

Education Budget Increase of 3.44% Approved by Board of Ed

Author : David Gurliacci

Categories : [Education](#)

Tagged as : [Board of Education 2016](#), [Education Budget 2016-2017](#)

Date : February 10, 2016

The Board of Education on Tuesday passed a \$93.8 million schools budget raising spending by 3.44 percent, an increase of \$3,125,290.

Before the board voted on any budget adjustments, Superintendent Dan Brenner suggested a collection of various budget cuts and changes that amounted to an overall reduction of \$365,527. The board unanimously approved the change (board member Christa McNamara was absent).

The largest of Brenner's cuts came from \$237,953 in lower spending on the district retirement fund.

The Board of Education's proposed budget for 2016-2017 is \$93,847,816 — at 3.44 percent, a smaller increase over the budget passed a year ago than Brenner's original proposal for a 3.85 percent increase. Much of the change in spending comes from previously negotiated wage increases as part of union and employment contracts.

Two major program changes in Brenner's spending plan are increases in teacher training ("professional

development") and a technology program providing more digital devices to students.

The district's proposed capital budget of \$3,441,000, which the board also unanimously voted to pass, was reduced by \$45,000 because both the district budget and town budget had each included that amount for new sidewalks on Hoyt Street near Holmes School. Brenner said that First Selectman Jayme Stevenson had agreed to pick up that cost in the regular town budget.

Freshmen team uniforms

Although the budget wasn't changed to reflect it, the school district will spend money in the next fiscal year to provide new uniforms for the boys soccer team, Brenner indicated. Two other, unidentified freshmen teams will get uniforms, he said.

When asked by board member Callie Sullivan if a line item for uniforms included spending on upgrading them for the freshmen sports teams, Brenner said, "Right now that does include three freshmen team uniforms." Three teams could expect new uniforms, with replacement purchases expected every three years, he said.

Brenner also said that spending on the uniforms would be part of planning on uniform purchases, and he seemed to indicate that district officials wanted to be sure they were making uniform purchases in a fair way for all students. He said that school officials would "take a hard look and make sure we're doing the right thing by underclassmen, at the same time maintaining the integrity of this three-year cycle. We're going to try to accomplish both."

Tiny cuts

After approving Brenner's revised operating budget proposal, the board reviewed a list of about two dozen proposed line-item budget cuts or changes that individual members had suggested.

In nearly all cases, which Chairperson Michael Harman read out individually, the proposals failed to be seconded by another board member and were dropped. In a few cases, votes were taken, for instance on but only two cuts — for a total of \$2,000 — received enough support to pass.

The cuts came in the Middlesex Middle School budget and both were for school supplies. A total of \$1,000 was cut for science teaching supplies and another \$1,000 for miscellaneous office supplies.

The science teaching supplies request "seem[s] to be a little out of whack with the rest of the schools and what they're asking for," said Elizabeth Hagerty-Ross, vice chairman of the board. That cut passed in a 7-1 vote, with member David Martens opposed. The music supplies cut was passed in a 5-3 vote.

What's next

The budget now goes on to the Board of Finance, which will get a presentation from the Board of Education at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, March 1 and hold a public hearing on that budget on March 8 at Town Hall. Later, the Representative Town Meeting will vote on the budget, which takes effect July 1.

The RTM and Board of Finance can change overall spending but not individual items in the operating budget, although they can change individual items in the separate capital budget.