

**BOARD OF FINANCE  
SPECIAL MEETING – April 23, 2019  
MEETING ROOM A TOWN HALL**

**PRESENT:** Jeff Rutishauser, Walter Kress, John Kalamarides, Peter Balderston, Ceci Maher

**ABSENT:** Stewart Koenigsberg

**Others Present:** First Selectwoman Lynne A. Vanderslice, Chair Board of Education-Christine Finkelstein, CFO Anne Kelly-Lenz, Dr. Kevin Smith-School Superintendent and Andrea Leonardi-Asst. Superintendent of SPED, Members of Press and Public

**Call to Order**

Chairman Jeff Rutishauser called the meeting to order at 7:30pm.

**Presentation of Alternative School Proposal – First Selectwoman and BoE Chair**

First Selectwoman Vanderslice began the Presentation of Alternative School Proposal to the BoF. Presentation is attached. After Ms. Vanderslice, BoE Chair Christine Finkelstein made comments. After comments, there was discussion on the attached questions that were previously submitted by the BoF.

**Discussion on Proposal**

Mr. Rutishauser opened the floor to the members of the board for their comments and any additional questions they may have for the First Selectwoman and the BoE Chair.

**Recommended Action**

Mr. Kalamarides moved a motion to approve the Alternative School Proposal as presented with the intention of the BOF authorizing the funding of \$468,000 through Charter Authority at the beginning of FY2020. Motion seconded by Mr. Rutishauser and carried 5-0.

Having no further business, voted to adjourn meeting at 8:13 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jacqueline Rochester  
(from video recording)

# Alternative School Program Presentation

Lynne Vanderslice

Board of Finance

April 23, 2019

SPED Outplacement and Settlement Spending is the **Largest**  
**Financial Risk** to the BOE Budget

SPED Outplacements and Settlements' 10-year Growth Rate is  
**10 Times the Growth Rate** of Total BOE Spending

Alternative School Program Presentation  
BOF-April 23, 2019

**BOE Actual Spending 2018 vs 2008\***

- **10-Year Average Annual Growth in Total BOE Spending: 2.7%**
- **10-Year Average Annual Growth in Total SPED Spending: 3.9%**
- **10-Year Average Annual Growth in Outplacements and Settlements Spending: 13.9%**

\* exclusive of State reimbursement

## **Managing Outplacement Risk**

**We manage** other financial risks in a number of ways:

- Excess Liability Insurance to limit risks from litigation
- Stop Loss Insurance to limit financial risks of providing medical benefits
- Worker's Compensation to limit financial risks of employing our employees

**There is no insurance to mitigate the financial risks** associated with meeting our SPED obligations

**There is no insurance** to mitigate the other **associated risks**:

- Whether the State will continue to provide funding for the Excess Cost Grant at current levels
- Burden of Proof statutes that work against the BOE

**In addition to the other benefits, the Alternative School Program  
is a means to manage financial risk**

- The **budgeted cost** for the Alternative School Program is **\$468.000** as follows:
  - Staff and staff related costs: \$382,000
  - Transportation: \$ 36,000
  - Rental of Trackside facility: \$ 50,000\*
- The estimated cost for **outplacements** range from **\$75,000 to \$110,000**
- The program is designed to include not only students who currently might be **outplaced**, but also students who may seek outplacement in the future

\*Trackside Board has agreed to relook at this amount

**The financial risk of funding the program is much lower  
than the risk of not funding**

- **Breakeven** number of students based on **\$75,000 per outplacement is 6.24 students**
- **Breakeven** number of students based on **\$110,000 per outplacement is 4.25 students**
- The program is designed to **educate 15 students at a cost equivalent to avoiding approximately 5 outplacements**

## **Using the Charter Authority to fund the program does not create a likely risk for the town**

- Historically, the funds have **rarely** been used
- The **greatest** risk to the BOE budget is **being addressed**
- The **Balance Sheet** is **strong**:
  - More than adequate medical reserves exist for both the BOE and BOS
  - The BOS has created reserves for compensated absences and legal costs
- The **fund balance exceeds 10%** in anticipation of a possible pension push down
- As time passes, the **likelihood of any major push down** from Hartford occurring in **FY2020** vs FY2021 or thereafter **diminishes**



You have an opportunity to do something that is both **good**  
for our **town** and  
our **students** and their **parents** and  
which will  
**reduce or avoid costs next year and in the future**

To: Board of Education / Board of Finance  
From: Kevin Smith  
Re: Additional Alternative School Program Questions  
Date: April 22, 2019

<p>1. How do you estimate the number of students that might avoid expensive outplacement?</p>	<p>The estimated number of students is based on a review of the students currently outplaced and when they were placed, a review of current students in our schools who are struggling despite the services provided, meetings with teachers and administrators from Middlebrook and WHS and meetings with parents.</p>
<p>2. In the past, what has WPS done in SPED to provide these services to students in this profile?</p>	<p>WPS provides a continuum of services to students, based on their needs, that range from mild supports, modifications, and accommodations that are provided by teachers in mainstream classrooms to programs like the FLEX program which is a small group program designed to support students in Wilton High School. Over recent years, FLEX has grown substantially. As strong as this program is, by virtue of its location, FLEX is unable to serve those students whose needs prevent them from entering the school building.</p> <p>The FLEX program at Wilton High School is comprised of several components. FLEX Lab is a service provided for students with mental health concerns; it is a resource center that offers emotional support, DBT therapy and academic support throughout the day.</p> <p>The FLEX Lab classroom is located in a suite which includes the offices of 2 social workers and 2 school psychologists. Students are able to access any of the mental health providers when they are in need of support. In addition, FLEX classes are offered for the 4 academic areas. These classes are smaller in size and are paced according to the needs of the individual students. These classes take place in the general education setting.</p> <p>Flex III is an additional component to the program offered. This portion of FLEX offers</p>

	<p>students a smaller, more structured environment. The students remain in one classroom for their 4 core subject areas and the teachers rotate providing project based learning. This continuum of services creates individualized instruction and support for the whole student.</p>
<p>3. How do you determine students that would be potential outplacement candidates versus students in the Alternative School that would not be potential outplacements?</p>	<p>The PPT determines placement. In making the determination, a wide range of factors are considered.</p> <p>To best manage the program during its start up phase, we want to ensure that we are targeting the students recognized by our staff as most likely candidates for this program. Recommendations are made by building administration when previous supports and services have not been effective. A parent may request consideration for this program. In addition, a PPT or 504 team may consider placement to this program. A student recommended for Genesis needs to complete the application for review by the intake team. The intake team will review the student profile and application. This team includes: Genesis special education teacher, Genesis social worker, school climate coordinator and Special education administrator. If the student is deemed a candidate then he/she will need an official recommendation from a PPT or 504 team meeting.</p>
<p>4. What is the maximum of students that could served under the proposed budget? Current proposal is 15 students – could more fit in the program without expanding staff or outgrowing space?</p>	<p>I would estimate that the maximum number of students with this staffing would be 20-25. I would caution that this is very dependent on the types of students who are in the program. For example, if the program is serving students with significant co-occurring disabilities there might be a need to lower the staff/student ratio.</p>
<p>5. Could a separate financial reporting be set up for this program to isolate costs from the</p>	<p>We have included the Alternative School Program as a separate line within the total operating budget in order to isolate costs.</p>

general BOE budget?	
6. Have any neighboring towns instituted a similar program? If so, what was their experience?	Both Darien and New Canaan have adopted programs in the last year or two. Additionally, Fairfield and Greenwich have long standing programs.
Please note that this is a start-up program and will be taking admissions on a rolling basis. Enrollment would begin at the start of the year and would increase as the year progressed. I would encourage us to look at enrollment monthly during the first years of operation to get a good handle on how the year progresses.	