

**MINUTES OF MEETING  
MUNICIPAL BUDGET COMMITTEE  
March 30, 2016**

A meeting of the Municipal Budget Committee was called to order at 6:30 PM in the Professional Development Room at Kennett Middle School with the following members present: Chairman Joe Mosca, Vice Chair Danielle Santuccio, Bill Marvel, Bill Masters, Peter Donohoe, Mark Hounsell, Jim LeFebvre, John Colbath, Terry McCarthy, Dick Klement and John Edgerton. Excused: Doug Swett, Pat Swett and Frank McCarthy. Absent: Christopher DeVries and Pat Kittle. Also present: Iris Bowden, Recording Secretary.

Chairman Mosca led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Mosca stated basically what the members were going to be doing tonight is going over meeting Minutes to approve what's outstanding.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

John Edgerton moved, seconded by Jim LeFebvre, to accept the Minutes of January 6, 2016. In favor: 11; Opposed: 0; Abstain: 0.

John Edgerton moved, seconded by Terry McCarthy, to accept the Minutes of January 13, 2016. In favor: 11; Opposed: 0; Abstain: 0.

Jim LeFebvre moved, seconded by Peter Donohoe, to accept the Minutes of January 20, 2016. In favor: 11; Opposed: 0; Abstain: 0.

John Edgerton moved, seconded by Jim LeFebvre, to accept the Minutes of January 27, 2016. In favor: 10; Opposed: 0; Abstain: 1 - Danielle Santuccio.

Jim LeFebvre moved, seconded by John Colbath, to accept the Minutes of February 1, 2016. In favor: 11; Opposed: 0; Abstain: 0.

John Colbath moved, seconded by Jim LeFebvre, to accept the Minutes of February 3, 2016. In favor: 10; Opposed: 0; Abstain: 1 - Mark Hounsell.

John Colbath moved, seconded by John Edgerton, to accept the Minutes of March 7, 2016. In favor: 10; Opposed: 0; Abstain: 1 - Bill Masters.

Jim LeFebvre moved, seconded by Peter Donohoe, to accept the Minutes of March 9, 2016. In favor: 11; Opposed: 0; Abstain: 0.

NEW BUSINESS

Chairman Mosca stated there is a request to have a member of this Committee join a sub-committee that's looking into public preschool. Chairman asked if any member wanted to volunteer to be a part of that sub-committee.

Peter Donohoe asked what was public preschool and asked if there was someone that could elaborate. Mark Hounsell stated it's not so much public

preschool, it's public Special Education preschool. Something that is provided now. There is early information, and he wasn't saying he was on it or not, but early information is that if they were to do Special Education Preschool in house, they could save as much as \$300,000.00 annually. They, of course, have to wait to have that shown to them. The integrated part is that the school would also be available for non-special ed students should they want to pay tuition. The discussion has a long way to go, but that's basically the idea. They are obliged to pay for special education for children from the age of 3 until they are 21 in special ed.

Peter Donohoe asked if that would be similar to what Jackie Sparks does with Children Unlimited. Mark Hounsell stated Children Unlimited is one of the providers that they use in the District. Again, the thinking is that the District would save money if we did it in house. That's the rationale for it being introduced.

John Colbath stated as part of the savings is Grants available if it's consolidated. Mark Hounsell stated that is correct. John stated substantial Grant money is available, both State and Federal. Mark stated one of the things that he would be looking for, and he wasn't taking any position, is what happens, what's it look like when the Grants run out. That's sometimes a problem with receiving Grants; it looks good for the first 3 or 4 years, but you've got to really look at things.

Jim LeFebvre asked where are they planning to house it. Mark Hounsell stated he didn't know. He could say this: the decision was made the other night that it will not go into the Middle School and the reason for that was because the Town is looking very seriously at using the moth ball space that we knew as the new Gym which is the old, new Gym, refurbishing that and putting the Rec Department in here. They could not do that if the preschool was in that building for security and access reasons. It would be a deal breaker and in order to have that consideration met. That goes more beyond what the School would save, but what the Town would save and it's either your left pocket or your right pocket and, on this Committee, we know that the Town was looking for some long term solution to its recreation facility needs. It kind of looks like it might work, but it wouldn't work if the School Board didn't say that we won't put the preschool in there should they do it.

Mark Hounsell further stated the other thing is the School Board is almost unanimous in its opinion that we need to move the 6<sup>th</sup> Grade into the Middle School as requested by this Committee last May. The School Board is looking to do that. He has finally been convinced.

Jim LeFebvre stated so the building would continue to be used as a school and not as a Rec Center. Mark Hounsell stated the 6<sup>th</sup> Grade would be able to go there and so would the Rec Center. John Edgerton stated 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Grade. Mark stated it's the integrated preschool that couldn't go there and the Rec Center because a lot of it is because of accessibility and security.

John Edgerton stated he hasn't seen any numbers in any of our books, but preschool Special Ed, how many students are we talking about. Mark Hounsell stated he didn't know; they are so early in the discussion. John

stated you must know how many you are paying for now. Mark stated they will know, but he doesn't know and he was sure that someone in the District does know. He just doesn't know. John stated it's not in any of our paperwork. Mark stated no, they haven't produced any paperwork. This is all stuff that's being talked about. John stated he wasn't too sure we shouldn't have known how much is in special ed.

Chairman Mosca stated he guessed his question is: once we open the door, if we do decide to open the door, do we open Pandora's Box. What if someone that has a student, a parent that has a student that's preschool age and doesn't need special needs sues the District saying if you're supplying preschool for these students, why do I have to pay tuition. Mark Hounsell stated because it's an integrated preschool. If they don't have an IEP, they're not eligible for special services.

Chairman Mosca asked once it becomes Special Education, isn't it open to everyone in the town. Mark Hounsell stated no, only from age 6 to 18 is the only compulsory education need. Even someone with a child that doesn't have identified needs doesn't go to public school until they go through the process of getting an IEP, being coded. It's definitely worth something to look at, but like any new idea, you need to look at the potential for a Pandora's Box to be opened. We just need to know what's inside the box before we open it and we don't.

Mark Hounsell stated he wanted to mention about the 6<sup>th</sup> Grade going to the Middle School. He has long been opposed to that; probably just because of things in his head, but he has been convinced that he was wrong; the Middle School experience should be a 3 year experience of 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. He thought that was the educational weight of it. They still have to look at how that will affect the Tuition Contracts because that's based on ratio of enrollments. The last he knew there was something like a \$500,000.00 negative impact to Revenues if they do it, so they have to, as a community, they have to ask if they want to do that. To make it all work, it all has to be discussed together. He wanted to assure that this is not something that the School Board can do without approval from the voters and they, of course, will be looking to the Budget Committee for their comments and their recommendations after all of the scrutiny is done. There's a lot of questions to ask. He just wanted to report that this is the direction that the School is looking at.

John Colbath stated in answer to part of Chairman Mosca's question, Federal law through IEP and coding for Special Education is age 3 to 21. The local Early Intervention Program does a very good job and fills the needs for age 0 to 3, then they have Preschool available, but as the child gets older the provision of those services to meet that Federal law becomes more and more expensive to do.

Chairman Mosca stated he appreciates that, but before there was Title 9, and he was going to use something different, in athletics, men's athletics always got more money than women's athletics did until someone sued and now the money is suppose to be split equally. His point is, or his concern is that if somebody sues and says they are calling this a public preschool, why isn't my child allowed to go. If there is a lawsuit, you don't know how the Courts will rule. All he was saying is what is the

potential impact because he thought there was about 200 students and that's about \$500,000.00.

Jim LeFebvre stated he was wondering if Mark (Hounsell) would be able to get the members the numbers from people who are actually in the program currently and the cost. Mark Hounsell stated there is a sub-committee working on those things and he is not a member of it, but he will ask them to give this Committee as much information as they have that they feel is ready for release at this point.

Jim LeFebvre stated if he recalled correctly there will be a meeting some time in April. Chairman Mosca stated that's why they've reached out to us to see if a member of this Board wanted to be on the sub-committee, so that we would have a representative there knowing what's going on and could report back to us.

Mark Hounsell stated it's going to be a fast moving train to get started with it. He expects that some time around September or October, this Committee will be looking to slow it down a little bit maybe because there will be a lot of fiscal questions apart from the policy questions.

Bill Marvel stated he just wanted to respond to the fear of a lawsuit. He thought the real fear is the annual school meeting where somebody comes in and says she teaches in another town and wants her kid to be able to go to a public preschool rather than pay for child care and comes in and says you have this program, why don't we all just fund it a little more and put everybody in it. That's his fear; in fact, that's his expectation that is what will happen.

Dick Klement stated he had a couple of shotgun answers. First for Bill (Marvel), if a child from another town has an IEP and they come to school here in Conway, that town pays for that IEP support. So he would imagine that if somebody from Bartlett for example, the parent had an IEP coded student and they wanted to send them to a preschool here the town would then pay for that.

Bill Marvel stated that's not what he was talking about. He was actually recalling how we got full-time Kindergarten. Someone who taught in another town and had to leave her child here in Day Care wanted us to pay for the Day Care, so we ended up funding full-time Kindergarten.

Dick Klement stated there are other examples of students with an IEP and students without an IEP being schooled together if you will for Project Succeed for example. There are some students that are coded to go there, others go on a paid basis. He believes what they were looking for was to say, he believes what they are trying to say is, okay we can actually save money by bringing these kids in house and we will have up to x, y, z number of slots left over for the year. He didn't think they were going to exceed what they are forecasting because they have to hire people. If they hire enough people to do 25 children, that's going to be the top level and that may be 3 students without special needs or it could be 13. They won't know until they get there.

Dick Klement further stated the last one is moving the 6<sup>th</sup> Grade. If you move the 6<sup>th</sup> Grade to that school, you will fill 5 of the empty classrooms that the Rec Center will not be using. There's still going to be 6 empty classrooms in that building. The School Board folks have a lot of things to think about.

Chairman Mosca stated now that all of this discussion has taken place, does anybody want to volunteer to be the representative for the sub-committee looking into preschool. Jim LeFebvre asked when and where they would be meeting. Mark Hounsell stated usually it is in the Conference Room. Chairman stated he was told that it would more than likely be Friday afternoons, not always, but that was what he was told by Pam (Stimson) when he spoke with her on the phone.

Jim LeFebvre stated if he knew when they were going to start, he would be more than happy to, but he's heading out again on Sunday and will be gone for two weeks.

Mark Hounsell stated he thought that someone like Jim (LeFebvre) would be good eyes on the sub-committee and if he didn't make every meeting, he would at least have access to all of the information. Bill Marvel stated then he wouldn't have to do it. Jim stated on that basis, put him down as the representative.

Mark Hounsell stated he wanted to address the comment about someone suing the District. That is certainly a possibility; you never know when that might happen, but he thought to be successful on a suit like that they would have to address the legal fact that there is no compulsory requirement for the District to offer anything other than Special Ed services. Both the State law and the Federal law would have to change before anyone could do anything about that.

Mark Hounsell further stated finally, he would say what has his interest on the potential of the integrated preschool is the savings and also the fact that, he believes, we can do better service in house for less money and they do know that when those services are provided in early intervention that the student does much, much better once they go into the classroom. A lot of kids are on 504's which are a little different than an IEP and they come off pretty early in their education. He knows of one young man who was on a 504 for Special Ed and received services and is currently Honors and High Honors at the High School. Early Intervention is a big benefit.

Chairman Mosca thanked the members for a great year and that he appreciated everybody's hard work this year and we'll do it again next year. Thanks.

**Bill Marvel moved, seconded by Jim LeFebvre, to adjourn the meeting at 6:50 PM. Motion carried unanimously.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Iris A. Bowden, Recording Secretary