

The **SPECIAL BUSINESS MEETING** of the Board of Education West Hempstead Union Free School District was called to order in the High School Video Conference Room on March 5, 2013 at 7:53 p.m.

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

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

Docket #2-245: Upon the motion of Mr. Schindler, seconded by Ms. Rilling and carried by six, the Board accepted the recommendations to add new vendors to the District vendor list.

Docket #2-246: Upon the motion of Ms. Brohm, seconded by Mr. Schindler and carried by six, the Board approved the Disposition of Equipment.

Docket #2-247: Upon the motion of Mr. Schindler, seconded by Ms. Rilling and carried by six, the Board approved the Settlement and Release with The Travelers Home and Marine Insurance Company to repair damage to Cornwell Avenue School.

Mr. Mariano then turned the meeting over to Mr. Hogan who stated,

“Over the course of the past 5 budget cycles, West Hempstead, like many school districts has found it necessary to cut costs in order to balance the budget. These cuts have been across the board and have included administrators, teachers, support staff, clerical and custodial positions. The cuts have also included our separate science teachers at both GW and CA, as well as the loss of our FLES program. Co-curricular clubs, athletic teams, advisors and coaches have also been cut. All in all, nearly 100 positions have been eliminated, while doing our best to maintain the efficacy of our academic program.”

The present budget year has continued that cycle of contraction. As we started the budget process and went before the community in three separate budget cafes, we found ourselves facing a budget deficit of over \$2 million dollars. This deficit was the byproduct of a number of factors including an increase in retirement and health costs...as well as contractual obligations come July 1st. Additionally, we have been dealing with lost revenue due to BOCES vacating Marian Delaney and a drop in Island Park enrollment. As of this evening, we are hopeful that a significant part of Marian Delaney will once again be occupied, providing a restoration of some of that revenue. Furthermore, our share of state aid continues to drop, including lost high tax aid to the tune of nearly \$370,000. I have been in contact with all our state representatives and am hopeful that the final state budget will restore some of the lost aid.

The Board and Administration continues to be very attentive to the needs of the community, realizing that the economic downturn has hit everyone and while Wall Street seems to have recovered, Main Street and households are still struggling to make ends meet.

As we come before you tonight, we are beginning the process of presenting a budget to the Board that will close the budget deficit and still provide a quality educational program to the students of West Hempstead. Certainly, changes are being recommended, including going to an 8 period day at our high school and middle school. The 8 period day will accommodate all the state requirements, while maintaining our AP and elective offerings, although some electives will be offered on a rotational basis. We will maintain our Fine Arts program. We will maintain our athletic and co-curricular offerings, and undertake necessary facility improvements in our buildings. We will meet our Special Education responsibilities and continue to offer Reading, ESL and AIS services. We will also meet our responsibilities to our families who choose to send their children to private and parochial schools.

This is a time of change. School districts are faced with integrating the new Common Core State Standards, along with the assessments that go with them. These assessments will be online, meaning additional computer purchases to meet the new requirements. Districts are also faced with meeting the APPR requirements and funding them...well over \$100,000 to West Hempstead. These requirements also carry with them the creation of Student Learning Objectives and the benchmark and final assessments that go along with them. The goal is to provide a rigorous education that will better prepare our students for life in the 21st Century and continuing to prepare our students for college.

We are going to meet these challenges for our boys and girls. We are going to embrace change, adapt as necessary and run a solid school district educationally and fiscally.

The administration is hopeful that the Board of Education and Community will find our efforts in preparing this draft budget educationally thoughtful and fiscally sound. We look forward to the Board's input and direction."

Mr. Hogan then turned the meeting over to Mr. Cunningham, who began a PowerPoint presentation on the budget. Mr. Cunningham first spoke on the unique value and success of each student, the highest standards of excellence being given, students being challenged, creating positive self-esteem, mutual respect and a life-long quest for learning. He also mentioned there were three Budget Cafés and how quickly things are changing since then. The District will hear more from Albany in the coming weeks to help determine which direction the District will go on the budget. The financial reality is difficult - citing state aid, the tax cap and losing revenue from Marian Delaney and a lower number of Island Park students.

The presentation began with collaboration with key stakeholder groups, implementation of Strategic Planning Goals, promoting academic excellence, promoting the school District, collaborating with the community in budget development and Island Park partners, academic excellence, educational equity, continuous improvement using data, embed technology throughout the District and community relations. He explained the budget building process, which included District plans, public discussion, Board goals and visions, resources and needs analysis. Hard decisions need to be made based on reality, history and what the District values including learning from experience, framing the issues, making the Meta decisions, gathering intelligence and coming to conclusions.

Mr. Cunningham continued with revenue being flat due to reduced Marian Delaney rent, declining Island Park revenue and state aid reductions. He then gave a tax levy limit update. Next he covered expenses that continue to increase, which include TRS, ERS and scheduled salary increases. Lastly, he spoke about the measures taken to

reduce the budget gap that included an 8-period day at the Middle/High schools, staff reductions due to enrollment, transportation, clerical/custodial reductions, attorney's fees and leasing computer equipment.

Under **CONSIDERATION OF BUDGET ITEMS** – Staff and community members were given copies of the Proposed 2013 - 2014 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 decrease for this portion is \$93,277 or -1.65%.

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 \$19,850 or 1.84%.

5500s – Transportation – Administration will continue to focus on this area proposing a 12.5% decrease in funding for contract transportation with savings efficiencies. The total decrease for this portion is \$498,750 or -11.26%.

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 \$176,868 or 1.17%.

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 12th; 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.

Future meeting dates are: March 12th – Budget Workshop on Instructional Items; April 2nd – Budget Workshop, if necessary; April 16th – Budget Adoption and May 21st 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 10:40 p.m. upon the motion of Ms. Rilling, seconded by Mr. Schindler and carried by six, the Budget Workshop was adjourned.

Kathryn Girolamo, District Clerk