

**MINUTES OF BOARD OF EDUCATION
FINANCE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
HELD VIRTUALLY VIA LIVESTREAM ON JUNE 3, 2020**

Committee Members Present: Adam Grippo, Finance Chair; Kathryn Hallen; Faith Ham

Other Board Members: Anthony Perugini, Board Chair, Anne Harrigan, Andrew Martelli, Timothy White

Administrators Present: Jeffrey F. Solan, Superintendent; Marlene Silano, Assistant Superintendent; Vincent Masciana, Chief Operating Officer

Public access made available through live streaming via Cheshire Public Schools YouTube Channel at www.youtube.com/cheshirepublicschools . Public comments were accepted at CPSCovid19@cheshire.k12.ct.us .

1. Call To Order – 7:00 P.M.

A. Roll for Quorum. The roll was called and a quorum determined.

B. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

Mr. Perugini led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and then turned the meeting over to Mr. Grippo.

2. Discussion/Possible Action Regarding 2020/2021 Budget

Dr. Solan reviewed that the Town Council passed their budget, giving the Board of Education a 1.69% increase over last year's budget. He said they need to make a \$908,628 reduction to the Board's budget. Dr. Solan shared their suggested line-item deductions.

The majority of the reduction is being applied to line item 113 – Teachers with a reduction of \$530,500. A large portion of this reduction is due to a retirement incentive where they were able to secure 14 retirements creating a \$290.5K savings. In addition there will be a reduction of 2 teachers at Dodd, due to lower enrollment, and 1 English teacher at Cheshire High School.

Ms. Harrigan asked for more justification on high school English teacher position being cut. Mr. Solan said Ms. Gadd looked at where they could possibly cut and this was the recommendation, relative to enrollment. Ms. Harrigan said she is not comfortable with the cut.

Dr. Solan said there are roughly 300 7th graders next year. They can make the reduction and keep the class sizes at the historical average. He said optimally we would keep all of the positions, the cuts were not part of the original budget. He said they don't ever like to cut teaching positions, but looking at the total budget, these are the most reasonable. The positions to be cut are a math position and an English position. The math teacher will be able to bump into another position at Cheshire High School. Unfortunately, the teacher they are bumping at the high school will be losing their job

Mr. White asked what the contractual increase is for the teachers union next year. He would be interested in hearing from the union to have no increase in exchange for no layoffs. Mr. Masciana said the increase is a 3.2% increase, a \$989,387 increase. Mr. Solan said at this time the union is not looking to negotiate.

Ms. Ham asked how many positions will not be filled. Mr. Solan said 1 or 2 people will lose their jobs.

Mr. Grippo noted that the overall reduction to the teachers account is significantly larger than this weekend. He asked if there were additional expenditures over the weekend. Mr. Solan said the Town needed an Owner Manager position and the Board is responsible to pay half of that salary. He said we are responsible for \$42,500 which was not included in the draft numbers from weekend, as well as \$75,000 for a security manager position. Mr. Solan reviewed other staff reductions including two IA's, a math interventionist and reduction of overtime hours for other staff. He said that the pension assumption also increased \$98,872, another expense we must pay and do not have a choice.

Dr. Solan said there are other line items that had to be reduced in order to come up with the \$908,628 reduction. These accounts include staff training, instructional supply, textbooks/software, library/periodicals, library/media and testing supplies, replacement equipment and new equipment.

Ms. Hallen said she vehemently opposes the Owner Manager position because it will cause us to cut staff. It is inappropriate to push it on us when we need to cut our budget by \$1 million. She asked about the math interventionist reduction and voiced her concern. Mr. Solan said when they included it in the budget they felt it was important. Over the last couple of years, they have focused on core math program. He said it doesn't mean we don't need it, and hopefully, it can be included in next year's budget.

Mr. Perugini said he doesn't remember discussing the Owner Manager position before the Board approved the budget. He asked where this position came from. Mr. Masciana responded that it was not discussed during the budget process. It came to Central Office as a request from Sean Kimball, who asked if the position was added, would we support it. He noted that was also before they were informed of the \$1 million reduction. Mr. Masciana said this position will help assist the Town with the Capital Budget projects. Mr. Perugini said the Board never discussed the position and it would have been good to know this as we were going through budget process. Mr. Masciana explained that this happened after the Board of Education approved their budget.

The Board had extensive discussions regarding the position and what the individual's job responsibility would be. Board members were not happy that they did not know about this position during the budget process. They discussed pushing back on the Town on this position because we do not have the funding for it.

The Board discussed other ways they can reduce some of the other accounts to retain the English teaching position being cut at Cheshire High School. Mr. Solan said that if the Finance Committee passes a motion this evening, he can send some additional options tomorrow morning and the Board can amend the motion coming out of Committee should they wish.

MOTION by Ms. Hallen, seconded by Ms. Ham

MOVED that the Finance Committee move to the full Board of Education, a revised budget, as presented by the Superintendent to the Finance Committee, with reductions of \$908,628.

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously 3-0.

MOTION by Ms. Ham, seconded by Ms. Hallen

MOVED to modify the existing agenda to add Agenda Item – Old Business.

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously 3-0.

3. OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Grippo said that at the March 12th Finance Committee Meeting, he had agreed to meet with Town officials to establish scope for an audit of the Student Activity Accounts. Last week he met with Rob Oris, Sean Kimball and Jim Jaskot to discuss the town RFP to bid-out their audit services. He said they crafted a professional request inside their RFP for the audit. He would like a motion to show support by the Finance Committee so it can be discussed by the full Board. He reported the actual cost of the audit is unknown at this time.

Ms. Hallen said this is ceremonial because it will be part of the RFP for the Town, not the Board of Education. This is something that probably requires more discussion unless there is a time factor. Mr. Grippo said it is ceremonial because it is an RFP for the Town, but because he requested it, he thought it would be good for the Finance Committee to support a motion.

Ms. Hallen asked if the Student Activity Accounts are included in the general audit. Mr. Masciana replied yes, but Mr. Grippo is suggesting something much more in-depth. Ms. Hallen asked if there is a cost, will the Board be paying for it. Mr. Grippo said right now, it would be part of the town RFP, but it is unclear who would pay for the services. Mr. Perugini said when he spoke to Mr. Oris about this, he implied the Town would pay for it as they pay for the audit. Mr. Masciana said we pay our prorated portion of the audit. Ms. Ham said she would be in favor of this audit as we need to be sure we are compliant. Mr. Perugini said he would like to have it done because we need to update our policies, but he would like to know the cost first. Mr. Masciana said the RFP has gone out, with a

RFP opening date of June 9, 2020. Mr. Masciana added that during COVID, they have been updating all of the student activities accounts with a new software.

Ms. Hallen asked if the bids come back and the cost is too high, can we say no? Mr. Grippo said that we could.

MOTION by Mr. Grippo, seconded by Ms. Ham.

MOVED that the Cheshire Board of Education Finance Committee submit for approval to the full Board that an internal control and operational review of student activity funds including the high school, middle school and five elementary schools the turf and educational programs, special revenue funds excluding grants, adult and summer school activities and board of education general fund expenditures credits to determine if internal controls are adequate and activity is being properly reported. The review should include identification of all sources of revenue and testing of all expenditures focusing on but not limited to larger transactions to see if policies and procedures are being adhered to. Upon completion, a formal report should be issued detailing the procedures performed.

Ms. Hallen asked why this motion is necessary if the RFP has already gone out. Mr. Grippo said this is more a matter of the Finance Committee asking the Town to take action.

VOTE: 2-1 (Ms. Hallen opposed)

4. **Audience – Public Q & A’s via CPSCovid19@cheshire.k12.ct.us**

None.

5. **Other.**

None.

6. **Adjournment**

On a motion by Ms. Ham and seconded by Ms. Hallen, the Committee voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 9:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Adam Grippo, Finance Chair

Attest:

Carol K. Jesensky, Board of Education Clerk

Filed electronically at the Town Clerk’s Office, Town Hall, Cheshire: November 24, 2020.