

The **PUBLIC HEARING/SPECIAL BUSINESS/BUDGET WORKSHOP** of the Board of Education West Hempstead Union Free School District was called to order in the High School Video Conference Room on March 4, 2014 at 7:38 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Ms. Brohm, who presided, and six other members of the Board: Ms. Kurko, Ms. Lotito, Mr. Mariano, Ms. Rilling, Mr. Schindler and Mr. Trocchia. Also present were Mr. Hogan, Ms. Peluso, Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Vecchione, Mr. Fleck, Ms. Girolamo and members of the staff and community.

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The Veterans' Exemption Hearing began with Mr. Cunningham explaining to the audience that certain classes of veterans can get relief on their school tax bills if the Board so wishes. If granted, the statutory amount would shift to the rest of the taxpayers in the District, rising approximately \$28.50 per year for Class 1 homeowners. The research showed that the District has 161 ex-war period combat veterans, 15 disabled veterans, 211 non-combat veterans and 1 war combat veteran who are currently eligible for this exemption. Their taxes would be adjusted \$425.00, \$1,274, \$255 and \$167 respectively. The tax breaks would begin July 1, 2014, if the Board passes a resolution. The resolution will be put before the Board at the March 11, 2014 Board meeting for approval. Ms. Brohm asked residents for their input and comments.

Upon the motion of Mr. Schindler, seconded by Mr. Mariano and carried by seven, the Board adjourned the public hearing and convened the Special Business Meeting.

Under **ROUTINE MATTERS** action was taken as follows:

**Docket #3-246:** Upon the motion of Ms. Rilling, seconded by Mr. Trocchia and carried by seven, Appointments, Resignations, etc. were made, accepted, granted and approved as follows:

**Topic: Appointment of Interim Director of Pupil Personnel Services**

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Salary</u></b>	<b><u>Effective</u></b>
Bifolco, Donna	\$700/day	3/13/14 – t/b/d

**Topic: Civil Service Appointment**

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Position</u></b>	<b><u>Salary</u></b>	<b><u>Effective</u></b>
Butler, Robin	Senior Typist Clerk Chestnut Street	\$32,729 Step 4 (pro-rated)	3/17/14

Upon the motion of Ms. Rilling, seconded by Mr. Schindler and carried by seven, the Special Business Meeting was adjourned and the Budget Workshop was convened.

Ms. Brohm turned the meeting over to Mr. Hogan, who stated:

- *The last 6 budget cycles, going back to the Budget of 2009/10, have seen significant changes in West Hempstead. As you have heard me say many times, we have excessed or eliminated over 100 full and part-time positions since 2009. These positions included administrators, teachers, advisors, coaches, aides, maintenance and support staff. We have also made the difficult decision to reduce our day at the HS and MS from 9 to 8 periods, which reduced the number of electives students have the opportunity to study. Additionally, we have lost both athletic teams and extra-curricular clubs. So while we have worked diligently to mitigate the impact of the economic times upon the students, certainly there has been one.*
- *We have also seen a drop in Island Park revenue due to their decision to permit high school choice, since September of 2008. Additionally, we lost Nassau BOCES as a tenant at Marian Delaney, but were fortunate enough to enter a lease with the Gersh Academy, which presently utilizes about 40% of that school building.*
- *Over the course of that time, West Hempstead has lost over \$20 million in promised aid from the state. This is due to the Gap Elimination Adjustment and the Foundation Formula, which sends West Hempstead only about 13.5% of its total revenue need. The remaining 86.5% of revenue is raised or accounted for by the community and school district.*

- *In the present draft of the 2014/15 school budget, the budget to budget increase is 2.9%, carrying a tax levy, under the cap, of 1.42%. At present, there still exists approximately a \$500K gap between projected revenues and projected expenses.*
- *The community will raise via taxes approximately 76% of the revenue supporting our schools. In a community like ours, which has no industry to speak of, the bulk of that responsibility falls to individual homeowners and small shop/business owners. We are very appreciative of the support they have given us over the years and we believe strongly that we have put together budgets that recognize the burden of our homeowners while supporting the K-12 program.*
- *Even with these challenges, we have continued to move forward academically and technologically. In the past 7 years we have:*
  1. *Maintained our music and art programs*
  2. *Maintained the majority of our athletic teams and clubs, including the addition of Lacrosse*
  3. *We have added Advanced Placement courses*
  4. *We have maintained our connections with Molloy and Adelphi for college bridge programs*
  5. *We have added Wilson Reading programs in Foundations, Just Words and One to One. We have also added programs in Greek and Latin roots, as well as Great Books*
  6. *We have moved from Everyday Math to Envisions and Digits...and have added AIS assistance at the 3-5 level in Mathematics and would like to add AIS in Math K-2*
  7. *We have increased our ELL and Reading services in the District*
  8. *We have added Rising Stars and STELLAR programs*
  9. *We have added Robotics to Science Research*
  10. *Through a grant, we offered online learning in AP Psychology*
  11. *We acquired a \$270,000 grant for Strengthening Teacher and Leader Effectiveness*
  12. *We have added CCSS modules with training for our teachers*
  13. *In the past 7 years we have added interactive white boards in every classroom in the District and have added wireless access District wide, with active access for the learning process*
  14. *We have purchased and utilize iPads, tablets, chromebooks, and so on*
  15. *We have had assemblies that address bullying, respect, responsible driving and so on*
  16. *We have, as a community, provided food and clothing to those most in need...in West Hempstead, Island Park and many surrounding communities*

*So, even in tough times and with strategic planning we continue to meet the needs of our students and the greater community. Imagine if we had the \$20 million we were due... My thanks for the support to the Board, administrators, teachers, staff, parents and community, without whom none of this would have been possible.*

*But...that being said, let's not forget the continuing challenge we face.*

- *We have reached a point where there is simply no more to cut without drastically affecting the educational product of the school district. The reality is that the state and Wall Street are again doing much better fiscally, but a restoration of lost aid does not appear to be on the horizon. We keep looking for the cavalry to arrive, and it is nowhere in sight. I ask all of you to make your voices known to the Governor and our local state representatives, Senators Skelos and Hannon and Assemblymen Ra and Curran, and urge them to restore the level of funding needed to support our schools at the level our students, parents and community deserve.*
- *Tonight, we continue to present a budget that meets the educational needs of our students. On this evening's agenda are non-instructional items...items needed to maintain our buildings, support health and safety, provide for transportation, and pay for such expenses as Social Security, workers' compensation, pension costs and so forth.*

Mr. Hogan then turned the meeting over to Mr. Cunningham, who began a PowerPoint presentation on the budget.

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Mr. Cunningham first spoke on the unique value and success of each student, the highest standards of excellence being given, creating positive self-esteem, mutual respect and a life-long quest for learning.

The presentation began with Board of Education Goals – evaluating the mission statement and vision for the District in collaboration with key stakeholder groups, reviewing and revising the Strategic Plan, promoting academic excellence, collaborating with community in budget development and Island Park partners. Then came Strategic Planning Council goals – academic excellence, educational equity, continuous improvement using data, embed technology throughout the District and community relations.

Mr. Cunningham then gave a Tax Levy Limit Update – the limit has been submitted to the Office of the State Comptroller; the allowable levy limit is 1.42% or

\$602,316 over 2013-14 including \$400,000 to be used for capital projects; without the additional capital projects spending, the allowable tax levy limit would be 0.49% or \$202,316 above the 2013-14 tax levy. He also covered tax levy limit calculations. The draft budget has a projected gap between revenues and expenditures of almost \$550,000 and Governor Cuomo's proposed budget takes \$1,460,670 away through the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA). Also covered were major expense drivers – the Teachers' Retirement System and scheduled salary increases. Administration will continue to refine the expenditure budget as new information is received. The District will hear more from Albany in the coming weeks to help determine which direction the District will go on the budget.

Under **CONSIDERATION OF BUDGET ITEMS** – Staff and community members were given copies of the Proposed 2014 - 2015 Budget items. They were invited to ask questions on any items as the Board and Administration discussed the various items listed in these reports. It was explained that this evening's discussion would be on the Non-Instructional portion of the Proposed Budget.

Under 1000s – General Support – These codes are dedicated to the Board of Education, Central Administration, auditing, legal, records management, general insurance, building operations, data processing expenses and BOCES administrative and capital expenses. The total increase for this portion is \$56,206 or 1.03%.

2815s – Health Services - Includes all costs associated with private/public school nursing services, health exams/medical examiner and health-related hazardous waste disposal. The total increase for this portion is \$8,785 or 0.80%.

5500s – Transportation – Administration has successfully reduced appropriations by \$1,500,000. Savings have been greater than anticipated.

9000s – Undistributed Expenses – These expenses include mandated contributions to the New York State Retirement Systems, Social Security and Workers Compensation, other insurances, debt service, transfers to capital and funding for mandated summer instruction for severely disabled. The total increase for this portion is \$452,141 or 2.92%.

Mr. Cunningham finished with the next steps in the budget: continuing to refine the expenditure and revenue picture; discussion of the instructional portion of the budget on March 11<sup>th</sup>; continuing to negotiate contracts favorable to the community and working with elected officials in Albany to improve our state aid picture and to pass legislation that allows the District to operate more efficiently.

Budgeted Building Inspections were also covered. George Washington items included sidewalk and stoop repair and Room 14 floor replacement. Cornwell Avenue items were sidewalk and stoop repair and replacing the PE office floor. High/Middle School items included repair intercom systems, sidewalk and stoop repair, fire alarm system upgrade, High School water main repair and continued roof replacement/masonry repair. Chestnut Street and Marian Delaney items were sidewalk and stoop repair.

Future meeting dates are: March 11<sup>th</sup> – Budget Workshop on Instructional Items; April 1<sup>st</sup> – Budget Workshop, if necessary; April 22<sup>nd</sup> – Budget Adoption, May 6<sup>th</sup> – Budget Hearing and May 20<sup>th</sup> is the Budget vote.

Residents were permitted to ask questions at the conclusion of each section covered and at the end of the meeting.

At 10:27 p.m. upon the motion of Mr. Schindler, seconded by Ms. Lotito and carried by seven, the Budget Workshop was adjourned to Executive Session for the purpose of discussing personnel.

At 10:30 p.m. upon the motion of Mr. Trocchia, seconded by Ms. Lotito and carried by seven, Executive Session ended at 10:40 p.m.

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Kathryn Girolamo, District Clerk