

The **BUDGET AND SPECIAL BUSINESS MEETING** of the Board of Education West Hempstead Union Free School District was called to order in the Middle School Cafeteria on March 8, 2011 at 7:36 p.m.

PRESENT: Ms. Lotito, who presided, and six other members of the Board: Mr. Brita, Ms. Di Miceli, Mr. Ejnes, Mr. Mariano, Ms. Rilling and Mr. Schindler were present. Also present were Mr. Hogan, Ms. Peluso, Mr. Cunningham, Ms. Girolamo and members of the staff and community.

Ms. Lotito welcomed residents, staff and students and stated that this was the second budget meeting and that the Instructional portion of the budget would be discussed. She said that the Board would have the opportunity to ask questions after each section. She then turned the meeting over to Mr. Hogan.

Mr. Hogan read a prepared statement as follows:

1. Good Evening – tonight the Board of Education will be considering the expenditures for the instructional part of the 2011/2012 draft budget, as well as the revenue picture. As stated by Mrs. Lotito, this budget is in draft form until adopted by the Board of Education on April 12th. Until that time, the draft budget will be adjusted to reflect possible changes in the revenue and expenditure areas, as well as any direction provided to the administration by the Board of Education.
2. Last week I mentioned the challenges facing the District this year. It is not my intention to go over all that I said last week, but I think it important to point out a few items:
 - The District has a \$2.4 million dollar gap between revenue and expenses to close.
 - The state and county continue to try to pass along costs to the school district that were in their budgets in the past. These costs include tax certiorari judgments, sewage taxes and summer special education costs. These areas alone could add approximately \$300 to \$500 thousand dollars to the District's expenditures over the course of the next few years.
 - State and federal aid has been cut or not renewed
 - The economy continues to struggle, particularly for the elderly living on a fixed income, and the young, trying to find jobs and stay on the Island.
 - In order to meet our obligations financially, academically, athletically and socially, sacrifices and cuts will be necessary across the board.

- As I said last week, none of us can afford the luxury of approaching this budget season only through the lens of our own interests. We must widen our lens to see the whole picture. In that way, we will meet our common goals, empathize with those most affected by the proposed cuts, and continue to move the District forward.
- We face difficult challenges that require difficult but necessary decisions. Those decisions have already been painful, but the financial and academic health of the District depend upon us making the difficult choices. I certainly understand that this may mean having to bid farewell to a favorite teacher, administrator, class or program. Unfortunately, this is our present reality and we must deal with it. Thanks in advance for your support and understanding expressed in so many ways these past few weeks and thank you for your kind attention this evening.

Mr. Hogan then turned the meeting over to Mr. Cunningham, who in turn, passed the microphone over to Ms. Peluso for a PowerPoint Presentation and a review on the Instructional portion of the budget.

Under **BUDGET ITEMS** – Ms. Peluso began by thanking the directors, principals, students and district office staff for their input and work on the budget. She discussed instructional account code series 2000s (administration and improvement), 2100s (regular school program), 2200s (special apportionment programs), 2300s (teaching other special schools), 2600s (instructional media) and 2800s (pupil services.) Copies of the 2011 – 2012 Proposed Budget were given to all present at the meeting. Ms. Peluso discussed the drop in enrollment numbers since 2007.

In the series 2000, Ms. Peluso stated that administration and improvement is dedicated to curriculum development and supervision and general education administration (non-teaching) for grades K-12. Ms. Rilling asked about the BOCES Staff Development line and what teachers use it. Mr. Brita inquired about the George Washington part-time clerk line that had a zero dollar amount and it was explained that the position was excessed last year. Mr. Mariano questioned the Professional Meetings line and if we spend all the monies in that line. Ms. Lotito asked if busing charges are included in the Charter School line and Mr. Cunningham said, “No, those funds would be in a transportation line.”

Series 2010 – Curriculum and Development and Supervision. Assistant Superintendent's Office is staffed with two clerical positions. One account clerk is responsible for all student data transmission between the District and New York State, central registration, residency investigations and tracking of demographics. In addition to monitoring student and employee performance, this office is responsible for all curricular initiatives, public relations, student teaching, professional development, personnel record keeping and hiring.

Series 2020 – Supervision of Regular Schools. Includes salary and staffing for the office staff for five schools. Also includes material and supplies for the operation of the five school offices.

Ms. Peluso then went on to series 2100 – Regular School Program. The regular school program includes all appropriations associated with daily general education instruction including instructional salaries, contracted instructional services, equipment, and materials and supplies. Ms. Lotito inquired about line 2110.131 Horizon Changes and what it was. Ms. Peluso explained it is lane movement attributed to teachers' gaining graduate credits, which includes a raise. Mr. Schindler asked about the Substitute Teacher line in which monies stayed the same. Mr. Cunningham explained that budget transfers are made to other codes when payments are made. Mr. Schindler asked if we are looking into book CDs instead of textbooks. It was explained that more manufacturers are starting to produce New York versions of books in textbook and electronic format. Mr. Schindler also inquired about 2110.400.00.2200 – Repairs – and what that line was for. It was explained monies there were used for repairs to kilns and culinary arts. Ms. Rilling asked what the impact was on Home Schooling and Ms. Peluso informed her that an annual education plan is submitted to the District and these students may take Regents and state assessment tests. There is no cost to the District. Mr. Ejnes inquired about 2100.133 Curriculum Revision, how can we sustain a quality program without an

allocation in that line and asked that we take a closer look at it. Mr. Ejnes also asked about the Summer School 9/12 PACE line 2100.490-08-2550 and why there was a high decrease in it.

Mr. Cunningham explained that we are trying to keep most students served by this program “in District” which lowers the cost. Ms. Di Miceli asked about Charter Schools and if the District has a say in the cost. Mr. Cunningham replied, “No, the cost is determined by the New York State Education Department and is a legislated equation.” She also inquired about ARRA funds and it was stated we do not have guidance on that yet, and the Translation Services line.

Ms. Peluso informed the Board that the line is for non-English speaking residents who need a translator at parent meetings during the school day. Ms. Di Miceli also inquired about estimated class size in the Middle/High schools and if we bid books out. Mr. Cunningham informed the Board that many textbook vendors are sole-source vendors and that the District looks for the most cost efficient means to procure and manage its textbook inventory.

Ms. Lotito introduced Diana Caracciolo, President of the Island Park Board of Education, who was in attendance. Ms. Peluso then covered the following: Chestnut Street Kindergarten Center’s staffing remains unchanged; 7.56 FTE (full-time equivalents) general education teachers for regular classroom instruction, physical education, art, music, library, reading instruction and ESL programs remain in place; Cornwell and George Washington schools have 45.47 FTE general education teachers for regular classroom instruction, physical education, art, music, library, reading instruction and ESL; projected decrease of one third grade section in George Washington; Middle School - 30.1 FTE general education teachers for regular classroom instruction, physical education, art, music, technology, home and careers, library, reading instruction and ESL and the projected reduction of teachers in English (0.3), math (0.1) and art (0.1); High School – 51.2 FTE general education teachers for regular classroom instruction, physical education, art, music, business education, home and careers, library, reading instruction

and ESL; projected reductions are English (0.7), Social Studies (0.7), Business Education (0.5), math (1.6), science (1.6) and Foreign Language (0.8). Other staffing reductions include three administrators, art (1.0) and music (1.0) instruction and one guidance counselor.

Series 2200 – Ms. Peluso covered teacher, teacher assistants and aide positions being evaluated as CSE's take place; staffing will be based on need; reductions are expected due to declining enrollment; budget currently includes appropriations for 50.6 FTE special education/reading/speech-language positions (27.6 teachers, 13 teaching assistants); and these teachers serve our five public schools, HANC and St. Thomas. Mr. Schindler inquired about the decrease in the Standardized Testing line and it was answered that the Director requested it. Ms. Di Miceli asked what percentage of the budget is Special Education. Mr. Cunningham answered 15 to 16%. She also inquired about Home Tutoring, Academic Intervention and Technology grant money, how much do we receive and are we utilizing all the monies from the grant. Ms. Peluso informed the Board that our interactive white boards, laptops and net book carts, video conferencing equipment and document cameras were purchased with grant money.

Series 2300 – topics discussed were summer school no longer being offered and the options students have.

Series 2600 – Instructional media includes appropriations for school libraries, the Office of Director of Technology, computer aided instruction, computer equipment and supplies, software, and computer repair. Mr. Brita commented he knew of a program in the city where students are trained to repair and maintain equipment, which saves dollars. Administration will look into it. We do hire students to assist us with summer work. Appropriations for 2600s are four librarians, library materials for five public schools and HANC and St. Thomas; increased appropriations in A/V material and supplies for replacement interactive projector bulbs and increased appropriation in computer-assisted instruction codes for contracted equipment

maintenance. The greater reliance on our computer network requires increased maintenance work.

Series 2800 – key points included appropriations for student attendance, guidance, health services, psychology services, social work services, co-curricular activities and interscholastic activities. The budget line includes six psychologists, two social workers and seven nurses. The number of clubs, sports and other co-curricular activities will remain unchanged.

Mr. Cunningham then presented a PowerPoint presentation on an EXCEL Project. Chapter 61 of the Laws of 2006 (the “EXCEL Act”) established the Expanding our Children’s Education and Learning Program (the “EXCEL Program”) is to provide additional funding for certain types of school construction projects. The projects must be for education and technology enhancement projects, health and safety improvement projects, expansion and new construction projects, accessibility projects and energy conservation projects only. The funds cannot be used to pay for municipal lease agreements related to Energy Performance Contracts. The State of New York will fully reimburse the District for all costs associated with voter approved EXCEL projects up to the apportioned amount as the projects are being paid for. The New York State Education Department will send the District the state aid generated by the projects over the course of the amortized life of the projects. The District may incur a small expense for short-term borrowing in order to begin cash flow for the construction projects. EXCEL projects require voter approval and are subject to all rules and regulations associated with obtaining voter approval for capital projects, must be reviewed and approved by the State Education Department, and work related to EXCEL projects are governed by all state and local bid laws. The District has a remaining allocation of \$706,880. The suggested project is masonry repair and re-pointing at the Middle/High school. Mr. Cunningham then showed pictures of brick work that is in bad need of repair on that building. If voters approve the budget, work would be completed during

the summer of 2012. Cost of all phases of work would be reimbursed to the District by the Dormitory Authority of New York State. The project has been included in both the expenditure side of the budget and the revenue side of the budget; therefore, the project would not increase the tax levy.

The last portion of the Instructional portion of the budget covered was the draft 2011-12 Revenue Budget. As it stands now, the Property Tax Levy is 3.90% and the School District Budget is at 3.04%. The budget is a work in progress and it will be formally adopted on April 12, 2011.

After each section of the presentation, Administration took questions from the Board and the community. Mr. Brita inquired about the EXCEL project and what would happen to the project if the budget is voted down. Mr. Cunningham answered that the District could put up a separate vote for the project. Ms. Lotito asked if there was a time limit on the funds for the project. Mr. Cunningham explained that we get the project information to the State for approval as soon as practical after the passing of the budget and then receive the monies. Mr. Brita inquired if the Island Park revenue line is final, and Mr. Cunningham replied there might be a slight change. Mr. Brita informed the public that Board members are advocates for change in education and education laws and advised that residents can also contact their legislators, congressman and senators to state their feelings on the state of education. Ms. Di Miceli asked and Mr. Hogan to explained the two class action suit resolutions recently passed by the Board. These suits are fighting recent legislations, one for the new sewage tax and the other for tax certiorari judgments. Mr. Schindler's final comment was to do more with less and to get our students into extra help classes.

At 11:06 p.m., the meeting ended.

Kathryn Girolamo, District Clerk