

**ENFIELD TOWN COUNCIL  
MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING  
MONDAY, APRIL 1, 2019**

A Special Meeting of the Enfield Town Council was called to order by Chairman Ludwick in the Enfield Room of the Enfield Town Hall, 820 Enfield Street, Enfield, Connecticut on Monday, April 1, 2019. The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m.

Present were Councilors Bosco, Cekala, Cressotti, Deni, Ludwick, Muller, Sferrazza, Szewczak and Unghire. Councilors Davis and Kiner were absent. Also present were Town Manager, Christopher Bromson; Town Attorney, Maria Elsdon; Director of Finance, John Wilcox; Town Clerk, Suzanne Olechnicki;

Present from the Enfield Board of Education were Walter Kruzel, Timothy Neville, Richard Regnier, Charlotte Riley, Christopher Rutledge. Ashley Depeau, Sarah Hernandez, Tina LeBlanc and Scott Ryder were absent. Also present were Superintendent, Christopher Drezek and Deputy Superintendent, Andrew Longey

**BOARD OF EDUCATION BUDGET PRESENTATION**

Mr. Drezek stated the entire Board of Education budget is within a packet for the Council. He then provided a slide presentation highlighting accomplishments and gave a brief synopsis of the proposed budget.

- The graduation rate went from 87.5% to 91.6%.
- The demographic reference group (DRG), which Enfield is part of, has an average per pupil expenditure of \$17,247 per student. Enfield spends \$14,422 per student, and the only town within that DRG spending less is Wolcott.
- The Town provided the Board of Education with \$71.2 million dollars last year, but Enfield Public Schools actually spent nearly \$4 million dollars more to operate the school system out of grants. He noted while some of these are federal and state grants, others are competitive grants that they go out and procure. He pointed out it actually cost the Board of Education over \$75 million dollars this year to run the school system.
- After learning all the needs indicated by the administrators, it totals up to about 6.88% or a little over \$76 million dollars. It had to be determined the best use of current resources to help offset some of these expenses.

Mr. Drezek expressed his and the Board of Education's extreme appreciation for the Town not passing on the State's \$4 million dollar cut to the Board of Education last year. He pointed out a \$4 million dollar cut on the Board of Education side at the mid-year point would have equated to an \$8 million dollar cut on the school side since they were already half-way into the fiscal year and had already spent half of their money. He stated such a cut would have resulted in closing buildings.

Mr. Drezek stated last year's request from the Board was 1.85%, and the Town actually had to provide more than this because the State of Connecticut released their figures and the calculation on the ECS grant resulted in the Board having to get more funding from the Council than they actually asked for. He noted the Town gave the Board over \$400,000, which had not yet been earmarked for spending. He then recommended the Board not spend that \$400,000 and plan beyond 12 months to offset what future expenses might be.

He stated the Town and Board froze spending, and the Board came up with an additional \$100,000 out of last year's budget money. He noted the Chairman of the Board then formally presented the Town Council with a check for approximately \$120,000 as a token of appreciation for the Town's support. He stated the Council and Board had a joint meeting, and it was decided to use this funding to help clean all the elementary schools and hire outside contractors to help get that work done.

Mr. Drezek stated the State of Connecticut allows Boards of Education to carry up to a one percent rollover from year-to-year. He noted over the summer months, there was an agreement that the Board would be allowed to carry over 1%, which amounts to \$700,000, but they don't typically have \$700,000. He noted the Town already pre-funded that savings account by giving them the extra \$400,000 that they had to have. He stated they agreed they were not going to spend that money, but rather keep it in reserve with the understanding that when they do this year's budget, instead of asking for 3% or 4%, they could cut that down by a point because they already have a reserve set up.

He highlighted some initiatives, such as the 1 to 1 technology program, which is the I-Pad Program, and every high school student will have an I-Pad. He noted this will be done with money they already have. He stated they just went through the accreditation visit, and the one area of focus mentioned throughout this entire process was the lack of technology in students' hands.

Mr. Drezek stated the new initiatives within the budget request are fixed costs of 1.45% and all the new initiatives totaled another .82%. He noted this included some teaching positions, such as an Art Teacher and Special Education Teacher, and that is strictly based on enrollment. He noted this amounts to 2.27%, which is what they were asking for, and that was the January 8<sup>th</sup> figure that was recently provided to the Town Council.

He stated at the time this budget was put together, unknowns included retirements, health insurance, magnet school tuition, special education cost grant funding. He noted these are the figures they now know:

- 16 retirements
- Insurance – health and other insurance is only \$2,220, but there's a caveat to that as well – general liability insurance is about \$23,000 less
- Magnet School tuition rates – \$368,000
- Special Education - \$351,880

- Transportation - \$50,000 reduction (new bus contract)

Mr. Drezek stated he asked for an increase of 2.27%, and in order to get that figure lower with no program changes, they can reduce it by \$1.27 million dollars, therefore, the new Board of Education increase number will be \$340,000 – a .48% increase. He stated this will keep all staff and programs, maintain transition classrooms, the Pre-K STEAM initiatives, sports, compliance with NEASC Accreditation, etc.

Councilor Sferrazza questioned if the bus contract goes to bid every year, and Mr. Drezek stated this is a three-year contract with a two-year extension.

Mr. Neville stated the Board is looking for a consensus to move forward in hiring new teachers, and he feels this is the only way to save money on quality teachers because they are hired quickly.

The meeting recessed at 6:03 p.m. and reconvened in the Council Chambers at 6:05 p.m.

### **NORTH CENTRAL DISTRICT HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

Present for this item was Patrice Sulik, Director of Health for the North Central District Health Department.

Ms. Sulik provided the following highlights:

- There are 66 local health departments in Connecticut
- Local health departments are funded through the state, member towns and fees for permits and licenses
- They service Enfield, East Windsor, Ellington, Windsor Locks, Stafford, Suffield, Vernon and Windham
- They serve 166,000 people
- Their main headquarter is in Enfield, and they have three satellite offices.
- They are comprised of a 21-member board
- Their divisions are Administration, Environmental Health, Community Health and Public Health Preparedness

Ms. Sulik stated she was hired in 2016, and she was tasked with the following:

- Conducting a thorough assessment of all the operations in the district and creating a plan of what she felt were priorities that should be addressed
- Taking a closer look at finances and the budget and explore frequent staff turnover

Ms. Sulik stated prior to 2010, the State per capita rate for health districts was \$2.08. In 2010, that rate was decreased to \$1.85 per capita, and in recent years, this figure has not been consistently

funded in full. She pointed out per capita rates across the state range from \$4.67, which is Enfield, and \$20.79. She noted Enfield has held its per capita rate for five years.

She then showed charts illustrating revenue over the last four fiscal years. She stated they're about to sign on for another five-year Preparedness funding cycle. She noted there's a new grant to combat opioid abuse.

As concerns Preparedness, Chairman Ludwick questioned who the fiduciary is. Mr. Sulik responded CRCOG.

Councilor Szewczak referred to opioids and questioned how that coordinates with what the town provides through Social Services. Ms. Sulik stated one of the biggest requirements of the grant is that they're engaging with all the towns' efforts.

Chairman Ludwick questioned whether they have a full-time grant writer, and Ms. Sulik responded no.

Chairman Ludwick questioned whether any federal money is coming in, and Ms. Sulik responded yes, this funding flows through the state.

Ms. Sulik then spoke about a new grant and stated they were asked to be the fiduciary for the "Putting on Airs Home Visit Asthma Intervention Program". She noted this amounts to about \$30,000, and they'll be able to work with community health workers.

She stated their fiscal year runs from July 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup>, and their budget process takes several months. She noted they estimate revenues and expenses very conservatively. She noted the Finance Committee work sessions are scheduled to gain input and address questions and concerns from the board.

Ms. Sulik stated changes in personnel can have significant impact on the budget.

She reviewed cost efficiencies since 2016, which include a significant cost reduction for their audit; they removed the need for an outside accountant to perform routine work; maximized savings on the agency's cellphones by tracking and adjusting the shared minutes plan, and a comprehensive cost study on office supplies, janitorial supplies, field supplies, and ordering is now done quarterly. She noted they purchased their building, therefore, there's no mortgage on the building.

Councilor Sferrazza questioned the extraordinarily high pay raises, and Ms. Sulik explained their salaries were not competitive. She then described the problem they had with the turnover of staff. She pointed out sanitarians would take a position, gain needed experience and then move on.

Councilor Cressotti stated his understanding in order to retain trained employees, it was necessary to increase salaries. He questioned how this district stands in comparison to other districts concerning salaries, and Ms. Sulik stated this puts them right in the middle range.

Ms. Sulik stated they are currently in a state health insurance plan, and the employee pays 16% of the premium and 12% of the premium for dental insurance. She noted vision insurance is available, but that is paid 100% by the employee if they want it. There is tuition reimbursement up to \$1,000 per year for courses that relate to the person's position. She noted vacation time taps out after three weeks, and they have a limited amount of sick time per year. She noted the life insurance and disability insurance is paid by the Health District. She stated they have a Defined Pension Plan.

Councilor Szewczak questioned whether they have a 401K plan for employees, and Ms. Sulik responded yes.

Ms. Sulik referred to a question brought up about excess of revenue over expenditures and stated over four fiscal years, 95% and 97% of the excess of revenue over expenditures for the first two years was due to vacant positions in the District. She noted that's decreasing, and she will forward a copy of the last audit, and every year within the audit, it will show exactly which categories show excess.

Councilor Bosco questioned what percentage they cap their fund balance, and Ms. Sulik stated the State recommends at least approximately three to four months of operating expenses, and she believes there's general consensus on the Board that \$500,000 would be a good amount. She explained their fund balance is high at this point because a couple years ago the Board was going to embark on a remodeling project for the building, and because the Commissioner of Health had indicated they were going to force major regionalization of Health Districts and people would not be in their own buildings, but rather town-owned buildings, the Board properly wanted to hold off and see what was going to happen. She stated they are in the process of seeking out a project manager to help move forward on the building.

Councilor Bosco questioned what the fund balance is now, and Ms. Sulik responded approximately \$1.2 million dollars, but \$250,000 is earmarked for the building.

Councilor Sferrazza questioned what percentage Enfield contributes to the Health District's funding, and Ms. Sulik indicated she did not have that figure. Councilor Sferrazza questioned if it's more than the other towns, and Ms. Sulik responded yes.

Councilor Sferrazza stated because Enfield is paying more, are the inspection rates and services provided to Enfield greater than the other towns, and Ms. Sulik stated her impression Enfield is getting very good inspection rates.

Councilor Szewczak questioned if the Health District is able to do the pay increases and keep employees because they're getting more revenue from services that have been provided, or has the increase come from the per capita increase that the Health District charges the towns. Ms. Sulik stated they haven't increased the per capita rates to the town, and it has been stable for five years and will be the same next year. She noted it's probably a sum total of being very careful on the revenue and expenditure sides.

Chairman Ludwick stated the salaries are greater than what the Town can pay their own employees, and yet the Town is still paying at that same rate percentage. He questioned if there's a duplication of services, i.e., some services are already provided by Social Services, i.e., the opioid issue. He noted he perceives a duplication of services.

Councilor Bosco stated he would like to see the percentage of restaurant inspections in Enfield compared to other towns.

Ms. Sulik stated they do not do housing inspections in all towns, but they do those in Enfield.

Chairman Ludwick stated there's a lot of private sector money for healthy communities, and he questioned what's the coordination between Enfield and other towns through the Health Department to pursue those grants. He stated his belief the Health Department should coordinate this with all the member towns. Ms. Sulik agreed and noted they formed a Health Advisory Council, and there's a lot more synergy bringing people together from different towns. She noted they also have an opioid advisory group, and the discussion in this group is very robust. She stated Enfield has a bigger coalition, but some of the other towns aren't talking with each other. She noted the community health programming has been neglected for a significant amount of time, and it take time to build those relationships.

Mr. Bromson stated this presentation will be available on the Town's website. He questioned what is the per capita contribution of Enfield towards the Health District's budget. He requested the breakdown from the towns, and what is Enfield contributing, and what is the total percentage of inspections. He stated his understanding a quarter million dollars is going into the renovation of the Health District building, and it's the intention of this Health District to stay in Enfield and renovating the building they're occupying in Enfield. He questioned when work will begin.

Ms. Sulik stated this is what the Board voted to do. She noted the building committee is in the process of reviewing proposals from people who would be a project manager, but there's no set time frame.

Mr. Bromson stated his belief it there were to be a change, the Town would be informed, and Ms. Sulik responded yes.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 7:07 p.m.