



**BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
COLUMBIA, CONNECTICUT

*The Columbia School District is a community of learners providing rigorous programs to ensure that each student can excel as an individual.*

Christopher Lent, Chairman  
Kathy Tolsdorf, Vice Chairperson  
James Chakulski, Jr.  
David Crim  
Linette Dooley  
Lisa Napolitano  
Karin Vertefeuille  
Laurence Fearon, Superintendent

**Columbia Board of Education**  
**Special Meeting Minutes**  
**February 22, 2016**

7:00 P.M.

Horace W. Porter School Cafetorium

APPROVED MARCH 7, 2016

Board Members Present: James Chakulski, Jr., Linette Dooley, Christopher Lent-Chairman, Lisa Napolitano, Kathy Tolsdorf-Vice Chairperson, Karin Vertefeuille

Board Members Absent: David Crim

Others Present: Lol Fearon-Superintendent, Mary-Kate Farley-Director of Student Services, Michael Kenyon-Assistant Principal/Data Coordinator, Bev Ciurylo-Finance Director, Jeff Viens-FiPAC Member, Karen Caputo-School Social Worker, Tammy Ekstrom-Grade 5 Reading/LA Teacher, Dolores Marcous-Grade 5 Math Teacher, Carla Croteau-Grades 5/6 Science Teacher, Roserie Rinaldi-Special Education Teacher, Christine Spósito, Michele Barton

## **I. Call to Order**

**Christopher Lent** called the February 22, 2016, Special Meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

## **II. Pledge of Allegiance**

## **III. Audience of Citizens**

Time allotted for public participation is twenty (20) minutes; time allotted for an individual speaker is three (3) minutes.

Mr. Lent explained there would also be an opportunity for the audience to ask questions/make comments after Mr. Fearon's budget presentation.

## **IV. 2016/17 Budget Presentation & Discussion – Mr. Lol Fearon, Columbia Superintendent**

Mr. Fearon thanked the audience for attending this evening's special meeting. He explained that the budget is still open to changes based on the public's input. The Board of Education will vote on the 2016/17 budget at the March 7<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting. He summarized the budget to date:

- Total 2016/17 budget request: \$12,869,633
- Net Increase; \$947,167
- Percentage increase: 7.94%

Mr. Fearon explained that Columbia is a high performing district with focus on rigorous programs that meet or exceed the needs of students. The Board of Education and Porter administrators are actively planning for the future. The focus this budget season has been on:

- The Board's Long-Range Plan
- Maintaining and improving current programs
- Improving student success

The Board is committed to small class sizes at the primary grades, technology implementation of programs and using grant money for updating equipment.

The three main budget increase drivers for the 2016/17 budget are:

1. High school tuition increases (48 grade 12 students will be graduating from our designated high schools in June and 64 grade 8 students will be entering grade 9 in the fall. This equates to an additional \$223,200 tuition increase.)
2. Unanticipated special education costs - \$473,000 (7 unanticipated high school students have moved into Columbia this school year. Of the 7 students, 6 have significant special education needs. Special education services at the high school level are in addition to regular ed tuition.)
3. Anticipated grade 9 special ed costs - \$218,000 (this is based on current IEP's and the cost of services for next year's grade 9 students.)

In addition, certified salaries increase by \$43,669, unemployment compensation increases \$21,600 and pupil transportation increases \$160,610 (special services/\$139,832).

There will be a 2.0 FTE reduction in non-certified staff. A grade 5 position will be reassigned to the primary grades. Over the next several years, modifications will be made to current teacher teams. Future enrollment projections will not warrant the current number of middle school teachers.

Additional budget decrease drivers:

- Employee benefits - \$33,180
- Professional Services - \$22,744
- Rental (copiers) - \$16,825
- Heating oil and diesel - \$43,380
- Software - \$13,800

Mr. Fearon reviewed 2016/17 enrollment information with the audience:

- Demographic study (2014) projected PK-8 = 413 students
- Current projection PK-8 = 431 students
- Demographic study (2014) projected 9-12 = 238 students
- Current projection 9-12 = 247 students
- Magnet projections K-12 tuition = 48 students or \$216,000
- Magnet programs (non-tuition) = 6 students

TOTAL 2016/2017 BUDGET INCREASE = \$947,167

96% of the total increase or \$914,200 is due to: *(Difference of \$32,967)*

- special education outplacement costs
- 16 more grade 9 students entering high school than the number of students graduating in June
- anticipated grade 9 special education services

## V. 2016/2017 Public Budget Input

- **Christine Sposito** asked if there has been consideration given to having 3 teachers/sections in grade 2. *Mr. Fearon explained the increase in enrollment during this school year has been in the second grade.*
- **Michele Barton** asked the impact of special need requirements for the students currently in grade 1 going into grade 2 next year. Could this be handled like the kindergarten classes where each class has a paraprofessional that works with the teacher? *Mr. Fearon explained that the majority of paraprofessionals serve special education and are assigned as needed.*
- **Christine Sposito** asked if SRBI intervention services would remain the same. Will children receive the individualized services they need? *Mr. Fearon assured her that preventative services work in the early grades. SRBI is designed to keep students from needing future special education services. Literacy blocks and co-teaching focus on grades 1, 2 and 3. Groupings can be smaller.*
- **Jeff Viens** asked what the acronym SRBI stands for - *Scientific Research Based Intervention*
- **Tammy Ekstrom** asked what will be the “magic” number to add a grade 2 section next year. *Mr. Fearon said 20 – 22 children per section or 44 total. The Board of Ed and administration attempt to keep class sizes small: 14-18 children in the primary grades and 18–22 in elementary grades.*

### Board members comments:

- **Lisa Napolitano** asked about PK program accreditation and early intervention.
- **Chris Lent** asked Board members if they would like to schedule an additional budget meeting. Members felt it wasn't necessary at this time.

## VI. Adjournment

K. Tolsdorf **MOVED** J. Chakulski **SECONDED** to adjourn the meeting at 8:09 p.m.  
**MOTION CARRIES 6:0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Tolsdorf, Vice Chairperson/Secretary  
Columbia Board of Education