The Finance Committee Meeting of the Board of Education was held at the Blake Building, 25 Ogden Street, West Haven. The meeting was called to order by Gerald A. Calabritto, Chairman of the Finance Committee at 6:00 p.m.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Gerald Calabritto, Chairman
M. Toni Paine
Robert Guthrie

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: Raymond Collins

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: George Monahan
Eric Murillo
Howard Horvath Jr.

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Mark Palmieri
Krista Pickering

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT: Dr. JoAnn Andrees, Superintendent of Schools
Neil Cavallaro, Assistant Superintendent

Jerry Calabritto, Chairman stated we have called a meeting for a mid year review of the operating budget for the Board of Education. He then turned the meeting over to Garth Sawyer.

Garth passed out budget worksheets for YTD vs. as of today with the balance. We will give you the projected later into January.

As of now all accounts are good we don’t have any over expenditures. Salaries C60 Substitute Custodians has always been a problematic account. In the past few years we have spent up to $200,000 in this account. If someone is out on Worker’s Comp we bring in a substitute and we spend less money than the regular salary. We do the transfers in January at that point.

Toni Paine asked if custodians have Steps for their pay like Step 1 gets paid for a Step 1. The response was no. Do they have their own pay scale? Is it per diem or per hour? The answer was it is per diem.

Garth found out today that the City is contracting out with a supplier for electricity. The Mayor signed a contract with Con Ed fixing the rate for electricity. We were included in this. Jerry asked we can piggy back on this? Yes. Garth is having the energy consultant
from Con Ed come in and explain the process. Right now we are good but probably in January we will do some transfers.

The other account we are keeping a close eye on is D20 Repair to Buildings. We have already spent $200,000 of the $300,000 we have budgeted for that and we have some issues in some of the buildings. We are keeping a close eye on this and hopefully the monies will sustain us through the year.

Under Benefits and fixed charges everything is going well in this category. Under Worker’s Comp the City does the quarterly posting on this but obviously there is not one over there right now so as soon as they get someone over there they will catch up with us. The same holds for Property and Liability Insurance.

F02 Postage we are keeping a close eye on this to keep it within the budget. We are just starting the new system from Pitney Bowes and hopefully we will start to realize some savings.

F14 Service Contracts this is one of those accounts that usually gets expended

G14 Periodicals is almost half budget. Librarians may feel they want more money in their periodicals so we let them transfer their three accounts. We will then come before the board and so the internal transfer.

Jerry Calabritto asked on E14 that is the line item that we divided by 12? Garth responded it is not so simple. Essentially what that budget is is what is going to show up as expended. We have to factor in our payroll deductions that go directly to the City account and service fund also deposits which have to be deducted.

Jerry asked if there were any other questions on this section.

Robert Guthrie asked where we stand on the authorization of overtime. Is it still being held tight by the central office? Dr. Andrees stated that all overtime has been authorized by Joe Yacano and her. Very little clerical has been authorized. In certain times in a one person office there are certain times when there are things going on in the building but the principals have always called to receive authorization. You will see an increase as we did not hire a contractor vs. using internal staff for wiring at Savin Rock for example. This weekend of course would be overtime which would be charged back to the building company.

George Monahan posed a question to Jerry Calabritto as well stating we have been made aware tonight that the Mayor has decided to change the provider of electricity to the City as well as the Board of Education. He wanted to remind the Chairperson and his colleagues that the U.I. has had a program for many year where there is a cost incentive or sharing where energy savings or efficiency savings be put in place. We had some pending and there may be some active programs right now. One brand new one is the new emergency generator to be installed at the school where the United Illuminating was
going to pay a very large chuck of the cost of that generator and if we are going to change suppliers that is out the window. We should take a good hard look at this or at least make the Mayor’s Office aware that we had these types of programs underway and is the new supplier going to match this program.

Jerry stated he would assume that they would stay on top of that and keep us informed. Again, the City can enter into any agreement that they wish and we could piggyback on it or we can choose not to do so.

George stated he wanted to make you as the chair aware – Jerry interjected point well taken.

Toni Paine stated didn’t we tag in on a program that the United Illuminating Company had at the very end of last year? The response was only at the Rink. Toni asked if this was just for the year or was it a three year contract or something.

Harry Conlan stated it was not for three years. The good news about it is that he met with U.I. officials to see if they would extend it another year once he heard about the increase they had extended it another year. George stated that dealt with lighting and insulation products as well. He knew the new emergency generator program that Mr. Yacano had various proposals on and worked with the U.I. and they were going to pay him also had a cost savings.

Jerry Calabritto said this is the first I have heard of this. But again I say we are a separate entity and I believe it would be this Board’s choosing whether to piggyback or not.

George said he thinks the Mayor should be made aware because this could be a negotiating tool as well. They should be aware that we have these possible incentives on the table from the U.I. and if they match them then there is no harm no foul. You need to look at the overall potential cost savings not just a certain charge per kilowatt hour.

Harry Conlan stated the money is there put aside already by the U.I. for small companies like ourselves. We have to spend $3.00 per kilowatt hour.

Eric Murillo stated since you (Jerry) hadn’t heard anything and he doesn’t recall anything would you get some information on this proposal to the Board i.e. what was done and what research was done back then. Jerry has said he has yet to see any paper work or anything on the generator. George Monahan stated the generator information was in our packet and Mr. Yacano prepared some information and he came before us. It was included in the proposal. Jerry stated he is sorry that he missed that. Eric asked again if Jerry would send us the information on the proposal and how much it was going to save us so we will be ready.

Bob Guthrie stated Mr. Chairman you are saying it is the Board’s prerogative to piggyback but in listening to Mr. Sawyer the contract has already been signed on our
behalf with us to go with energy through Con Ed. The piggyback has already been done
on our behalf.

Jerry asked Dr. Andrees to find out about this. Garth stated like I stated this is something
we just found out about today that the Mayor, George interjected, signed a new contract
that includes our electricity as well.

Bob Guthrie said when the gentleman from Con Ed comes before us we should have
questions as far as if we have outages and problems who repairs them. Is that Con Ed and
is that Con Ed’s money or are we still going to have to pay a local provider to fix the
problem and go back to Con Ed. There are still a lot of questions.

Jerry stated it is kind of like the horse is out of the barn. He can come say whatever he
wants it has no bearing we have already been committed to a carrier.

Bob Guthrie asked if the largest variable would be energy. Garth responded yes
everything else is pretty concrete or pretty close.

Harry Conlan was available to discuss the Bennet Rink. Jerry Calabritto stated I guess
we can tell the U.I. thanks but no thanks. Harry stated the Mayor is aware of this because
we had conversations about the U.I. and I know he was in negotiation with them and he
must have decided this was a better.

Garth stated as far as the Rink we have Operating YTD and we have a rough estimate and
later in January we will have more concrete numbers. The revenue accounts are stable.
Everything is basically in line there is a little bit more in the repairs and maintenance but
we did offset that. We upped the skate rental. Electricity is almost 1/3 or our
expenditures and is the problematic account and because it has been so warm it works in
reverse. It takes more to keep the ice cold. We haven’t projected that out because we just
found out today about the new development. He will keep us advised.

Bob Guthrie stated the document that was passed out shows a rate increase in 1999 and
an increase in 2002 and asked Harry if he knew where we stand now compared with rates
for North Branford, Milford and Shelton. Harry stated way below. Bob asked that these
documents be prepared for when they come before us for the budget explanation. This
gives Mr. Conlan time to set it up and if they need thoughts from the Board we can
discuss it at the time. Jerry asked Harry to go out and get competitive rates and have that
available for us. Harry stated he has that already. He knows what is going to happen with
electricity but he doesn’t know now about Con Ed. Jerry stated either way it is going to
go up whether it is 50% or 40%. Harry sated we have to raise our rates to our vendors
that come in, the people that go through the gates for hockey games, and the people that
use our ice these rates all have to go up. The sooner we act on this the better. We need to
get $50,000 in electricity and I don’t know how we are going to do it. We can’t raise that
much extra revenue based on what the Rink makes right now.
Bob asked if the list of groups for the 2002 rate increase is all still there. Those groups are still there. We did loose revenue from CHC (Connecticut Hockey Conference). They had a change in their Presidency and their Treasurer who was located in West Haven and they pulled out in August and went up North – Waterford and that direction. We lost between $12,000 to $14,000 just for the month of August. We did get $14,000 back from Hamden Youth Hockey as they are renovating their rink.

George Monahan had a general maintenance question regarding the heating problem for the past several years and wanted a quick update. The center of the ice is up about 1 ¾” and that is where the heating really is and the far end of the ice is about 1 ½” so we make ice from the back of the rink towards the center and it is the same if not better than it was last year. It is constantly being monitored and shaved. It is not 9” like it was five years ago.

Jerry Calabritto thanked Mr. Conlan for this update.

Chris Everone stated the stadium is doing well and they are keeping the expenditures in check. We will revisit the electricity again. Rentals have exceeded the athletic events revenue that we had budgeted. We upped some of the projections there so we would be more in line with what we currently have taken in and obviously reduced the Board’s contribution.

Toni Paine asked what services are purchased. Steve stated that would be all the workers as far as game personnel workers like ticket takers etc.

George Monahan asked the main difference on the revenue and rental side was because of Pop Warner because there field was not complete is this correct. One and for some reason a lot more people wanted to rent the baseball, softball and football stadium this year. The Pop Warner for this year is not in there yet and George stated it probably won’t be.

Bob asked about the concession payment. We just haven’t received payment yet? Steve spoke with them and they have the money set aside but things have been crazy with the holiday season. He will receive the money this week.

Jerry Calabritto thanked Mr. Everone for this update.

Alan Belchak gave an update on the Food Service Budget and stated that some of the revenues were reduced but a lot of that has to do with the State of Connecticut and is not unique to just West Haven. During lunches we are not allowed to serve anything with more than 4 grams of sugar per ounce. Some of our milks even have to be calculated. We have to serve 100% juice which a lot of kids don’t like they were drinking over the past few years only 10% or 20% juice. These kids are in the middle and high school where we used to sell a lot of juice. We can’t sell milkshakes as they are too high in fat and sugar. We can’t serve anything with transfats and we are supposed to serve everything off of what is known as a State Good List. We monitor that list. We can’t sell pop corn,
Doritos and Blue Bunny is the only ice cream we are allowed to sell and it doesn’t come in too many flavors.

We are trying to reduce expenditures by the use of more commodities. The government goes out and buys things to keep the price on an even keel. Currently we have just been notified that the United States Department of Agriculture will have bonus supplies of cheese and apples. Recently the Department of Defense had an offering of apples and I took 100 cases of apples because apples have a five month shelf life.

We are finding that the elementary school children will eat a fresh apple rather than applesauce. We are trying to make it appetizing for children. To cut is up and mix it with a little cinnamon and a touch of sugar.

We have cut down on plate waste by getting a more accurate count for the kitchens and we are holding our plate purchases down.

The question was posed to Alan if State Organizations are finding the same issues are affecting all districts. Everyone is having extreme difficulties including the districts that took the extra money. The ten cents they will give you per meal really restricts what you do in your classroom for fundraisers and everything else and he doesn’t feel the Board and Food Service Department should be in the position of monitoring that. Every school district has found a large slack off in the sales.

Coke only has one product that they can sell their water. We can’t even sell the flavored ones that don’t have sugar because State Law prohibits anything that has an artificial sweetener. We can’t even sell iced tea.

The figure for Item 3072 climbs everyday. Currently West Haven is at 55% of students in the system on free or reduced price meals. The high school alone which is the highest is has ever been is at 36%. Some other schools are in the 70% and close to 80%. The whole average for the City is 45%. These are guaranteed sales. It is the ala carte sales that we have really been hurt by because we have completely stopped sales at the high school.

His department has no overtime except for the one person who feeds the last lines. All overtime has been cut. We are self producing most of the meals which is saving us a lot of money.

What we are trying to introduce now are name brands and we had Tropicana come in today. We are hoping the name brand Tropicana will sell fresh orange juice at the high school and we are trying to sell Smoothies. Smoothies are a mixture of yogurt with fresh fruits which are very good, healthy and nutritious. We will not sell a snack individually.

The kids today that look obese or fat are not malnourished they have enough nutrition but they have the wrong nutrition. They don’t exercise and burn off the calories they should
burn off and they over eat too many calories and too many sugar calories. They need more activities.

George asked who monitors the product list from the State. Susan Fiore from the State Department produces a list of products for sale which is on the State Web Site and is about 360 pages long with all different classifications and she monitors this list. George asked how often do they come in to monitor. They don’t but there is a hefty violation responded Alan. All it takes is one parent to call them. We don’t want to be out of compliance.

Howie Horvath asked if he has seen results from the various things that have been done to encourage the kids and families on the free and reduced lunch to sign up. Alan stated that the State Department has changed the regulation and we have located them at the high school. We do a much better job now that the applications are centrally located at the high school. Alan has full control over the applications. The thing we can do better is to educate the parent on filling out the application. If they have five children in the system they are still sending in five different applications. One application would have been easier. When I hear there are layoffs such as Bayer etc. his office contacts Bayer and asks if there are West Haven residents and we try to mail them an application. These people need it.

Howie stated that at the high school he thinks that the stigma for the student is a big barrier. He asked if all the systems are now in place that makes it almost invisible. Alan stated that at the high school we don’t have the ID and we are half way through the school year. The lines are long because it takes too long to check each person some people have a nine digit number. The ID’s will speed things up. Jerry asked Dr. Andrees to look into this. The high school is having Lifetouch make the ID cards. The middle schools have two sets of ID’s (picture and ID that Alan made). The AFSME Union does not allow comp time so the library clerk can not do these ID cards. These cards must be done on straight time.

Jerry said in a short time the school year will be over and those ID’s will be useless. George said that at a previous board meeting the board talked about expanding the bar code feature that would enable the quick scan for the free and reduced lunch to a pre-paid or debit card system. Parents wouldn’t have to give children cash everyday they could put a $20 credit on the card and every student could go through a scan. This also would add to the anonymity part.

Jerry stated if it is a vendor issue what can we do to fix it in house. Alan can have cards made in five days but can’t put the picture on them.

Alan stated he wanted the board to know that the Department of Defense has promised us grapes and California Oranges during seasonal time. This is something new that the Department of Defense is trying to turn over fresh produce to the school system.
George Monahan stated they feed a lot of people and they would rather give it away than have it go bad.

Dr. Andrees stated that once you achieve a certain level and it is about 40% then that becomes a Title I School. This means you are under all the sanctions that fall under this category. We are now at 36% and now we are beginning to look at other issues and sanctions that will be imposed upon us.

David Russell stated that as of October 1st we were at 35% and that is the magic number. October 1st is the key date at what your enrollment is.

Howie Horvath wanted to clarify something. We are under the gun for all our schools relative to student achievement against the AYP goals. You don’t escape that regardless whether you are Title I or not. I always thought that Title I meant you received federal funding that was the good news. Is there more scrutiny over and above with Title I? Yes there is. School of choice and additional programs that we would be obligated to fund. Especially at the high school this presents a problem because there is only one high school. A parent can request services and you also have to provide transportation and these costs are not offset by the additional federal monies. Robert Guthrie stated that the paras need an increased level of training also. Once you are Title I the whole ball of wax along with the training change.

Dr. Andrees stated this is what happened in the New Haven Schools where they just released a lot of professionals who did not pass the special testing and did not have the certification.

Dave Russell stated for Title I we get $1,118,000.00 a year which is an entitlement not a grant and this money must be divided up between the five elementary and one Middle School (the 6 Title I schools only.) Each Title I school has a reading teacher and a paraprofessional that must be qualified.

Jerry thanked Mr. Belchak, Mr. Russell and Mr. Sawyer.

Motion made by Toni Paine to adjourn
Bob Guthrie seconded the motion
All in favor
The meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marylou C. Amendola