

Town of Bedford Finance Committee

Remote Meeting - Zoom

January 27, 2022

Minutes

Finance Committee Members in attendance: Stephen Carluccio (Chair), Elizabeth McClung, Paul Mortenson, David Powell, Stephen Steele, Karen Dunn, Ben Thomas, Erica Liu,

Others in attendance: David Castellarin, (Finance Director), Philip Conrad, Superintendent, Julie Kirrane, Schools Director of Finance, Sarah Scoville, Chair School Committee, Emily Mitchell, Select Board

Chair Carluccio called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm.

Reads Remote Meeting Guidelines.

Calls the Roll of Committee Members in attendance.

Noted for the record that the meeting is being recorded by Bedford TV.

I. REGULAR BUSINESS

1. Public Comment

None

2. Schools FY23 Budget Presentation – Request/Discussion

Chair Carluccio introduces this topic and turns the discussion over to School Superintendent Conrad.

Mr. Conrad states that the proposal he will discuss tonight asks for an increase of 3.5% although the Finance Committee guideline number for the schools is 3.25%. The proposed budget has been approved by the School Committee. The proposal assumes normal operations and relies on a Town reserve for out of district tuition in the amount of \$200,000. The proposal also includes new funding for Special Education transportation. The proposed budget number does not include potential financial impacts due to Covid-19 although they are estimated and may be covered by federal funding.

The total FY23 budget request is \$45,157,090, an increase of \$1,527,051 amounting to 3.5%. The Maintenance of Effort (MOE) Budget is \$45,006,057, a 3.2% increase.

Mr. Conrad discusses FY23 enrollment projections with lower elementary enrollment and stable secondary level enrollment.

Mr. Conrad discusses MOE salaries with an overall MOE increase in budgeted salary cost of 3.6% over FY22.

Mr. Conrad discusses MOE operating expenses with an overall increase in operating expense cost of 5.8% over FY22.

Mr. Conrad discusses MOE out of district tuition with a budgeted net tuition of \$3 million which is 3.5% above FY22. Also notes the need for a Town reserve for \$200,000 here which is a lower amount than FY22.

Mr. Conrad discusses MOE regular transportation costs with a net increase of \$74,000 which is 6.1% increase over FY22.

Mr. Conrad discusses MOE special education transportation costs with a net decrease of \$178,000 which is 19.9% under FY22.

Mr. Conrad discusses special education additional needs in the amount of \$133,051, a .8 FTE.

Mr. Conrad discusses additional needs for salary totaling \$79,481 and non-salary of \$71,562.

Mr. Conrad discusses special education staff additions and subtractions totaling a net of 2.0 FTE

Mr. Conrad discusses regular education staff additions totaling .7 FTE.

Mr. Conrad discusses the adoption of the Bridges in Mathematics Curriculum approved by the School Committee during the FY22 budget process. Funding of \$17,000 is requested to support year two of the curriculum adoption.

Mr. Conrad discusses the Responsive Classroom curriculum at Davis and Lane and seeks to add an evidence based curriculum to that model. It seeks \$15,000 to fund the testing and piloting of a curriculum prior to adoption of a proposal in FY24.

Mr. Conrad discusses the addition of a coop team as a cost effective way to meet student interest in interscholastic gymnastics. The cooperative team would be with Wilmington which would share coaching, venue and official costs. Funding of \$7,500 is requested.

Mr. Conrad discusses a request for \$25,000 to maintain some aspects of virtual learning and remote access because they add value and improve access.

Mr. Conrad discusses Covid-19 contingency planning for unbudgeted Covid costs for nurses, custodial overtime, PPE/ safety protocols and facilities HVAC amounting to .5 FTE. No funding is included in this FY23 Budget Proposal and it is anticipated that these costs are eligible for ARPA funding.

Mr. Conrad discusses preliminary state funding for education. Potential increase of \$192,916, a 3.4% increase.

Mr. Conrad discusses budget offsets for preschool tuition, school building rentals, athletics and food service revolving accounts.

Mr. Conrad discusses Circuit Breaker and State Hanscom Military Mitigation reimbursements.

Mr. Conrad discusses Finance Committee Reserve Fund requests for \$200,000 for extraordinary special ed tuition and \$300,000 for Covid-19 contingency. ARPA funds are expected to cover the Covid-19 contingency.

Chair Carluccio thanks Mr. Conrad and all of his staff for putting together the Budget and Presentation.

Chair Carluccio asks for Member questions and comments.

Member Liu asks for information concerning enrollment.

Ms. Scoville provides details including student teacher ratios.

Member Liu inquires about the Special Ed and Covid reserve requests.

Mr. Conrad provided further details. Will continue to keep interested parties including the Finance Committee up to date.

Mr. Conrad discusses moving reserve fund funds in the future into the budget itself.

Member Powell discusses 3.5% increase and what effect future inflation might have.

Member Powell asks about the use of the term cohort.

Mr. Conrad discusses what cohort means as a special ed concept.

Member Powell asks about the 50% reimbursement for Special Ed reimbursement for out of district special ed transportation.

Mr. Kirrane explains the state increase here from previous 25% to this year 50% with another increase potentially to 75% in the future.

Member Powell discusses potential funding increase in Chapter 70 funds.

Mr. Conrad discusses these funds as going directly to the town.

Member Thomas discusses use of out of district funds and effect of inclusion. Doesn't like keeping a \$200,000 reserve amount in future years. Should be in the schools budget.

Member Thomas discusses effects from potential enrollment numbers decrease.

Member Thomas requests information about the gymnastics program and the student makeup of it.

Member Dunn supports the 3.5% increase and the reserve. Does suggest combining these amounts into the budget in the future.

Member McClung asks about funding for the new gymnastics program.

Mr. Conrad discusses this issue for this previously not offered sport. Discusses unique situations like this in the past.

Mr. Conrad discusses current Zoom licenses held and the need to reduce this number in the future.

Member McClung asks about costs involved with diversity programs.

Mr. Conrad explains. Not a separate cost center.

Chair Carluccio expresses his thanks for the presentation. Also notes that he hopes the Schools keep in mind that consideration should be given to allowing students the make up for the social aspect of education lost in the last two years.

3. Review School side and Town side Fund Balances

Member Steele asks about Impact Aid, Special Revenue, Page 3.

Chair Carluccio states that we went over this item which applies to the Town side of the Budget.

Member Steele asks to go to page 10, Athletic/Recreation.

Mr. Castellarin refers to the one fund. Will look into this.

Member Liu asks about Covid reimbursement for expenditures. What percentage will be covered for what was expended.

Mr. Castellarin explains these numbers.

Ms. Kirrane also explains funding received and timing.

Member Powell asks about Impact Aid under School Department with respect to funds received and later applied. Points to a large amount available that should be available dealing with Federal Hanscom funding. Not same as State Hanscom funding.

Mr. Castellarin will look into this issue more closely.

Member McClung agrees with Member Powell on this issue. Also, notes that she had previously asked for a breakdown of what the ARPA reimbursement funds have been spent on, totaling about \$5 million. Looking for a more detailed breakdown.

Mr. Castellarin agrees to provide this.

4. Review/Discussion FY2023 Fincom Budgeting Model

Mr. Castellarin explains how he updates the Model as he gets information with respect to certain categories. Will be filling in numbers from Town budgets as they are now received.

Mr. Castellarin explains the status of Free Cash number from the State. Should have the Free Cash number in the next day or so. Will try to confirm that tomorrow.

Mr. Castellarin refers to Chapter 70 money received as against where the Governor's current number is.

Member Steele asks about Merit Article usage. Looking at Page 10.

Mr. Castellarin explains the numbers here. Being done in a manner different than last year.

Member Steele asks how the health care insurance numbers were determined.

Mr. Castellarin explains how this was done coming up with 2.5% increase. States that for other insurance expenses, should carry an increase of 5%. Suggests adding that number to the Model now for the next meeting.

Member Powell states that we should ask Mr. Castellarin to do that.

Chair Carluccio asks for any objections to that request. None given so he agrees that the change should be made to the Model for the next meeting.

Member Powell asks about Line 68 which now says \$516,000. Member Powell suggests that number be raised to \$800, 000 for this year.

Mr. Castellarin states that he and Town Manager are working on what this number should be and update the number for the next meeting.

Member Dunn asks about Overlay Reserve from the Assessors.

Mr. Castellarin explains how this number is reached. Will be talking to the Assessor on this. The final number is automatically adjusted.

5. Review/Discussion Initial Draft of ATM Warrant

Chair Carluccio states that it was placed on the Agenda only because the initial draft is now out.

Mr. Castellarin states that he has no comments yet.

Chair Carluccio asks for Member comments.

Member Powell notes that historically the Operating Budget was usually one of the last Articles on the Warrant.

Select Board Member Mitchell indicates that the draft is just a skeleton and not in any particular order at this time.

6. Minutes

Draft Minutes for September 23, 2021 Meeting. Comments submitted by Member Powell.

Motion that Finance Committee recommend approval of the September 23, 2021 Minutes as presented and amended by Member Powell.

Second by Member Steele.

Roll call of Members in attendance at that Meeting.

Vote: 6-0-2

Motion carries

II. RECURRING BUSINESS

1. Meetings Attended

Member Powell notes that he attended the workshop last Saturday and found it generally positive.

Member Thomas discusses two Select Board meetings. Included discussion of increasing the Cemetery land. Also included discussion of change with respect to new proposed Fire Station location. The new location would be substantially less expensive.

2. Open Discussion

Chair Carluccio discusses having a joint meeting next week with CapEx with respect to the Fire Station. Suggests starting the meeting at 6:30pm.

Chair Carluccio notes that the Committee should begin discussion of Unused Tax Levy at the next meeting.

Motion to adjourn by Member Mortenson.

Second by Member Steele.

Roll call of Members in attendance.

Vote: 7-0-0

Motion carries.

Time: 9:44PM

John B. Connarton
Recording Secretary

DOCUMENT LIST

Agenda for January 27, 2022 Meeting

Bedford Public Schools - School Committee Fiscal Year 2023 Approved Budget Proposal,
January 27, 2022

FY23 Superintendent's Proposed Budget By Account

FY22 Budget and FY23 Proposed FTE Detail

Trust and Agency Fund Detail period ending 6-30-21

Model FY23 – January 27, 2022

Memo from D. Castellarin to S. Carluccio concerning ARPA receipts and expenditures through
9-22.

Town of Bedford Special Revenue & Expenses for period ending 6/30/21

Initial Draft of Warrant for 2022 Annual Town Meeting

Draft Minutes for September 23, 2021 Meeting

Finance Committee 2021-2022 Meeting Schedule through 3-28-22.