

# Stafford Board of Education Budget Presentation

Public Hearing, March 9, 2015

**CURRENT 2014-2015 BUDGET:** On October 8, 2014, the Town approved a budget for the Stafford Public Schools totaling \$26,909,795. This amount reflects a decrease of 0.08% as compared to last year's budget. Within that budget, contractual and other costs necessary to provide education to our students increased. Some of the cost increases include negotiated salaries, negotiated benefits, contracted transportation, and magnet and other outplaced tuition (driven by school choice). This situation has resulted in a decrease in the level of services previously provided.

**PROPOSED 2015-2016 BUDGET:** This proposal, which reflects an increase of 3.39%, addresses some of the challenges we are currently facing as a public school district. Through systematic improvements and strategic reductions, the budget reflects the the Board of Education and Administration's collaborative efforts to ensure safety and school security, provide mandated services, promote student achievement and opportunities, and address declining enrollment.

Line	2013-2014 Approved	2013-2014 Expended	2014-2015 Approved	2015-2016 Proposed	Difference	2016 % change
100 Salaries	15,358,701	15,203,234	15,135,686	15,561,100	425,414	2.81%
200 Benefits	5,228,821	5,249,709	5,323,248	5,397,900	74,652	1.40%
300 Professional Services	306,905	319,628	333,445	348,800	15,355	4.60%
400 Repairs, Rental, Other Property Services	729,741	814,680	752,536	867,800	115,264	15.32%
500 Transportation, Tuition, Other Services	3,570,570	3,454,886	3,571,804	3,821,900	250,096	7.00%
600 Utilities, Instructional & Building Supplies	1,425,609	1,460,432	1,435,921	1,416,800	(19,121)	(1.33%)
700 Equipment and Software	213,356	237,814	206,748	217,800	11,052	5.35%
800 Dues and Fees	98,698	132,207	150,407	190,400	39,993	26.59%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>26,932,401</b>	<b>26,872,591</b>	<b>26,909,795</b>	<b>27,822,500</b>	<b>912,705</b>	<b>3.39%</b>
Year-to-Year Comparison			(0.08%)			3.39%
<b>Percentage Increase Averaged Over Two Years</b>						<b>1.65%</b>

With your support, we plan to maintain the majority of our existing programs. It is critical to Stafford, because current programs positively impact our high graduation rates and provide a strong foundation for our young people, which promotes their continued achievement after they graduate.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF BUDGET LINES:

**Line 100- Salaries:** In addition to funding for contractually-obligated degree changes, this line reflects the reinstatement of a 1.0 FTE principal at Staffordville School, replacement of a 0.4 FTE with a 1.0 FTE social studies teacher at the high school, addition of a 0.5 FTE music teacher, and addition of a 0.67 FTE intervention specialist. The proposed budget also reflects the elimination two certified staff (2.0 FTE) to address declining enrollment.

**Line 200- Benefits:** In the past, increasing costs of health care had a significant impact on the budget. In this proposed budget, we reap the benefit of our self-funded insurance program. With a 2.5% increase in medical and 0% increase in dental premiums, insurance is no longer a major cost driver.

**Line 300- Professional Services:** These costs, which include professional development, do not reflect a significant increase.

**Line 400- Repairs, Rental, Other Property Services:** This line reflects a moderate increase in the repairs and maintenance costs of five schools, which had previously been postponed, and the Superintendent's office. Identified projects mitigate the potential for higher future costs that would be incurred from neglect.

**Line 500- Transportation, Tuition, Other Services:** In 2014-2015, students choosing to attend magnet schools, for which the district is required to pay tuition, nearly doubled as compared to the previous year, increasing costs from \$95,000 to \$172,400. We believe resident support for this budget proposal, coupled with an increase of opportunities for students, may help improve this costly trend.

**Line 600- Utilities, Instructional & Building Supplies:** This line reflects an overall reduction, particularly in fuel oil. Future electricity and oil savings are expected to fund the solar and geothermal projects, providing further energy savings.

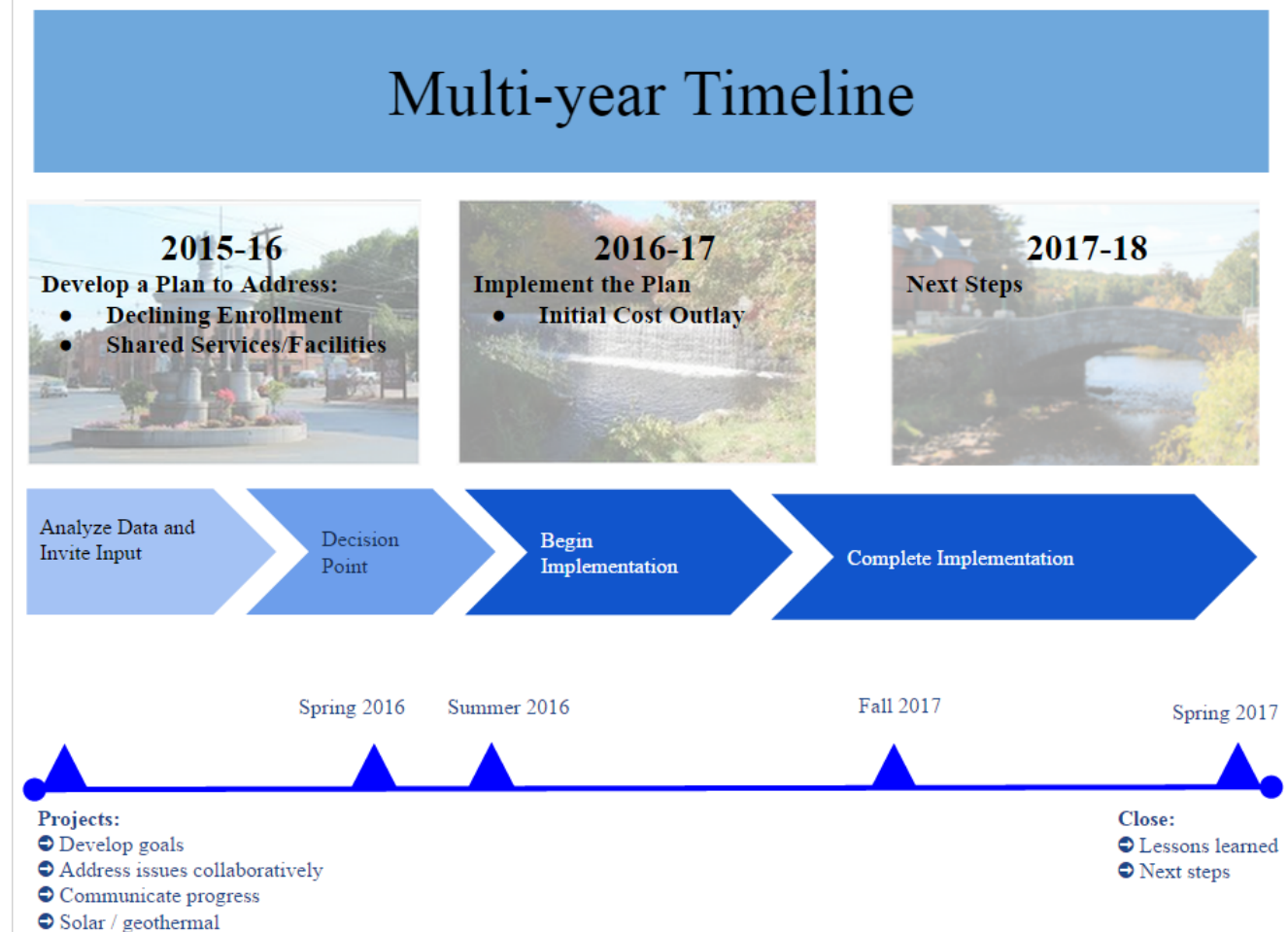
**Line 700- Equipment and Software:** This line reflects a small increase in maintenance equipment.

**Line 800- Dues and Fees:** The lease payments for energy projects are offset by a zero increase in the cost of electricity.

**MULTI-YEAR:** The 2014-2015 budget has been and continues to be a challenge. In order to reduce costs, we continue to make adjustments to compensate for the net reduction of more than seven (7) full-time equivalent (FTE) staff. While it may appear that we are operating on the same level as in previous years, these reductions will result in a slow erosion and negatively impact those to whom it matters most, our students.

**The 2015-2016 proposal coupled with the 2014-2015 reduction results in an average increase of 1.65% over two years.** An issue facing school districts across the State, our enrollment dropped by 141 students across 14 grade levels in the past two years. It is impossible to compensate for this decrease in enrollment by simply reducing teaching positions due to the fact that the decreases are district wide, as opposed to being concentrated in one grade level. Additionally, our school facilities are designed for students of a certain age.

**LOOKING FORWARD:** Through this budget process, in particular, we have identified a number of challenges: moving forward from sustainability, declining enrollment, over-reliance on in-kind services to support students, and economic instability. In order to address these challenges, we have a plan, as outlined below.



It is our hope that by working collaboratively, the Town and School District will develop plans to further identify and continue to build on our efficiencies to address our mutual needs. In this way, we will maintain the desirability of our school district (as published in “Best School Districts for Your Buck in Connecticut” in which Stafford was ranked third!) while controlling costs and any potential impact to tax payers.

In closing, the Board of Education’s complete budget and related documents are posted on our district website at [www.stafford.12.ct.us](http://www.stafford.12.ct.us), Board of Education>Budget Information.