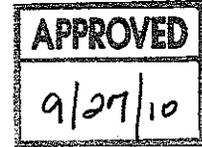


**MINUTES
BOROUGH OF NEW MILFORD
7:00 PM SPECIAL MEETING
Monday, May 5, 2010**



Councilman Arthur Zeilner	Present	
Councilman Keith Bachmann	Present	(Arrived 7:26)
Councilwoman Randi Duffie	Absent	
Councilman Howard Berner	Present	
Councilwoman Ann Subrizi	Present	
Council President Michael Putrino	Present	
Mayor Frank DeBari	Absent	

Also present: Christine Demiris, Administrator/Clerk

Mr. David Foo	Present
Mr. Joseph Steele	Present
Mrs. Judith Rabinowitz-McSweeney	Present
Mr. Dan Conner	Present
Mr. Darren Drake	Present
Ms. Peggy Saslow	Present
Ms. Geraldine Mechler	Present
Ms. Lori Barton	Present
Ms. Theresa Lacey	Absent

Also Present: Michael Sawicz, Business Administrator; Michael Polizzi, Superintendent

Council President Putrino led the flag salute. Council President Putrino opened the meeting by summarizing what took place at the last meeting.

Councilwoman Subrizi asked to have the actual salary numbers being used for the budget clarified. She said that the Power Point presentation said \$15,979,000; the Excel spreadsheet said \$15,059,944; and the PDF File said \$11,500.

Councilman Berner said that he has received a number of comments regarding the decision to let eighteen staff members go and then hire a Director of Curriculum (DOC). He asked what the DOC does and if there is not already someone in the district that is qualified/certified to do those things.

Mr. Polizzi responded the DOC works with the Superintendent monitoring the five year cycle implementation, heads the professional development in the district, and is responsible for grant writing. He added the DOC is part of the central administration team and is in charge in the absence of the Superintendent. He stated it carries a high level of responsibility and a high level of work.

Councilman Berner asked again if there was no one within the district qualified to fill the position. Mr. Polizzi stated that there are people with the appropriate certification and that the BOE posted the position in February or March so in-district personnel could apply. He stated two internal candidates applied and had the necessary qualifications.

Councilman Berner asked if any of the people being let go were entitled to termination pay. Mr. Polizzi stated they were not.

Councilman Berner commented that the Borough has someone who handles the grant applications on a contingency basis and asked if it is necessary to have someone on staff. He asked if the five year cycle happens every five years or if it is on a continual basis. He was advised that it is on a continual basis. Mr. Polizzi stated that the BOE asked for a meeting with the person who writes the grants for the Borough and was advised that they had no educational expertise. He added that grants are a time consuming part of the job.

Councilman Berner asked if it would not benefit the BOE to pick someone from in-house, someone familiar with the district. Mr. Polizzi stated even if they were to take the Director position off the table it would not get them far. He said it is the BOE's goal to save all positions and any concessions made will be toward salaries and benefits for all. He said that no one on the list of eighteen was qualified to fill the position.

Councilman Berner asked if there was any information on the outcome of the association meeting. Mr. Polizzi said he had only informal knowledge. Mr. Dave Wilson, union representative, stated the association met but they are not prepared to make any offers yet. He stated the NMEA had met three times to discuss options. He said they met on the previous Monday with the Superintendent and the Business Administrator for the first time at which time they asked a number of questions. He stated that there had been no written proposal prior to today and that it came to the entire staff via email from the Superintendent. The letter outlined some of the issues and the membership had met after school and was unanimous in the decision that they had not been provided with enough information or assurances to cast a vote. Mr. Wilson said that they are in the middle of a contract which ends June 30, 2011. He stated that other towns have remaining years on their contracts so they know that they will be entitled to an increase in future years. If they were to agree to a salary freeze this year they have no way of knowing if there will be any increases in the future. He explained that a 4.75% increase does not mean that everyone got 4.75%. He said that a greater percentage was put into Steps 1 – 10 to attract new talent in the teacher pool. He said that those at the top end of the Steps were only receiving 2%. Mr. Wilson stated that forty people were already going to make less money next year because the stipends were cut; he said these extra-curricular activities are what excites kids and is a hook to get kids interested.

Mr. Conner said he would like to refute the statement that the salary freeze was not discussed before the budget vote. He added that the meetings started with the association as soon as the BOE became aware of the cut in state funding, which he believed was sometime in March. Mr. Conner continued stating that two previous DOCs were not reviewing the results of the state tests; that the previous DOC and future DOC would be looking at those test results and acting upon them. He acknowledged that the DOC is not eye-to-eye with students but is critical to student achievement and teacher achievement.

Councilman Berner clarified that the Council can approve the budget as submitted or reduce it but has no power to increase it. He added that even if the Council approves the budget as presented there will still be eighteen positions eliminated, all that is being asked is that everyone cooperates fully to keep as many positions as possible.

Councilman Zeilner asked to confirm that the association has not made a determination as to whether or not they will agree to the proposed salary freeze. Mr. Wilson confirmed that no decision has been made.

Councilman Zeilner asked who sets the salary of the DOC. Mr. Conner responded that the budget reflects the salary of the old director with an increase for the current year. He stated that the new DOC would not necessarily be hired at the same salary as the previous DOC.

Councilman Zeilner asked for an update on retirees. Mr. Conner stated that there are three confirmed retirements. Mr. Zeilner asked if the Council had the amounts associated with those retirements. He was advised that they do not. Councilman Zeilner asked if there would be any compensatory or sick time due to the retirees. Mr. Conner stated that there would be but that it is capped by contract. Councilman Zeilner asked to have the amounts provided to the Council.

Councilwoman Subrizi said the Council needs a firm number for what the salary is vs. what was introduced taking into account the jobs lost, the positions saved and the retirees.

Councilman Bachmann stated that he did not believe he would be entitled to vote on the matter and therefore would refrain from expressing his opinions. He stated his role is to ask questions to enlighten those who will vote. Councilman Bachmann asked for a description on virtual high school. Mr. Polizzi responded it is an opportunity to take online courses; it is a pilot program with twenty students and that a contract has been signed for approximately \$11,000 and it was paid out of the 2009-2010 budget. Mr. Conner stated it will be a graduation requirement in the future. Councilman Bachmann stated his assumption that this would not require a separate teacher. Mr. Polizzi stated it would not require a separate teacher but rather a supervisor which has been embedded into the position of the media specialist at the high school.

Councilman Bachmann asked if it was correct that you need to have a Superintendent's certificate if you have the title of Director of Curriculum. Mr. Polizzi stated that you did not need that specifically but that you would need administrative certification of one kind or another. Councilman Bachmann asked if the position was titled Supervisor of Curriculum if anyone with Administrative certification could apply. Mr. Polizzi stated that was correct and noted that when the position was posted it was open to a number of different certifications. Councilman Bachmann asked if the position had already been advertised. He was advised that it had been. Councilman Bachmann asked if it was a twelve month position. He was advised that it is. Councilman Bachmann asked if the previous Director had left in April and if so who had been handling the responsibilities. He was advised that the previous Director left April 9th and that the Superintendent had been handling some of the responsibilities since that time, but not at the level that the position deserves. Mr. Polizzi stated that at one point the Interim Superintendent had been handling the responsibilities at a rate of \$1,000 per week. Councilman Bachmann commented it would equate to approximately \$50,000 per year to get the job done. He added the BOE could assign the different obligations of the DOC to different administrators to share the burden. Councilman Bachmann stated if they do not fill the DOC position they would be well on their way to keeping the two Vice Principal positions. Councilman Bachmann asked what assurances the BOE could give the Council that this solution would be utilized.

Mr. Polizzi stated those two positions may already be off the table but the goal is to preserve all jobs and bring everybody back. He added they have already brought back a teacher at the high school.

Councilman Bachmann asked if the BOE started interviewing for the DOC position; is there a front runner or have they put the process on hold to determine if there is enough money? Mr. Polizzi stated they have received eighty five applications which were screened by the search committee, they have been narrowed down but no decisions have been made because the BOE wants to explore all options before committing to another position.

Councilwoman Subrizi asked what year, in the five year cycle, they are in. She was advised that it is an ongoing, continual cycle; what was done five years ago is being done again this year, what was done four years ago will be done again next year.

Councilman Zeilner asked to confirm that the stipends were not contractual. Mr. Conner responded that Mr. Zeilner was correct. Councilman Zeilner stated they could be changed at any time if necessary. Mr. Conner stated that was correct. Mr. Conner noted the stipends had already been cut.

Mr. Polizzi stated that central administration cannot solve the problem alone; it will require cooperation from all. He asked the Council to not cut any additional money and asked the teachers and staff, top to bottom, to help with concessions. He stated the elimination of the DOC position alone would not be enough to solve the problem. Councilman Bachmann stated by making the concession not to hire a DOC it would send a message to the teachers and the Mayor and Council.

Council President Putrino stated again that the Mayor and Council only decides the amount to cut and makes recommendations on where the cuts should be made. He stated that the BOE does not have to follow the Mayor and Council recommendations on where to make the cuts, only how much to cut.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Councilman Bachmann made a motion to open the meeting to the public. The motion was seconded by Councilman Berner. All present in favor, none opposed.

Ms. Alicia McMahon, 1095 Steuben Avenue, came forward to address the Council and the BOE. Ms. McMahon stated that one of the responsibilities of the DOC has been identified as obtaining grant money. She asked how much grant money has been obtained in past few years. Mr. Conner stated that there was no grant writer in the past; it is a new requirement of the position. Ms. McMahon asked for the anticipated amount. Mr. Conner stated there is no real way of knowing. Ms. McMahon asked if it would be possible to get someone to do it on contingency like the town. She was advised that most do not work on a commission basis. Ms. McMahon asked if it would be possible to postpone hiring a DOC for a year. Mr. Polizzi stated that it is postponed right now. Ms. McMahon asked about the class size policy and if any changes were expected. A BOE member outlined the current class size policy. Ms. McMahon noted that the classes at Berkley are pretty much "maxed out" and asked if room size was taken into consideration in developing the policy. She asked if there are overages will students be moved between the elementary schools. She was advised that depending on enrollment it may be necessary to move some students. She asked again

if the policy on class size will be revisited. Mr. Polizzi stated they will try to maintain it but until they know how many positions will be lost it cannot be guaranteed. Ms. McMahon asked if guarantees had been made to teachers for the concessions being requested. Mr. Polizzi responded, as he stated at the last meeting and stated it in his letter to teachers, 100% of any concessions will be applied to bringing positions back.

Ms. Joanne Prisendorf, 317 River Road, came forward to address the Council and the BOE. Ms. Prisendorf stated when we don't hire a DOC and when teachers agree to a pay freeze, everyone will keep their jobs and class size will stay the same. She was advised that this would be true provided the Council does not cut the budget.

Mr. Ray Cottiers, 344 Lacey Drive, came forward to address the Council and the BOE. Mr. Cottiers stated it is disturbing to him that the Council is asking the BOE for information and it does not seem as if information is forthcoming. He stated he also felt it was disturbing that the BOE called out Dave Wilson at a public meeting. He said that it is obvious that the negotiation is not going well and it does not seem as if real negotiation is taking place. He stated he cannot imagine how it would be possible for the High School to run without a Vice Principal.

Mr. Nick D'Amelio, 349 Trench Drive, came forward to address the Council and the BOE. Mr. D'Amelio said he is disturbed by the fact that it feels as though we are pitting individuals against individuals and missing the point. He stated most people feel the administrative cost of providing education is out of hand and not comparable to the private sector. He said that you can't have all of the benefits without the means to pay for it and asked how taxpayers are expected to pay for these increases. He said if nobody is willing to give back there will be a stalemate and he does not see where the sacrifice is being spread evenly.

Ms. Mary McElroy, 297 Greve Drive, came forward to address the Council and the BOE. Ms. McElroy stated the budget is not just about the DOC position. She said that she sees the value of the position but suggested that maybe it would be better on the back burner; that the whole picture needs to be taken into consideration. She stated that everyone will have to sacrifice something otherwise it will not work.

Ms. Paige Ryan, 226 West Street, came forward to address the Council and the BOE. Ms. Ryan stated that the Mayor had mentioned the Council would consider cuts by tax points and that one tax point would equate to approximately \$42 per household. She asked if the Council cut one tax point how much would actually be cut from the budget. Councilman Bachmann said the Mayor had stated that cutting one tax point of \$196,000 out of the BOE budget only saves each taxpayer on average \$41. Ms. Ryan stated the impact on the district from cutting \$196,000 would be much greater than the impact on a household in saving \$41. Ms. Ryan asked why Councilman Bachmann would not be voting. He responded that he has a conflict of interest as he has an immediate family member that works for the district. Ms. Ryan asked if there would be continued negotiation and real discussion with the collective bargaining units. Mr. Conner stated there would be.

Ms. Debra Kayay, 394 Congress Street, came forward to address the Council and the BOE. Ms. Kayay commented that there has been a lot of focus on the DOC position. She stated that when people buy a house the first thing they consider is the education system and suggested that it should

be put first or it is a disservice to the town. She stated she would hate to see money taken from education as it would be a downward spiral

Ms. Ida Piasevilli, 328 Jordan Road, came forward to address the Council and the BOE. Ms. Piasevilli stated that everybody needs to sacrifice and that something needs to change because people just cannot afford to pay for it all anymore; she suggested paying into benefits, a freeze, or a cap. She stated people are losing homes and asked in the future when decisions are being made that this all be kept in mind. Ms. Piasevilli asked about the program designed to bring children back into the district. Mr. Conner asked Mr. Dorso, Director of Special Services, to explain the program. Mr. Dorso explained there will be two new programs for children on the autism spectrum, for pre-kindergarten and Kindergarten through second grade. He stated that the money saved from not having to send these children out of district will fund the new programs and help to bring money into the district. Ms. Piasevilli expressed concern for children who may be comfortable in their current programs now being required to begin a new program within the district. Mr. Polizzi stated no child will be required to change programs.

Ms. Joan McCann, 217 Mckinley Avenue, came forward to address the Council and the BOE. Ms. McCann stated that if the Mayor and Council decide the DOC position is not important they will cut \$140,000 from the budget and if the BOE decides to maintain the position they will then have to cut the \$140,000 from somewhere else in the budget. She implored the BOE to give serious consideration to filling the position and stated she genuinely believes that this was the reason the budget was defeated.

Mr. Mark Flores, 150 North Carlton Place, came forward to address the Council and the BOE. Mr. Flores stated that the amount of attention paid to one job is amazing, but that he heard about this job before the election and thought that maybe this would be the year that the BOE should consider not filling the position. Mr. Flores said that if the BOE is looking for cooperation on behalf of the union they need to show cooperation on their part. He noted the importance of the Vice Principal position. He suggested offering retirement incentives. He was advised that this was not allowed by law.

Mrs. Flores stated she teaches in Hudson County and she said that there would be no way to convince her that the Vice Principal position is not necessary or less important than the DOC. The BOE collectively responded that they were not attempting to do so. She asked if it was a strong possibility that the DOC position would be held off for a year. Mr. Conner stated it is a possibility but it is the hope of the BOE to bring back all of the positions. She said the Vice Principal position is really a safety issue that should not even have been a consideration

Bonnie Korzelius, 210 Fulton Street, came forward to address the Council and the BOE. Ms. Korzelius asked if the Vice Principal is cut at the Middle School and High School who would take on those responsibilities. She was advised that at the Middle School it would fall to the Principal and at the High School it would fall to the Principal and the Athletic Director. Ms. Korzelius stated she heard that a guidance counselor had been cut at the Middle School so now there would be only one guidance counselor for 500 students.

Ms. Donna Collucci, 223 Bergen Avenue, came forward to address the Council and the BOE. Ms. Collucci stated that in her memory the Principal played the role of the good guy and the Vice

Principal played the role of the bad guy or disciplinarian. She stated her opinion that it would be important to maintain the two Vice Principal positions.

Mr. Chris Petching, 621 McCarthy Drive, came forward to address the Council and the BOE. Mr. Petching stated his understanding that there was to have been a vote by the membership but that there was not enough information for them to take that vote. He asked if the vote would be taken prior to the date when the decision needs to be made by the Mayor and Council and if it is not taken prior would it matter if they were to come back a month from now with a vote. Mr. Conner said that it would matter; it would affect not only the eliminated positions but the actual individuals. Mr. Petching asked if anyone from the teacher's union could comment on whether they would be taking a vote within the next week. Mr. Wilson said that based upon where they are now he would say no. Mr. Petching stated not having a vote is the equivalent of a "no" vote and the Mayor and Council should just make their decision.

Ms. Piasevilli asked if anyone had received a cut in salary yet. Mr. Conner said nothing would be effective until July 1st.

Councilwoman Subrizi asked if we have any idea of what last year's total salary was vs. this year's total salary as of this date. She noted that things have changed since the BOE compiled the budget. She suggested that if the difference was \$900,000 and everyone agreed to take ½ of the proposed salary increase the savings would be \$450,000 plus the addition of the three retirements. She asked if all of this would be decided by 5/13 and said she did not believe it would be.

Ms. McCann asked who from the BOE is speaking to the teachers. She was advised that Mr. Polizzi and Mr. Sawicz have been speaking to Mr. Wilson and his executive team. She asked why the negotiations committee from the BOE would not be included in the discussions. Mr. Conner stated that it is difficult to get that many people together. Ms. McCann suggested it seems as though there is a stalemate. Mr. Polizzi responded there is no stalemate; decisions just need to be made. He stated the conversation consists of a few simple items: 1.5% voluntary contributions toward medical, a waiver of tuition reimbursement, and a salary freeze or some percentage of a freeze.

Ms. Ryan said she understands that some matters cannot be discussed in public. She asked if the only way to save all of the positions would be if everyone, district wide, took a pay freeze. This was confirmed. She stated then if that does not happen the rest is a moot point. She stated if the BOE says they are having good faith discussions and the union says they do not have enough information there is a disconnect because the information is not getting across the lines. She asked if the BOE would reach out after this meeting in an attempt to hash out the details. Mr. Polizzi stated he would as he has for the past month.

Ms. Isis Nieto, 265 Milford Avenue, came forward to address the Council and the BOE. Ms. Nieto state she has had four children in the New Milford school system, three have graduated and one is going into the Middle School. She stated she has seen cuts up and down. She stated that she does not believe that this is the end of the cuts we will see. She stated that one of the reasons she came to New Milford was because of the school system. She said she is worried; she sees three different groups working the Association, the Council and the BOE. She said there must be some reason why the teachers are not coming forward and agreeing to the terms. She said she believes they would be looking for a solution to keep their jobs.

As there were no further comments from the public, the meeting was closed on a motion from Councilman Berner. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Subrizi. All present in favor, none opposed.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christine Demiris". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Christine Demiris
Borough Clerk