

The minutes presented within this document provide a summary of the discussion that took place at the Board of Education meeting. For the complete discussion of the agenda items, please view the video of the Board meeting on our website at www.southingtonschools.org. These minutes are considered a draft until approved at the following regular Board of Education meeting.

SOUTHINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION

SOUTHINGTON, CONNECTICUT

REGULAR MEETING

MARCH 8, 2018

The regular meeting of the Southington Board of Education was held on Thursday, March 8, 2018 at 7:00 p.m. in the John Weichsel Municipal Center Public Assembly Room, 200 North Main Street, Southington, Connecticut with an Executive Session scheduled for 6:30 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Brian Goralski, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

Board members present: Mrs. Terri Carmody, Mr. Joseph Baczewski, Mr. Robert Brown, Ms. Lisa Cammuso, Mrs. Colleen Clark, Mr. David Derynoski, Mr. Brian Goralski, and Mrs. Patricia Queen. Absent was Mr. Zaya Oshana.

Administration present: Mr. Timothy Connellan, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Steven Madancy, Assistant Superintendent; and Mrs. Sherri DiNello, Director of Business and Finance.

2. EXECUTIVE SESSION ~ NEGOTIATIONS UPDATES AND STUDENT MATTER

MOTION: by Mr. Derynoski, seconded by Mr. Baczewski:

"Move to go into Executive Session, excluding the public and the press, for the purpose of discussing Negotiations Updates and a Student Matter, and upon conclusion reconvene to public session."

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

Mr. Goralski ended Executive Session at 7:04 p.m.

3. RECONVENE MEETING ~ REGULAR SESSION

Mr. Goralski reconvened the Board of Education Regular Session at 7:12 p.m.

Board members present: Mrs. Terri Carmody, Mr. Joseph Baczewski, Mr. Robert Brown, Ms. Lisa Cammuso, Mrs. Colleen Clark, Mr. David Derynoski, Mr. Brian Goralski, and Mrs. Patricia Queen. Absent: Mr. Zaya Oshana.

Administration present: Mr. Timothy Connellan, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Steven Madancy, Assistant Superintendent; and Mrs. Sherri DiNello, Director of Business and Finance.

There were no Student Representatives present as there was no school due to a snow day.

4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Kelley School Robotics Team led in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES ~ February 22, 2018

MOTION: by Mr. Derynoski, seconded by Mrs. Carmody:

“Move to approve the regular Board of Education minutes of February 22, 2018, as submitted.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

MOTION: by Mrs. Carmody, seconded by Mrs. Clark:

“Move to move Agenda Item 9.a ‘Approval of Out of State / Overnight Field Trips’ to Agenda Item 6.a.1.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

a. Communications from Audience

Patti Goldberg, 64 Miller Farm Road, spoke regarding school safety and security and explained that 22 days ago her 14 year old nephew, Alex Schachter, was shot and killed at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. She asked the Southington Board of Education to review their security and safety protocol. She requested hiring security guards for each school, bullet-proof glass on all doors and windows and metal detectors. She did not support arming teachers with guns. She recognized the education budget deficit; however, advocated for hiring more school counselors and psychologists for the children who are falling through the cracks and need help. She is starting a crusade for safer schools and mental health programs for young children and adults in memory of her nephew and for all the children in Southington.

Mr. Goralski extended the Board’s sympathy and advised Mrs. Goldberg to speak to Mr. Connellan and Mr. Romano who oversee the safety and security in the school district and that they would be happy to listen to her ideas for consideration.

a.1 Approval of Out of State / Overnight Field Trips *(formerly Agenda Item 9.a)*

Mrs. Marilyn Kahl, Principal of Kelley Elementary School, and Mrs. Valerie Moriarty, Grade 5 Teacher at Kelley, started the Kelley CyberShamrocks Robotic Team five years ago with a maximum of 16 students divided into four teams in the program. They discussed the mentors, competitions against middle school teams, sportsmanship, and the Robotics program. The Kelley Robotics Team qualified to compete in the Vex IQ Robotics World Championship that will be held in Louisville, Kentucky April 29 through May 2, 2018.

MOTION: by Mrs. Queen, seconded by Mr. Derynoski:

“Move that the Board of Education approve the field trip request for the Kelley School Robotics Team to travel to Louisville, Kentucky April 29-May 2, 2018.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

The students gave a brief demonstration of their robot.

a.1.b SHS Key Club Field Trip Approval

Mr. Patrick Nobou, Foreign Language Teacher and Co-advisor of the Southington High School Key Club, gave a brief description of some of the Key Club charitable community activities. He explained the opportunity for 20 Key Club students to learn leadership skills at the New England Key Club Convention at the Springfield Marriott Hotel Springfield, Massachusetts April 6-8, 2018. There would be no expenses incurred by the Board of Education because the Southington Kiwanis Club is paying for the transportation.

MOTION: by Mr. Brown, seconded by Mr. Derynoski:

“Move to approve the field trip for the SHS Key Club on April 6-8, 2018 to Springfield, Massachusetts, as presented.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

MOTION: by Mrs. Carmody, seconded by Mrs. Queen:

“Move to move Agenda Item 9.c ‘Perkins Supplemental Enhancement Grant Approval’ to Agenda Item 6.a.2.”

6.a.2 Perkins Supplemental Enhancement Grant Approval *(formerly Agenda Item 9.c.)*

Mr. Owen McLaughlin, Teacher at the Agricultural, Science and Technology Center at Southington High School, stated that he was applying for this federal Perkins Supplemental Enhancement grant to update some of the equipment in the Plant Science, Animal Science and Aquaculture labs to be more technologically advanced and to reflect what the industry professionals are looking for in the workforce. He gave a brief outline of his grant application. It is a requirement of the Perkins Grant that the Board acknowledges submission and approval of the grant.

Mrs. DiNello explained that annually the school district receives money from the Carl D. Perkins Grant that is used by three different departments at the high school who write and submit the grant (Agricultural Science, Technology Education and Family Consumer Science). The grant award is under \$50,000 each year. This Perkins Supplemental Grant is offered in addition to the annual Perkins Grant. Mr. McLaughlin and Mrs. Marion Stannard, Ag-Science Director, initiated this grant on their own because of the Board of Education budget challenges.

MOTION: by Mrs. Clark, seconded by Mr. Derynoski:

“Move that the Board of Education approve for the administration to apply for the Perkins Supplemental Enhancement Grant and to continue the initiatives developed with this grant award.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

b. Communication from Board Members

Mrs. Carmody addressed the public comments made by several elected officials concerning the work of the Board of Education. She read the following for public record: *“I find some elected officials’ comments quite disparaging and certainly not factual. The nine member Board of Education works very diligently to ascertain what will be the best educationally for all the students of Southington. We examine all possible scenarios that will have the least impact on the students. Mr. Connellan has publically presented our budget and thoroughly explained the impact that state cuts will have on our school system. Still, there are those that believe the Board of Education is not pursuing the best way to move forward. It is a daunting task, one that we all take very seriously and remain committed to putting forth a fair and equitable budget. I ask that before the Board of Education is criticized that these people examine the facts and that we all work together to do what is best for all the people of Southington.”*

Mr. Brown stated that he received a phone call from a 90-year old gentleman who lives out of town and gave him names of two military servicemen, Anthony Pasqualli and John Folcik, to be inducted posthumously to the Wall of Honor who were killed during World War II. Mr. Brown was going to look into these names. Mr. Brown received an email from a student in a history class in Texas who was assigned Charlie Remer’s name to research from the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C. Charlie Remer recently was inducted posthumously into the Wall of Honor at Southington High School and Mr. Brown was able to send her all the biographical information that he had collected on Charlie Remer.

Miss Cammuso read to the second grade class at Thalberg School last Friday and thanked the school community for welcoming her and noted the energy and positivity of the students. She pointed out that it was International Women’s Day and thanked all the strong women who have come before her and currently serve on the Board of Education.

Mr. Goralski had flyers available for parents regarding a STEPS event on March 23, 2018 from 5:30-8:00 p.m. at the Southington Police Department. STEPS will be presenting an educational community event on learning how to stop an opioid overdose. Free Narcan Kits will be distributed at the end of the training courtesy of Beacon Pharmacy (*Attachment #1*). He explained that STEPS also attended a Planning and Zoning meeting to oppose the opening of a medical Marijuana facility on Queen Street

Mr. Goralski thanked Mrs. Queen for writing the open letter to the Citizens of Southington on behalf of the Board of Education that was submitted to the local newspapers encouraging the community of Southington to participate at the budget public hearings in the 2018-2019 budget approval process (*Attachment #2*). He requested that the letter be shared with social media and that Mr. Connellan send the open letter to the parents via email.

Mr. Goralski addressed the student-driven walkout event on March 14 and that the Board was helping the students to safely facilitate the walkout for 17 minutes and not impact education. Mr. Connellan assured the Board that it was a student initiated, neutral memorial event for the 17 students who were slain in Florida. It is not a public or political event and there will be no speeches. It is a private event on school grounds with the involvement of the Southington Police Department who will provide resources. They have been purposely sparse on details for the protection of the students. The event will start at 10:00 a.m. Students who do not want to participate will be engaged in a different activity inside the school. No permission will be given for media to be on school grounds.

c. Communication from Administration

Administration reported on the following:

1. ALTA Bingo Event: Mrs. Passamano, HR Manager, reported on the Designer Bag Bingo event held at Bread for Life sponsored by the ALTA PTO, which is comprised of community Leaders. The goal of this event was to fundraise \$3,000 for ALTA. This event was the idea of Christina Simms, Director of Youth Services, with 65 women attending and over \$3,000 raised. This will become an annual event.
2. Healthy & Wise Update: Mrs. DiNello reported on results of the Lose to Win six-week competition rolled out in the fall with 138 school and 25 town employees participating for a total of 163 people with 65% staying with the program for a total loss of 562 pounds. The three top winners lost over 25 pounds in six-weeks. First place was John O'Neill, second place was Kelly Kemnitz and third place was Lt. Keith Egan. There will be a another walking challenge offered in the spring with participants picking a team of 5 people.
3. American Legion Grant: Mr. Madancy reported that the school district, in partnership with the American Legion, received a grant for \$764 for literacy materials targeted to the preschool program that was presented by Mrs. Rachel Wache of the American Legion Women's Auxiliary.

d. Communications from Student Representatives:

There was no communication.

7. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

a. Personnel Report

MOTION: by Mrs. Carmody, seconded by Mr. Derynoski:

"Move to approve the Personnel Report at presented."

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

8. OLD BUSINESS

a. Town Government Communications

Mr. Goralski reported on the recent Committee of the Chairs meeting with discussion centered on the Deficit Mitigation Plan, 2017-2018 Budget, and Medical Marijuana. He

apologized that he did not bring up Mr. Derynoski's idea about holding a Town Hall Meeting to the Committee of the Chairs but will do so at their next meeting.

Mr. Goralski announced the upcoming budget meetings:

- Board of Finance Budget Public Hearing, March 13, 7:00 p.m. at DePaolo Middle School
- Board of Finance/Board of Education Workshop, March 21, 6:30 p.m. at Town Hall
- Board of Finance adoption of budget, March 28, 7:00 p.m. at Town Hall
- Town Council Public Hearing, April 23, 7:00 p.m. at the Municipal Center
- Town Council adoption of budget, May 14, 7:00 p.m. at the Municipal Center
- Board of Finance setting of the Mill rate on May 16, 7:00 p.m. Town Hall

Mr. Goralski reported on the Farm Heritage Committee and that they will be looking at a Master Plan of Development for the two parcels on Pleasant Street and the Groski Farm at the corner of Berlin and East Streets. The committee asked the Southington High School Tech Department about having students renovate the produce stand at Groski Farm; however, the answer that the Farm Heritage Committee received was they could not do it. As the Board of Education chair and the liaison on the Farm Heritage Committee, Mr. Goralski was not happy by that response because it was also a learning opportunity for the students. Mr. Goralski asked Mr. Connellan and Mr. Derynoski, who serves on the Technology Committee, to look into why they replied no to the request because he thought it was a win-win situation for the students and the community.

b. Budget 2017-2018

Mrs. DiNello walked through the "draft" 2017-2018 Deficit Mitigation Plan with the Board members to meet the Board of Finance request that the Board of Education come up with a reduction of 75% of \$2,100,000, which equals \$1,575,000 and submit it in three columns: 1) Structural, 2) Non-Structural, and 3) One-time Savings that are not under Board of Education control. The directive was if there were not items under Board of Education control then what would be the alternative plans.

Mrs. DiNello stated that the only way that they can meet the request for the Mitigation Plan are some things that are out of their control. At the last Board of Education meeting, the Board asked administration to request a Furlough Day with the bargaining units. They are still awaiting the results of that request from the unions. If the Furlough Day is approved, there also would be savings in transportation.

Another item that is out of their control is action that could take place through the Self Insurance Committee. The school district Self Insurance Fund has a very healthy fund balance, which is separate from the town's fund balance. Mrs. DiNello explained in detail that the claims were well below what was anticipated and if it continues they could have \$1.4 million in claims under budget. Administration believes that a reduction in the contribution by the Board of Education and the Town into the Self Insurance Fund could help the entire community right now to make up some of the money due to the lack of state revenues. The Self Insurance Committee will be meeting in March.

The items out of the Board of Education's control are the Furlough Day, eliminating funding for capital items (elevator at SHS and Security Project), and the Self Insurance

Committee recommendation. The only other option would be lay-off of employees. The longer these decisions are delayed, it would impact a larger number of staff members. Currently, there is not a lay-off plan and they do not have a list by bargaining unit of who would be impacted. She thought it was important for the community at-large to know that they do not have any other options within the budget for reductions except salaries and benefits, which would result in mid-year reductions in staff.

The Board discussed the Deficit Mitigation Plan at length and had many questions. Mrs. Queen was in support of reducing the amount of money that they add into the Self Insurance Fund for this year. She asked Mrs. DiNello to explain a "Premium Holiday" to the public. Mrs. DiNello stated that the Self Insurance Fund balance is made up of money that the Town and Board of Education have contributed into that plan and employees also make contributions into the Self Insurance Fund based on the premiums that they are required to pay. Because there is a healthy Self Insurance Fund balance and they are looking to reduce the contributions being made by the Town and the Board, the employees would have a right to share in some savings. If the recommendation was in the \$1 million to \$1.2 million range, it would be appropriate that employees would have a "Premium Holiday" meaning at one-time this current year, a reduction from their pay would not be taken for health insurance and employees would benefit from the healthy fund balance too.

Mr. Goralski will not support lay-offs of staff in the middle of a school year; especially, when there are alternatives available. The Town's Deficit Mitigation Plan was all capital projects and does not impact services to the community. At the last Committee of the Chairs meeting, he told Mrs. Emilia Portelinha, Town Finance Director, that for over four years at the end of every budget season, Mr. Brumback (former Town Manager) used a word called "Harvesting" which involved harvesting over \$2 million last year for things that serve community needs, i.e., capital projects. This year's two capital project items, which the Board of Education might forego, can be funded through cash from last year's "harvest." He requested the Town to look at those accounts now before the Board of Education considers lay-offs. He noted that Mrs. Portlinha said the Town does not do that until the last quarter of the year. Mr. Goralski reiterated that this is a revenue problem, not a budget problem, because the Board of Education's budget was approved and there was a plan to spend the budget. The Board of Education cannot meet the request of \$1.6 million and if the Town has the ability to have funds leftover at the end of the year that could help the Board of Education, this is where the one checkbook philosophy comes in. He will not support any lay-offs until the Town looks at the "Harvesting" that they have done in the past to help the Board of Education with the budget deficit this year. He hoped that the "Harvesting" process stops and would rather see the Town have contingency accounts and tighter budgets like the Board of Education. The Board of Education uses supply money to cover unexpected special education costs.

Mr. Derynoski did not think there was a school system in Connecticut that was as open and transparent or had a budget prepared with factual detail like Southington. Anybody can look up any aspect of the budget and know exactly where it came from and what it is used for. The Town has contingency funds built-in in almost every department. Their process works fine for them; however, the Board of Education does not have that luxury. The Board of Education had to reduce \$400,000 in the current year budget because they could not get it funded last year.

Mr. Brown wanted to talk about the elephant in the room. The Town has a Rainy Day Fund of something between \$17 million to \$20 million. He is tired of hearing people say that this is not an emergency. When the state made its cuts, their intention was to shift the burden from the

state to the towns. He felt that rules were made to keep an orderly process and that it did not make sense to him to not take the money out of the Rainy Day Fund at this one-time huge deficit cliff that they are facing. Instead of doing that, the school district is going to have to lay-off employees, eliminate school programs and ask employees to give back. He pointed out that school employees are not overpaid in Southington when they look at other school employees in other towns; Southington is either in the middle or below the average. He was tired of hearing that Southington school administrators were overpaid. Mr. Brown pointed out that the nonunion administrators took half a raise this year and a zero percent raise for 2018-2019. He requested that the Town Rainy Day Fund be used instead of decimating the school system that already ranks 154 out of 166 districts. The Board of Education already received a letter from the state that Southington is almost at the point of not matching the minimum of amount of money that is required by the state to educate students, which he found embarrassing. He thought it was an emergency for the students and the Southington educational system to take that state deficit money out of the Town Rainy Day Fund and spend it on the school system before it is damaged any more than it already is because there is nowhere else to cut. Mrs. Carmody agreed with Mr. Brown and asked that the Town officials speak the facts as presented to them.

Mrs. Queen explained that coming into the 2017-2018 school year, the Board of Education already made structural changes, some of which came from the \$400,000 deficit from last year that had to be carried over into this year's budget and there was not an appropriation that came at the time. The Board of Education had to reduce eight teaching full time equivalent positions, six paraeducator full time equivalent positions and no longer have a paraeducator in every kindergarten classroom. There is one less guidance counselor at the high school, the World Language Pilot Program at South End Elementary School was eliminated, which the Board had intended to expand district-wide, also the middle school sports programs were lost, which is now being funded by the Southington Middle School Athletic Association. There have already been summative structural changes made already for this year. When the budget was presented to the Board of Finance, the message was that now is time to reduce the size of government and that structural changes were needed. Many people do not believe that education is government. With the school system ranking 154 out of 166 school districts in terms of how much money Southington spends per pupil, she did not know how much more they could reduce without damaging the quality of education that is provided to our students.

Mrs. Clark respectfully disagreed with Mr. Brown. She did not think that they needed to go into the Town Rainy Day Fund for anything because she did not want to see the town's credit rating be affected and would like to keep it as healthy and robust as it is now. She questioned if the Board of Education had to add to it this year. With the Self Insurance fund, there is a healthy, robust fund that our insurance consultant has said was fine at the level it is now. She questioned why the Board of Education had to add more money to it. This is a revenue problem, not a budget problem, because the Board of Education had a budget that was workable and could keep the integrity of the school district as it was. The state threw the curveball in November and told Southington they are going to be short \$2.1 million. She agreed that it was an emergency and questioned why they were still adding this year to the "Savings Account" Rainy Day Fund because it is one checkbook for the town. The Town has \$2.4 million of "Harvested" money and the Board of Education is being told that they have to basically dismantle the school system in April. The Southington residents write their checks out to pay taxes to the "Town of Southington," not the Board of Education.

Mr. Baczewski was concerned about the communication between the different Boards in town. Administration worked hard on the Mitigation Plan and had gotten very creative with it.

He noted that they have been talking about this for three months now and certain key meetings were put off. He has two children in the elementary schools and finds what is happening unacceptable. He noted the cliché, “Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me.” He stated that they have been fooled this year because they had a budget and it was important that they make good on it without laying off teachers. As a taxpayer and father, he found it ridiculous to be having a conversation around open space when the Board of Education is bleeding and needs to be surgically fixed.

Miss Camusso does not support any layoffs; especially, in the middle of the school year. She thought that they have to work with the other Boards collaboratively and be as transparent as possible. She thought that the Self Insurance Fund should be looked at.

The Board agreed to support the “draft” Deficit Mitigation Plan if they removed the layoff component and leave no other alternative. The Board discussed how to present the approved Deficit Mitigation Plan and whether to show the scenarios of the layoff component. Mrs. DiNello explained that the Board of Education had a clear directive from the Board of Finance that they needed to put a plan together of items that were out of their control and to provide alternative options. She stated that the “draft” was the administrations Mitigation Plan shared with the Board of Education and that if the Board of Education does not agree with administrations alternative option regarding layoff’s it could be communicated in a letter that accompanies the document. She thought that the Board of Education needed to share in that letter what their alternatives are because they were asked to come up with an alternative. The Board’s alternative option is that the Town relooks at accounts to see if there might be line items that are running in a surplus. An option is that of the \$3 million in contingency the Board of Finance and Town Council have that 85 / 15 split, her understanding is that 15% is not going into anything specific and is being held by the town in the event that there is a need for it somewhere else. It is another \$450,000 that potentially would end up going into the fund balance. There also should be some communication that the administration had no other alternatives but to put layoffs in front of the Board of Education and that the Board does not support that and is putting that burden back on the Town with some suggestions.

Mr. Goralski summarized that the Board is comfortable with sending to the Board of Finance the Deficit Mitigation Plan as it is with a letter attached to it that the Board does not support the layoff option and making the request for the Board of Finance to look at revenue items that could be potentially in the surplus on the Town side, as has been done in past years. Mrs. Queen added that the Self Insurance piece would benefit both sides of the budget ledger because it is both the Town and Board of Education, as well as the employees themselves, who have contributed to that fund.

MOTION: by Mrs. Carmody, seconded by Mr. Brown:

“Move to accept the Deficit Mitigation Plan as presented and discussed.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

9. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Approval of Out of State / Overnight Field Trips** *(moved to Agenda Item 6.a)*
- b. Lawn Mowing Bid Award – BID-2018-15**

MOTION: by Mrs. Clark, seconded by Mr. Derynoski:

“Move that the Board of Education Award BID-2018-15 Lawn Mowing and Trimming Services and Fall and Spring Grounds Debris Clean Up and Removal at Flanders, Hatton, Strong and Thalberg Elementary School, as presented.”

Mr. Goralski stated that Mr. Oshana could not attend the meeting because of a family obligation; however, if he were in attendance Mr. Oshana would not be in favor of voting to allow any company that has a lawsuit against them working in the Town.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YES – Mr. Brown, Mrs. Carmody, Mrs. Clark, Mr. Derynoski, Mr. Baczewski, Mrs. Queen and Mr. Goralski.

Motion carried unanimously.

c. Perkins Supplemental Enhancement Grant Approval *(moved to Agenda Item 6.a.2)*

10. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: by Mr. Derynoski, seconded by Mrs. Clark:

“Move to adjourn.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

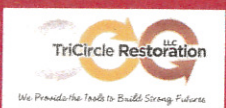
The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Blanchard
Recording Secretary

FREE NARCAN KITS

Narcan is a brand name for naloxone, a drug that can reverse the effects of an opioid overdose.

Free Narcan kits will be distributed at the end of the training courtesy of Beacon Pharmacy



SAVE A LIFE

ATTEND OUR COMMUNITY EDUCATION EVENT

LEARN HOW YOU CAN GIVE SOMEONE
A SECOND CHANCE AT LIFE

STOP AN OPIOID OVERDOSE

TriCircle, Inc.'s founder, also the facilitator of Southingtons Hope & Support Group, Ana Gopoian, will be presenting.

Christine Gagnon, Southington resident, will share her story and experience of her son's addiction and overdose death.

Beacon Pharmacy will be facilitating the Naloxone training and the dissemination of FREE Naloxone kits.

Event is free but registration is required. To register, email Megan Albanese: albanesem@southington.org.

ATTEND THE EVENT

DATE

03/23/2018

TIME

5:30-8pm

LOCATION

**Southington Police
Department
(69 Lazy Lane)**

Open Letter to the Citizens of Southington from the Board of Education

We, the Board of Education, strongly encourage the entire community to participate actively in the 2018-2019 budget approval process. We strongly feel that the future of public education in Southington should be the subject of a community discussion. We provide the following facts.

For the current fiscal year, 2017-2018, the BOE budget was not adequately funded to provide the same level of services as the previous year. As a result, we eliminated:

- 8 teaching positions;
- 6 paraeducator positions;
- Elementary world language pilot program, a program that we wanted to expand;
- Middle school sports, subsequently saved by the SMSAA; and
- All new textbooks.

After the budget was finalized, we were asked to cut an additional \$1.6 million because the State reduced funding to Southington partway into the current year. Resolution is still to come.

For next year, 2018-2019, the Superintendent proposed a 3.27% budget increase which totaled \$97.3 million. This budget included no new staff or services. The Board of Education reduced that budget to a 2.77% increase for a total of \$96.8 million.

The cost of education is personnel driven. Some contracts were due for negotiations this year and resulted in a 0% increase for salaries in the 2018-2019 budget. Nonunion staff, including our superintendent and other central office administrators, will also have a 0% increase in their salaries for next year.

The fiscal state of Southington is strong, but the fiscal state of Connecticut is weak. The increase in Southington's grand list at the current mil rate will not be enough to offset reduced state funding and the expected increase of BOE expenses.

Any further reductions in the BOE budget for next year will result in the reduction of staff and loss of programming.

We are proud of what Southington Public School employees and our students have achieved. This success is happening with a lean budget, one of the lowest in the state.

- Southington's per pupil expenditures ranks at 154 out of the 166 school districts in Connecticut.
- The ratio of students to administrators in Southington is 186 students per administrator, 36 students above the state average
- The recent enrollment study concluded that elementary enrollment is rising over the next ten years, due to home sales, both new and existing.

We believe that the strength of our schools contributes to the strength and prosperity of our town. The question now is how much value does Southington place on public education for our children and our town, and what are we willing to pay for it?

The Board of Finance will hold a public hearing on March 13th at 7pm at DePaolo Middle School. The Town Council will hold a public hearing on April 23rd at 7pm at the Municipal Center. Community members are always able to speak during the public communications portion of any board or council meeting.

Please join the conversation.