



TOWN OF MIDDLEBURY

Office of the Selectmen

**MINUTES
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Tuesday, April 7, 2015
SHEPARDSON COMMUNITY CENTER – ROOM 26**

Present: Edward B. St. John, First Selectman
Elaine M. Strobel, Selectman
Ralph J. Barra, Selectman

Also Present: Regina L. Botsford, Superintendent of Schools - Region 15
Keith McLiverty, Director of Finance – Region 15
Attorney Robert Smith
Barbara Whitaker, Recording Clerk
Bill Bittar, Reporter – Republican American

Call to Order with Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order by the First Selectman with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes of March 16, 2015 Meeting

Selectman Strobel MOTIONED to approve the minutes of March 16, 2015, SECONDED by Selectman Barra. Unanimous approval.

Reappointments

Selectman Strobel MOTIONED to approve the appointment of Robert Rubbo, Director of Health – term from June 30, 2014 through June 30, 2015, SECONDED by Selectman Barra. Unanimous approval.

Selectman Barra MOTIONED to reappoint Elizabeth M. Callahan as a member of the Safety and Health Committee – term from February 4, 2015 through February 4, 2016, SECONDED by Selectman Strobel. Unanimous approval.

Region 15 Budget Presentation by Regina L. Botsford, Superintendent of Schools

At this time Ms. Botsford introduced Keith McLiverty, Director of Finance.

Ms. Botsford stated that she presented a condensed version of the Budget to the Board of Education, which was approved. The amount of the budget is \$65.5 million. That number is an increase of 2.48% of the current budget; and will go to referendum on May 6th. Ms. Botsford said that Region 15 has a mission statement about being committed to excellence and that the budget is informed by the mission statement. Their charge is to educate students for what their future will be.

Budget Investments

Technology, math textbooks, library books, turf field at high school and text books at the high school. Technology they have some catching up to do. Upgrade of infrastructure; current was installed in the 1990's last upgrade was in 2007. Smart boards

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are in all classrooms at elementary and middle schools; some of them need to be replaced; \$50,000 is budgeted to replace smart boards. There are no smart boards at the high school; \$31,000 is budgeted for computer projectors; \$8,000 for five additional computers for the digital learning academy.

Ms. Botsford explained that there are desktops and laptops that are beyond their useful life; desk tops that are up to 11 years old and laptops that are up to 8 years old. \$253,550 is the total cost of the technology investment. Mr. McLiverty explained that the annual cost of lease will be \$60,000; they will get 1,074 replacement desktops and laptops. They will be doing four year leases.

Math Textbooks

Ms. Botsford explained that currently, in the elementary schools they do not have math textbooks, as the standards have been changing. \$40,000 has been allotted in the budget for math textbooks for k-3 for next year. There are four elementary schools.

Library Books

There were cuts made to new library books. They restored the funding for library books so k-12 they will be able to supplement libraries with new library books.

Ms. Botsford added that although we have great libraries here, these books will be located in the classroom and those books are the ones that they use directly for reading instructions. Selectman Strobel inquired about the need for more books when we already have good libraries. Ms. Botsford explained that not all students will be reading the same books at the same time. The library books are in the school libraries to increase the collaboration between the librarian and the school teacher.

Turf Field

Ms. Botsford explained that the turf field at the high school is eleven years old; expected life is ten years. They perform a density test on a regular basis for student safety. The most current test is acceptable, but they are reaching the point where it will no longer be acceptable. They have built up capital reserve fund for this purpose. The First Selectman asked for more specific details on what was needed and what the cost would be, as well as the repair and maintenance.

Textbooks at High School

Region 15 will be offering a new course in advanced placement economics. The Board will be funding new text books in the personal finance course the text books at 11 and 13 years old as the standards have changed. The budgeted amount for the textbook is \$16,736.

Selectman Strobel asked for what the administrators at Region 15 have done to reduce the budget. Ms. Botsford offered that there has been no spending increase in the past

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two years and that the \$65.3 million budget reduces the equivalent of three full time staff members.

Both Ms. Botsford and Mr. McLiverty commended Chief Viadero and the Middlebury Police Department for all they have done to assist Region 15 and appreciate the great relationship the Region and the MPD share.

First Selectman St. John shared statistics on why the residents of Middlebury feel animosity towards Region 15 (attached). The First Selectman said that the Town keeps their spending in check even though there has been an increase in the number of residents over the years.

Mr. Barra said that he was very impressed with the presentation. Ms. Botsford said the Region was very fortunate to be able to work with the Board of Selectmen. The First Selectman extended thanks to Ms. Botsford and Mr. McLiverty for their time and budget presentation.

Discussion and Consideration

None.

Public Comments

None.

Adjournment

Selectman Strobel MOTIONED to ADJOURN the meeting, SECONDED by Selectman Barra. Unanimous approval.

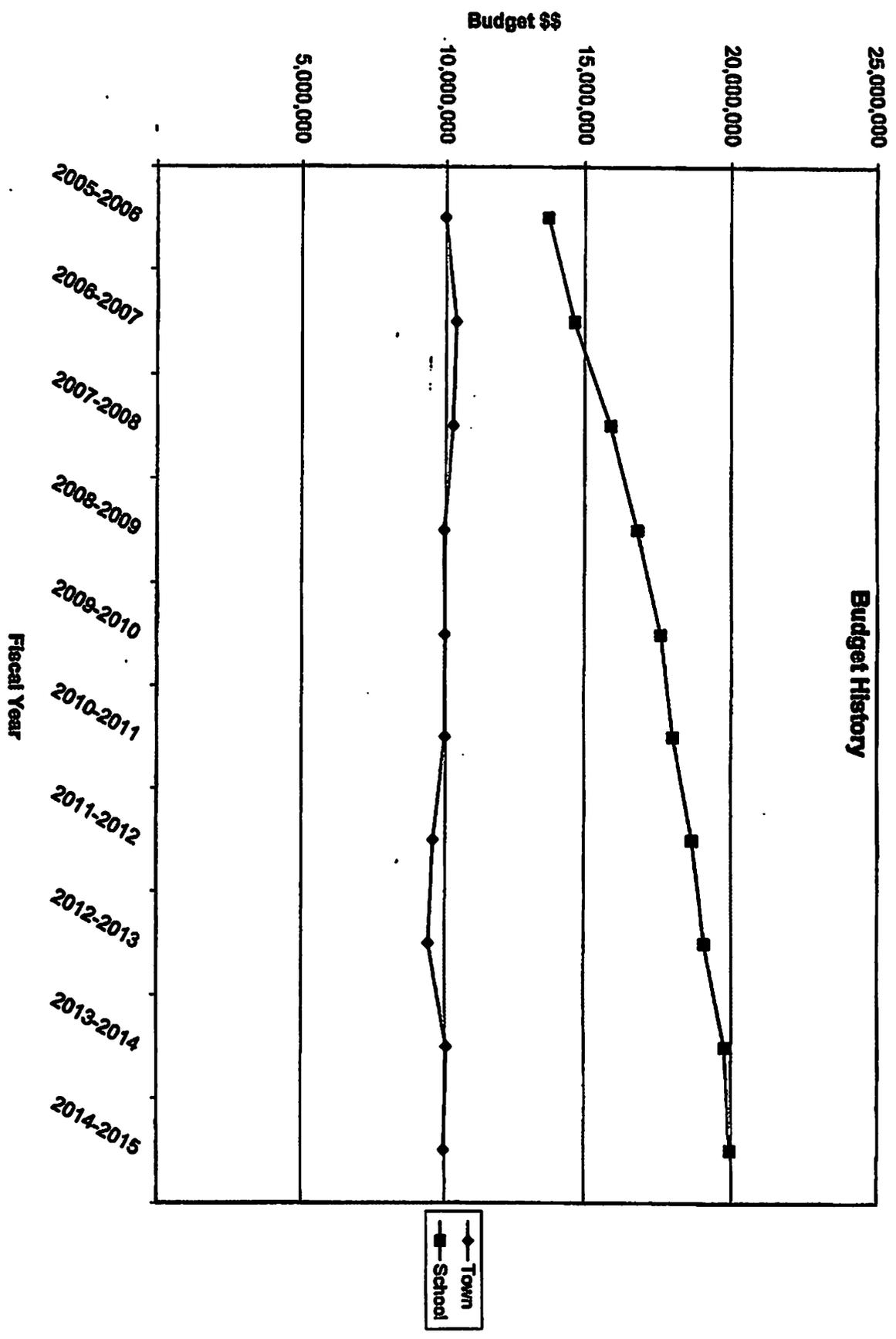
Respectfully submitted,

Barbara J. Whitaker

Barbara J. Whitaker
Recording Clerk

Budget \$\$ History

FY	Town	Town % Incr.	School	School % Incr.	Total	Total % Incr.	Mil Rate
2005-2006	9,983,261	8.79%	13,715,412	10.12%	23,698,673	9.56%	30.55
2006-2007	10,374,486	3.92%	14,640,597	6.75%	25,015,083	5.55%	31.32
2007-2008	10,267,773	-1.03%	15,904,783	8.63%	26,172,556	4.63%	21.90
2008-2009	9,943,120	-3.16%	16,817,012	5.74%	26,760,132	2.25%	23.21
2009-2010	9,974,870	0.32%	17,606,265	4.69%	27,581,135	3.07%	23.63
2010-2011	9,988,224	0.13%	18,025,247	2.38%	28,013,471	1.57%	23.37
2011-2012	9,568,875	-4.20%	18,677,886	3.62%	28,246,761	0.83%	23.79
2012-2013	9,406,782	-1.69%	19,093,395	2.22%	28,500,177	0.90%	28.07
2013-2014	10,052,636	6.87%	19,774,403	3.57%	29,827,039	4.66%	28.86
2014-2015	9,969,867	-0.82%	19,951,990	0.90%	29,921,877	0.32%	29.34



POMPERAUG REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT #15
Student Population - Southbury / Middlebury

Ed,

3/3/2015

Fiscal Year Ending	Southbury	Middlebury
1968	1059	1058
1969	1154	1103
1970	1235	1180
1971		
1972	1246	1193
1973	1316	1229
1974	1387	1211
1975	54.50%	45.50%
1976	56.90%	43.10%
1977	57.80%	42.20%
1978	1732	1179
1979	1837	1131
1980	1973	1091
1981	2027	1078
1982	1991	1029.5
1983	2002	1020
1984	1988.5	998.5
1985	1987.5	926
1986	2000.5	900.5
1987	1994	878.5
1988	2048.5	848
1989	2001	847.5
1990	1997	856
1991	2119	840
1992	2223	862
1993	2273	907
1994	2379	934
1995	2509	933
1996	2632	943
1997	2719	990
1998	2869	1038
1999	2994	1061
2000	3105	1123
2001	3184	1148
2002	3148	1178
2003	3266	1145
2004	3332	1189
2005	3300	1221
2006	3398	1257
2007	3295	1249
2008	3265	1307
2009	3244	1328

Please note that many of these numbers/percents were estimates from the Region 15 budgets.

2010	3181	1367
2011	3187	1369
2012	3068	1386
2013	2901	1351
2014	2798	1309
2015	2755	1257
2016		

Regional school formula needs review

BY JOHN H. FIELD

Connecticut's statutes for governing regional school districts are structurally flawed. They urgently need comprehensive legislative review and updating.

Regional school districts in Connecticut are legal partnerships of towns for public education. Conceptually, small towns should be able to provide better education, more cost effectively, by working together rather than separately.

However, most statutes governing regional districts were enacted in the first half of the 20th century. Regional districts have become expensive to operate and difficult to manage as a result of a mix of statutory constraints, unfunded state mandates, shifting of state financial support to needy urban districts, and declining student populations.

The major structural flaws include:

■ Regional district boards have authority to submit budget and capital project referendums to voters directly, with neither input nor approval from town boards of finance.

But regional district boards lack taxing authority to fund approved budgets and projects. This awkwardly places voters in the position of having to allocate resources to

competing needs of schools and towns.

Elected town officials, not voters, should make those tradeoffs, subject to approval of town legislative bodies. Boards of regional districts should have the same accountability to town boards of finance as do boards of non-regionalized school districts.

Further, with respect to budgeting, the state mandates that school budgets cannot be materially reduced, even if enrollment declines.

■ In 2009, the Connecticut Supreme Court ruled that any substantive change in the original regionalization agreement requires approval of the legislative body of each town in the school district. Each town thus has a veto over changes to reduce costs or improve education, even if approved by a majority in the district. No such constraint was placed on the state concerning its regulations, mandates and commitments of funding support to regional districts and towns.

So, state unfunded mandates have continued. These mandates include a requirement that schools accept and mainstream special-education students and to absorb most of those costs into local budgets. Others are evolving; for example, the current effort to convert to the requirements of the federally sponsored

Common Core curriculum. Meanwhile, state sharing of regional costs, such as transportation, capital facilities and education cost sharing, has been severely reduced from levels provided when the districts were formed.

Adding to these pressures on costs, regional districts are required by the state to accept "closed-shop" union representation of most employees, and compulsory binding arbitration.

The combined impact of this network of constraints and mandates, spread over declining student populations, has been devastating. Region 12 — Bridgewater, Roxbury and Washington, Conn. — has a 2014-15 budget of \$21.4 million for 747 students, down from 1,058 in 2007-08. That's \$28,670 per student. Professional forecasters project the Region 12 student population will continue to decline to 528 by 2022. Even with no increase in costs until then, the cost per student would grow to \$40,561.

Boards of regional districts, thus "boxed in," must defer facilities maintenance, reduce education programs and curriculums, or take on more debt. Such measures have little chance of winning unanimous approvals of regions' towns.

■ Finally, a business partnership faced with such a daunting array of issues and obstacles might say:

"Let's give it up — let's dissolve the partnership and allow each partner to reconsider its circumstances and seek alternative strategies in its own best interests." But not so fast: Statutes Sec. 10-61 to 10-63, covering Withdrawal or Dissolution of a regional district, were repealed in 1963. The only way for a town to withdraw, or for a region to dissolve itself, is Sec. 10-63 (a-f).

It requires at least two towns in a regional district of three to petition the board of education for a study, which the board shall organize under the provisions of this statute. This, too, is a flawed concept. The legislative bodies of member towns, not the school board, created the region; they should have the lead responsibility for developing new strategic plans that might involve de-regionalization, withdrawal or reconfiguration of towns.

Without thoughtful reform by the state of its statutes and regulations governing regional school districts, regionalization will not be a successful strategy for primary and secondary public education in Connecticut's small towns. The losers will be students, their parents and educators, taxpayers and ultimately, the towns and the state.

John H. Field, a retired senior executive of Union Carbide Corp. and former Washington, Conn., finance board member, lives in Litchfield.



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