

Newtown Board of Education
CFF/CIP/Facilities/Finance Sub-Committee Special Meeting Minutes
June 26, 2023
BOE Conference Room

PRESENT: Deborra Zukowski, Alison Plante, Christopher Melillo, Tanja Vadas, John Barlow

CALL TO ORDER: Mrs. Plante called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm.

BUSINESS

Ms. Zukowski moved to accept the BOE CFF/CIP minutes of May 18, 2023. Mrs. Plante seconds the motion. The motion passes for the approval of the BOE CFF/CIP minutes of May 18, 2023.

NEW BUSINESS

Review Financial Report and Proposed Budget Transfers

Mrs. Vadas presented the financial report with the proposed 23-24 budget transfers. She wanted to identify and bring to everyone's attention a few big moving pieces of the financials. She gave a recap of all reductions for the 23-24 budget that were approved by the board last month. The pre-purchases which includes textbooks, supplies, and a few budget reductions such as the network specialist, and adjustments were made along the way. She stated she later learned from the auditors that a few items were not eligible for pre-purchase so that money had to go back in the contracted services.

She stated they were able to find the remaining adjustments that they needed of \$106,240. She said we identified those areas which included the NICE stipends to be reduced by \$10K for the 23-24 year only. She said we will fund this through the activity accounts. Due to travel restrictions over the last couple of years we have not used that fund. We are also reducing the tutor position for the visually impaired that we will not need next year due to the lack of a student who would need this service. She further said we do have one other tutor so if we need that position we have it. We are also looking to reduce an elementary teaching position that was budgeted.

She then stated that we do need this adjustment and there are not too many other places to pull from and she believes this an acceptable adjustment. She continued by stating she would continue to watch the class sizes closely with the Superintendent and if we have to add this position back in, we will. The discussion continued around class sizes and Mr. Melillo stated we are trying to keep in line with the guidelines.

Ms. Zukowski asked where are we relative to our 23-24 budget after the LC cuts. Mrs. Vadas state we are there.

She stated we were fortunate enough to have a balance this year.

Mrs. Vadas stated the other concern that she mentioned last month is we have some contractual obligations that came in higher than budgeted for 23-24 school year. Union and non-union salaries went up 3%. Also with BT adjustments the hourly rates increased which was approved by the board along with removing the two levels of step movements which amounted to \$50K, an adjustment for the 3 open positions for BT's of \$30K and an adjustment in pension based on contractual annuity and 401K obligations.

Mrs. Vadas said we were able to identify another pre-purchase which was found in our technology department for equipment in Chromebooks. We have a total of \$181,500 that we can pre-purchase now for Chromebooks and reallocate it towards salaries and pensions in next year's budget. With the board approval she would like to request this transfer which would come from our salaries in our current budget.

Ms. Zukowski asked about technology and how every year we spend a certain amount on Chromebooks and will this impact that level of funding so that we would have another \$181K hole we have to find.

Mrs. Vadas stated she was correct and the LC did add back the \$140K into the technology equipment so it is almost a bit of an offset because that \$140K would have been in the capital non-re-occurring and was put back in but we are taking out \$181K. Yes, it is correct we will have to find that again next year but we have to do this because we have to fund the salaries and pensions.

She stated the remaining transfers for \$98K is for re-allocations to adjust the supply accounts and cover some of the shortfall that we experienced this year.

The total transfer request is \$295,207 and the projected year-end balance is \$77K.

The committee agreed to move this forward to the Board.

Public Participation: None

Adjournment:

Ms. Zukowski made a motion to adjourn meeting. Mrs. Plante seconds the motion. All in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 6:27 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanne Morris

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

Newtown Board of Education
CFF/CIP/Facilities/Finance Sub-Committee Special Meeting Minutes
May 18, 2023
BOE Conference Room

CALL TO ORDER: Mrs. Larkin called the meeting to order 6:08 p.m.

Participants: Jennifer Larkin, Deborra Zukowski, Alison Plante, Tanja Vadas, Chris Melillo, Steve Goodridge, Board of Finance

BUSINESS

Mrs. Larkin made a motion to approve the BOE CFF/CIP minutes of April 17, 2023. Ms. Zukowski moved the motion to approve the minutes of April 17, 2023. Mrs. Plante seconds the motion. All in favor. BOE CFF/CIP minutes of April 17, 2023 approved.

NEW BUSINESS

Facilities Update

Mrs. Vadas presented a summary of the building projects to date. She stated the new Facilities Director would be starting on June 5th.

She began with the Hawley project and that they were still waiting for the switch gear which looks to be at the end of May. She stated we did run into a change order that happened in December. This change order was put through to upgrade the smoke detectors and alarms, strobes and panels. It did go through the project. However, \$28K is slated to be our cost. She stated this expense was unanticipated and has hit the general fund. She stated she was unaware of this as this happened during the previous Facilities Director employment. She stated this was work that was going to be done regardless of the upgraded panels and this was a previous conversation where it was agreed that we would pay for this portion. She stated another project is taking out the lockers in the 21 section and having them repainted which will be done during the summer. She indicated we recently replaced all of the carpet in the front of the classrooms, main office and finished the music floor. The bathroom floors she stated we are waiting for a date to update the boys & girls gang bathroom and faculty bathroom which our guys will do. There is a portion of the playground that will be replaced by the PTA.

In regards to Sandy Hook she stated we did replace the flashing on the cistern in order to protect the tile which we might have to replace at some point. The 3 cameras that were on the front of the building have been replaced and moved as they were going down continuously due to the rain.

For Middle Gate she stated the playground has been ordered and will come in July. She also discussed the back field where we need to pave to have access to the multi-use field which has to be ADA complaint. She has included \$5K for materials which the town will do including the paving during the summer.

She stated we also had to install 2 a/c units due to a medical note – allergies/asthma. The front stairs are cracked and will be repaired in June/July.

For Head O’Meadow we have a CIP project coming up which is the condensing unit which is not in good shape and the school does not have a/c right now. It will need to go through a bond resolution which the town is starting this week and will be completed by the end of June. Ms. Zukowski asked if this was on year 1 of our current CIP and Mrs. Vadas stated yes. She further stated that they are also completing the flooring in the two gang bathrooms.

Mrs. Vadas stated Reed has a couple of issues going on. She stated both of the chiller units malfunctioned and they had Trane come out and was able to get them running. However they will be limping through the remainder of the school year. She obtained a quote for \$240K to rebuild both units. She stated she was not sure if the re-build was the best to do because they are on the CIP but not until 2026-2027. Also these chillers take the old refrigerant which is the R22. She said we did save some refrigerant from an older chiller and not sure if that is enough.

Ms. Zukowski stated the original plan was to remove the refrigerant from the chillers rebuild them and put the refrigerant back in. She thought the cost would be \$120K each.

Mrs. Vadas stated she would have to talk with Trane to see if there would be enough refrigerant reserved to put back in and the rebuilt itself.

Ms. Zukowski asked Mr. Goodridge what he thought about the chillers.

Mr. Goodridge stated it would have to be looked at on the CIP in order to swap something out to get it done sooner while weighing the cost of rebuild vs brand new.

Mrs. Vadas stated she has already talked with the Town Finance Director about this and it will be discussed further.

Mr. Melillo stated Trane came out and put some work in the chillers to get us through the rest of the school year.

Ms. Zukowski thought from the previous Facilities Director that the rebuilding would guarantee 5 years to work

Mrs. Vadas stated she has the quote but she is not sure of any guarantee.

Mrs. Vadas also said another project that is not on a project lists is the courtyard. The area has not been maintained and the trees are over the roofline. She said this is a big job as there is no way to access the brush and work in and out with equipment. She stated the lowest quote she received was \$17K and the highest was \$30K.

Ms. Zukowski thought that Parks & Rec took care of the gardens.

Mrs. Vadas stated they do mow the fields but that is it. We have outside contractors who come in for the landscaping.

Mrs. Vadas stated it is not a safety concern, just visual.

Mrs. Vadas stated the Middle School already is in the works for the paving of the c-wing side of the sidewalks. We replaced 4 doors that the frames were rotting out (kitchen, Maintenance, SpEd, upper C-wing).

She stated all of the chiller units are new and we are waiting for one more unit to be installed and then that project will be complete.

For the High School she stated we have the gym floor of sanding and refinish going on for the month of July. The gym will be closed down as they finish that floor.

Mrs. Plante asked if we had gotten quotes for that.

Mrs. Vadas stated the former Facilities Director went through the state contract.

Mrs. Plante asked what the total cost was for the floor

Mrs. Vadas stated it was \$65K including the logo.

She stated we also replace some security doors as the sensors were malfunctioning and the doors would unlock whenever someone walked by them.

She stated there was another issue at the high school with the pool which is in bad shape. She stated we use to drain it and paint it every 5 years and now the paint is coming off and the lines are fading.

Mr. Melillo stated there are too many layers of paint and we can't keep adding.

Mrs. Vadas stated we had several quotes which came in. She stated we had 1 coat of acrylic come in at \$9,500 and quotes up to \$68K for sandblasting. The ideal would be two coats of acrylic for \$12K. Mrs. Vadas stated this is not on the project list but is something to think about.

Mr. Goodridge asked what the pool is made out of.

Mrs. Vadas thought concrete and tile and Mr. Goodridge stated it's probably gahnite.

Mrs. Vadas stated the other project at the HS is the B-wing a/c units which were approved through the referendum. She stated she would run that project through the new Facilities Director when he starts.

She also stated we have a portion at the warehouse where our supplies are kept and park and rec has the other part. The park and rec has fertilizer and equipment on their portion and one of our employees is getting the effects of the smoke and toxic odors of the fertilizer and so we are looking at some partitioned doors. We received one quote for 2 doors at \$8,900.

Mrs. Zukowski asked about the request for CIP which will be due by August or so and she would like for the new Facilities Director to jump in and begin this process.

Mrs. Zukowski asked about the projects listed and talked about if they are coming out of this year's budget.

Mrs Vadas stated it's a combination.

Mr. Melillo asked the question is there anything we need to prepare for.

Mrs. Vadas stated areas of concern are the two chillers, the reed courtyard and the HS pool that are not budgeted.

Mr. Melillo stated the Reed Courtyard is not a need to and not a safety hazard but an eyesore.

The longer we put it off the more expensive it will be. He said the chillers are on our radar and we knew it but the problem relates to Reed is not built for when the a/c goes down there is no way to get fresh air into some areas and it becomes hot quick. Luckily we got them running to go through the end of the school year.

23-24 Budget Adjustments (Reductions)

Mrs. Vadas walked the committee through the attached spreadsheet which relates to the 23-24 budget reductions and transfer requests.

She stated items we were able to identify and pull out of next year's budget that we can pre-purchase which includes textbooks, classroom supplies, equipment and curriculum services.

23-24 Budget Requirements/Concerns

She stated there are a few concerns she has for next year's budget. One area was a settlement with the Educational Personnel and Custodians Unions. She stated the two unions increases totaled about \$60K above what we budgeted. Another area of concern is the non-union salary adjustments from the Behavioral Therapists.

Mr. Melillo stated we are looking at possibly raising the salaries to entice those positions to bring more people in so that we are not forced to pay through a third party which is way higher.

Mrs. Vadas stated by doing this we are looking at another \$140K. We are locked into the \$60K for the two unions.

Mrs. Plante then stated that we are looking at an additional \$200K we will need for the 23-24 budget.

Mrs. Vadas stated yes and we have some time and she will continue to work with the Superintendent on this.

Mrs. Vadas stated we were looking to expand the reading program. The Assistant Superintendent was able to find a contract that included the program up to K-5 for a three year contract vs. just the unfunded mandate of the K-3 program. So the total program is now at \$350K. She stated the items that would be removed from the 23-24 budget included the K-3 reading program, IReady, IXL, Lexia, Fun Hub and Learning A-Z for a total of \$395,915 reduction. She also stated she was able to reduce another \$48,350 from classroom and technology by cutting a technology position, Decodables which is part of the reading program, and contracted services.

She is requesting a transfer request of \$491,316 to cover the purchase of the items removed from the 23-24 budget. She stated the \$100K increase was mainly due to the K-5 reading program.

The Total budget cut from the 23-24 budget is at \$495,076. There is still an additional amount of \$54,924 required to meet the \$550K reduction by the Legislative Council.

22-23 EOY Balance and Transfers

She stated she is requesting transfers of \$418,764 to adjust accounts and re-alignments which includes staff turnover, salaries, textbooks, SpEd contingency, and custodial equipment. A lot of these areas included are normal actions nearing the end of the school year.

Ms. Zukowski asked the question about the high school music travel being moved to the sport travel and is the HS music travel just coming in less than expected.

Mrs. Vadas stated that was correct.

Mrs. Plante asked if we were paying the full \$350K for the reading program up front so we would not have any additional spend.

Mrs. Vadas stated that was correct.

She finished with stating that the total transfer request is \$910,080.

22-23 Financials

Mrs. Vadas stated she did include the total transfer of \$491,316 which accounts for the 23-24 budget reduction. This is why the projected balance is showing a large decrease. Last month we had a balance of \$578K and that balance has decrease -\$446K and now shows a balance of \$132,354.

Mrs. Plante stated this financial statement is up to date and reflected with the transfers discussed. Mrs. Vadas stated the total dollars in transfers is in there but the actual transfers have not taken place yet.

Mrs. Vadas did say that it still has to go through board approval.

Legal Fees

She talked about the legal fees and is concerned that it could be \$80K over budget. We have different areas identified and are keeping track of our spending.

Mrs. Plante asked what we budgeted.

Mrs. Vadas stated \$109K.

NHS Insurance Claim Summary

She stated the insurance claim has been completed. The total flood cost was over \$104K. Our cost was \$25K.

Excess Cost Grant (now at 73.71%)

She stated the budget was finally approved by the state but it did not come in at 85%. She said Newtown was allotted 73.71% and that is where we will probably stay for next year and it is over what we budgeted which was at 70%.

Ms. Zukowski asked how the negotiations were going for regional special education.

Mr. Melillo stated we are close to having an agreement. It does not impact us as far as negotiation goes as we are the only district that uses EdAdvance for transportation. Other districts have concessions as they have other providers. Currently we have an agreement that EdAdvance is having looked at by their attorneys.

Ms. Zukowski stated that agreement will cost us less but we will get back less from the Excess Cost Grant.

Mr. Melillo stated we often would have to pay a third party when EdAdvance can't do a run. So this will allow them to be more consistent because they will have more drivers to make this happen. He stated he can't say that every run will be cheaper because you are working in a consortium but it should be cheaper to run because the totality of the runs will come in at a lower cost.

Mrs. Vadas stated the last concern is that she was recently informed that they would need more money for the BT contracted services which is another \$35K which is not included in this statement.

Virtual Net Metering

Mrs. Vadas stated they are trying to get Middle Gate on the virtual net metering but it is a different program. Hopefully next year.

Next year they will be issuing checks for credits.

She stated next year we will not see those surpluses as this year as she budgeted higher for those credits.

Ms. Zukowski stated the bottom line is we need about \$200K for basic salary, \$35K for the Behavior Therapist, and then we have the facilities unbudgeted issues that needs to be looked at so this is over and above what was budgeted for this year and next year.

Mrs. Vadas stated that was correct.

Activity Account Review

Mrs. Vadas handed out a balance sheet for each school regarding the school activity accounts. She stated it is standard procedure to have the Board review these accounts.

The discussion was around the large current balance as of March 2023 with the high school activity account and how we can utilize this money to benefit families and students.

Mrs. Vadas agreed with the committee to review the accounts within the activity fund account and speak with principals and advisors and get back with the subcommittee.

Chartwells Contract Renewal

Mrs. Vadas stated that there is a food service amendment which will go to the board for renewal of our food service contract for another year. She stated the contract remains the same and the amendment includes any changes for the 2023-2024 school year. She stated the only change we have which is in the original contract is that they can increase their administrative and management fees based on the current CPI (Cost Per Index). This year the CPI was capped at 8.2% and we negotiated with Chartwells for a 7.5%. As long as the Board approves the amendment we can move forward with another year. This has no impact on our budget.

Public Participation: None

Adjournment:

Ms. Zukowski made a motion to adjourn meeting. Mrs. Plante seconds the motion. All in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanne Morris

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