

Call to Order

Chair Moffitt called the meeting to order at 7:02p.m and initiated roll call. Through video conferencing mode, present were Chairperson Eugenie Moffitt-Y, Paul Russo-Y, Andrew Betts-Y, Linn Anderson-Y, Mary Ellen Logee-Y, John Barry-Y, Paul Monticciolo-Y, Bojay Taylor-Y and Spiro Christopoulos (arrived late.) Also present were School Superintendent Berman, and School Committee members Blumstein and Scully, Town Manager, Donna Walsh, Finance Director, and Patrick Lawlor, Assistant Town Manager. The meeting was videotaped and live cablecast.

FY2020 and FY2021 School Budget – Dr. Berman, Mr. Blumstein and Ms. Scully

Mr. Blumstein reviewed the budget process pre- (3.86% increase) and post-COVID-19 (2.92% increase), and how the revenue shortfall would be addressed by the Town Manager’s request for a reduction of \$807K (see attached powerpoint presentation.) The School Committee will meet on Thursday, May 28 on Article 4 as well as voting on Articles 5, 22 and 24. The public hearing on the budget originally scheduled for mid-March will now be held on June 4th, at the conclusion of which a vote will be taken by the School Committee.

Dr. Berman then reviewed the operating budget planning for FY21 from an original \$89,246,700 less the \$806,788 for a total of \$88,439,912 (see attached powerpoint presentation.) He also reviewed the additional costs associated (approx. \$980K) with the safe precautions for reopening and daily operation of schools, including better software tools for continued remoting learning and special education. Some relief funding is expected from the federal CARES Act (\$158K allocation) and circuit breaker funds (total of approx. \$340K.) Other areas are being at looked at in terms of reduction in athletics and professional development. Mr. Blumstein emphasized the need to maintain or even add staff to accommodate potential changes to alternative learning. Collective bargaining negotiations have begun and decreased revenues due to Covid-19 will be a key component in addressing salaries Also, circuit breaker funds across districts may well be compromised.

Capital budget planning was also reviewed (see attached powerpoint presentation.) He noted that SCH1 and 2 had been decreased by 59.6% of original and SCH5 46.2% of original. While he acknowledged that both the town and school had significant reductions in capital projects, he stated that the risk of deferring maintenance on aging schools remained of concern. Also discussed was the possibility of taking advantage of historic low rates of borrowing. However, the Town Manager noted its negative impact of debt service in future years, and the goal of having a sustainable budget year over year, especially at this uncertain time. Mr. Blumstein noted there remain many unknowns in what the school year will look like in the fall, and the possibility of higher costs.

Discussion ensued including the following highlights:

- a) The projects in SCH5 were reviewed and prioritized as to their urgency of repair.
- b) Managing personnel costs including notification of retirement incentives and the ability to forecast replacement hiring at significantly lower salary scales.
- c) Estimating COVID-19 related expenses at \$150-200K, particularly in the purchase of disinfecting machines, software upgrades and licenses for SPED-related services.
- d) CARES Act stipulation of reimbursable expenses.

- e) Breakdown of \$980K estimated amount to cover alternate staggered schedules to accommodate reduced number of students in the building at the same time, the integration of a remote learning management system, upgrade of software to accommodate more efficient learning schedule. Team is in place to examine these issues.
- f) Due to compromise of circuit breaker funds, SPED costs will need to be absorbed in budget for out-of-district placement as well as transportation.
- g) Possibility of remote learning on snow days and stability of school calendar.

Vote on Warrant Articles

Article 7 – Consent Votes on Financial Articles

At the suggestion of Ms. Walsh and the unavailability of figures at this time, the committee will make its recommendation at Town Meeting.

Article 14 – School Department Revolving Fund

Following discussion, and upon motion duly made by Ms. Anderson and seconded by Mr. Barry, it was unanimously voted to recommend approval of the above article with a revolving fund limit of \$50K. Chair Eugenie Moffitt-Y, Paul Russo-Y, Andrew Betts-Y, Linn Anderson-Y, Mary Ellen Logee-Y, John Barry-Y, Paul Monticciolo-Y, Bojay Taylor-Y and Spiro Christopoulos-Y. Motion passed 9-0.

Article 4 – FY2021 Budget

Following discussion, and upon motion duly made by Ms. Anderson and seconded by Mr. Barry, it was unanimously voted to recommend approval of the above article in the revised amount of \$196,220,326. Chair Eugenie Moffitt-Y, Paul Russo-Y, Andrew Betts-Y, Linn Anderson-Y, Mary Ellen Logee-Y, John Barry-Y, Paul Monticciolo-Y, Bojay Taylor-Y and Spiro Christopoulos-Y. Motion passed 9-0.

Article 5 – FY2021 Capital Fund Project

Following discussion and upon motion duly made by Ms. Anderson and seconded by Mr. Barry, it was unanimously voted to recommend approval of the above article in the revised amount of \$805,108 comprised of two pieces, the first in the sum of \$211,108 to be appropriated immediately and the second in the sum of \$594K authorized but delayed and deferred until January 1, 2021. Chair Eugenie Moffitt-Y, Paul Russo-Y, Andrew Betts-Y, Linn Anderson-Y, Mary Ellen Logee-Y, John Barry-Y, Paul Monticciolo-Y, Bojay Taylor-Y and Spiro Christopoulos-Y. Motion passed 9-0.

Article 22 – Capital Projects Fund – General Fund Borrowing

Following discussion, and upon motion duly made by Ms. Anderson and seconded by Mr. Barry, it was unanimously voted to recommend approval of the above article in the revised amount of \$6,592,000. Chair Eugenie Moffitt-Y, Paul Russo-Y, Andrew Betts-Y, Linn Anderson-Y, Mary Ellen Logee-Y, John Barry-Y, Paul Monticciolo-Y, Bojay Taylor-Y and Spiro Christopoulos-Y. Motion passed 9-0.

Article 24 – Capital Projects Fund – Free Cash

Following discussion, and upon motion duly made by Ms. Anderson and seconded by Mr. Barry, it was unanimously voted to recommend approval of the above article in the revised amount of \$3,460,000. Chair Eugenie Moffitt-Y, Paul Russo-Y, Andrew Betts-Y, Linn Anderson-Y, Mary Ellen Logee-Y, John Barry-Y, Paul Monticciolo-Y, Bojay Taylor-Y and Spiro Christopoulos-Y. Motion passed 9-0.

The Town Manager assured the committee that the above capital fund articles will be revisited in light of the financial situation at the time of a special fall town meeting.

Finance Report and Letter

Ms. Anderson reviewed the progress of the report and letter. Discussion ensued on the various aspects of review and completion of content and the members assigned to the task. She asked that the date of the first draft due at the printer be extended to Friday, May 28th. Ms. Barraford will contact Flagship Press with that request. Discussion also ensued on the chartered timeline for delivery of the report to residents.

Following discussion, and upon motion duly made by Mr. Barry and seconded by Mr. Christopoulos, it was unanimously voted to approve Ms. Anderson's draft of the transmittal letter in substance. Chair Eugenie (Janie) Moffitt-Y, Linn Anderson-Y, Paul Russo-Y, Andrew Betts-Y, Mary Ellen Logee-Y, John Barry-Y, Bojay Taylor-Y, Spiro Christopoulos-Y and Paul Monticciolo-Y. Motion passed 9-0.

Next Meetings

Wednesday, June 3 @ 7:00PM (tentative)

Wednesday, June 10 @ 7:00PM

Adjournment

Upon motion duly made by Ms. Anderson and seconded by Mr. Barry, it was unanimously voted approve to adjourn. Chair Eugenie (Janie) Moffitt-Y, Linn Anderson-Y, Paul Russo-Y, Andrew Betts-Y, Mary Ellen Logee-Y, John Barry-Y, Bojay Taylor-Y, Spiro Christopoulos-Y and Paul Monticciolo-Y. Motion passed 9-0. The meeting adjourned at 8:50PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Martin Barraford
Recording Secretary

Attachments:

School Department Revised Budget Projections