

EAST LYME BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SPECIAL MEETING OF MARCH 13, 2023
MINUTES

PRESENT: Kevin Seery, Rose Ann Hardy, Dan Cunningham, Bill Weber, Anne Cicchiello and Anne Santoro

ALSO PRESENT: Finance Director Kevin Gervais and Board of Education representatives; Superintendent Jeff Newton, Christian Lund, Maryanna Stevens, Kim Davis and Jaime Barr-Shelburn

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EAST LYME, CT
2023 MAR 17 A 3:33
Camille W. Shelburn
TOWN CLERK

Mr. Seery called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Budget Discussion – Board of Education

Mr. Newton and the other representatives gave a presentation on the Board of Education budget, which is attached hereto as Exhibit 1.

Ms. Cicchiello inquired about the following:

- She explained that members of the public have approached her to say that the Board of Education budget is being cut this year, and she would like to clarify that the budget starts at \$54.1M, there is a \$4.8M proposed increase, which totals \$58.9M. What we are addressing now is the \$4.8M proposed increase.
- She attended all of the BOE budget meetings and thanked the Board of their hard work and diligence in being thorough in their budget review.
- She asked if they cut two elementary teachers, would that still keep them within the mandatory classroom size guidelines; Mr. Newton stated that would potentially work but that the guidelines change with the amount of students, which varies year-to-year.
- 5% increase in the Administrative line item for the Athletic Director. Mr. Newton stated that 5% includes contractual salary increases for all administration, as well as the creation of an Athletic Director position, which the salary is offset in other areas, as per the narrative in the budget.
- When there is a reduction in special education students, as this budget shows four leaving, can they reduce the paraprofessional headcount as well. Mr. Newton explained that the district does not know if there will be four or more students coming in to take their place. Student to teacher ratio is State mandated.
- State funding is not guaranteed, but Mr. Seery stated that there is a House Bill currently alive that would reinstate all of the Education Cost Sharing funds; currently we are anticipating \$5.8M.
- Maintenance projects – funding bill HVAC indoor quality grant. Mr. Lund explained that those funds went primarily to schools that were wholly deficient in HVAC / air quality systems; East Lyme is fortunate that all of our schools have working HVAC and air quality systems. The ductwork cleaning in the Capital Plan is necessary as there are air quality standards that must be kept up with.
- Health insurance costs are not yet known.

Mr. Weber inquired about the following:

- For the record, he noted that although a family member is considering employment with the East Lyme Board of Education, he does not feel as though this is a conflict of interest and is comfortable that he can be objective in discussing this budget.

- He noted that on the Per Pupil Expenditures (Across SECT) slide, it shows that Salem has a lower per pupil cost than East Lyme, although Mr. Newton could not explain why that would be.
- Line 437 Projects; Mr. Lund explained that this line is for ongoing, miscellaneous projects that come up, such as carpet replacement. He explained that in the past he has used this account for unexpected expenses as well, such as when the new kilns were installed it was found that they needed to re-wire the area, which was not budgeted for.
- He inquired about fuel costs, and Ms. Stevens reported that they are a part of a consortium and that the prices for the upcoming year have been locked in.
- Per student costs at the special education level vary depending on the amount of support needed.

Ms. Santoro inquired about the following:

- In relation to a question that Mr. Weber asked earlier, Ms. Santoro requested that Mr. Newtown provide a chart to show the correlation between the increase in cost, increase in staff and increase in students. Currently, it appears that enrollment is down. Mr. Newton replied that special education costs are driving the overall increase as enrollment stays the same essentially, but special education numbers have increased drastically.
- She asked about the minimum budget requirement; Ms. Stevens reported that she has filed the paperwork, and that she does not have an estimate on what that number will be, but she will get that to the Board of Selectmen.
- Salem tuition rate is on average \$15,973, but fluctuates; he also noted that the special education has increased.
- Line 116 Safety Personnel has increased to align with having such staff in the building any time there are students in the building, including weekends and over the summer.
- Line 641 Textbooks is a state mandated program. Mr. Newton stated that they have requested an extension in order to get on schedule with this program.
- 15.85% of budget is paid for by State and/or Federal dollars; the rest is on the taxpayers shoulders.
- Revenue information on other programs that are run would be helpful for the Board of Finance presentation; Ms. Stevens stated that she would include that information for the Board of Finance.
- Please provide more detailed and forecast information for their Capital Improvement Plan to the Board of Finance.

Mr. Cunningham inquired about the following:

- 43% increase in salaries is due in part to many positions were below or at minimum wage, which increased last year. Majority is contractual increases.
- Health benefits increase - Ms. Stevens explained that they feel more comfortable leaving the 12% budget in place for benefits until we hear from the State what it will be; it should come in around 7.1%.
- Are there any opportunities to save money on utilities, such as utilizing a microgrid. Mr. Lund confirmed that they are currently working with a vendor on such a projects and will be presenting to the Board of Education at an upcoming meeting. They have already retrofitted all of the lights with LED equipment.

- It was discussed that the Education Cost Sharing program is at risk, but they expect it to be restored this year; it will potentially be phased out over time.

Ms. Hardy inquired about the following:

- If the budget is approved as it is presented tonight, will that mean no position cuts and no new positions; Mr. Newton affirmed this and stated that the Athletic Director position that was discussed earlier is the only new position. Ms. Hardy inquired if the new Athletic Director is a current teacher and if so what will become of those classes. Mr. Newton confirmed that those classes are being easily absorbed by other teachers.
- Has the problem of acquiring substitutes been resolved? Mr. Newton that they have worked through the issues that they had during the pandemic, and are also utilizing the services of a staffing agency which has worked out well.
- Mr. Newton confirmed that per pupil expenditure for Salem students is less than for East Lyme students because they enter into the system in high school.
 - We can expect 70% paid by the State for special education costs.
 - Average class size is 15-20 students; some classes at the high school level could have up to 30 students in a class.
- She is concerned with the advertisement and recruitment efforts as we are already at the top limit of our space needs in all schools.

Mr. Seery inquired about the following:

- Is the cost of the recent computer incident in this budget; Mr. Newton stated that it is not.
- Have you researched all of the current opportunities for grants and financial assistance for upgrades such as a microgrid; Mr. Lund stated that he is actively researching all options.
- Is there an opportunity to cut back on buses? Mr. Newton stated that they previously have tried to adjust the bus routes and it has not worked out. They have noticed that the buses are again full at the elementary and middle school level and have returned to normal as before the pandemic. High school buses are historically not used as much, but the Town is required to run the buses.
 - Higher than ever before are requests for services at Care and Share and TVCCA.

3. Budget Discussion / Deliberations

Mr. Seery requested that all Board of Selectmen members forward to him by Friday close of business, any comments they have that they would like to be forwarded to the Board of Finance for consideration.

Mr. Seery reported that as of right now with the proposed budget as it is presented tonight, would equate to a \$4,750,062 increase and a new mil rate of 25.45. For a \$400,000 home, there would be a \$652 increase in one year. The Board were in agreement that the Board of Education should not be recruiting for students outside of the district as this is not financially prudent. Average house value in East Lyme is \$316,000 which would equate to an average increase of \$499 in taxes on an annual basis.

Ms. Santoro expressed her concern with receiving the Board of Education budget so late in the process, and after this Board sent the budget to Board of Finance for review. It is her request, and the rest of the Board agrees, that going forward this budget should come to the Board of Selectmen earlier in the process. She expressed her support for our school system and our students, but she noted that it is this Board's job to make the best choices possible for the Town as a whole. She reported that when they were decided how to distribute the ARPA funds, they discussed at length that using the funds for positions was not a great idea.

Ms. Hardy agrees that the BOE budget should be received earlier for review and consideration and agrees that separating the budget would not be helpful. She would like the town to work harder to put pressure on outside agencies that are handing down unfunded mandates and leaving the burden to the municipality.

Mr. Cunningham feels that everyone in the Town is doing the best that we possibly can with what we have to deal with, and this is not sustainable going forward. If the federal or state government is going to hand down these mandates then they need to assist us financially. We need to work with our Representatives to weed out these unfunded mandates and make that change.

Ms. Cicchiello feels that we do have to find the balance between supporting our entire community and supporting our schools, students and teachers. She looks forward to more discussion including the Board of Finance in the coming weeks. Ms. Cicchiello stated that this Town has shown its support for the Board of Education throughout the years, especially over the last couple of years during the pandemic, but this level of growth is not sustainable. Ms. Cicchiello suggested that maybe there are other options, for instance instead of cutting a full position make a couple of them part-time.

Mr. Weber stated that he thinks that we need to figure out why the Board of Education is growing faster than the Town itself.

Mr. Gervais stated that the Board of Education budget is just under 67.5% of the budget this year. Mr. Seery reported that approximately 27% of the taxpayers presently have a child in the school system.

4. Adjourn

MOTION (1)

Mr. Cunningham MOVED to adjourn the March 13, 2023, special budget meeting of the East Lyme Board of Selectmen at 8:47 p.m.

Seconded by Ms. Cicchiello. Motion passed 6-0.

Respectfully Submitted By:



Sandra Anderson
Recording Secretary

Exhibit # 1

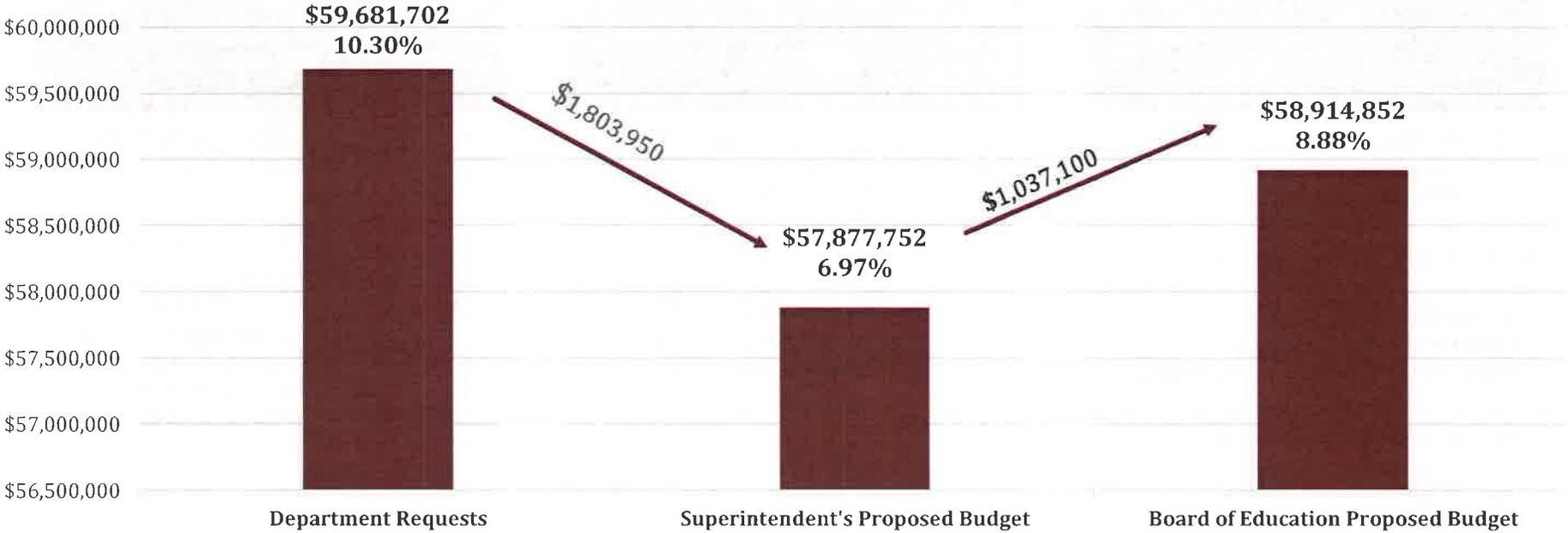


East Lyme Public Schools BOE Adopted Budget for FY 2023-2024

East Lyme Board of Education Budget Timeline

November 14, 2022	Board of Education, Special Meeting - Budget Workshop # 1- Initial Budget Discussions
December 15, 2022	Board of Education, Special Meeting - Budget Workshop #2-Initial Proposed Budget Increase of 10.30%
January 9, 2023	Board of Education Regular Meeting: Superintendent's 2023/2024 Proposed Budget Presentation with Proposed Increase of 6.97%
January 30, 2023	Board of Education Special Meeting-Budget Discussions
February 6, 2023	Board of Education, Regular Meeting-Continued Budget Discussions
February 13, 2023	Board of Education, Special Meeting- Public Forum Budget Discussion with Presentation and Q & A
February 13, 2023	Board of Education, Special Meeting-Continued Budget Discussions
February 27, 2023	Board of Education, Public Hearing/Special Meeting Immediately Following-Possible Adoption of Budget

East Lyme Public Schools 2023-2024 Proposed Budget



2023-2024 Major Budget Drivers

The major budget drivers listed below make up 98.50% or \$4,734,708 of the total proposed budget increase of \$4,806,374 and reflect an increase of 8.88% rather than the previous 6.97% increase

Salaries

43.92% or \$2,110,891 of Budget Increase

- The increase in salaries is due to contractual increases and the increase in minimum wage
- Contractual increases averaged 2.50%
- In addition, a collective bargaining agreement settled after the finalization of the 2022-2023 budget
- As a result of the increase in CT minimum wage, the increase in wages were higher than the estimate included in the 2022-2023 budget

Benefits

39.48% or \$1,897,396 of Budget Increase

- The increase in benefits is primarily due to the increase in estimated increase in health insurance premiums of 12%
- Additionally, unanticipated changes in employee plans in 2022-2023 (i.e., 2 person to family) increased 2022-2023 health insurance expenditures

Operating Expenses

15.11% or \$726,421 of Budget Increase

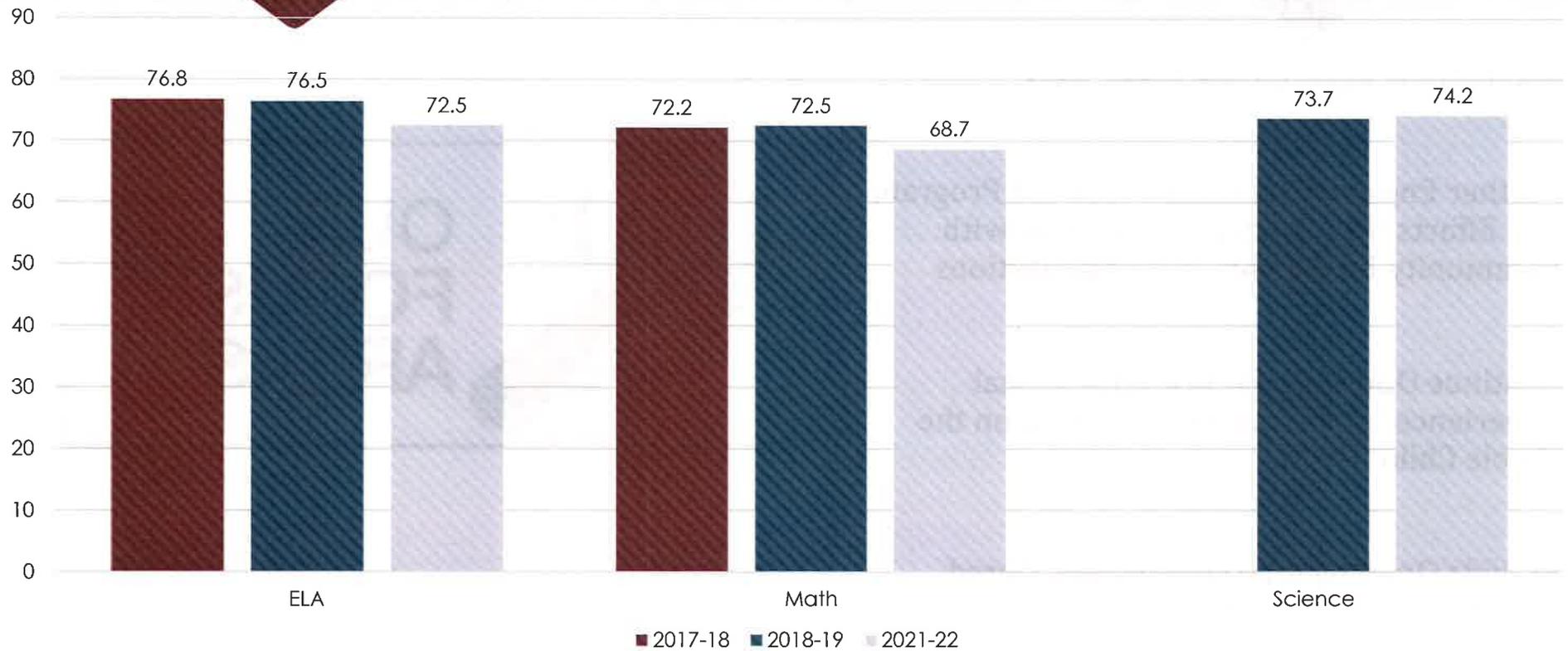
- Operating expenses includes, utilities, plant operations and contracted services
- Increases in energy costs (electricity, natural gas, heating oil, and fuel) account for most of the increase in operating expenses (\$390,760)
- Increases in plant operations such as repairs and maintenance, projects and increases in contract costs due to inflation make up a majority of the remaining increase

District Educational Focus Areas

- Maintaining Appropriate Class Sizes
- Further Engagement in the Pathways Program and Efforts that Connect our Schools with Community Businesses and Organizations
- Continue Offering a Robust Educational Experience for all Students Focusing on the Whole Child
- Provide Ongoing Intervention and Tiered Support for all Students



2017-2021: District Performance Index Math, ELA & Science



Social and Emotional & Mental Health Crisis Data

2022-2023 Data (as of March 1, 2023):

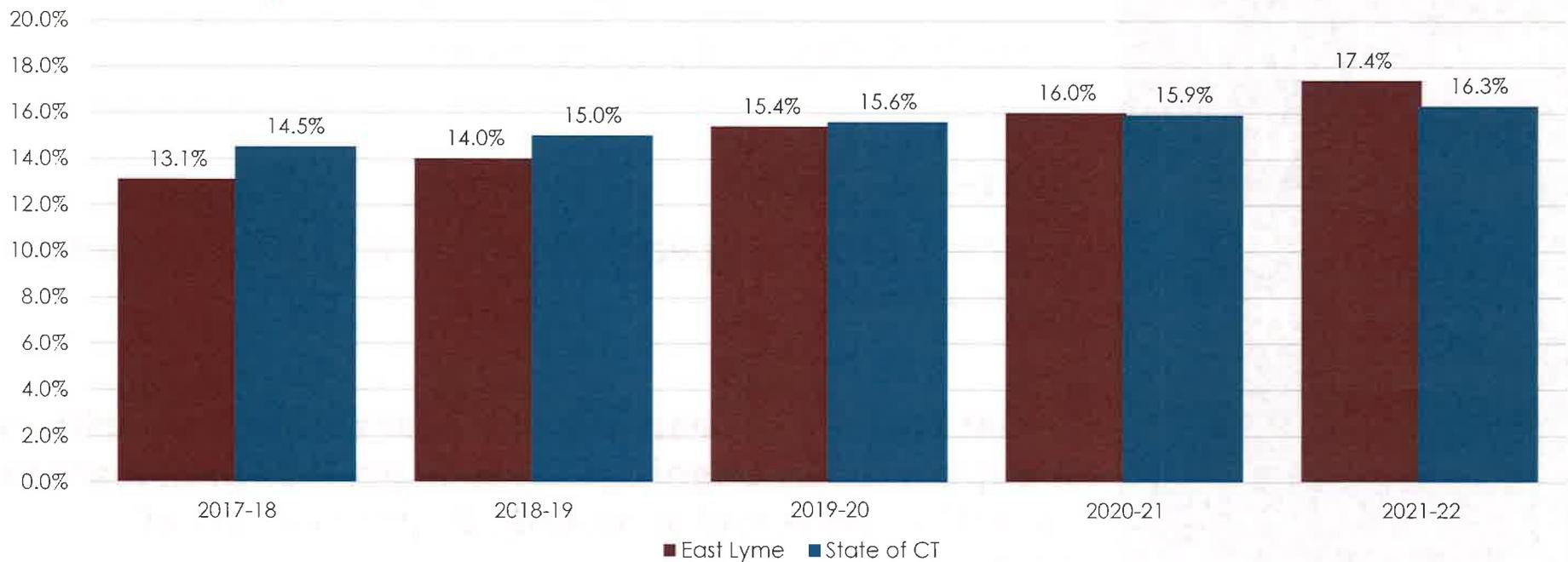
- *MS Crisis Data* – 67 student incidents
- *HS Crisis Data* - 90 student incidents

2021-2022 Data:

- 124 referrals to special education. 83 students qualified for services

Social Emotional Learning continues to be a priority and is supported by ongoing access to professional learning as well as universal screening 3x per year for all students

Special Education Prevalence Rates



2022-2023 Out of District Student Comparison Numbers by DRG

	Total Enrollment	OUTPLACED 2022-23
MILFORD	5,416	93
WALLINGFORD	5,342	60
WINDSOR	3,288	54
CROMWELL	1,948	43
SHELTON	4,423	42
NEWINGTON	3,922	37
WATERTOWN	2,604	34
NEW MILFORD	3,694	32
BERLIN	2,668	25
BETHEL	3,160	25
BRANFORD	2,750	21
WATERFORD	2,500	21
STONINGTON	2,000	17
SOUTHINGTON	6,266	17
COLCHESTER	2,221	16
EAST HAMPTON	1,786	12
OLD SAYBROOK	1,100	11
ROCKY HILL	2,537	10
EAST LYME	2,650	10
EAST GRANBY	827	6
CLINTON	1,700	Awaiting Information
LEDYARD	2,400	Awaiting Information

East Lyme Public Schools Out of District Costs

Out of District

- Students: 10
- Tuition: \$96,000(average)
- Transportation: \$28,000(average)

Benefits of Keeping Education in District

- Cost Savings
- Programming with Peers
- Access to the Community
- Diversity in the Student Body

Per Pupil Expenditures (Across SE CT)

DISTRICT NAME	PER PUPIL EXPENDITURE	RANKED HIGHEST TO LOWEST
OLD SAYBROOK	25,787	20
DISTRICT NO. 18	22,995	42
MADISON	22,882	44
CLINTON	21,739	63
NORWICH	21,138	72
WATERFORD	20,977	75
EAST LYME	20,224	88
NEW LONDON	20,117	89
GUILFORD	19,795	96
SALEM	19,163	108
MONTVILLE	18,821	120
GROTON	18,320	131
GRISWOLD	18,067	139
NORTH STONINGTON	17,462	150
LEDYARD	16,496	159

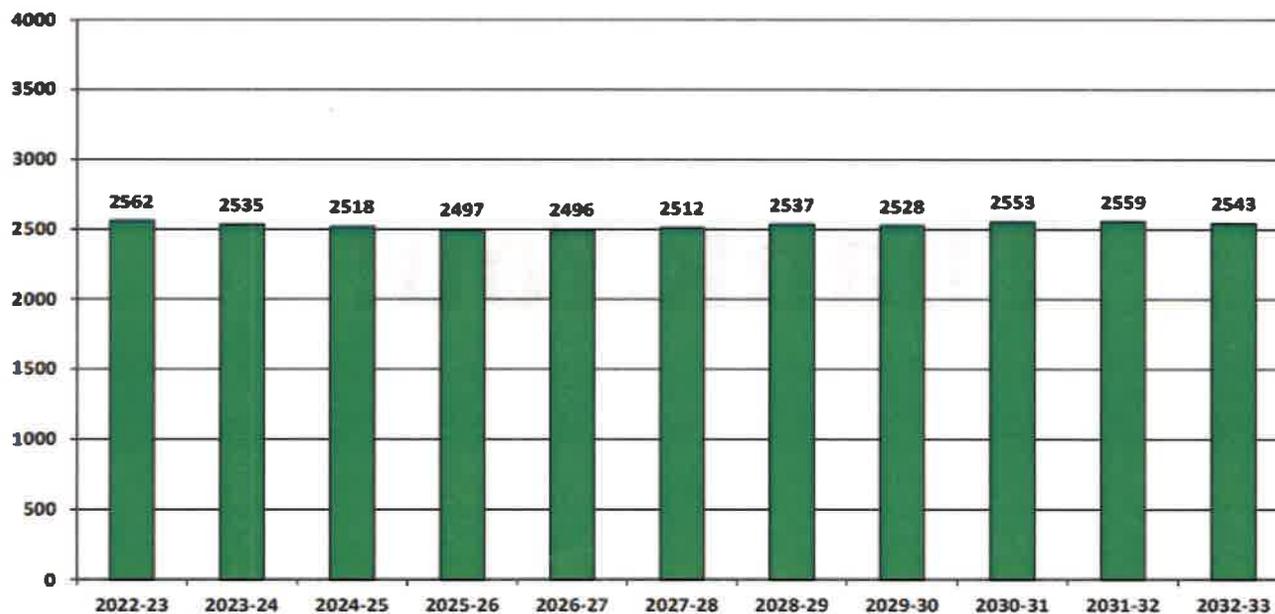
Per Pupil Expenditure

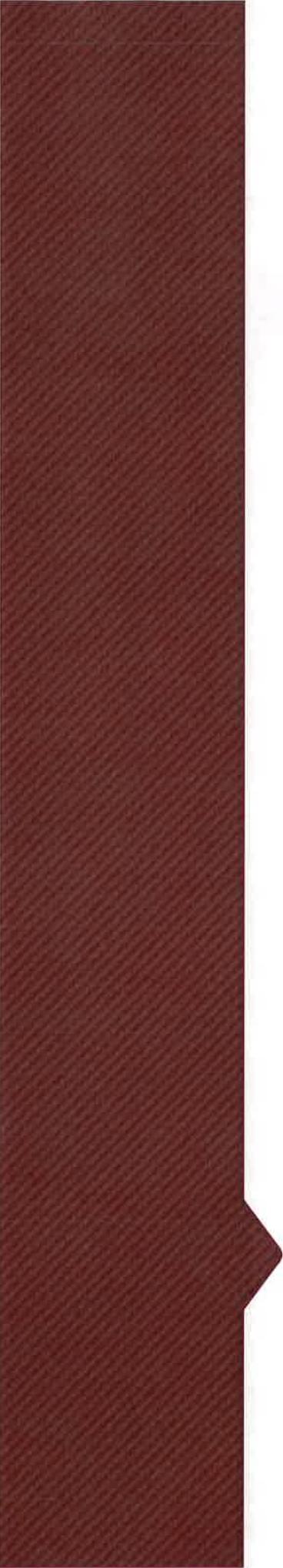
2021-2022 DRG D

District	Per Pupil Expenditure	Ranked Highest to Lowest
OLD SAYBROOK	25,787	20
EAST GRANBY	23,019	41
MILFORD	22,591	46
BRANFORD	22,294	53
CLINTON	21,739	63
STONINGTON	21,216	69
WATERFORD	20,977	75
WALLINGFORD	20,917	77
WINDSOR	20,713	79
NEWINGTON	20,382	85
BERLIN	20,322	86
EAST LYME	20,224	88
EAST HAMPTON	19,146	109
WATERTOWN	19,122	111
NORTH HAVEN	19,120	112
COLCHESTER	18,838	119
ROCKY HILL	18,690	125
CROMWELL	18,134	137
WETHERSFIELD	17,864	143
BETHEL	17,507	149
SOUTHINGTON	17,102	153
NEW MILFORD	16,975	155
LEDYARD	16,496	159

East Lyme Public Schools Projected Future Enrollment

K-12, School Years 2022-23 to 2032-33





Thank You!