

Pawling Budget Communications Committee

January 16, 2007

Attendees: Helen Grosso, Pauline Kaplan, Henrietta Lodge, Margaret Clarke, Teri Olsen, Vince Polletta, Joan, Anita Heitmann, Thomas Johnson, Michael Divitto, Michelle Iankowicz Steve Vlamis, Richard Blowers, Kathleen Greiner, Weston Berg, Rob Hamilton, Meredith Bleavans, Melissa Castro, David Spagnolo, Leslie Lee, Sonya Abbye Taylor Lucy Watson, David Watson, Joseph Sciortino.

Mr. Sciortino introduced himself and distributed handouts. He reviewed questions that were asked last session. Answers to these questions will be on the website tomorrow.

1. What is the aid we receive for textbooks?

- *\$57.40 per student = book aid*

2. What is the range of textbook cost currently?

- *\$50 - \$100 and above can be the cost of one book*

3. My daughter, a seventh grader, has a couple of books ... one at home and one here...so she doesn't have to carry books back and forth from school. How does that affect the budget?

- *This does affect the budget. Double books require twice the money for each subject. Books are now being put on CD's, online & on jump drives. This helps with accessibility but these items often can cost the same price as the book. The district negotiates with the textbook companies to receive the best possible support materials along with each purchase.*

4. What is the annual cost on that dept per year to the budget?

- *It is based on full value assessment... It goes up and down depending on full value assessments....*

5. What are unfunded mandates?

- *These are activities we must do... for example testing in grades three through eight. You have no choice as to whether or not to do this. They are mandated by the State and Federal governments.*

6. Are children with learning disabilities placed outside of the district?

- *Yes, a child will go out of district if necessary, if we can't provide the services the child needs in district*

7. Is there a reasonableness about providing special ed?

- The district cannot ignore a child's Individual Education Plan (IEP). You must provide an appropriate education to all children...
- If a student has a learning disability it will not go away like the flu. It is the way the student learns... Some can remember if they use their hands, movement ... We all compensate... children with special needs must compensate also.

8. What percentage of our students with disabilities receive regents diplomas?

- For years, over 90% of students with disabilities receive local or regents diplomas. Ninety-seven students graduated in 2006. The following chart is a breakdown of students receiving diplomas:

Type of Diploma	Total	General Education	Special Education
Regents	34	27	7
Local	14	4	10
Advanced Regents	34	33	1
Advanced Regents with Honors	15	15	0
Total	97	79	18

9. What are the benefits of going through BOCES?

- *BOCES provides collaborative services. Many times BOCES can provide services more economically by providing for more students than a district can on their own for only one or two students. The district is reimbursed during the following year for services provided by BOCES.*

10. Do we just place a student in private schools regardless of the cost?

- *We always seek to strike a balance of services and education. We find the school that provides the best service for the most economical price. We cannot compromise a child's education based on cost.*

11. How does the State determine reimbursement for special education costs?

- *The State has two formulas for compensation public and private. The state calculates what we can afford. Public - 28%, Private - the threshold is \$14,500 and State Aid is 78% above that.*

12. What are the real numbers in special education?

- How much money is really being spent to send children out of the district? In the 2005-2006 school year, we spent \$837,892 for tuition and services to private and public schools and \$1,019,805 to BOCES.
- What do we pay for transportation? This varies depending on where students are placed and which bus drivers transport the students. However, school districts are mandated to transport special education students up to 50 miles each way.
- What is the grand total? All of Special Education expenses, including Special Education teaching and support staff, in 2005-2006 came to \$4,055,869. This amount is reimbursed by State Aid in the following year.
- Where do we find the additional space? There isn't any. In order to reduce the number of out-of-district students, we would have to increase the space in Pawling's school buildings.
- We are not looking to expand to a special education school? No.
- The PASE program, is it in fact a program that brings other children to the district?
 - *The program was started to accommodate the needs of students with aspergers syndrome, (autism) in our district. We took in extra students to help pay for the program.*
Whenever possible we integrate all of our students.

13. What percentage of our students is special education?

- *13.6 percent.*

14. How do we keep the numbers of special education students as low as possible?

- *Teachers differentiate instruction tailored to the student's needs and learning styles. In addition, before classification, academic interventions are used to address weaknesses.*

15. What duties do teacher perform other than teaching?

- *Teachers perform duties other than teaching ... duties include: hall duty, lunch, etc.*

16. Do we spend more than any other districts?

- *We have found that comparable schools have similar spending in some ways... When you look at individual line items in each district there are differences because each school district has set different priorities. For example Pawling transports all of its students to school. This was a mandate from the community, was voted on by the public and will remain until the community changes its opinion regarding transportation. Other communities have limited transportation or not transportation. These factors affect the line items in the budget.*

17. While we are talking about special education and out of district placements, is the cost in addition to our cost per pupil?

- *No. Special education costs are calculated into the budget and into our cost per pupil.*
- *What is the average spending in addition to special education? The average cost per pupil for Special Education is \$18,038. That is \$400 over the State average, but \$4,300 below cost of similar schools. (2003-2004 – most current Report Card)*
- *What do we spend in house for special education? The District spent \$2,198,172 for special education provided in District (2005-2006)*

18. My question is about health care. What do our staff members pay?

- *Our teachers pay on a sliding scale from 5% to 20% of whatever coverage that they get.*

19. When will the work be done on the elementary school roof?

- *We are anticipating that the work will be done this summer (2007)*

20. Will children be affected by moisture and mold? Will that advance our cause with the state?

- *We believe that there is very little of these factors at play. The roof has been repaired temporarily and we are receiving no notice that this is a factor. Since there is no emergency, the state will approve this in a routine fashion.*

21. What happens if you go out for a bid and you don't get a bidder?

- *You can go out for bid the again.*

The Capital Component of the School Budget

22. What are the parts of the Capital budget?

- Facilities and grounds
- Heating
- Utilities
- Cleaning
- Mowing
- Lining fields
- Snow removal
- Field fertilization

23. How much fuel do we buy at a time?

- *We buy 7000 gallons per time. We keep the tanks as full as we can. 21,000 gallons can be burned in one week. (Due to warmer weather we are a load and a half down from last year) 80 gallons of oil are burned per hour.*

24. How do we compare to the price that a homeowner pays?

- Compared to a homeowners price, are we generally below that because we purchase fuel through a consortium.

25. How do you determine the best price?

- We look up New York harbor rate. This is a state contract and the contract usually goes to the lowest bidder?

26. Does everyone in the state pay the same for fuel?

- No. The BOCES Consortium (Group of Regional Districts) bids for the best possible prices in the area.

New Mandates:

27. What are the new mandates that we must meet?

- Environmental
- Green products
- Disposal of hazardous materials (for example fluorescent lighting)
- Notification of spraying and field fertilization
- Tank testing for bulk oil storage

- Annual training for personnel in the handling of hazardous waste. (This takes a tremendous amount of energy to do this training for example for blood born pathogens, and we have to pay people to come in for the training

28. Are we mandated to use any products differently this year in relation to cleaning products?

- We are required to use only “Green” products which are environmentally friendly.
- We have about six different types of inspections of facilities each year.

29. How much of our budget is in capital expenses?

- *In the 2005-2006 school year, the district spent \$3,916,096 on the Capital Component of the school budget. This component includes all debt service payments as well and operating and maintaining school buildings and property.*
- How does this compare to other districts?
 - It depends on the number of schools etc.
- *Can't we take an average of all districts in the state? Or in the nation? And see where we fall? Doesn't a curve assume that everything is equal? No. It is a series of datum on the spectrum. How many schools... What programs the districts value and have in place. Also, in NY different school districts receive different State Aid on their facilities. So one district, that receives a higher percentage in State Building Aid, can afford to have a swimming pool while others cannot.*
- Pawling currently holds bonds for 15 million dollars in debt. This does not including the 2.6 million dollars voted on last year to repair the Elementary School roof and façade.

30. Who sets the cap on debt limit?

- The State Law limits school district debt to 10% of its full valuation of tax assessments.
- The total Debt voted on by taxpayers is not shown in the school budget. Rather, that year's payments for principal and interest are included in each school budget.

- We only borrow as the district needs funds. There is no point borrowing ahead of time, so we wait until just before we go to bid on a project.

31. Will the next tax bill reflect that payment?

- The funds are borrowed in one year and the first payment is made in the following year. For the Elementary School Roof and Façade project, the payment will be on the next tax bill if we have to borrow before July 1st.
- There was a projection of the tax rate and that was on the tax levy from August, 2004. When we actually borrow the money, we will look at the interest rates to determine the tax rate. But we will see if we need the money in June or July ... we hold off as long as possible to borrow money.
- We are waiting for the State Education Dept to approve the project first.

32. How many bids do we get for each project?

- The Wicks Law requires 4 prime contractors on every project, general contractor, plumbing, electrical, and HVAC. This makes the project more complicated. It would be much cheaper and easier if there was one contractor. This way each contractor builds in profit.

33. What is the function of the General Contractor when you have the Wicks Law?

- The general contractor works on everything except plumbing, electrical and HVAC.

34. What is the impact of the Wicks Law?

- Estimated 15% increase in total cost
- Requires a construction manager or clerk of the works
- Can result in a more lengthy project
- Requires the coordination of all contractors rather than one general contractor

The next Board meeting is Tuesday, January 23, 2007

Operation and Maintenance
Building and Special Education

36. Is the budget in place?

- No, part of the budget is in place.

37. Why are we the only township where the children are provided door to door transportation service?

- The people created a referendum in support of 100% bussing. If anyone wanted to change this it would require a petition 60 days prior to the budget vote. Another referendum would be created to undue the last one.

38. What are the state requirements for transportation?

- New York State Regulations dictate that you must provide transportation to all students who live two miles away from school for K-6 and three miles away for 7-12 grade.

39. How would that affect Pawling if we just provided the minimum transportation?

- That would mean that every child in the village would have to walk to school.

40. Can the district modify the transportation?

- If the Board feels a stop is unsafe it can arrange for a pick up.
- In Deerfield and other communities parents drop off children at a central location.

41. Has there been a comparison between hiring our own bus drivers and in contracting out?

- Yes.

42. Would the purchase of the buses and the bus garage be included in the price comparison?

- Yes. Contracting buses has come up several times before.. Civil service must agree; unlikely that they will agree bus drivers know the kids there is a higher turnaround
- The need to rotate or introduce new buses is not factored into the cost of transportation.

42. Where are the buses kept at night? Why aren't they kept at school?

- The buses are kept at the newly leased bus garage. Formerly they were kept at school, however, that location did not provide security for the buses or space for maintenance and cause congestion and pollution.

43. Would it be good to contact other districts to see what the problems are with bus drivers that are contracted out?

- This is an ongoing discussion. Having our own bus drivers allows us to build a consistent transportation program that delivers security, reliability flexibility and predictability of cost.

44. How much do we pay for the rent on the bus garage?

- *\$14, 000 per month*

45. Are teachers evaluated?

- *Yes. Tenured teachers must be evaluated at least once each year. Non-tenured are evaluated at least three times each year.*

46. Why do teachers get the same rate? Why does every teacher get the same raise?

- *Teacher raises are based on a salary schedule that provides raises according to their longevity. Each year that a teacher works is identified on the schedule and increases are built in for each year they are employed by the district.*

47. How do we ensure quality teaching?

- *We ensure quality teaching by providing the appropriate professional development and training, by evaluating the programs and the performance of the students and by consistently discussing good teaching with the staff and monitoring how the teaching is done. There are improvement plans used for those teachers who need focused direction, support and evaluation.*

48. Is this an issue across the nation?

- *Yes. There is much focus on how school districts can improve the quality of teaching. With current focus on accountability, everyone in the system must be evaluating the job they are doing for our students. We are constantly looking at the successes of other school districts and using their ideas to improve what we do for our students.*