

Newtown Public Schools  
BOE CFF/CIP Facilities Finance Sub Committee Meeting  
September 20, 2023 6:30 pm  
BOE Conference Room

AGENDA

CALL TO ORDER

BUSINESS

Item 1 Approval of BOE CFF/CIP Minutes of August 17, 2023

NEW BUSINESS

- Facilities Update
- Transportation Update
- Superintendent's Update

PUBLIC COMMENT

ADJOURNMENT

Newtown Board of Education  
CFF/CIP/Facilities/Finance Sub-Committee Special Meeting Minutes  
August 17, 2023  
BOE Conference Room

**PRESENT:** Deborra Zukowski, Alison Plante, Christopher Melillo, Tanja Vadas, John Barlow, Steve Goodridge, Board of Finance, Michelle Ku, Legislative Council

**CALL TO ORDER:** Mrs. Plante called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

**BUSINESS**

Ms. Zukowski moved to accept the BOE CFF/CIP minutes of June 26, 2023. Mrs. Plante seconds the motion. The motion passes for the approval of the BOE CFF/CIP minutes of June 26, 2023.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**2022-20233 Financials**

- **EOY Review**

Mrs. Vadas did a review of the past few years and her role as Director of Business. She wanted to thank board members for their support through the years.

She presented the 22-23 year-end report and stated we are ending fiscal year 22-23 with a positive balance of \$184,274. We have expended 99.78% of the budget. The balance is up \$106K from the previous month due to closeout of purchase orders, encumbrances and forecasts.

She then went through the major objects. She stated we are turning over \$986,528 in encumbrances, which will remain open for one year. A lot of this is due to the pre-purchases from our 23-24 cut which includes textbooks, curriculum, and contracted services. If this is not expended at the end of the year it will go back to the town.

She stated salaries carried the budget for this year due to so many openings. Our ending balance for salaries is \$177,635.

Benefits ending balance is \$59,586 and the driver was our FICA and Medicare which is hard to adjust until year end.

Professional Services ended with a \$66,281 balance which comes from staff training which came in under budget.

Purchased Property Services ended with a balance of \$35,037 due to water accounts and equipment repairs.

She wanted to point out the building & site & emergency repair services account which is at a negative -\$57,157. The account includes our contingencies for all emergencies that arise.

The Other Purchase Services account had a lot of activity. Within this account, Contracted Serves was hit hard with BT's and we spent over \$300K with some of that being grant funded. A transfer went into contracted services of \$427K with the majority of that for pre-purchases from the 23-24 budget adjustment. She stated even in the SpEd out of district tuition account and having to transfer the \$100K from the SpEd contingency account we still ended the year with a negative balance of -\$344,076.

Mrs. Vadas stated with the supplies account, our virtual net metering outshined. With Eversource rates increasing, so did our credits with the virtual net metering. Next year the credits are budgeted a bit higher so we should see more of a level balance. This helped our budget throughout the year and we ended with a balance of \$185,256.

There were small balances in miscellaneous. Local fees for tuition and parking lot fees came in at a surplus of \$15K. Property has a small balance of \$3,900.

She stated to close out the year we will need to take all of the balances and have them all be in a positive position in accordance to the BOE policy #3160. She stated it was recommended by the auditors to do a major object transfers which will be internal.

The committee agreed to recommend to the Board for the transfer of the 22-23 balance of \$184,274 to the non-lapsing account.

- **Activity Account Review**

Mrs. Plante stated as background we reviewed this back in March and now at the end of the year to see where the balances are. Mrs. Vadas presented a report of the school balances. She stated she has been in touch with principals and brainstormed with them to utilize the money in the accounts. They decided going forward to present this to the Board at the end of the year vs. in March as in the past.

### **2023-24 July Financial Report and Transfers**

Mrs. Vadas presented the July financial report. She stated this budget is fully loaded and all accounts are in alignment with the 23-24 budget. There was not much to report.

We are still working on payroll encumbrances and loading them into the financial system. She said the only anticipated obligation that she included in this report is the excess cost grant at the budgeted amount which we know will change.

### **Transportation Update**

Mrs. Vadas stated over the summer All-Star had a major recruiting effort campaign. They put all of their jobs on the following boards; Indeed, CT Hires, and LinkedIn. They visited some professional recruiting resources and programs; American Job Center, American Staffing Association. Social Media they posted on; Facebook, Instagram, Utube, LinkedIn. They are keeping their internal referral bonus, and restructured it and increased it to \$1500-\$2500 which

Mrs. Vadas confirmed that it is their money. They also put banners back up on the trestle in Newtown, Google add campaign, yard signs, banners on side of buses, sent buses to different events, digital flyers, they contacted representatives, VFW, local VA, Hiring Hero's, Vet Inc., and Easter Seal Veteran rally point. They also presented a video at Edmund hall.

She stated at this point, every route is filled with a permanent driver and we have 5 subs. They are still interviewing and recruiting. Mr. Melillo stated we currently have 2 training right now. So we are fully staffed and we did not reduce any routes. We have a total of 54 buses.

Mr. Melillo stated he is feeling good about it. Now that we have all of our drivers we should have drivers for sporting events and field trips.

Ms. Zukowski asked how the moral of the drivers are. Mr. Melillo stated we are supplying a breakfast before school starts to thank the drivers. He stated we will spend some time there and talk with them. He said it is important to maintain a good contact with them and we will do this regularly. He also said he is grateful to be in this position for the start of the year with one less worry.

Mrs. Plante stated she thought it was very wise to invest time with All-Star and the drivers to build those connections. She said it is important to the families and a lot of good will is built if the buses are running.

Ms. Zukowski asked about the previous issues with EdAdvance and Special Ed. Mr. Melillo stated EdAdvance is fully staffed with their buses but they are moving to a new platform and they will not be picking up any excess routes but only the routes that we are contracted for. He stated we may have to go to outside providers for any excess routes.

## **Facilities**

- **Hawley HVAC Close-out**

Mr. Barlow stated air conditioning is on at Hawley School. He stated the tested and balance contractor is starting this week and will finish by next week. He said we have already started the closeout documents and we expect to have the project closed out by early September. He said the Fire Marshall did inspections. He stated they had 2 inspections and the building passed with flying colors. Teachers have already begun to set up classes. He further stated the building was starting to look like a school again. He then said we have also utilized some Hawley fund money to address some of the painting issues in the building. He said we found a local contractor who did an amazing job doing touch up painting.

Mrs. Vadas stated there will be an open house on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>.

## **Update on Sumer Projects**

Mr. Barlow presented a spreadsheet with the list of projects that are currently being done or completed at all of the schools.

High School - B-wing roof top handlers have been ordered. He thought the delivery would be sometime in January and will hold until the April break to be replaced.

He also stated the gym floor was completed and looks amazing.

Repair work to the public restrooms at the high school of the main lobby have been updated and we are just waiting for the floors to be refinished.

Middle Gate- Adjustments were made in the delivery of the playground which is now set at around the 28<sup>th</sup> of this month. Old playground has been removed and the site is ready to accept the new playground along with the accessible walkway which has been completed. He stated it will take 1 to 2 weeks to install the playground and should be ready for students sometime around September 11<sup>th</sup>.

Reed School – Survey from Trane on chillers came back as stable and the refrigerant is in good shape. Mr. Barlow state the R-Newal program is definitely a viable solution. He stated the R-Newal program looks at the entire chiller package and determined the coils in the chiller are excellent for its age. With rebuilding the chillers the R-Newal program wipes out all of the equipment except for the coils and puts all new equipment into the chillers and would recover the original R22 refrigerant. The price from Trane came in at \$237K to rebuild the both and we would get 10 more years of service instead of a full replacement. The price to replace the two chillers would be over \$1M.

HOM – Two of the bathroom floors were refinished which included the sand grit in the finish to eliminate slips. He stated with some of the monies from the Hawley fund they were able to do a few other bathrooms at Hawley with the same finish. He stated eventually they would look at all of the bathrooms at all of the schools to complete with the same finish.

He said the new condensers for HOM have been ordered and are expected to arrive by the end of October and if delivery is on target he would get them put on the roof by the end of October or early November ahead of the cold winter weather.

We have ordered new overhead doors for the warehouse space we share with Park & Rec and they are expected within the next few weeks. This is to help block the odors of the fertilizer and chemicals that Park & Rec store in the warehouse.

Newtown public works have removed dead trees at the MS and HOM.

Parking lot lines at all buildings have been done.

Summer HVAC maintenance is completed and we are now doing fall maintenance on all buildings.

Fire sprinklers and life safety devices have been inspected in every school.

Fire marshals inspections have been completed in all buildings.

Ms. Zukowski asked about all of the equipment being purchased and if it was encumbered in the 22-23 school year. Mrs. Vadas did a recap of where the monies were coming from for the purchases.

Ms. Zukowski stated if we are paying \$240K for rebuilds and we are pretty confident for 10 years, our other option we spend \$1M on new and being confident they would last 25 years then it would be \$120K per 5 years on rebuilds and \$200K per 5 years on new. She further stated we can make an argument over \$120K per 5 years vs \$200K for 5 years.

Mrs. Plante asked about the concrete steps leading up to Middle Gate entrance and if they had been repaired and completed. Mr. Barlow stated it was on the custodian list to be done.

Mr. Barlow wanted to publicly thank the individual departments such as Public Works and Park and Rec for their working relationship.

Mrs. Plante asked about Middle Gate field where the big playground is that the kids play soccer on. She stated it should be grassed but it is dirt and could we get that grassed. . Mr. Barlow stated he would look into it.

### **CIP Discussion**

Mr. Barlow stated he made a couple of adjustments with the MS and \$12M for the HVAC project. He stated we had put it out in year 5 but everyone wanted it back in year 4 so he moved it back.

He stated we are just starting with looking at the \$450K that was approved as to how we are going to expel that money. We decided to look at a design bill project so that we can expel a limited amount of dollars out of the \$450K. He stated the concern is the project could potentially come in well over the \$12M.

Mr. Melillo stated the reality of the Middle School could be more from \$12M - \$20M.

Mr. Barlow thought the \$12M was a low number.

Mr. Melillo stated to put \$20M into a building that needs more work does not seem to be a good use of funds.

Mr. Barlow stated the reimbursement rate from the state for Newtown is about 38%.

Mr. Melillo stated he will continue the discussion with Mr. Barlow on the cost and numbers and stated there are also other ways to maybe make it palpable. We need to be prepared to have a plan outside of the \$20M price tag on that building.

Ms. Zukowski brought up the possibility of a committee for long term analysis of our buildings which would include members of the board, public and other boards. Mr. Melillo was in agreement with this.

Mr. Melillo brought up the concern of not having the capacity to move students out of the building as with Hawley. He further stated if you do an HVAC project and keep students in house you will have significant costs with working around them.

Mr. Barlow stated the discussion he had with the town was that the \$450K is a lot of money to spend on engineering to possibly find out that this might not be a viable project. He stated with design build we can probably expel less money to find out what the end result is and would prefer to spend less now than more.

Mrs. Plante asked the difference with design build vs engineering. Mr. Barlow stated design build cuts the engineering cost out because some companies staff their own people for that and design build kind of takes that piece out along with the CM. It would be oversight of a building committee and we would oversee the design process.

Mr. Barlow also talked about a facility study. He stated with a facility study besides looking at your overall facilities and developing a capital projects list, they also look at NESDEC projections, potential space requirements, etc. and he thought it might be money well spent.

Ms. Zukowski agreed.

The discussion continued around a possible facility study.

Mr. Melillo suggested we look at what our options are for financing a facility study.

Mr. Barlow stated the facility study adds a tremendous benefit to where we are going to go and what our future looks like.

Mr. Melillo asked Mr. Barlow about air quality vs. air cooling.

Ms. Zukowski mentioned an air quality test. Mr. Barlow stated there is no state or federal standards on indoor air quality.

Mr. Barlow stated he agreed with Mr. Melillo that to invest \$20M in an indoor air quality/ air conditioning system for that building does not seem feasible with the fact that we know the spaces are not conducive to learning environments.

Mrs. Plante stated she thought we should keep talking about the facility study. Everyone agreed.

Mr. Barlow stated he can write an RFP for it.

Mr. Barlow moved on to state that he made some other adjustments on the CIP. He stated he had a conversation with Garland the roofing vendor and asked to get some realistic quotes per square foot of replaced roof. He said the numbers for roof replacement, the dollars per square foot listed on the CIP were much lower than the \$50/sq. ft. price now. He stated he could not see putting a CIP together with the current numbers listed and not being able to get the jobs done. They need to be more reflective of what the actual number is.

He stated when he ran the numbers for the High School he came in at \$4.1M and divided the cost and separated the years so that we could be sure these roof replacements would happen and look palpable on the CIP. He stated all of the roof, window replacements and HVAC improvements are eligible for state reimbursement dollars. The 38% falls in there. He did state we would have to fund the entire amount before the state reimbursement would fall in.

Ms. Zukowski requested a revised version of the CIP that starts with the proper year 1 as a no bonding year and goes out to year 10 with as a 'TBD' (To Be Decided). She also asked Mr. Barlow on the projects that are potentially eligible for a reimbursement rate and to have an asterisk by the dollar amount.

Mr. Barlow stated he would also pull the actual percentage rate for all projects and input that on the bottom of the CIP and would bring this to the next Board meeting.

### **Superintendent's Update**

Mr. Melillo stated the convocation is scheduled for the 24<sup>th</sup> of this month. Students start on the 30<sup>th</sup> and Hawley is now ready to open and he is looking forward to a great second year with Newtown.

**PUBLIC COMMENT: none**

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Ms. Zukowski made a motion to adjourn meeting. Mrs. Plante seconds the motion. All in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:09 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Joanne Morris

THESE ARE DRAFT MINUTES AND ARE SUBJECT TO THE APPROVAL OF THE BOE  
CFF/CIP SUB COMMITTEE