

Regional School District 12  
Board of Education  
Public District Budget Hearing  
Shepaug Valley School  
April 9, 2018

The Public District Budget Hearing was called to order at 7:03 p.m., on Monday, April 9, 2018, by Chairman Anthony Amato. Present were Board members: Alan Brown, John Buonaiuto, Gregory Cava, Michelle Gorra, James Hirschfield, Stephanie Kolnick, Jennifer Pote, Julie Stuart and Peter Tagley. Also present were Dr. Patricia Cosentino, Superintendent, and Robert Giesen, Director of Finance and Operations. Lisa Roush and Michael Sinatra were absent.

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC BUDGET HEARING**

Chairman Amato requested Alex McNaughton to read the Notice of Public Budget Hearing:

“Notice is hereby given to all those entitled to vote in town meetings in the towns of Bridgewater, Roxbury and Washington, that a Public Hearing will be held on Monday, April 9, 2018 at 7:00 p.m. in the Library of the Shepaug Valley School, 159 South Street, Washington, CT to present the Annual Budget for the year 2018-2019, prepared by the Regional Board of Education for Shepaug Valley Regional School District 12, copies of which will be available at the Public Meeting.

SHEPAUG VALLEY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT 12  
BRIDGEWATER – ROXBURY – WASHINGTON  
By – Anthony Amato, Chairman  
Board of Education  
Washington Depot, CT 06794”

**OVERVIEW PRESENTATION OF THE BUDGET PROCESS AND THE 2018-2019 ANNUAL BUDGET FOR RSD 12**

Michelle Gorra, Finance Committee Chair, gave a brief overview of the budget that will be presented. In February, the Finance Committee held workshops with the administrations. The Board of Finance from each of the three towns were invited and some did attend. Dr. Cosentino presented her proposed budget in March at a 3.97% increase over last year’s budget or \$850,000 more. This already included cuts of over \$700,000 from the requests of the administration. Mrs. Gorra spoke about the three large drivers of increases to the budget that the Board is unable to do anything about. Medical insurance was the largest; about \$100,000 increase in special education expenses and a little more than \$100,000 are contractual obligations. In March, the Board cut another \$260,491 from the superintendent’s proposed budget bringing it down to 2.76% over last year’s budget. Those cuts included moving some capital items out of the proposed budget to be funded out of the capital non-recurring account. Two busses in the amount of \$113,000 were cut, 2.5 FTE paraprofessional positions and a project TEAM coordinator position totally \$70,000 were cut, and a cut to the superintendent’s salary. Mrs. Gorra explained that all these cuts brought the increase over last year’s budget to \$589,000 and that since \$526,000 is from the health insurance premium, it is a relatively flat budget.

**QUESTIONS AND/OR STATEMENTS CONCERNING THE BUDGET**

Chairman Amato opened the floor to the public for questions and comments.

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Ed Wainwright, Bridgewater – Mr. Wainwright asked why the BAND for AgSTEM on page 13 appears to be changed from what was forecast on the website; \$125,000 to \$150,000. Why did it go up? Mr. Giesen explained that the interest rate assumption from one year to the next increased. Rates have gone up. It is 1.75% on \$9M. Mr. Wainwright asked if the AgSTEM director on page 8 listed at \$126,000 was originally forecast for \$74,000. What does \$126,000 consist of? Mr. Giesen answered that it includes benefits and it is a 12 month position not 10 month. Mr. Wainwright asked about page 3 and the discussion on dialog about sending teachers to TAFT for AP courses. Item called Public Relations for \$24,000 originally the AgSTEM program included \$24,000 each year for 4 years for STEM. Do not understand what the \$24,000 is for? Mr. Giesen explained that there are two different things. The board initiated a public relations person. Page 4 of 13 in the 330 expenditure line items and it is outside public relations. Dr. Cosentino explained that the Board wanted to attract more families to the Region by tuitioning in or moving into the area. Chairman Amato will get back to Mr. Wainwright with the details on the AgsTEM four year public relations item includes.

Kathy Liebowitz, Roxbury – Ms. Liebowitz asked about the increase in the health insurance and what the deductible per family is? Mr. Giesen replied that it is \$3000. Ms. Liebowtiz asked why the transportation for special education out of area was \$400,000. Mr. Giesen responded that it is mandated that we provide transportation to a facility that accommodates their needs. Ms. Liebowitz asked what the special education private in the amount of \$415,000 is and why it increased \$200,000 from last year. Ally O'Hara explained that it is for the students that are placed out of district for services that cannot be provided in district. Ms. Liebowitz asked why the line item for textbooks is so low, \$23,000. Dr. Cosentino explained the balanced approach to digital tools and buying textbooks as needed. Lastly, Ms. Liebowitz stated that she feels \$32,000 per student is an insane number for public education.

Valerie Andersen, Washington –Mrs. Andersen, a former board member, congratulated the Board in putting together a reasonable budget in these hard times and that many people do not realized that many things are mandated making it impossible to fund. She was glad to see that line item 512 on page 7 went down to \$98,604 but that we cannot do a single thing about it. State mandates that we provide transportation for the children in the three towns that attend private school. The large cost per student is because we still must pay for lights in all the buildings in the three towns. Mrs. Andersen emphasized that we are doing something special in this district.

Barbara Henry, Roxbury – First Selectwoman, Mrs. Henry, expressed her appreciation to the Board in their effort in cutting the budget after the last meeting. Mrs. Henry asked about the two busses that have been taken out and why one was not taken out in Bridgewater. Mr. Giesen responded that a bus was removed last year in Bridgewater. Mrs. Henry asked how many busses are in each town. Mr. Giesen responded that Bridgewater has three busses, Roxbury has four, and Washington has five and a half. There are four in district to service REACH and Montessori and two going to tech schools and Nonnewaug. Lastly, Mrs. Henry thanked the Board for their hard work and that she supports the system. She is not sure how her town will vote.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** made by Michelle Gorra to adjourn the hearing.

**VOTE:** unanimous.

The hearing was adjourned at 7:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Debby Bliven