

**CRANSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
SPECIAL MEETING AND PUBLIC BUDGET WORK SESSION  
WESTERN HILLS MIDDLE SCHOOL  
400 PHENIX AVENUE  
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2006  
PUBLIC SESSION: 7:00 P.M.**

## **MINUTES**

**A special meeting of the Cranston School Committee was held on the evening of the above date at Western Hills Middle School with the following members present: Mr. Archetto, Mrs. Greifer, Ms. Iannazzi, Mr. Lupino, Mr. Stycos, and Mr. Traficante. Mr. Palumbo was absent because he was ill. Also attending were Mrs. Ciarlo, Mr. Scherza, Mr. Balducci, Mr. Votto, and Mr. Laliberte.**

### **I. Call to Order – 7:00 p.m. – Public Session**

**The meeting was called to order at 7:08 p.m.**

### **II. Roll Call/Quorum**

**The roll was called, and the Pledge of Allegiance conducted.**

### **III. Public Hearing**

#### **a. Students (Agenda/Non-agenda Matters)**

**Elizabeth Hampson, 16 Edgewood Avenue – She stated that the teacher in her classroom they were supposed to have is sick, and their long-term sub, Miss Manera, is being replaced by Miss Sencer. She is a member of the Student Council of the Edgewood Highlands School and is a member of Miss Manera’s 4th grade class so she felt obligated to come to this meeting. She indicated that she wished to state her opinions on this matter. She feels that the situation might have been handled better if parents, students, and staff members could have been told earlier on about it. She realized that they could not change this transition or go back in time and stop it, so she is talking about the future. Yesterday her class threw a surprise party as a going away gift, but it was not as good as she would have hoped. The reason for this is the fact that they did not have enough time to prepare for it. All they had was a few streamers and food, but it was the message that counted. They want Miss Manera to stay, and she felt she was speaking for the whole class. She knows that it is not Miss Sencer’s fault, so she would not say any words against her. Miss Manera, in her opinion, was already replacing Mrs. O’Malley. Her class will miss Miss Manera very much. Maybe the laws cannot be changed, but she wished to voice her thoughts about this whole business. She thanked the committee for letting her and other children speak.**

**Henry Wheeler, 117 Norwood Avenue – He stated that he wished to speak on the Miss Manera problem. He is in Miss Manera’s 4th grade class at Edgewood Highlands School. First of all, Miss Manera is leaving, and he thinks it is because of the budget. It is not because they need a new teacher. They already have the best teacher, Miss Manera. She was originally a substitute teacher for Mrs. O’Malley who has breast cancer. It is unfair that they have to lose two teachers this same year, first Mrs. O’Malley because of her breast cancer, then Miss Manera because of the money and contract. They are getting rid of Miss Manera because they don’t want to pay her if a real teacher is available. To the students, Miss Manera is a real teacher. He knows it is a part of the contract, and that is why the contract rules should be changed. Yesterday they had a meeting after school with Steve Stycos because everyone was upset. They learned that the new teacher, Miss Sencer, has a contract; so when she is ready to come back to work, they must pay her even if she doesn’t have a class to teach. That is why Miss Manera is leaving. Even though she had been their teacher all year, that tells them that the school thinks money is more important than how the kids feel. It should matter more which teacher is better for the kids than what teacher has spent the most time with the kids. Miss Sencer knows nothing about the school, the class, or the kids. So, it is like she is starting a new year. Also, she is starting with kids who don’t want her there. They are upset that Miss Manera left. Miss Manera came to the class when**

they were sad about Mrs. O'Malley. A lot of them didn't know what cancer was before that. Miss Manera worked with them to help them understand. She made everything seem normal and acted like their regular teacher. She really likes the kids, so everything doesn't seem like work, work, work. School is fun with her, and they learn a lot. When Principal Gamba came into the class to tell them that Miss Manera was leaving, everybody cried. Nobody could understand. Even after the meeting with Steve Stycos, it doesn't make sense. Why do they need a different teacher? Why can't Miss Manera stay for the rest of the year? Can Miss Sencer have a different class, one that doesn't already have the best teacher? Even if Miss Manera can stay, he thinks the rules should be changed. If a sub is there for a long time, and the class is happy and learning and doing well, then the sub can become the permanent teacher. Thank you for your time.

Jameel Arrundell, 165 Pawtuxet Avenue – He spoke on Miss Manera. He is in the 4th grade class at Edgewood Highland School. Miss Manera has been their teacher because Mrs. O'Malley has cancer. He wants Miss Manera to stay. The committee was talking about money, and he asked how much money it would cost to keep her. He said that he could pay with his lunch money because lunch at the school isn't very good, and Miss Manera is very good. People take back, and he asked the committee to take back what they decided.

**Joshua Adler, 20 Riverfarm Road – He spoke regarding closing Horton School. He stated that he is a student at Bain Middle School, and he is an honor roll student. Last year he graduated from Horton after being in that school since Kindergarten. What he learned at that school made him the honor roll student he is today. His best friends from Kindergarten are still his best friends today because of being at Horton. They had one class per grade, and they learned how to be there for each other. They also meet after school at the Horton School yard. Mrs. Casale always gives them a big hello and smile. His little sister is in special education at Horton School, and she is in second grade. He asked how the committee could rob his sister of learning about life, school and friendship like he had at Horton. His sister has her own dreams about Horton and they are to keep it open. She would like to run for president like he did and play with her friends in the schoolyard. He asked how the committee could do this to his sister and his friends. He asked them to keep Horton open.**

**Justin Angilly, 28 Richland Road – He stated that he wished to speak on why Horton School shouldn't be closed. He first attended Horton in 1997. He had just moved, and he was worried about being the new kid in school. He was welcomed and did not feel tested or picked on. It was the attitude that made him enjoy his time at Horton. The teachers were nice; they were more like friends than teachers. They taught him how to study, not just give information. The base line for**

studying helped him make the honor roll all three years at Bain. When the students made a mistake, they weren't screamed at or yelled at. They were asked to try again. They used positive reinforcement to encourage studying and classroom participation. There were many programs he enjoyed while he was there. The DARE Program was one of them. As he got older, there was a Kindergarten Buddy Program that paired the older children with the Kindergarten kids. The small school setting allowed them to know most of the kids in the schoolyard. The Kindergarten Buddy Program gave them a chance to open up since they already knew some of the big kids in the playground. His class was allowed to pick the school mascot, and there was none previous to that. There was a holiday gift shop which allowed the students to select a gift at holiday time for their parents and siblings. There was always something going on, ice cream parties, book fair, Halloween party, hot dog roast, Christmas party, etc. Occasionally, they would go to the elderly center around the corner and play trivia games. He was happy to hear that his younger brother, Logan, would be attending the school he had enjoyed so much. He needs the extra help and encouragement. He grew to appreciate Horton so much.

Caroline Lema, 43 Crothers Avenue – She stated she would speak on the Horton School problem. She is the President of the John W. Horton Elementary School Student Council. She came to this meeting to ask the committee not to close her school. She has been at Horton School for six years, and she was welcomed there before

that because both of her older brothers attended this school. It is not just a building on Park Avenue. It is a place to grow and learn. It is a neighborhood school where everybody knows everybody. They are like one big family. It is a place where

Page 4      February 1, 2006

she was able to meet new people and try to new things. This school means so much to her and all the other students there. Even though she will be graduating this year, she still thinks it is important to keep a neighborhood like Horton open so that other children can experience the same educational opportunities and fun that she has. There is nothing as fun as staying after school playing games with her friends. Her point is that Horton is a high achieving neighborhood school that needs to remain open for the good of the community.

Mr. Lupino noted that two specific meetings regarding Horton School have been scheduled, March 1st and March 15th. The original intention was to have the meetings at Horton School, but administration is working on getting Bain Middle School auditorium. It will be published well in advance.

Mr. Archetto stated that if the meetings for Horton School are being held in March, the committee votes on the budget February 27th. If

the committee votes to close the school on February 27th, he asked why the meetings would be held in March. Mr. Lupino responded that Horton School is in the budget. It has not been removed from the budget. Horton is a line alignment in this particular budget. Mr. Archetto commented that he was opposed to closing the school. The consensus he has received from the leadership of this committee is the opposite point of view. Even if Horton School is still in the budget, the committee is voting on the 27th, and he is pessimistic and is looking at the worst alternative. He doesn't understand why the committee is holding the meetings after they vote on the budget.

Mrs. Ciarlo stated that the School Committee must by resolution after a series of meetings close by resolution a school. Just because the committee passes a budget that has X amount of dollars in savings, it does not automatically close the school. The School Committee should have ample opportunity to meet with the parents and concerned community people to discuss just that topic during one meeting or as many meetings it will take before the committee decides by resolution that they will close the school. By passing the budget, the committee is merely saying that they want to obtain, among other things, certain savings. That savings, if it does not come from Horton, will come from somewhere else. By no way passage of the budget on February 27th means the closing of Horton.

It merely means that the committee has passed a budget. It now must go to the Mayor for him to incorporate into his budget. On March 1st and 15th, hearings are planned. They tried to have them at

**Horton School because it is more convenient for the parents and the community. At that time, that is the only topic that would be discussed – the closing of Horton School. If another meeting is needed, they would have it. Otherwise, the earliest the committee could vote by resolution to close the school would be in March and then again in April at their regular School Committee meeting.**

**Page 5      February 1, 2006**

**Mrs. Greifer mentioned that she and Mr. Archetto plan to be at Horton School on Thursday, February 9th, at 7:00 p.m. to discuss this with the parents. It is going to be a very informal conversation to hear what the parents have to say about the matter. She asked the parents to attend.**

**Mr. Stycos asked that a separate meeting regarding Horton School be held before the committee votes on the budget. He further commented that Mr. Lupino was right in stating that Horton School is in the budget. Mr. Lupino stated that he did not call the meetings on March 1st and 15th. Mr. Stycos suggested that the committee change some meeting dates.**

**b. Members of the Public (Agenda Matters Only)**

**Mark Lucas, 28 Riverfarm Road – He stated that he wished to speak on Resolution No. 06-2-5, middle school sports. He commented that he was happy to see this back in the budget. It was long over due. He hoped that this was not a one-time deal and that this is a permanent reinstatement that people will see year after year. The kids deserve it, and the parents really want it.**

#### **IV. Consent Calendar/Consent Agenda**

**There was no consent agenda.**

#### **V. Action Calendar / Action Agenda**

##### **RESOLUTIONS**

##### **ADMINISTRATION**

##### **BUSINESS**

**NO. 06-2-4 - RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the 2006-2007 Capital Budget be approved.**

##### **CAPITAL BUDGET**

**2006 - 2007**

**Bond 00 – 40**

**Cranston East – Renovation and Construction \$6,275,000**

**Bans \$ 188,250**

**Page 6 February 1, 2006**

**Bond 04 – 0425**

**Cranston East – Main Building and Fire Alarm \$1,300,000**

**Design Service \$ 90,000**

**Bans \$ 48,000**

**Bond 02 – RIGL**

**Barrows – Sprinkler System \$ 350,000**

**Design Service \$ 20,000**

**Bans \$ 11,000**

**Rhodes – Sprinkler System \$ 400,000**

**Design Service 20,000**

**Bans 11,000**

**Bond 02 – RIGL**

**Roof Replacement**

**Norwood (Old Building) \$ 125,000**

**Design Services \$ 6,000**

**Bans \$ 4,000**

**Bain Science Wing \$ 75,000**

**Design Services \$ 6,000**

**Bans       \$       2,500**

**\$8,931,750**

**Moved by Mrs. Greifer and seconded by Mr. Traficante that this Resolution be adopted.**

**Mr. Stycos questioned the addendum for this Resolution and stated that the addendum looked the same as the other information he had received. The secretary responded that this information should have been included as a part of the resolution. She would incorporate this information as a part of the resolution.**

**Mr. Stycos stated that he attended the meeting to discuss the addition to Cranston East. The direction it seems to be going is to do some reconstruction to the existing building. He asked if there is any money in this Capital Budget for temporary classrooms to provide the space that will be lost during construction. Mr. Zisseron responded that the \$6.2 million being requested for Cranston East is for construction only. There is no costing for renting portables for temporary housing. It is strictly construction costs. Mr. Stycos asked Mr. Zisseron if he had a plan where the students would go who now go to the area that would be under construction. Mr. Zisseron responded that the Superintendent, the Assistant Superintendent, the Principal, and himself have been discussing how those youngsters will be housed and where the classes will take**

place. There will be some disruption to the school just as there was at Cranston West when

Page 7 February 1, 2006

the addition was done there. There is enough time to plan exactly how the passing will take place, what paths they will be taking rather than what they may be taking now to get to the Briggs Building. Mr. Stycos asked that they look at how much it will cost to move temporary classrooms there and whether or not they are needed. He is concerned about a building that is already very crowded losing some of its space.

Mrs. Greifer commented that part of the problem is that they can't plan on what to do with the school children until they know what the final design is going to be and the way the construction will proceed and the timetable it will have. The scheme was just approved last night.

Mr. Lupino added that a temporary solution to a situation is not something that would be put into a bonding.

This Resolution was adopted unanimously.

NO. 06-2-5 – RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the reinstatement of spring middle school sports in

**the amount of \$30,000 be adopted.**

**Moved by Mrs. Greifer and seconded by Ms. Iannazzi that this Resolution be adopted.**

**Mr. Traficante stated that he spent about twenty years of his life on the athletic field in Cranston both as a football and wrestling coach. It is his personal opinion that there is no greater classroom than on those fields. The qualities learned on the athletic field cannot be duplicated in any way, shape or form in a science class, English class, or history class. The qualities he was referring to are such things as self-reliance, self-esteem, self-motivation, self-determination, sportsmanship, teamwork, etc. Those qualities they inherit by playing sports are absolutely necessary to deal with the highs and lows of life itself. One would think that with his strong opinion about athletics that he would feel very comfortable about voting for this \$30,000 to reinstate spring sports at the middle school level. He noted that he intended on supporting it. He wanted to make himself very clear that the parents understand where he was coming from. The committee is facing a budget crisis that he has never seen in the City of Cranston since he has been an elected official for the past twenty-two years. That \$90,000 that is put aside for next year's athletic sports program at the middle school may well be absorbed in other areas such as the mandates, contracts, and other sensitive issues they are dealing with right now such as the closing of elementary schools, such as the class sizes at the K-3 level, such as**

**the bus transportation they are presently facing. There are a variety of sensitive issues that have to be dealt with. He doesn't want to be a hypocrite. He feels that he is dangling a carrot in front of the athletes at the middle**

**Page 8      February 1, 2006**

**school level by giving them spring sports and come next year it may not be there. Even though he is voting yes, he wanted to place the parents and athletes on notice that the \$90,000 right now is up for grabs; and it may not be there next year because of the crisis the district is facing in a variety of areas.**

**This Resolution was adopted unanimously.**

**TABLED RESOLUTION**

**SPONSORED BY THE COMMITTEE**

**NO. 05-12-27 – Whereas, the City of Cranston FY '06 Budget is inconsistent with the needs of the Cranston Public Schools;**

**Whereas, the Municipal Executive has suggested litigation as the means of resolving differences between the Cranston Public Schools**

**and the City relating to the FY '06 Budget;**

**Whereas, litigation only promises the expenditure of unnecessary funds that can be utilized in support of Cranston Schools;**

**Be it RESOLVED that the School Committee assigns the Superintendent, with the assistance of any and all internal staff, with the following tasks:**

- 1. To adopt a hiring freeze for all new personnel and non-essential replacements;**
- 2. To adopt a spending freeze for all non-essential materials;**
- 3. To confer with representatives of the Executive and Legislative branches of the Municipal Government to recommend solutions to the existing differences between the Cranston School Committee and the City relating to the FY '06 budget;**
- 4. To recommend suggested courses of action to the Cranston School Committee in order to resolve said differences;**
- 5. To report achieved progress and status of the above to the School Committee by January 5, 2006.**

**No action was taken on this tabled resolution. This resolution falls**

off the table.

Page 9      February 1, 2006

## **VI. Public Hearing on Non-agenda Items**

**Mark Lucas, 28 Riverfarm Road – He stated that he wished to express his outrage over the School Committee’s plan to close Horton Elementary School. His son is a first grader at Horton, and his daughter is two years away from Kindergarten. He has a keen and vested interest in this school’s future. One of the major reasons why he moved to Forest Hills was the proximity of a neighborhood elementary school. It is just like the one he attended in his youth. He, like a number of others, have many fond memories of walking to school with friends every day, sometimes up hill both ways and discussing things that mattered to them back then. The message being delivered by the School Committee and the school department is that small neighborhood elementary schools are more trouble than they are worth. While he understands that times are changing, he simply refuses to accept that notion. Small neighborhood schools in general, and Horton in particular, provide the structure and social stability that younger children need to begin their educational journey. Horton seems to provide a focal point for the community,**

and they all come together for a common purpose which is to properly educate their children. It is his opinion and that of many others that the proper education of a child does not begin and end with the almighty dollar. All he has heard from the School Committee and the school department since he moved to Cranston was they need more money or programs will be cut, and they are doing it for the children. Quite frankly, he is tired of being shaken for money this way and tired of his children being used as bargaining chips. The fact is the school system is facing a multi million dollar budget shortfall next year, and in his opinion that is directly attributable to the new teachers' contract. He has nothing against teachers; they are fantastic and should earn as much money as they possibly can. He has nothing against the unions. They are doing exactly what they are supposed to do, to represent their membership to try to get the best deal possible. With all due respect, he thinks it is a leadership issue. If the co-share was 10% instead of 5%, the district would have saved almost \$1 million, more than enough to keep Horton open. If the co-share was 20%, which is what many other professionals pay, the savings add up to almost \$3 million. He believed that these savings are only the tip of the iceberg. He cannot understand why the committee didn't negotiate more forcefully and in the best interest of the taxpayers. He asked them if they were afraid, out-classed, or don't care. All of the committee, with the exception of Mr. Archetto and Mr. Stycos who both opposed the contract, are really responsible for this mess. If the committee leaves here tonight remembering only one thing let it be this: people who pay the bills are fed up with this

nonsense.

**Angie Salvato, 13 Cedar Street – She spoke on behalf of Horton School. She stated that she was speaking on behalf of her daughter who is in 2nd grade at Horton. They moved from the Dutemple School area so that she could have a better school experience with a smaller school, after school programs, and an all-around better school. Her reading is already so much better. She went into the Stadium area to get signatures for a petition not to close Horton. She filled in three pages within only four**

**Page 10      February 1, 2006**

**streets. She ran into a woman on the Spy Committee at Stadium, and she asked her why Stadium would want the Horton kids so bad. She said they want Horton's Title 1 name. The committee is willing to kill the kid's education to give them their Title 1 name back. They would take the kids from a school and put them in a fake classroom in a schoolyard. She is a 1986 graduate of Horton School, and her daughter is the fifth generation of her family to attend Horton. She didn't know how the committee could overlook the grades, the achievement, and the honorable children this school turns out. She wondered how they plan on saving money seeing they will have to bus these children to their new school, re-district the areas, hire new teachers, and the parents will be fighting for co-pays to a psychiatrist because they will be hiring a lawyer. Third grade is hard enough on**

children, and putting her daughter in a new school will push her daughter over the edge.

Edward Angilly, 28 Richland Road – He stated that he wished to speak on behalf of his son, Logan, who is six years old and has Downe Syndrome. He has been in Cranston Public Schools since he was three. He has been shuffled around to different schools and Head Start Programs. He has speech problems and hearing problems. He has had aides who couldn't help him at all. He is now in a school where he feels very comfortable. He is in Kindergarten in the morning and special education in the afternoon. He gets more one-on-one time with teachers. Other students help him out which helps them to learn too. With his speech problems, they have to practice their speech in order for him to understand it. The teachers use that to give the children the education they need. He is also the school mascot; everyone knows Logan. When he goes to the supermarket, everyone goes up to him. He is a very liked kid. When he went to school, students with Downe Syndrome were ostracized. They had special classrooms and special lunch periods. It is not like that now; he is welcomed in the class and the schoolyard. All of the children know Logan. That is what is nice about the neighborhood school. Since he moved into Forest Hills, he has watched three houses on his street get torn down. They are fighting the bank to keep their neighborhood alive. Now they are losing their school. If they lose the school, the property values in Forest Hills will go down. Maybe that is what the city wants so that the bank can knock down all

**the houses and have great parking lots and ATM's. The parents want a neighborhood school so that the children can walk to school and feel safe amongst their friends. All the families know everyone. They don't need to be bused across the city or the other side of Park Avenue. They want to walk home with friends.**

**Andre Arujo, 20 Stevens Road – He stated that his daughter, Emma, is a first grader at Horton School. He came to this meeting to plead to keep the school open. It is his daughter's school, and he understood that the School Committee had the very difficult position of making ends meet. Everyone faces all of these difficult things. There are rising costs of energy and health care. It is putting pressure on the schools, but it is putting pressure on the families also. There are high gas prices to pay every day; there are high home heating costs every day; high co-pays; high health care costs but still**

**Page 11      February 1, 2006**

**have to make ends meet. Everyone is worried about energy and health care, but the most important thing parents worry about are their children's education. Only 20% of kids entering 9th grade will finish a four-year college education. In this world, no one works a farm any more and one doesn't work in a factory any more because there are no factory jobs in America any more. One needs a college education if one wants to stay in the middle class. If not, these children will have a lower standard of living than their parents. They**

will be the first generation in the United States for this to happen, and that is a sad state of affairs for these United States. He believed that the committee was being short sighted because they will needlessly jeopardize the quality of education everyone wants. Smaller schools are better performing schools; smaller schools are safer schools. Placing neighborhood schools with regionalized impersonal schools circumvents the advantages provided by the neighborhood schools and replaces those advantages with a small cost savings but at the expense of a quality of education and quality of life that cannot be met. Neighborhood schools encourage a strong sense of community and self-pride. Everyone knows that in this globalized world the children need the best possible education they can get. Horton is a high performing school, and he didn't know why the committee would want to close a high performing school. He asked why they would want to penalize a school for achieving. If they are going to close the school, close one of the schools that is having problems; there is a moderately performing school on the list. He asked if it wouldn't be better to close one of the problem schools and place those kids in one of the better schools. The cities in this country should not be in the business of closing the small elementary schools. These are the best models. These models are better than home schooling, better than the big schools, better than magnet schools, and these schools are where the seeds are placed for high school and college. If one doesn't have a college degree in this world, one is not going to make it. There are ways to fund these small schools. He asked that the co-pay be spread around the state.

**Susan Adler, 20 Riverfarm Road – She stated that she is proud to be a part of this community. She is proud of all the students. She is very proud of her son, Joshua, not only for what he did at Horton but also at Bain. She is also proud of those students who spoke about their teacher; they really touched their hearts. She also mentioned the students who would speak later about their buses being late. She quoted Mrs. Ciarlo’s statement that appeared in the budget: “After careful deliberation on the part of all constituencies representing the Cranston Public Schools...” here we are she told Mrs. Ciarlo that she did a poor job representing the parents at Horton and the others. She told her that as the Superintendent she is concerned. She thanked the committee for the second time in several years to teach the children what it is like to have their constitutional rights such as being heard and freedom of speech. This is a high performing school. One of her daughter’s best friends is Logan who are in special education together. Twenty-five years or fifty years from now they will still be best friends, and the committee will have the pleasure of reading their book, “My Best Friend Logan and Me and What We Learned in Mrs. K and Mrs. Z’s Special Ed Class.” She**

**Page 12      February 1, 2006**

**asked them to read it; they may have to wait a little for the book. She told the committee that they want to close Horton; try it; it isn’t going to happen. When the committee took on this role, they took on the**

role of being the children's parents representing their rights. The parents teach them that if they try hard, if they study hard, they will be rewarded. She asked what the rewards would be for closing down a school and taking away teachers. She asked why the committee was teaching them that trying hard doesn't matter. The only carrot that should be dangled for these children is their education and their hard earned effort. She doesn't think that Bain Middle School will be large enough to fit all the parents, the posters flapping making noise, and the support; the committee has seen nothing yet. She thanked the committee for this opportunity; the committee will not shut the school down because they will never shut down their voices.

Virginia McCormick, 20 Lockmere Road - She read a letter into the record that her sister wrote to the committee because she was unable to be present. The letter states: "It is with great sadness that I learned about the discussion regarding the possible closing of John W. Horton School. I am a proud alum of that school, having two sisters who attended as well as having two nieces currently enrolled. Please reconsider this misguided idea and think about the psychological and emotional damage that will be done to its present cherished vulnerable little ones who love their neighborhood school. How can you do this to these children? Why are you doing this? Surely you can't only be thinking of financial reasons. What about the soul of the neighborhood being ripped open by the shortsighted thinking? This little school in Forest Hills has had a myriad of alum who have gone on to further their education in some of the finest

**schools and have gone on to become great citizens making innumerable community and political contributions. How can you deny this same foundation and opportunity to our current Horton students and ignore the pleas of their actively involved parents? Citizens of Cranston have more than carried the load in righting the wrongs of our city's poor fiscal management by paying high taxes, taxes that we don't mind shouldering if we can see our children getting a good education in their own neighborhood school. Our children deserve to get the best education and the same caring and firm grounding that the previous generations enjoyed. Surely you must know the political ramifications of not standing up and doing the right thing. I don't think you need to be reminded that failing to represent your constituents who care about their children in their neighborhood school will be remembered at the polls. John W. Horton is our children's last little bastion before going off into the big world to other unfamiliar schools in far away locations. Please don't rob them of Horton's fine reputation and neighborhood culture. Horton children deserve to experience the same fine caring education that former generations had who look back upon their Horton days with only the fondest memories. Give these kids an insight into a civics lesson where they can be shown that people in position of power who sit on school boards and town councils can and do reconsider and reverse decisions for the better good. Thank you."**

**Suzanne O'Shea, 35 Raven Circle – She stated that she wished to express her concern regarding class size at Orchard Farms. Last year they lost two classrooms, a second and a fourth grade, causing some classes to have as many as twenty-six children in them as young as second grade. They are concerned that this pattern of classroom closing and condensing will continue as these targeted groups advance. They are strongly opposed to maxing out classrooms at the elementary school level and would like to see the restoration of the elementary school priority. She urged the committee to protect what they are left with after last year's cuts and avoid any further classroom closings at Orchard Farms. Please restore the elementary schools.**

**Yajaira Reyes, 254 Ausdale Road - She stated that she was speaking on behalf of her daughter, Jahida, who is in fifth grade at Horton School. Her father is in Iraq for the past three years fighting for her freedom. Her daughter needs this school open. She needs the teachers in the school. They are her support. She loves waking up in the morning going to talk to her friends. She doesn't worry about anything. She asked that the school not be closed. She needs this school open.**

**The special meeting was adjourned to the public budget work session at 7:59 p.m.**

## **VII. Adjourn to Public Budget Work Session**

### **a. Discussion on 2006-2007 Proposed School Budget**

**Mr. Lupino stated that he would entertain any questions on a particular school, and there were no questions.**

**Mr. Lupino stated that he would entertain any questions regarding transportation.**

**Mr. Lupino called for a three-minute recess.**

**Mr. Lupino reconvened the budget work session at 8:03 p.m.**

**Mr. Traficante referred to the budget presentation made by Mr. Balducci. At that time, he included the \$1 million in the budget, but if the appropriation comes through as the Mayor has indicated, it would be \$1.3 million which reduces the request of city dollars. He asked what the reduction would be. Mr. Balducci responded that in percentage it would drop from 17.7% down to 15.6%; the district would be asking \$91,405,000. Mr. Traficante asked what it would mean in terms of dollar increase the district is asking for, and Mr. Balducci indicated that the bottom line wouldn't change but rather who is assisting the district in funding it. The district would still be at \$129 million, but the percent would decrease. Mr. Traficante commented that, unfortunately, he thought the \$700,000 was included**

in the budget for the relocation of central administration. Apparently that money was taken out of the budget prior to the proposed budget by the

Page 14      February 1, 2006

administration. Mr. Balducci responded that his statement was correct. Mr. Traficante added that he was hoping that it was in the budget, and that would be \$700,000 to the good, but it is not in the budget.

Mr. Stycos referred to the Horton School estimate, and he indicated that this is the second time since he has been on the committee that the issue of closing Horton School has come up. He believed the last time it was proposed was two years ago. At that time, Mr. Cofone prepared a cut list because the distance between the School Committee's budget and the city's appropriation was a \$7 million gap.

He asked Mr. Balducci if he remembered that cut, and Mr. Balducci indicated that he did remember it. Mr. Stycos commented that on that cut list the closing of Horton School is listed as a \$310,000 savings yet when he asked for a breakdown of the savings of Horton School this year, he got a figure of \$791,000. He asked how in two years the amount went from \$310,000 to \$791,000. Mr. Balducci responded that he didn't have the specifics as to how that \$310,000 was arrived at two years ago. He did have the breakdown for the \$791,000. He could provide the breakdown for the \$310,000, but off the top of his

head he could not answer him. Mr. Stycos responded that he would like to see it. He further commented that the estimate that Mr. Balducci put together was approximately \$500,000 in salaries and \$250,000 in benefits. He asked if the benefit level was at 50% of salary. He asked for a breakdown of the benefit level. Mr. Balducci indicated that he would give it to him in written format, but he did not have the numbers available now. The approximate numbers are: health is \$172,000; dental is \$13,000; life insurance is \$713; pension certified is \$55,000; pension non-certified is \$2,000; one of the other components of pension which is called survivor benefits is \$864; FICA is \$4,000; Medicare is \$7,800; and one of the other components of life insurance is \$1,100. Mr. Stycos commented that on the breakdown of savings, there is savings of one principal, 3.5 teachers, 4.0 itinerants, 1 secretary, and 1 custodian. Given that estimate of the 3.5 teachers who could be eliminated by merging Horton with Stadium and Woodridge, he wanted to know what those classes would look like at those two schools if that was done based on the current population. Mrs. Greifer commented that this information was included in the pink folder that the committee received at this meeting.

Mr. Stycos commented that assuming the 3.5 teachers is right, he didn't understand how 4 itinerants could be eliminated based on the fact that there are 3 fewer classes for the itinerants to go to. He was assuming that it is 3 classes and 1 Kindergarten. They don't have their own music teacher; that teacher arrives at the class for one

period every week or every two weeks. Mr. Laliberte responded that last year when ten elementary teachers were reduced administration did not touch the itinerant staff at that time. Now, together with the closing of Horton and what was done last year eliminating ten classrooms last year, the district would be able to save almost one in each category. This would mean music, art, library, and gym/health. Mr. Stycos responded that those four positions can't be attributed to the closing of Horton. If Horton was left open, the district could save three positions. Mr. Laliberte responded that this wasn't the case

Page 15      February 1, 2006

because of the way they are spread out. There are fractional pieces that are used throughout the city so when they all come together with the closing of Horton, it puts them enough over that there is one extra teacher. Mr. Stycos commented that someone could be hired as a  $\frac{1}{2}$  time or  $\frac{3}{4}$  time in those four fields, which is something that is done often. Mr. Laliberte responded that he didn't know if it was done often, but the district can do some of that. Mr. Stycos referred to the ten classrooms from last year and asked if it was higher than ten or just ten, and Mr. Laliberte indicated that it may have been a little higher than ten. To come up with the four, administration looked at all of the itinerants throughout the system in all eighteen elementary schools, tried to even them out so that every elementary school of similar size had the same amount of time, and then added Horton to that. When Horton was taken away, it was enough to put each of the

areas over so that one full-time teacher could be let go in each area. Mr. Stycos asked, that in addition to the breakdown of the benefits and the classes, for a breakdown of how many itinerant positions could be saved if Horton was left open. From what he is hearing, it is clearly less than four. He asked what the automatic itinerant savings would be without the Horton closing.

Mr. Archetto referred to question No. 4 from Mr. Lupino which is how will sending more students to Stadium allow it to qualify for Title 1 status. With regard to Title 1, he asked if it was a limited amount of money, meaning if there could be more than one Title 1 school, does the district gain additional money or was there a limit. Mrs. Ciarlo responded that there is a certain amount of money that comes in which is earmarked Title 1. A ranking is done of all the schools to see what percentage of free and reduced lunch is in each of the schools, both elementary and secondary. Then the highest in need is considered to see how far the money will travel. Horton and Stadium have been very close in qualifying for Title 1 funds. Certainly with those forty students it would go significantly go over the top. There is already a .4 Title 1 teacher at Horton now. That would increase because the district is not only servicing them but also other students at Stadium that meet the same qualifications. It may go up to a .8 or a 1.0 out of Title 1. Mr. Stycos added that if Horton closes, the district wouldn't gain any additional Title 1 money. What would happen is the Title 1 money would move from Horton to Stadium. Mrs. Ciarlo added that as one looks at the distribution of Title 1, one

would have to remember that Stadium is a larger school, and, therefore, would have students in addition to the Horton students going there that have similar problems. Those students would have to be serviced. Mr. Stycos asked if the district would get additional Title 1 money from the federal government, and Mrs. Ciarlo responded that it fluctuates from year to year. She couldn't say that it would be additional money just because the students are moved. It is taking the money because the school no longer exists and putting that money at Stadium. In Stadium there are similar kids to Horton, so instead of a .4 reading specialist there would probably be a .8 or a 1.0; and that would come out of the total allocation to the City of Cranston. Mr. Stycos added that another Title 1 school might get less money unless Title 1 funds increase. Mrs. Ciarlo remarked that Title 1 fluctuates from year to year in terms of money. It has been going up, but who

Page 16      February 1, 2006

knows what will happen. Mr. Stycos added that whatever the amount is, Cranston will get a set amount for the City of Cranston whether there are five Title 1 schools or there are six Title 1 schools. It is just the way the pie is sliced up.

Mr. Lupino indicated that the way this is being explained, the district is on a set amount for Title 1 funding, period. The dollars get rearranged between the schools. That is not the way he thought it

worked. Mrs. Ciarlo explained that every year the Congress decides how much Title 1 money in their budget they are going to distribute nationally, and then one looks at the regions. When it comes into New England, one looks at the level of poverty. If there is more poverty in Rhode Island than they had in the past, more money comes in and is distributed. That fluctuates from year to year, but just because students are moved from Horton to Stadium, does not necessarily mean that the district will get more money because of that. All it means is that those students now would be combined with other students, and Stadium would probably qualify for Title 1 funds since it was very close. There were only a few percentage points between Horton and Stadium, and in past years, Stadium has qualified for Title 1 funds. She is hoping that the district will be getting more Title 1 funds because they need it. There was less money for elementary Title 1 programs when administration felt the need to go into Bain and Cranston East, and then a ranking has to be done. The district has to show the federal government that the district is concentrating its resources they are giving in the most in-need areas. The higher numbers are at the middle and high schools in comparison to an elementary school.

Ms. Iannazzi stated that she did receive a response to her question from Mr. Laliberte. Her question was what resources will be added to Stadium and Woodridge if Horton closes and those two schools have to make accommodations for additional students. The answer she received states that Woodridge and Stadium already have the same

amount of custodian, secretarial, and teacher assistant time as buildings of comparable sizes. She took the time to go through the summary, and Woodridge has fewer custodians, teacher assistants, and teachers. She asked Mr. Laliberte to look at this again to determine what resources would be added to Woodridge if Horton closes.

Mr. Stycos stated that he had asked a question regarding the number of bus drivers. His question was how things have changed in the last five years, and the answer was that they have added two special needs drivers and one non-public driver in the last five years. Mr. Stycos went on to say that looking at the school population figures the elementary population in the last five years has gone down by about 540 children. He asked if the district buses approximately one-half of the students, and Mr. Zisseron indicated that he was correct. Mr. Stycos asked that if the district is busing 270 fewer elementary children wouldn't there be the possibility to consolidate some bus runs. In response, Mr. Zisseron said that in some areas where the rider ship is going down, there are other areas in the city where it is going up. He continuously reviews the runs and changes drivers' runs. As an example, if he has two buses covering an area and

that population is down and he can consolidate into one bus, there is

another area, and mostly the western section, where the population is higher. Therefore, he has to put on another bus. Rather than going through the expense of another bus driver and another bus, he is always shifting around. Mr. Stycos indicated that the net number of kids citywide in the elementary schools is down 540 over five years. He is figuring 270 fewer to be bussed. This is citywide, and this is separate from the fact that it is going down in the east and going up in the west. He asked if the potential was there that the district is transporting 270 fewer children to elementary school every morning and the potential to do some additional consolidation of bus runs and eliminate a few runs. In response, Mr. Zisseron stated that he wished it was that simple. One of the problems is road time and how long it takes to do a run especially in western Cranston where some of the runs start at 8:15 a.m. for a 9:00 a.m. school. The other problem is the middle school numbers. Those numbers are still heavy rider ship wise. If there is an area where he could eliminate an elementary run for argument sake, he would still need that bus for a high school and a middle school because every bus has a high school, a middle school, and in some cases one or two elementary schools. That bus is still needed on the road to service the high school and the middle school. Theoretically, there could be a bus without an elementary school which wouldn't be very efficient, but it could happen. The rider ship in the city is still healthy enough where he can't cut back on buses or can't eliminate a bus and take it off the road. Mr. Stycos indicated that he and Mr. Zisseron has had this conversation many times regarding RIPTA. When they met with

RIPTA, they talked with them about the possibility of some East students using the RIPTA system to go to East, and if they did that and there are the declining elementary numbers, it would seem that a few buses could be taken off the road and have savings not only to not operate 99 buses but maybe 95 buses. The budget has \$100,000 in it for new buses, and there would be the possibility of ducking some of that money for one year because if he got rid of four buses he would get rid of the four worst buses, and he wouldn't have to buy replacements if he cut the run. It seemed to him that this would be an area where the district could potentially save considerable money through the elimination of runs and postponing purchases. Mr. Zisseron commented that when they talked with RIPTA, they had a problem in helping the district at the high school level because they mainline everything. Their buses didn't go into other areas where the district goes to pick up the students. For the middle and elementary schools, there is a law for them that they cannot get involved in the busing of certain aged children. He believed it was up to the age of 12 that there was a federal problem where they cannot be used for transportation of those children. Mr. Stykos responded that an 8th grader could ride a RIPTA bus, but a 6th or 7th grader could not. The way RIPTA ran their buses up Cranston Street, Park Avenue, and then Broad Street, they would be able to cover just about everyone, certainly enough to accommodate four runs. Mr. Zisseron indicated that in certain areas of the city, and he used Cranston East as an example, the students would meet at the Brewery Parkade, and the bus would then go downtown; they would get off that bus onto

another bus that would take them up Pontiac Avenue from Providence to drop them off at Cranston East. Mr. Stycos

Page 18 February 1, 2006

commented that he believed the end result was that they would end up at LaSalle from western Cranston. Mr. Zisseron added that the run from the Edgewood area would come up Park Avenue. Mr. Stycos commented that the district is in a very big budget mess, totally separate from whatever happens with Horton. Whatever the committee does, it is still going to be a mess. This is a potential area to save. If it cost \$40,000 to run a bus, which was the rough number, and to provide bus passes to high school kids which is approximately \$12,000 for forty students, that is a \$28,000 savings per bus off the road plus the capital cost of not having to buy a replacement bus. With three or four runs, given the fact that the elementary population is going down, he felt this was a potential area for saving six figures. Mrs. Ciarlo asked Mr. Stycos to keep in mind that the school department is running double runs and running into all sorts of problems in the western part of the city. Even if the administration and committee weren't talking about buses, they would be talking about the need for bus drivers because quite often they are doubling up. It is not an even distribution of reducing. They are reducing and losing more in the middle and eastern parts of the city than on the western part of the city. One of the issues tonight dealt with the number of double runs the district has to do. She doesn't know how

much of a savings it would. It is certainly worthwhile looking at it because rider ship, even though the district has to provide it and has to be eligible, administration has to think of some creative ways because when the students turn 16 many of the parents give them a car, and that is far more lucrative than riding the bus to school. There may be the possibility of doing some consolidation there. Mr. Zisseron said that he has no problem revisiting with RIPTA to have more dialogue with them. Mr. Stycos commented that from those meetings with RIPTA and Mr. Zisseron he learned that just because a high school run is eliminated nothing much has been accomplished. An elementary and a middle school run have to be eliminated. There has to be a combination of three runs and not only one run to save any money. With those elementary numbers and the presence of RIPTA in some areas, that using those two things together, the district should be able to eliminate some buses. Mr. Zisseron suggested that Mr. Stycos call RIPTA to set up a meeting.

Mr. Zisseron remarked that one of the things that came out of the meetings with RIPTA was that he had asked what they do with their old RIDE buses. They indicated that they are donated, and Mr. Zisseron asked how the district could get on a list for donations. He wrote a letter and approximately one year later he received a call from a gentleman in purchasing asking if he was still interested in getting a RIDE bus. This person told Mr. Zisseron that the district would have to pay for the tires which amounted to \$500. He hasn't decided what he will do with this bus; it is currently parked at Fletcher Avenue.

**Mrs. Greifer asked Mr. Zisseron how many buses he was proposing to purchase. In response, Mr. Zisseron said that he could not bring himself to spend \$52,000 for a large bus when he can buy a large bus anywhere from \$9,000 to \$10,000. He can get a**

**Page 19      February 1, 2006**

**good five years out of a used bus. The district always needs small buses. He has approached the subject with the Superintendent regarding going into a lease/purchase.**

**The district just finished a lease/purchase of twenty small school buses five years ago. He tested the waters with her because he would now like to go back into that program for twelve small buses or twenty-seven capacity buses and two wheelchair buses. He is negotiating with the Superintendent for fourteen buses, twelve being twenty-seven capacity and two being wheelchair. Every year he re-evaluates the fleet to see what has to be replaced. He did lose a number of buses to the flood, but they were insured. The district just made a settlement with the insurance company. The large bus fleet is in pretty good shape to go another year, but he is still looking at the small bus fleet. It would be a combination of a few large used buses and hopefully the money can be applied to a lease/purchase. There aren't a lot of small used buses out there.**

**Mr. Archetto indicated that he had a conversation with Mr. Zisseron regarding advertising on buses, and he knows the Warwick School Committee is investigating it very thoroughly. Through his investigation, he understands that advertising can be placed on the inside of a bus and not on the outside of a school bus. The district is in dire need of money, and the committee should look into this. There should be a study commission, and hopefully some corporations will jump on board to lease some advertising space inside the buses. Mr. Zisseron commented that the Registry of Motor Vehicles, and this was pursued a couple of years ago, would not allow anything on the outside of the bus to take away from the integrity of the school bus. A couple of Massachusetts communities have advertising on the sides of their buses, and it looks terrible. It can confuse a motorist as to whether it is a school bus or a public bus. Mr. Archetto responded that he didn't think a "got milk" sign inside the bus would be offensive to anyone. This committee needs to look at this if they want to raise some revenue. Mr. Zisseron commented that he would look into it.**

**Mr. Traficante indicated that he was handed some information recently. He knew there were some parents in the audience who were concerned about further compacting at the elementary level. The information given to him is that this budget contains no further compacting at the elementary level. Mr. Scherza stated that Mr. Traficante was correct. Mr. Traficante stated that of the 134 elementary classes K-3 there are 12 at the present time that are at**

capacity which has approximately 25 or 26 students. By the next meeting, Mr. Traficante asked for some indication as to what is happening regarding those 12 classes, whether the population is going down for next year in that particular class or the population is going up in that particular class for next year. If it is going up, will it require an additional teacher so that they add a class. He noted that there were parents in the audience from Orchard Farms and the other schools who have a concern regarding the compacting issue.

Mr. Lupino commented that several years ago the Superintendent was striving for teacher aides in K, 1 and 2 for any class over eighteen to have a teacher aide, and that

Page 20      February 1, 2006

has fallen by the wayside. He would like to know what the impact would be if they went back to that model at least in K and 1 and on an individual basis with Grade 2 based on population. Mrs. Ciarlo indicated that there were approximately thirty-three three –hour literacy teacher assistants the district had but lost in a previous budget. She asked to go on record that she is very disturbed that the district can't continue that and keep class size down especially at the K and 1 level. That is where they learn how to read, and they should be given maximum opportunity at that level to do it. It is very discouraging, but if there are any grants available, they would use grant money to accommodate it. She would be happy

to look into this.

## **VIII. Public Hearing on Proposed Budget**

**Valerie Schule, 27 Farm Street – She stated that she came to this meeting to advocate for the high schools. Both Cranston East and Cranston West need to be budget priorities. When the budget was presented, she heard that there would be no new staff for the high schools. She went into a state of shock and has been there ever since. Next year the high schools are facing new high school graduation requirements causing an increase in the number of classes needed for graduation. There no longer can be any study halls. Every child has to be in a class or receive an educational instruction for 330 minutes a day. The schools are undertaking a new digital portfolio requirement. Cranston West is going to have a new principal, and Cranston East will begin a long overdue building addition. She doesn't believe this all can be done successfully without additional staff, the key word being successfully. Not too long ago she stood before the committee and discussed the new graduation requirements at that time. She said that if they weren't going to be funded don't mandate them. The district can't do it. They are not the federal government, not the state government. The district has to fund their mandates and the government's mandates. She hears a lot about class size at the elementary level, but she is left with this question: What is an acceptable class size at high school. She can see the all-ready large classes busting at the seams. She**

has been on the School Improvement Team at West since her daughter was in 8th grade, and she works in the lunchroom at East. It quickly became clear to her that the staff at both schools could do amazing things with little resources. They quickly became her super heroes. But all super heroes have breaking points. For Superman, Kryptonite does him in. This may just be the Kryptonite for her super heroes. She often finds herself quoting a part of the Rolling Stones song to her kids, and it comes to mind now. "You don't always get what you want, but if you try real hard, you just might find you get what you need." The district long ago gave up on getting what they want. They are trying very hard to get what they need. They are not asking for wants but very real needs. She is not sure how much harder they can try. They are not going to make Cranston East and Cranston West budget priorities. Not only is she concerned, but she has to say that she is not scared, not afraid, not terrified, but she is petrified for the high school students and what it will mean to their chances of having a successful, positive high school education.

Page 21      February 1, 2006

Councilwoman Cynthia Fogarty, Ward 2 – Mrs. Fogarty indicated that in the budget presentation the administration talked about the quality of the schools, the nature of the schools, and that it reflects on the nature of Cranston. It is beyond her that people would be talking about closing a neighborhood school like Horton. The committee heard from many of the parents this evening and heard from her two

weeks, and they will hear from her every time they let her get up and speak. They will hear from her in April when the committee comes before her as the Finance Chair. She stated that she could not support this plan. Last year after they finished the budget process, she and Mr. Lupino spoke about starting meetings right away so that they wouldn't have these emergency crisis situations two months before a budget has to be completed, and yet that didn't happen. As Finance Chair, she offered to be available to meet with the School Committee and administration, and it didn't happen. No one ever wanted to do it, and now here they are with a situation where parents are coming to the committee shocked, angered and surprised. She doesn't know what should have been done beyond that. She was available, and they didn't take advantage of that. She has looked at only some of the questions regarding Horton. Mrs. Fogarty went on to say that there is a \$12 million increase, and she has a letter dated January 26th from Mr. Balducci which shows the \$12.5 million increase but indicates that this is net of a school closure. However, Horton is in the budget, and the committee is showing a \$12.5 million increase. She stated that she is a little confused what school closure is referred to in this letter. Mr. Balducci said that he misspoke earlier; the budget is net of approximately \$791,000 so Horton is not in the budget. Mrs. Fogarty responded that the summary budget she had did not include Horton even though it is listed line item by line item. Mr. Balducci responded that it does. Not knowing how well the personnel is going to end up because they will be holding a teacher jamboree during this process, the savings for Horton are identified in

a certain area of the budget, and he believed he gave her this information in memo form. Mrs. Fogarty asked if she was supposed to add up the line items to figure it out. Mr. Balducci responded that she asked the question, and he provided the information to her. Mrs. Fogarty indicated to Mr. Balducci that she was looking at a \$12.5 million increase with a \$129 million request and he was telling her that the \$129 million did not include Horton School even though she could go through the budget book and find every dollar amount for Horton in this book. Mr. Balducci responded to her that the savings for Horton are identified elsewhere in the budget, and it is in the detailed budget. He directed Mrs. Fogarty to page 191, second line item on that page where it indicated "teacher retirement". He usually factors in a certain number of retirements every year. This year he is factoring in twenty. Above and beyond the twenty retirees, that \$876,000 does take into consideration, as Mr. Stycos asked earlier, the salary savings for closing Horton. Mrs. Fogarty apologized because she was out of the room during that earlier explanation and caught only the end of that explanation. She asked how she was supposed to know that from seeing that on the net number in this book. She asked if it was clear to the committee. She

further commented that one could see the frustration when people try

to read this budget. Mrs. Fogarty further commented that she had a letter dated January 24th that details the amount that is going to be saved by closing Horton which is \$791,000. Mr. Lupino stated to Mrs. Fogarty that she could ask her questions, and she would receive her answers in the future. However, she is afforded something that the other members of the public are not because the committee does go through budget deliberations with the Council at some point in the future. Mrs. Fogarty responded that the committee has always come before the Council asking them where they were during the committee's work sessions. Now she is being told that the committee will talk to her later. Mr. Lupino told her that she could ask her questions after the public had spoken, and if Mr. Balducci or someone from administration could answer her questions, they could do that or could get back to her with the answers if they were unable to answer them.

Mr. Traficante directed Mrs. Fogarty to page 8 of the budget summary book which lists the breakdown of Horton and lists the faculty and administration. Mrs. Fogarty referred to the letter of January 24th which indicated a savings of 3.5 teachers and 4.0 itinerants. She seems to have 9.05 teachers according to page 8, 3.15 special ed teachers, and .4 guidance counselors. She didn't know where this savings amount which seems to be less .75 bodies comes from closing Horton. If Horton is closed, then all of these bodies should be saved or not, so there is a discrepancy there at 12.9 versus 7.5 on

page 8.

Mr. Scherza explained that all of those teachers would not be a savings to the district. They would have to open additional classrooms with the students who are moving so some of those teachers would be shifted; one to Stadium and one to Woodridge as well. The \$88,000 salary for a principal being saved is not necessarily true because that principal will bump out someone else at a lesser salary so there won't be an \$88,000 savings more than likely. Mr. Scherza responded that administration doesn't know that right now. If Horton were to close, there would be one less elementary principal in the City of Cranston. Mrs. Fogarty responded that most likely it wouldn't be an \$88,000 principal, and Mr. Scherza remarked that there was no way of telling that until they know that it happens. Mrs. Fogarty responded that people have to make some predictions in budgets, and that comes from experience, and there is the best experience here in who helped prepare this budget.

Mrs. Fogarty referred to the final page of the summary. There is an increase in salaries of \$4.8 million and an increase in benefits of \$5.6 million. Before the committee comes before the Finance Committee, she would need to have some pretty good information as to why benefits have superseded the salary increases. Mr. Lupino commented that at the next budget hearing Mr. Kevin Walsh, the health care consultant, will be present to answer questions. The date for the hearing is Monday, February 6th, at 7:00 p.m. Mr. Lupino noted that Mr. Walsh is also the health care consultant for the city.

**Mr. Archetto stated that due to the magnitude of the issue of the Horton School closing and this member of the public being a councilwoman, he recommended that the**

**Page 23      February 1, 2006**

**committee suspend the rules to give her adequate time to say what she needed to say and then reinstate the rules. Mr. Lupino stated that it would have to come as a motion**

**and seconded. Mr. Traficante indicated to Mr. Lupino that he had the privilege by rule to extend the time allotted to any speaker. Mrs. Fogarty responded that she appreciated the time the Chair had given her. She has presented some questions to which she would need some follow-up information. Mr. Lupino pointed out that just as the committee members e-mail questions or present questions to the administration between the hearings, a question may prompt another question from one of the committee members. All of the e-mailed questions are answered in writing. All of the committee's questions have been addressed. The only questions that don't appear are the questions that were asked this evening and there were some particular health care questions he had asked in detail that the committee will have Mr. Walsh address next week. He told Mrs. Fogarty that she was welcome to put together some questions for the committee. With regard to Mr. Stycos's remarks concerning busing, Mrs. Fogarty commented that when she was in high school, she took**

a bus from Silver Lake to downtown to get to school. She didn't understand the objection to doing that, and the students purchased tokens at a discount. She was not referring to elementary students. Mr. Lupino responded that there was an editorial in the newspaper which stated that Providence does not supply busing for high school students, however, the schools start at 8:15 to 8:30 a.m. to coincide with the RIPTA bus runs. They are not adjusting their bus runs for the schools; the schools are adjusting to that situation. Mrs. Fogarty indicated that the committee has the power to stagger school openings and closings so that the buses don't have to do runs that coincide. She asked why the district needs all these buses. Consider staggering opening and closing times. She further commented that this is discussed all the time. Mr. Traficante indicated to Mrs. Fogarty that she had asked why the benefits were \$5.6 million, and at the bottom of the page it breaks down all the benefits and the amounts related to it. She was questioning the changes from prior years. For the past few years, she knew that the projections were over-inflated to the actual costs for both city and school side. Mr. Traficante indicated that the state is requesting an additional \$2 million from the school department and the City of Cranston. Mrs. Fogarty responded that deals can be made on this issue; they have been made in the past. They received money from the state in addition to a forgiveness last year. Mrs. Ciarlo added that they haven't been forgiven this year as of yet. Mr. Traficante added that the district is hoping to get some pension relief.

**Mr. Traficante clarified that the budget before the committee tonight is a proposed budget; it is not a School Committee budget. It is a budget proposed by administration. It is very similar to what the Mayor does. He proposes a budget to the City Council, and then the City Council deliberates and comes up with a financial blueprint for the City of Cranston. The same thing happens here. The committee is given a proposed budget; they deliberate, scrutinize and finalize the budget at the end of the month and then present it to the Mayor. Therefore, there is a month of deliberations. It is not a budget**

**Page 24      February 1, 2006**

**of the School Committee; it is a proposed budget of administration. Mr. Lupino indicated that the committee tries to believe that they finalized the budget, but tonight the committee made a \$30,000 adjustment to the budget, and the committee is talking about next year's budget. It is an ongoing thing. The committee has had their hands out for the \$1 million for the past several months.**

**Mr. Archetto asked for a clarification as to whether or not Horton School was appropriated in this proposed budget, and Mr. Balducci responded that this budget reflects approximately \$791,000 that would be saved if Horton is closed. Mr. Archetto stated that he didn't know if that was a yes or no answer. He further commented that he wished to have the minutes read back to him where Mr. Lupino stated**

that Horton School is in the budget. Mr. Traficante stated it was "0". Mr. Archetto commented further that the committee was making full circle, and if it wasn't in the budget, why is the committee holding a meeting in March after they have voted on the 27th; and the committee would be back to the same issue again. He asked for clarification before voting on the budget on February 27th. It is ridiculous to have the meetings in March if the money isn't there. He felt other members would agree with him.

Maureen Morgan, 165 Pawtuxet Avenue – She stated that she was so glad not to be sitting where the committee was sitting. She knew that this was a budget meeting, and it was a real hard challenge that the committee will have to complete. She understood that the dwindling population in the schools is forcing the committee to consider some difficult options. She understood that class sizes would most likely increase in the coming years and probably lead to more frustrations like the ones expressed here tonight. She asked to what extent value enters the budget determination process. Article VII Employment Standards of the Master Contract between the Alliance and the School Committee states that the parties to this agreement recognize the committee's exclusive authority to select and employ new professional personnel. In keeping with the high standards of the community, the parties agree to make a good-faith effort to attract teachers who possess high qualifications and to keep such teachers in Cranston Public Schools. She requested and recommended that the City of Cranston school department extend that good-faith effort

in recognizing Miss Theresa Manera as such a teacher as described in Article IV Section A and immediately interview Miss Manera and hire her before the district loses her. The committee saw an example of children tonight speaking and participating in the live theater of civics that is going on here. They are a direct reflection of her abilities as a really excellent teacher. With regard to the budget and Title 1, she asked if the elementary schools could have a 6th grade to receive Title 1, and Mrs. Ciarlo responded that there was a 6th grade when the city had a system of K-6, 7-9, and 10-12 some years ago. It was changed in approximately 1995. It isn't the grade level but rather the student showing academic problems. Once you enter the school, you forget about any level of poverty and look for the educational needs of the students at that school. Mrs. Morgan said that there are too many kids at the high school level, and certain sections have to be closed down in order to complete

Page 25      February 1, 2006

construction. Then there is a problem with the population at the middle school level, but there is room in the elementary schools. She asked if 6th grade could be put back in elementary, pull the next grade down from high school, and free up some space to do the construction in high school without having to spend more money renting spaces to put these high school students. Mrs. Ciarlo responded that they are not talking about renting space. They are looking into alternatives, and it will last for one year to 1-1/2 years at

the most. Mrs. Morgan added that everything is temporary, and the next time the insurance increases, the district will have to face it again.

Councilman Allen Fung, Council at Large – Mr. Fung referred to the summary report and asked why the benefits were zeroed for each of the schools when there are actuals from 03-04, 04-05, and even this current year's budget. Mr. Balducci responded that for budgeting purposes it is easier to budget at one location which is referred to as Location 96 under Administration. At the end of the year, he knows where everyone ended up, what the benefits were for those individuals, and then make the allocations at the end of the year. Because there is so much movement during the year, it is a lot easier for him to manage property to show it in one location. Mr. Fung asked why it wouldn't show on the actuals, because on the actuals there would be year-end numbers for how a particular school has finished. He questioned why it wouldn't be broken down for each of the individual schools. The number associated with salary is tracked and questioned, but the benefits wouldn't be tracked because it is a significant cost to the city. Mr. Balducci explained that it is broken down by school for state reporting purposes. For informational purposes or for the budget, it is left in one central location. Mr. Fung indicated that health care and all of the benefits are such a significant part of all of the budgets on both the city side and the school, and it is extremely important to track the health care. He strongly recommended to the committee that even on the proposed budgetary

process the committee should have a significant idea of what it is costing them because it goes into that calculation. An example is the Horton School and the type of savings the school department could realize or not realize in closing a school or in making staffing decisions. Before making any decisions, the committee should do a financial analysis to see what the potential impact is because he doesn't think that closing a school will save that amount of money with a lot of potential turnovers and bumping into other schools. To throw out some of those numbers as part of the committee's decision now without taking a serious projected look at where those savings would come, they should really look at it. Mr. Fung stated that he is in favor of saving Horton School because of the neighborhood programs that go on there.

Mr. Fung referred to Orchard Farms and its class size. He is very concerned about this as well. He told Mr. Traficante that he was right in taking a look at those projected population costs. In Orchard Farms' budget, page 132, he sees a significant increase in the salaries for the full-time salaries at approximately \$70,000, but yet he is hearing there will be no cuts; but they are maintaining. He asked what the \$70,000 was going to. He asked if the committee would be proposing an increase in class sizes or was it

Page 26      February 1, 2006

going toward benefits. The full-time teacher salaries list an increase

of \$72,700. Mr. Traficante responded that this includes step and salary with no increase in class size. Mr. Fung stated that this is a significant number given the contract the School Committee entered into. The committee has to taken into consideration a lot of the parents' concerns and what they are talking about throughout the city, in particular Orchard Farms. Those types of concerns are serious concerns. When he sees \$72,700 for just Orchard Farms and that is going for step increases, and not going toward adding an additional teacher, that presents some serious concerns to him as a Councilperson because the Council is the funding mechanism there. That alone provides grave concerns, and he asks for more teachers, and those budget type considerations on the contract really have a profound impact. That is why he was urging earlier that the committee needs to do the cost analysis before entering into a contract.

Mrs. Greifer referred to the Orchard Farms' summary on page 13 and mentioned that it has 20-1/3 teachers. When talking about the \$70,000, it is divided among 20-1/3 teachers. It is not like Horton School that has only nine teachers. Mr. Fung responded that it is still a significant number when talking about \$70,000 and twenty teachers.

That is over \$3,000 per teacher in salary obligations. Mrs. Greifer added that it is salary plus steps. Mr. Fung added that it could mean one more teacher for one of those classes. When looking at the contracts, the committee should project them out. The City Council wouldn't ratify anything until they took a look at what it would cost

**the city in years one, two, and three.**

**Councilman Jeffrey Barone, Ward 6 – Mr. Barone referred to the revenue page regarding Title 1 revenue. He asked where it would show up on that revenue page. Mr. Balducci responded that it does not appear. For the revenue that the district will get to support the general budget, the grants are separate and apart so they are not reflected at all in these documents. Mr. Barone stated that he was advocating to keep Horton School open. He was sure that everyone on the committee felt the same way. However, it does come down to money. He had a conversation with someone earlier saying that he would be willing along with someone from the City Council, a sub-committee of the Finance Committee, and a sub-committee of the School Committee sit down next month and try to spearhead together to determine how the school can remain open, He would be more than willing to sit on the sub-committee. The committee will be inundated with the meetings they have scheduled March 1st and March 15th. If the committee pro-acted a little bit to form this sub-committee with two or three people from the School Committee and two or three people from the Finance Committee on the City Council, the sub-committee should be able to come up with some type of solution to keep the school open. Mr. Lupino stated that the School Committee currently has a Budget Sub-committee that deals with areas of the budget, and Horton would be an area of the budget. Mr. Barone responded that the mechanism would be the City Council.**

**They have to sit down with the committee to review the school**

department's budget. If there was a meeting just to focus on Horton School, that

Page 27      February 1, 2006

seems to be the committee's biggest thorn in their side. He didn't think the committee wanted to close that school. Mr. Lupino asked Mr. Barone to not put Horton School in a vacuum by any means because it is the bottom line that is needed. \$12.5 million of which \$10.2 is contractual and mandated by the state, doesn't leave a lot of wiggle room in this budget. Mr. Barone responded that there should be a spearhead committee to make these comments. Every school has an issue, and Orchard Farms has special issues for them; but the committee is not going to close Orchard Farms. Mr. Lupino added that this same type of meeting is being held throughout the state. He sees different editions of the Providence Journal to see what is going on in other school districts, and it is happening all over the state. With 1,000 more kids, at \$129 million that is less than the City of Warwick had for an operating budget four years ago, and they have 1,000 more students. They haven't settled a teacher contract yet. Mr. Barone stated that when the City Council and the School Committee sit down for the budget hearing, his recommendation will be for the school department to review the possibility of privatizing the bus situation. The city has tried it with fleet maintenance and the animal shelter, and it didn't work. That might be a savings.

**Sean Morry, Waterman School Parent – He asked to speak on Waterman School class size. He is concerned about class size at that school. He knows that Orchard Farms’ parents are concerned about it as well. He spoke at the meeting last week as well. His son’s first grade class at Waterman School is the largest in the city with twenty-six students. He is concerned moving forward that this classroom size doesn’t remain at that level. He knows that there are two second grade classrooms at Waterman. He hoped that moving forward one of those second grade classrooms is not eliminated next year. He hoped the committee would do their best to accommodate that. Mr. Lupino responded that the point of coming to these meetings is to try to understand what the committee has to deal with. This budget is a working document and has to go to the Mayor. He will give the committee his bottom line, and the City Council does what they want to do with it although they have recognized a couple of mistakes last year that will hopefully get rectified this year. It eventually gets dumped back on the committee. The committee was still dealing at this meeting with a carryover from last year from the \$1 million they were waiting for. That is something the committee doesn’t have control over. All too often the parents are preaching to the choir because of all the School Committee he has served on, these members understand how serious this budget situation is this year. It is the worst he has seen. Mr. Morry added that there is a class room reduction teacher in the room for three hours per day, and it isn’t sufficient. The teachers do a great job, and he was sure they**

**work very hard. He doesn't take anything away from the teachers. He hoped that when the committee looked at the budget, they would strongly consider keeping the two second grade classrooms at Waterman School.**

**Jane Edwards, Waterman School Parent – She indicated that the budget proposal indicates the number of students but does not tell classroom sizes. She asked where it**

**Page 28      February 1, 2006**

**is listed as to what schools will be losing their classrooms. It is a concern for Orchard Farms and Hope Highlands Schools. She asked when it is determined and when it is**

**announced who loses a classroom and who gains a classroom. Mr. Traficante stated that it was announced a short time ago that there will be no further compacting at the elementary level. Based on the population figures the Superintendent is working on at the present time, a teacher may be added because of increased population. Mrs. Edwards commented that due to compacting last year, children moving into certain districts were not allowed to go to their school because of compacting. She asked if those children will be allowed to go back to the school that they moved into. Mr. Traficante told Mrs. Edwards that she was correct. Mr. Lupino asked Mr. Scherza to clarify Mr. Traficante's response. Mr. Lupino repeated Mrs. Edwards' remarks that if a child got moved from Waterman who was not in**

**Waterman's district last year.... Mrs. Edwards interrupted and commented that in the fifth grade administration pulled permits and the school lost kids; they were forced out; they had been at that school since Kindergarten. Those kids are moving on to Park View next year. So, that is not an issue any more. There are still classrooms at Waterman where she doesn't know if permits will be pulled again. There are a lot of parents who are very nervous about that again this year. If some of those permits get pulled, the classrooms go down to the minimum of twenty-five, and administration can produce only one teacher. There are a few cases where children moved into the Waterman district during the summer, and they were clustered out to different schools. Technically they fall under the district of Waterman. She asked if they would be allowed to come back to the Waterman district in September. Mr. Traficante said that if they are in the Waterman district, yes. Mr. Scherza commented that he knew exactly what Mrs. Edwards was saying, and the answer is a definite yes. She is referring to the students who moved in, and that is the key administration has to look at. During the course of the year, he clusters students out to a different school if there is no room in their home school. Those students are now figured in with the population of that neighborhood and have an appropriate right to go to school in their neighborhood. If that class may have been at cap this year, and there are twenty-five or twenty-six in there, and they get another four or five students moving in there, there are thirty students who would have to be serviced in that neighborhood. When they are doing their projections, that would then necessitate a second**

class in most instances. They would not continue to cluster them away. Students who get clustered out are the ones who register after the class has been set for the year, and administration makes every attempt to try to get them back to their neighborhood school. Mrs. Edwards asked if anything was going to be done regarding permits this year. Mr. Scherza responded that administration tried to hold the line on permits last year, so they are not giving them out. Mrs. Edwards asked that the children that were allowed to come back to Waterman that were on permit would they be able to finish that school. Mr. Scherza responded that in most instances, yes; it is going to depend on the circumstances. Mrs. Edwards added that the school could have a problem that they had in fifth grade. Mr. Scherza responded that they would not have that problem because he did not issue the number of permits that had been given in the

Page 29      February 1, 2006

past. That use to be in the many hundreds, but now for this current year, they have been cut way down. That was one of the issues that forced the district to have more teachers in some schools than were needed to service students from that neighborhood school. Mrs. Edwards stated to Mr. Scherza that he wasn't going to pull any of their permits, and Mr. Scherza responded that he didn't say that he wasn't going to pull any of their permits. He sad that it is done on a case-by-case basis. There are

different circumstances for each case.

Laurie Petipas, 10 Ridgewood Road – Mrs. Petipas referred to the budget for the elementary schools. She said that she sees that all the itinerant teachers are listed as full-time teachers, but she knows at her elementary school all of the itinerant teachers are half-time teachers. She doesn't understand why it shows a full salaried budget for each of those teachers at every one of those schools. Mrs. Ciarlo explained that it may be half at her school and half at another school. Mrs. Petipas noted that they are listed as full-time at the other school as well. Mrs. Ciarlo commented that it may not be the same teacher. Mr. Balducci confirmed what Mrs. Ciarlo said. Mrs. Petipas remarked that all of the elementary schools seem to have full-time teachers listed; none of them have a half-time itinerant. She printed Oak Lawn School from the website, and it indicated Oak Lawn School music teacher full-time salary \$55,267, and she is a half-time teacher at Oak Lawn. Mr. Balducci indicated that it is based on time which is FTE. It may not be a full salary in some cases, and in some case it may be. It could be two music teachers adding up to that figure. Mrs. Petipas responded that there is one music teacher at Oak Lawn School, and this suggests to her that the teacher makes \$110,000, and Mrs. Ciarlo commented that she doesn't. The librarian, gym teacher, and art teacher are all listed as full-time salaries. Mr. Balducci indicated that he was looking at the amount of \$55,267 for the music, and he would have to see what was behind that figure. He indicated he would answer the question for her. Mrs. Fogarty requested a copy of his

response.

**Susan Adler, 20 Riverfarm Road – She thanked Mr. Archetto for bringing up the question as to whether or not Horton School is in the budget. She said that she had received a call from a friend of hers at Horton to return to this meeting. When she returned to the meeting, there were parents from other schools saying they couldn't believe what was happening and what they had just heard. All they want is the truth. They need to know that if they are going to stay open, let them know. Please don't let them have false hope and believe after the February 27th deadline by having meetings that they really don't count. If the meetings in March are to tell the parents where their children will be going to school next year, they just don't want to be played with. They just want the truth. Mrs. Ciarlo indicated that she would ask the committee to consider holding a meeting before February 27th just dealing with Horton School. Those two meetings are not because of feta complete in doing that because the School Committee must by separate resolution decide whether or not they are going to close the school. They can't just use the budget to do that. If the parents want to have a meeting before**

**Page 30      February 1, 2006**

**the 27th, if it can be scheduled, they will do it. On behalf of administration, Mrs. Ciarlo stated that this was not something they wanted to do. She doesn't like large classes.**

**She needs the resources in order to be able to do this, Over the years the cumulative deficit of not having adequate funding is catching up with them. Cranston is still the lowest per pupil expenditure in all the surrounding communities. She can put elastic bands together, but she reaches a point where she can no longer do it. It breaks her heart to have larger K and 1 classes. She was a reading specialist for a good part of her life, and she doesn't want to see it; but she has no alternative if she doesn't have the money to be able to have those people in there. That is the part that is really bothersome. Everyone is preaching to one another and preaching to the choir. Let's go where the resources are and bring it to their attention which is at the state level. She intends to do that, and she has a whole sign-up sheet of people who have said they would help the district. She will certainly call on them to do that. If the Horton parents wish to have a meeting before February 27th she would ask Mr. Lupino to work with the committee so that they would be available to do that. She has never been a phony in her life. Mrs. Adler responded that she respected that and believed that this is not Mrs. Ciarlo's first choice to close the school. The parents obviously want the truth, and their wonderful principal, Mrs. Casale, tells them all the time not to worry about her; but they do worry about her and the teachers as to where they will be. They have been so amazing to the children and parents. She agreed to have the meeting before February 27th. Mr. Lupino stated that he asked the same question Mrs. Adler asked. With regard to the breakdown, the principal is \$88,000 approximately; 3.5 teachers at \$78,500; four itinerants at**

**\$204,000; secretary at \$29,500; custodian at \$35,000; benefits broken down at certain levels of pension for a total of \$791,781 as presented by the administration to the School Committee. Mr. Stycos stated that the meeting date before the 27th was a good suggestion. He felt that the committee should schedule some meetings while everyone was present. The meeting for the public hearing on the proposed closing of Horton School will take place on Thursday, February 9th, at 7:00 p.m. at Bain Middle School. Because of the new fire code, Horton School would not be large enough for this meeting. Mrs. Adler noted that Mr. Archetto and Mrs. Greifer were going to meet informally with the parents at Horton, and this meeting will take place instead with the entire committee. Mr. Lupino noted that this may be putting a strain on some of the committee members, and everyone may not be present for the entire meeting, but there will be a quorum. Mrs. Ciarlo asked that Mrs. Casale send a meeting notice home to the parents about the meeting.**

**Susan O'Shea, 35 Raven Circle – She stated that she wanted to clarify the term compacting or condensing. She thanked administration and the committee that there would be no further condensing or compacting in the elementary schools. She asked how this scenario would play out. As an example, last year the present 2nd graders were compacted. They were compacted at 51 kids last year; twins moved back, so there are 49 right now. There was a similar situation with the 4th graders. They are at max as well; they were compacted. If everyone left them alone, these same children**

would move out of two classes into three classes. If they are at 49 and they are at 50, she asked if they would still warrant those classes. She asked if they would still leave that staff alone at her school so that they will move into that smaller class. She asked if there would be three third grades next year and will there be three fifth grades next year. Mr. Scherza responded that there are currently three third grades that will probably become three fourth grades. The teachers will stay the same number. Mrs. O'Shea commented that their numbers are projected at 51 from Mr. Dillon. Mr. Scherza explained that if there are currently three grades and there are 25 or 30 students moving in, there would not be three classes of ten but two of fifteen. The people who are in three classes right now would move up next year. For example, if it were third grade this year, next year there would probably be three fourth grades. The maximum class size goes up to 28 for grades 4 and 5 and up to 30 for grade 6. Mrs. O'Shea said that Mr. Dillon is projecting for next year 50 4th graders and 49 5th graders. Mr. Scherza responded that those are the projections today, but he does not know what the numbers will be in a few months. It is premature to say that right now. If there are going to be 49 3rd graders, they probably would be in two classes of 24 and 25 realistically. Mrs. O'Shea said that the fourth graders who are overcrowded to the parents in two grades with 50 students are now currently in two classes. There are three fifth grades for them. Mr.

Scherza responded that if there are fifty students, that would necessitate two teachers and not three. Mrs. O'Shea indicated that Mr. Dillon is projecting for second grade next year at 56. She asked that if it stayed at 56 and there are only two second grades, what would happen. Mr. Scherza responded that if the second grade stayed at 56, there would have to be three class sections. Mr. Lupino warned them to be very careful with projections. Mrs. O'Shea voiced her dismay because her son is in a class of 26 third graders, and 18 of them are boys. She wrote an e-mail to the committee regarding some of the boys having difficulty. They are coming out of a crowded classroom and may have the luxury of an additional classroom because an additional student is projected right now. They have had a whole history of having small classes and they are a little bit older.

Mr. Stycos stated it was extremely unwise to give anyone in this room a promise on what the class size is going to look like. That is a decision this committee is going to have to make. The administration has said that their plan is to eliminate positions at the high school level, but the committee has not seen it yet. His initial opinion is that if the number of students is declining in the elementary schools and the number of students is increasing in the high schools, he certainly would want to look at the possibility of not eliminating those positions at the high school level. All that has to be balanced out with the amount of money, and it can't be done looking at one school.

The other factor they play with every year is that the district picks up many students from Kindergarten to first grade because some

parents have their children in an all-day Kindergarten program. These people don't know what the first grades will look like. He told Mrs. O'Shea that she was making some very good points, and there are things for the committee to

Page 32      February 1, 2006

consider. To make any kind of assumption that something is going to happen, and there are so many variables, to leave with any assumptions, she is leaving with a false impression. Mrs. Ciarlo added that she wouldn't want to do that, but it would be helpful to look at where some compacting was done last year to see what the situation is to see what it will look like for these students for the second year. They should see whether they need to make some improvements. Mr. Scherza responded that Mr. Traficante had already asked him for a report, which will go to everyone, on how the classes that were compacted are affected and how they would be affected next year if the numbers today go up or down. Mrs. Ciarlo commented that she will continue to push for lower class size in K and 1. High Schools can deal with it far more easily than children in elementary. If the district does a good job in the primary grades, then there aren't as many problems when the children get into the middle and high schools. Mrs. O'Shea indicated that she would be happy to sign up for the committee Mrs. Ciarlo had mentioned earlier.

**Mr. Scherza mentioned that he, Ms. Iannazzi and Mr. Traficante met this week with parents from Orchard Farms, and they will continue to keep abreast of things. As they told the parents then, they will always be candid. They may not tell the parents what they want to hear, but they will be honest with them. Mrs. O'Shea indicated that it was a very open forum, and the parents appreciated it. She asked Mr. Scherza to look at the groups a little more subjectively than he would like to do. The second graders have had it this year. Next year it would be nice for them to move into the three classes in order to have that break. The next year if they had to deal with again with the two fourth grades then they do, but at least the school shares the burden with the staff at the school. Mr. Scherza responded that administration will try to be fair. Her plea is not falling on deaf ears. It is a matter of the degree to which they can accommodate it. Administration and the committee will continue to work with her to continue what they have started already.**

**Mr. Lupino commented that this prompts a request from several months ago that he has not received. The committee has been receiving the population reports in a new format. He had asked to go back to the old format which gave them the breakdown of the school, the class, and he had asked for the aides that were assigned to the classes.**

**Mark Lucas, 28 Riverfarm Road – He requested that the cost**

breakdown for Horton School be posted on the Cranston Public Schools' website so that it would be available to everyone. He further stated that he was absolutely shocked to hear Mr. Balducci say that Horton School was not in the budget. He remembered someone saying that Horton is in the budget. This whole process should be absolutely transparent. People should not have to tease nuggets of information out by asking the right question at the right time and have the right person respond. He felt that the people were being played with, and he hoped that was not the case.

Page 33      February 1, 2006

Mr. Traficante clarified that what is not in the budget is the salaries of the personnel that were mentioned a little while ago and the benefits associated. What is in the budget about Horton is the money that is appropriated per child for supplies, for books, for equipment, etc. The committee appropriates approximately \$95 per child at the elementary level, and they appropriate approximately \$125 per child at the secondary level. Therefore, if that child at Horton were to move to Woodridge School, the money follows the child. That is what is in the budget.

Mr. Stycos stated that the budget has all the money in it for Horton in one spot, and in another spot it takes away all the money for Horton. That is what is in the budget. He told Mr. Traficante that he was

**absolutely right that those types of things like the supplies and materials couldn't be counted as a savings because they go with the kid. That is where the confusion comes in. If one were to look at the budget, there is a Horton section, and it is treated exactly as if Horton was going to be open. But as Mr. Balducci explained, there is another line item on page 191 that subtracts the amount that the school department is estimating would be saved by closing Horton. If this book was passed, there is no money for Horton. For Horton to stay open, it is going to require a change to this book.**

**Mr. Lupino stated that the next section for discussion was Plant Operations.**

**Mrs. Greifer moved to adjourn the meeting.**

**Mr. Stycos suggested that if any of the committee had questions that they not ask for answers tonight but that they lay out the questions so that administration can answer those questions before the next meeting. He added that he had several questions.**

**Mrs. Greifer withdrew her motion.**

**Mr. Stycos requested a listing by school of open classrooms, classrooms where nothing is happening, or he knew of some schools where they had an available room would use it for a music room or an art. He would like an inventory that would state as an example,**

Orchard Farms 5 rooms empty, one art room, and one music. He explained that he was requesting this information because he would like an estimate of the savings from the closing of the special services building. As part of that, he would like to know if the services there could be moved into existing space in the school system and what that would save. Mr. Lupino responded that this was addressed in this evening's questions. Mr. Stycos withdrew this question. Mr. Lupino added that there may not be a breakdown of savings because there is a plan to use Special Services for another purpose.

Page 34      February 1, 2006

Mr. Stycos asked for a breakdown of over-time charges, revenue and expenditures for the rental of the school department facilities. When CLCF uses Hope Highlands, they pay so much money. He asked how much money is coming in and how much money is being expended, and what the net is. Mrs. Greifer said that this question was also addressed in the answers. Mr. Balducci commented that he gave Mr. Stycos the information through the month of January.

Mr. Lupino encouraged his colleagues as they have questions during the week to get them to Mrs. Moretta by Wednesday so that they can

**be included in Friday's update.**

**Mr. Stycos asked the committee members if anyone wished to participate in the bus meeting. Mr. Lupino asked Mr. Stycos to let the committee know when the meeting will take place. Mr. Traficante noted that he would be away from February 10th to February 16th at a conference. If the meeting were scheduled above or below those dates, he would like to participate.**

#### **IX. Announcement of Future Meetings**

**Mr. Lupino reported that the next meeting will take place on Monday, February 6th, at 7:00 p.m. at Western Hills. The committee will continue on with their code listing. They will also have a visit from Mr. Kevin Walsh concerning health care. The Horton School meeting will take place on Thursday, February 9th, at 7:00 p.m. tentatively at Bain Middle School.**

#### **X. Adjournment**

**Moved by Mrs. Greifer, seconded by Ms. Iannazzi and unanimously carried that the public budget work session be adjourned.**

**There being no further business to come before the work session, it**

**was adjourned at 10:14 p.m.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Anthony J. Lupino**

**Clerk**