funded by grants.

Ms. Willink responded that a number of positions are funded by grants.

Alderman McPherson asked, with the shape that the Federal Government and State Government is in, and in conjunction with Alderman Simonetti's comments, will people have to be let go.

Ms. Willink responded, that at this moment in time, from what they are seeing, for example, Ms. Curran has a Title One Grant that funds some teachers in troubled, poverty-level schools. They don't see that money drying up. Some other ones have been reduced so that haven't done some of the things that they might have done. Ms. Willink indicated that the Special Education is the other large grant area and some of those positions might be affected.

Alderman McPherson asked what the cost was per student.

Ms. Willink responded that it was approx. \$10.5K for a high school student and about \$8K for intermediate school student and just under that for elementary school.

Alderman McPherson asked about non-resident students and if they had 10, 20 or 30 non-resident students at \$10K...

Mr. Oppel responded that, as he mentioned earlier, they can't necessarily make that clean of an argument.

Alderman McPherson asked, if in some way they found out who they are, has the BOE taken action against these people because it is fraud to accept these services so they might have to make restitutions to the City and to the Shelton School System. If there are a lot of non-residents, it becomes a big problem.

Alderman Simonetti responded that he did not want to answer for the BOE, but the time, the effort, the expense to chase them and go through the legal system to get the money back wouldn't be worth it. And as Chairman Oppel stated, it is not a clean cut thing.

Alderman Finn asked, if because of the economy, have they seen an increase for students eligible for free lunches.

Mr. Oppel responded yes, 11% - free or reduced.

Alderman Finn asked what the qualifications for free lunch were.

Mr. Oppel responded that it was based upon family income based on family size; there is a State threshold. He added that there has been a quantitative increase in the number of students.

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Alderman Papa asked, since they have looked into custodial services, do they know of any towns that do have custodial services subcontracted out.

Mr. Cameron responded that Trumbull contracts out the management but the actual work is performed by employees of the Trumbull BOE. He knew there were some towns; however, he could not recall them all – they are few and far between. However, Plainville had their own custodial services for a long time, went to private and returned to

their own about three years later. There are others towns investigating it – he thought one town was Weston.

Chairman Papa asked if they contacted those towns to find out if they realized any cost savings.

Ms. Willink responded that they met with all the Superintendents and Business Managers at Weston to discuss that subject and share ideas about it.

Chairman Holden added that he thought it would depend greatly on what kind of relationship can be established with the vendor.

Alderman Papa commented, relative to what Mr. Capece mentioned, that as everyone knows, Bridgeport is having severe budget problems and they did talk to their police union and instead of having layoffs, they agreed to no increases for two years; it has been done in certain unions. Also he wanted to thank Chairman Holden for bringing up the subject of the administrative offices because they had a lot questions that people have asked about that – and now this will give it clarification. He thanked the BOE members for their responses to those questions.

Ms. Willink commented that in the long run it is a good thing it was done because, the Perry Hill School has relocated to the building because they are under construction with no water, power, etc. She added that they've built something for the City. It is a building that anyone can use such as the BOA for public hearings and it will serve the City for years to come.

Alderman Anglace asked when the Board of A&T was going to finish with their questions because he's been waiting a long time.

Judd Crawford, asked if they needed 45 secretaries.

Ms. Willink responded that yes, they need 45 secretaries.

Mr. Crawford asked why, under the account for Program Improvements, was there a cut of \$5K.

Ms. Willink responded that they are having more Programs internally, instead of having people come in from the outside and paying them a fee to present a program to the Staff. She provided the example of a program done this afternoon for the administrators by the administrators so that they didn't have to pay someone. They figured that if they continue to do that, the High School will be doing the New England Association work internally. They determined that to be an area where they could save.

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She continued that they have been very cautious in sending people out to Conferences Teacher Workshops and they've done more internally.

Under the 6 Year Capital, Mr. Crawford, asked why they went with Replacement of Windows as #1; HVAC as #2 and Roof Replacement as #3. His main concern is under

The HVAC system where it states that it does not provide sufficient outside air to the classrooms to comply with the Connecticut Indoor Air Quality Act.

Mr. Banfe, Director of Facilities/Operations, responded that the reason for the priority was that the windows came first, so that wherever the HVAC system was put in would have the advantage of having insulated glass. The boilers are in the process of being installed and are almost complete - so that the heating of the elementary schools is done. The priority now goes to the windows so that whatever heat is generated stays inside as much as possible. The HVAC comes second because whatever penetrations have to be made into the roof are made before the final roof replacement. Mr. Banfe added that it makes more sense to make all roof penetrations for any rooftop equipment prior to finishing the roof. Some times it makes more sense to go in reverse – and that was the progression of those three things.

Mr. Crawford asked a question in regard to their fleet inventory and what the status was of the Chevy S-10 Pick-Up.

Mr. Banfe responded that maintenance vehicle does not leave the Intermediate School and the High School campus – it does not go on public streets. It is a smaller truck used for upkeep of sidewalks and snow-removal; it is not a road-ready vehicle.

Mr. Crawford asked if anything being done about the severe body rot.

Mr. Cameron responded no and clarified that they don't have a replacement vehicle in for next year.

Mr. Crawford commented about the State budget– there is more and more coming down on to the local Board of Educations. When he first came in to working with the City they were getting over \$11M back for educational cost sharing. The citizens of the City of Shelton have had to pick up this cost expense. They are down to \$4.975; of course, the State hasn't finalized its budget yet. He asked if they foresee any increase.

Ms. Willink responded that the figures they got today did not indicate an increase, nor did they indicate a significant decrease. They just stayed flat.

Mr. Oppel responded that it was left funded – that was what the Governor had indicated in her comments.

Ms. Willink added that she and Allan Cameron are going to a meeting on the 17th with the Governor and they will tell them everything once and for all. They will get back to them with that information.

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Chairman Holden asked Alderman Anglace if he had any comments.

Alderman Anglace motioned to adjourn.

Chairman Holden asked if there were any other questions or comments.

Alderman Lynn Farrell asked about the testing, and the question that Charlotte had asked, and she commented that she thought it was well answered about particular students that are now tested. She indicated that she didn't think it had been mentioned about the non-English speaking students, only Special Education students were discussed.

Alderman Farrell commented that Shelton is in no way being considered by anybody for a situation that could come under the No Child Left Behind Act; in looking at the Non-Performing or Failure to Perform for 3 Years or Failure to Improve – Shelton is OK. If they were not OK, they would be hearing from not only the Federal Government, but the State Department because in June of 2007, the State of Connecticut decided that they were going to have a legislation that would bring somebody in to access the District.

And they did, they brought in the Cambridge Assessment Plan that assessed the districts and found 12 failing Districts – all 12 districts had to submit District Improvement Plans. They examined every single District Improvement Plan and made every Superintendent and Board Chair come before them to tell them why their plan was good. This was done last year; this year they just found three more. One of them being Ansonia, Danbury and Stamford. The 12 improving districts are overseen very carefully by the State Department of Education and they have people that go out into those districts and work with them.

Shelton is nowhere near that list ...

End of tape 1B, 8:38 p.m.

Alderman Lynn Farrell asked about the expenditure for outside tuition.

Mr. Cameron responded that it has not been increased. It has been held the same since 2003-2004. If they run significantly over budget, which they report to the Board of Education monthly, and outside placements are made by the Department of Children and Families, the Courts or the Special Ed Departments, then they get reimbursed through the Special Ed Excess Cost Grant. Those reimbursements are netted against the expense.

Alderman Farrell asked if they keep looking at bringing some of them back.

Mr. Cameron responded – always – their Special Ed Director is relentless about looking for ways to keep them in.

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Alderman Farrell asked if they were going to cut the Alternative Education Program – where would those kids be going.

Ms. Willink responded that they cut it four years ago and at the time they organized the high school – the Guidance Counselor they had went with those students to the High School and those students were in her House and she's monitored them and seen them through. Now they are more dispersed throughout the school; however, they have

brought in an extra guidance counselor, an extra social worker and Staff has tried to monitor those students who might be at risk. She added that sometimes students are counseled out to attend night school or the night program.

Dr. Smith added that instead of having those students who have a difficult time attend in the traditional school setting (7:30 a.m. – 2 p.m.), they allow them to come for a half a day and try some other means to get credits, such as work program.

Alderman Farrell asked if those students that go into the Adult Education were included in the drop out rate.

Dr. Smith responded no but for this present year they have to be.

Alderman Farrell inquired about the Talented & Gifted, it is not required by law, and she asked if it was a necessity that they have it.

Ms. Willink responded that it was something that the Board felt very strongly about; they discontinued the program they had. They studied it for a couple of years, Mrs. Curran and Dr. Parchin worked to see what program would work well. They waited, hired a teacher and the program has been extremely well-received, in fact, if they Board could afford it, they would like to see the program expand. She added that, honestly, it would be one of those programs that, if they aren't funded --it would have to be one of the ones to go.

Mr. Oppel indicated that one of the reasons that the Board felt it was important was because they spend a huge amount of dollars at the bottom end of the educational system, and there's not a lot for those kids that are at the top end of they system. It was a way to create parody for a small group to restart a talented and gifted program that wasn't a lot of money in the grand scheme of things but had a great impact on kids that are above and beyond the norm.

Alderman Papa added that a couple of years ago he had asked that question about why they had cut out the gifted program – because, as Winn just said, there is so much money being spent on special needs and it is not fair to the students at the top of scale They should not just be pushed along because they are going to be very successful in life– educators, scientists, doctors – that is money well spent.

Alderman Simonetti commented that he knew that there was a number that was thrown out - \$10K per high school student, \$7K or \$8K for an elementary student. If he takes the raw numbers that are provided - the \$63M from last year divided by the number of students, he comes up with approx. \$11,250; when he does the \$64M this year, he comes up with \$11,721. He asked if they could get back to him and give him a better

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number, he'd appreciate that – because with \$10K and \$8K that would only be an average of \$9K.

Alderman Papa commented that there must be a lot of other services factored into that.

There was further discussion about Page 6 of Section 1 of the BOE Proposed Budget Requested (\$64,468,075) divided by the total number of students (5,550) and how it would come out to about \$11,721.

Mr. Oppel commented that it was only about a \$200 increase.

Alderman Simonetti stated that he thought the increase was minimal too – but how did you get from \$11K down to \$7K...even if it's just averaged out it is coming to \$11K...

Mr. Oppel asked for clarification as to what the question was – did he want to know how they determine the breakdown from the high school, the intermediate school and the grammar schools?

Alderman Simonetti commented that yes, he just wanted to know how they came up with that number.

Chairman Holden indicated that some students - like the Special Needs or Gifted Program – are going to drive up the average.

Mr. Oppel clarified that the high school student is going to cost more than the grammar school because there is a lot more going on – more teachers, more counselors, more programs, etc.

Nancy Dickal complimented the BOE on the great job they did on the breakdown of costs. She added that they can all at least agree that education is the most important thing and hopefully, the economy will improve...

Alderman Simonetti asked about the mandates for busing – he asked if it was correct that they have to have a seat for every child, for every grade, even high school.

Mr. Cameron responded yes.

Alderman Simonetti commented that he thinks it is extremely unfair to the BOE to do that because so many students are driven in by Mom or Dad everyday anyway. If they could cut it down to 38 buses, there could be a savings right there. He added that he thinks our legislators should work with them that way. He thanked them again for an excellent job in their presentation and it was an easy book to read.

Judd Crawford asked the total number of students that are driving to school that are paying the parking fee.

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Mr. Cameron responded that it was probably about 260 at \$100/ea and they got about \$26K.

Mr. Crawford asked what it cost for a bus.

Alderman Simonetti added that it wasn't the number of students that were driving – because each kid might be taking 2 or 3 other kids in the car, and there's Moms and Dads dropping them off.

Mr. Cameron indicated that if it snows, they are all back on the bus anyway.

Charlotte Madar stated that somehow legislators have to come up with a type of contract – either you do want your student on a bus or you do not. She heard of it being done in Congers, New York; if the parent signs that they don't want their child on a bus, then they could not take a bus for the entire school year – the parent would be signing a contract.

Mr. Cameron responded that the thing governs them is the Students Accommodations part of the Connecticut General Statutes so it would have to be changed at the State level.

Charlotte Madar stated that she thought it would be worth fighting for because it is useless spending that could go towards something else.

Mr. Cameron agreed and responded that it would save a lot of money if they did not have to bring the kids to school – he suggested that some could walk to school, and it would also help with socialization because they would talk to each other.

Alderman Kudej asked about Bernie Simons Summary of Savings worksheet from the beginning of the meeting, in regard to the Non-Resident Students, he asked if they were strictly relying on a Hotline to monitor this or do people have to prove their residency.

Ms. Willink responded that there is a huge packet of information that has to be filled out before a student can register or enter the Shelton Schools. The Guidance Department at the High School, for instance, works with the Outreach Officer to investigate. If a child is found to no longer live at an address, Dr. Smith writes a letter indicating that the child needs to be withdrawn if they no longer live there.

Alderman Kudej commented that there has always been a question over the years that there are kids from other towns, Trumbull, Bridgeport or Stratford. But when it is brought up, they say it isn't true, but they've had a couple incidents to prove that they got in. He asked how thorough they are in policing this and what is the average because it costs \$10K to educate a student per year.

Ms. Willink responded that people are quite devious because they will move and pretend to still reside in Shelton or the child will live with an aunt or uncle who is a resident and they have to keep them. They are trying very hard to keep on top of it.

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Alderman Finn asked about the Revenue side of the budget and wanted to know if \$42K - \$46K still coming in for the (inaudible) replacements – how many more years do they have to pay off on that.

Mr. Cameron responded that it was about 6 more years.

Judd Crawford commented that he was sorry to hear that Robin Willink would be leaving. He indicated that he had gone through this chart of all the different positions of the reporting structure, and asked what would happen if the Board eliminated the Office of Administrative Assistant Superintendent and solely had the Office of Superintendent

of Schools – because everyone here is reporting to the Assistant Superintendent whom is then reporting to the Superintendent.

Ms. Willink responded that they have over 800 employees; a \$63M budget; almost 6,000 students; 9 facilities to manage, technology centers– she thinks that they could not be as accountable to their own people and to the City and to the Community without two people there. She just didn't think one person could do it alone because it is a huge responsibility without an Assistant to share that load.

Chairman Holden added that one of the things that brings this to the table is that Robin is leaving and that is someone that they wouldn't need to let go of to reduce payroll. It might be something to consider on an interim basis from the standpoint of getting through the budget crunch. Chairman Holden asked if there were any further questions from members of either Board.

Alderman McPherson indicated that he had a question on Capital Improvements. He asked Mr. Banfe about the type of roofing. He asked if it was the new type of roof used now, more pitched as opposed to flat roof.

Mr. Banfe responded that the law calls for any roof replacement to have a roof that has a pitch of one half inch per foot; it does not specify what type of roof is put on. They are currently on the Building Committee for Elizabeth Shelton and Long Hill Schools and they are investigating four or five major types of roof systems that could go on there. The decision hasn't been made yet. The law only addresses issues such as no ponding, bracket support, pitch, insulation – it doesn't say what type of roof to put on. They are investigating how to get the best bang for their buck. All the roofs have to have a 20 year warranty, which is part of the law, so regardless of what roof they put on, they have make sure it is in compliance so that they can get reimbursement from the State.

Chairman Holden asked if there were any further questions from either Board. There were none.

Adjournment

Due to no further questions or comments, Chairman Holden adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Karin C. Tuke
Clerk, Board of Apportionment and Taxation

Tapes (2) both sides on File with the City Town Clerk's Office.