

**JOINT MEETING OF THE  
REDDING BOARD OF EDUCATION  
REDDING BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
REDDING BOARD OF FINANCE**

DECEMBER 22, 2003  
MINUTES

Present:

Redding Board of Education: Alvarez, Barickman, Goldberg, Lewson, McCarthy, Simeonidis, Streams

Redding Board of Selectmen: Ketcham, Miller, Takacs

Redding Board of Finance: Demaree, DeSalvo, Guitar, Mullaney, Sullivan, Viscio

Also present: Redding school administrators: Jokubaitis, McLiverty, Voss, Sneiderman, Torre, Kelly, Johnson

17 members of the public

Media: Redding Pilot

Each board called their meeting to order at 7:03 pm in the Redding Community Center.

Mr. Simeonidis began the meeting by reading a statement announcing the recommendation of Dr. Allen Fossbender to be the Superintendent of Schools. Formal action on the recommendation will be taken at the Joint meeting of the Boards of Education on Tuesday, December 23, 2003.

**REVIEW OF BOARD OF EDUCATION PRIORITIES**

Mr. Simeonidis began the discussion with a review of the priorities of the Redding Board of Education. These included: quality instruction; safety and security for students and staff; technology including upgrade, replacement and maintenance; maintenance of facilities; and better budget process, presentation and communication with the public. He added that excellence in the Redding schools is not negotiable.

**GUEST COMMENTS**

First Selectman Ketcham stated that this was a welcome and healthy activity for the community, and that starting early to work together was a good thing.

**ADMINISTRATIVE PRESENTATION-2004-2005 KEY BUDGET DRIVERS**

Mr. Jokubaitis divided the presentation into five categories: personnel, curriculum, technology, facilities and special services programs. A presentation on special services will be made at the regular Redding Board of Education meeting on January 6, 2004.

Mr. Jokubaitis presented an overview of how personnel needs are determined. This included enrollment data and class size, programs, & salaries and associated costs. He stated that a "continuation" would be prepared. The administration will include improvements that

involve doing a better job and/or re-instatement of programs and things that were previously eliminated. New programs would constitute another option.

Dr. Voss presented an overview of budget for curriculum. He described the work of the ten curriculum committees and estimates of cost for each of the next five years.

Mrs. Johnson presented information on the technology piece of the budget and education. Included were options for equipment purchases over a seven-year span.

Mr. McLiverty reported on some of the preventative maintenance and repair that will be needed on the two school buildings. He is still in the process of collecting information and will work on preparation of a “state of the buildings” report and a plan to do the repair/replacements over a period of years. Some of the specifics included a backup generator at RES, security /alarm system at both schools, repair of steps and roadway at RES, tractor/snow blower for use at both schools, replacement of buffing machine, replacement of broken furniture and cafeteria tables, repair HVAC in sections of RES, replacement of carpet with tile at JRMS, fireproof filing cabinets, etc.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

Mary Kubick: comments on the current per pupil cost information obtained from the Internet: Redding \$11,905; Easton, \$10,665; Ridgefield, \$9,545. Mr. McLiverty added that those are unaudited figures and are subject to change.

Jennifer Bodurtha: commented that comparing Redding to Ridgefield on cost alone was not good. She felt the education her children were receiving in Redding is far better than they received when they were residents of Ridgefield.

Joe Dolan: suggested getting a survey of opinions of students and parents.

Gene Connolly: suggested a subcommittee to research and brainstorm to find innovative ways to deliver education more efficiently. Mr. Simeonidis responded that the Redding Board of Education established subcommittees to look at long-term budgeting, strategic planning, and communication. The board also plans to work with CAFE to address the state legislature regarding special education costs.

Michael Driscoll: urged a subcommittee be established to find cost savings, cost efficiencies, to study the costs from the custodians on up. Mr. Simeonidis responded that the board has been charged with managing costs and finding efficiencies.

Mrs. Kelly, Principal at RES, commented that she and Mrs. Sneiderman, Principal at JRMS, have prepared a survey for parents called “How are we doing”. A separate, but similar, survey has been prepared for the staff.

## BOARD OF FINANCE COMMENTS REGARDING GENERAL TOWN FINANCIAL ISSUES

Peggy Sullivan, Chairman of the Board of Finance, provided comments from a town economic viewpoint.

- There has been a decrease in state grants.
- Property tax represents 88% of the town's revenue.
- Using state equalized tax rates, Redding ranks #133 of the 169 towns in Connecticut.
- 85% of the Grand List is residential property.
- Between 1982 & 1992, property tax doubled.
- Between 1992 & 2002, property tax doubled again.
- This year, the estimated growth in Grand List is 1.7%.
- Social Security, increase for this year is 2.1%
- CPI increase is 1.6%
- Private salaries increased 2.8% last year.
- Elderly tax credit is currently a \$50,000 reduction in assessment and there is a consideration of increasing that amount.
- Board of Finance would like the Board of Education to create a capital budget and a five-year plan.

## BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMENTS

Jamie Barickman: very healthy to have this kind of discussion, this was an opportunity to define budget drivers. The current enrollment projections do not show a need for school construction in the near future.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

Christine Kearney: commented that salaries represent 80% of the school's budget. Contractual obligations must also be considered. Regarding the measurement of success of education, she asked that CMT scores not be the only measurement. She would not like to see the schools "teaching to the test."

Lauren Ashton: felt the forum was very beneficial and wished more members of the community attended to hear the presentations. She asked how the three boards would like the public to communicate with them with comments and questions. Mrs. Ketcham responded that phone calls, emails and comments at meetings are all appropriated. She has "brown bag lunches" each Tuesday, and the Board of Education will be represented at the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month, the Board of Finance at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month, and Christopher Shays at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month. Members of the public were encouraged to attend these. Mrs. Sullivan said the Board of Finance would welcome phone calls or email. A separate email address will be set up for the Board of finance. Mr. Simeonidis added that the Board of Education would welcome phone calls, email or comments at meetings.

Ms. Guitar added that the League of Women voters has scheduled a session on understanding the town's budget on January 25, 2004 at 3:00 pm.

Michael Driscoll: commented that the boards must remember the silent voters and the need to get information out to the voters.

Joe Dolan: commented on the need for something to measure success and that the boards need to agree on what is important to judge success.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chair of the Board of Education adjourned the meeting at 9:25 pm.

The Chair of the Board of Selectmen adjourned their meeting at 9:25 pm

The Chair of the Board of Finance adjourned their meeting at 9:25 pm

Respectfully submitted,

David Lewson, Redding Board of Education secretary

Recorded by Mary Maday