

Newtown Public Schools
CFF Sub-Committee Meeting Minutes
May 16, 2024, 6:00 PM
BOE Conference Room

PRESENT: Shannon Tomai, Alison Plante, Brian Leonardi, Christopher Melillo, Tanja Gouveia, John Barlow, Steve Goodridge, Board of Finance, Jill Soderholm, Legislative Council

CALL TO ORDER: Mrs. Tomai Called the meeting to order at 6:08 pm.

BUSINESS: Approval of BOE CFF minutes of April 23, 2024. Mrs. Plante made a motion to approve the minutes of April 23, 2024. Mrs. Tomai seconds the motion. All in favor. Motion passes.

NEW BUSINESS:

Facilities Update

Mr. Barlow stated the Reed school basketball hoops purchased by the PTA are installed. Also with Reed school, we always paid a contractor to mow the courtyards at MG, Reed and front flower bed at SHS. We have now pre-purchased a few pieces of machinery and therefore we have reduced costs and custodial staff will mow these areas. The tractor and two weed whacker's cost us \$2,800 vs the contract costs just for Reed was \$8K. We will keep the equipment in the courtyard with covers under an overhang for protection and in winter we will move the equipment to the maintenance shop.

Mr. Barlow stated he has a couple of contractors for Middle Gate area in the back. We don't have any quotes yet but we have a scope of work of what needs to get done to establish some grass. One problem is that the area has been trampled so much and compacted so the soil needs to be aerated and opened up in order to get grass to grow. We are looking at least a tri-axle load of top soil and then looking at an option of putting turf grass on top. The larger rolls of 4x50 would work best to keep everything together. Our custodial staff will have to keep kids off for the summer and we would have to do a lot of watering so that it establishes itself. If all works out the kids will have a place to play with grass.

Mrs. Plante asked if this would be pricey. Mr. Barlow stated he was not sure and was looking to get numbers back to see what he could do. Mrs. Plante stated the PTA was willing to kick in about \$10K. Mrs. Plante stated this would be huge for the school.

Mr. Leonardi asked if this was the best option in place of seeding or hydra-seeding.

Mr. Barlow stated that is an option but he wants to see what the numbers come back at for the turf grass on top.

Mr. Barlow stated right now is the perfect time to grow grass and if we try to do during the summer it will need constant watering so we are trying to get the best option established for the fall.

Mr. Barlow stated the RTU jobs for the High School is 100% complete and that includes the wiring for the BMS system. Hawley School is 100% complete and signed off on the letter for the \$85K

reimbursement from Eversource. They are coming to do inspection soon and they will issue us a check. That check will go back to the town because that money came from that project.

Mr. Barlow stated we received \$3.5M back from the HVAC grant from the State of CT. He stated he would plan to have some meetings with First Selectman and BOF to possibly re-purpose that money back into continuing the RTU work, the replacement work and air handler work. He said there are two options; they could potentially give the money back to the BOE for us to continue that or, they can pay down their bonds. He stated it is worth the ask.

He further said the 20th is the official Grant announcement and press release.

Mr. Barlow talked about Head O'Meadow and that there was a slight set back issue with one of the dx coils where they were not able to seal the leaks. They sent an option on how they will potentially make that repair with a slight increase in cost of \$5K but there is plenty of money left in the project from the CIP. He stated he expects in the next two weeks the air conditioning will be on at Head O'Meadow.

He went on to discuss NHS and with all of the rain lately he was happy to say they have not had any roof leaks but that is indicative of a lack of huge temp fluctuations. Although we are in great shape right now it is possible that when we get to the fall these problems could come up again.

We did have some issues with the chiller on the roof of the HS. It was installed on the roof in 2013. Over the course of years it has not received the care and proper maintenance and unfortunately they have had nothing but problems. It has only operated in its full 400 ton capacity for about 2 years and now mainly runs on about half of capacity for the last 5-7 years. He stated it is a dying unit so if he can possibly reutilize some of that \$3.5M it would be a great opportunity to look at what we could do with that. He stated he would never put a water cooler unit back on the roof. We would either go to an air cooler chiller or switch to a Intellapac unit.

Mrs. Tomai stated with dealing in performance guarantees for equipment that is expensive, if we put in an expected useful life as a guarantee it can sometime protect us from the defects that are happening.

Mr. Barlow stated he had a kickoff meeting for the Bureau Veratas facility study and has a timeline. He stated the drafts would come in for all schools on the first of August. They would give a month for review and then all finals would be due August 30th. Middle Gate was the Pilot school picked to start on June 10th. Mr. Barlow stated we also contracted with a company called FMX which would be replacing School Dude. SchoolDude was used for generating work orders. FMX will take over and is in our contracted services and is about an annual \$1K savings from SchoolDude. FMX is for work orders, which we can track and know where are repairs are. FXM integrates with Veratas so all of the data will get dumped into FMX including all of the bar codes so when we do work orders we can work off of the bar codes and will become very usable. FMX also does work orders, preventative maintenance, and school facility scheduling.

Financial Report and Transfers

Ms. Gouveia presented the financial report. She stated we have a \$1.9M budget adjustment. She then talked about the sequence of determining transfers and budget cuts. First she said w look at our current

balance and we try to identify some areas we can pre-purchase out of next year's budget and use our current year funding. We have worked with principals and administration to go through all accounts and figure what balances we can use for transfer. Our summary sheet identified over \$165K over the prior month to bring into the current budget that we can use for pre-purchasing. The budget is showing an expected year-end balance of \$567,162 right now.

For our sub accounts she stated there was not too much change in salary accounts. Anticipated obligations were lowered by positions that will not be filled such as paras, a teacher position, home bound tutors and we released some funding in the certified staff of \$19K. In non-certified staff we released about \$45K. We adjusted mostly to anticipated obligations.

In the benefits accounts we did a re-adjust for Fica and Medicare and had to include an additional \$40K based on a forecast budget that was built last year.

Our pension account was in a negative last month with our 401A plan, and as new employees come on they are not eligible for our defined benefits so they have to sign up for the defined contribution which happens every year. It is hard to budget because we base it on employees that we have.

Unemployment costs were very high last month and estimated to be a negative of -\$34K with a possible addition of another -\$10K.

In professional services we are going to go over in our legal account about \$15K. We also have the two SLP's which is driving the professional services to a negative due to 2 teachers out on leave which we had to bring in a service for specialized teaching.

Purchase Property Services is looking pretty good. Bldg & grounds emergency repair account stays status quo and we could see a very small deficit at the end of the year. Ms. Gouveia stated this may be the first time we might not go over budget.

Other purchase services: contracted services we added the superintendent search for \$12K. We also had to add an additional encumbrance for BT services as we discussed in previous meetings. The conversation continued around BT services, labor shortage and what the needs are for these students.

For contracted services this year, we have the highest negative student lunch balance. By contract and state statute we have to provide for that. We have to budget \$7K each year. This year the balance is at \$23K.

Mr. Melillo stated he believes parents are aware.

Ms. Gouveia stated we are sending out weekly emails to parents and we will use school messenger more next year. She also stated she is working with principals and guidance to get the balances down. She stated she was just informed that the reduced lunches will be free again next year and we will work on getting that communication out to the district.

Mrs. Tomai left the meeting at 6:50pm

Transportation is still showing a negative of \$70K due to the two displaced students which is ongoing through the end of the school year.

Out of district tuition is holding steady.

Supplies is showing a really good balance of \$330K. The majority coming from electricity accounts with virtual net meeting. Propane and Natural gas are seeing a surplus due to the mild winter.

In the other equipment account we did go through all of the accounts and because we have such a large budget adjustment we did release \$75K in equipment which was set aside in our security budget. We were holding this money for radio upgrades. We had a quote from Norcom for \$85K which we were going to put through this year. We are now able to push this off to next year so that money will go back into the general fund for pre-purchase.

She then presented a schedule of transfers she is requesting which lists pre-purchases for next year's budget. She stated we are looking to pre-purchase out of the curriculum budget a reading 6-8 program, Spanish textbooks, classroom companion library for K-5, and psych books. This would reduce next year's budget by \$523K. The actual cost is going to be \$366,358. She would like to request a transfer from the supply accounts.

The second request is from our equipment line which is for technology which has about \$75K of equipment and also the cafeteria tables for the Middle School. The total of \$453,616. Sitting at the balance of \$567K it looks like we can fit all of these pre-purchases in our current year budget.

Mrs. Plante stated the first reduction from the Board of Finance was about \$528,109 so this pre-purchasing takes care of these reductions. She then stated the work we do next week will be to figure out how to find the \$1.4M reduction.

Transportation Update

Ms. Gouveia stated we have drivers in training and getting licenses. We had a meeting with All-Star to talk about SpEd ESY that will be coming up. She said that transportation is going well. The Sports budget is looking okay. We have spent 85% of the sports activity fund. We set aside about \$140K in general fund for athletic transportation. When that is depleted we then go to the activity fund which comes from pay-to-pay and ticket sales. So we have only spent 85% of that.

Chartwell's Contract Renewal (Food Service Provider)

We have 5 yr contract with chartwells and every year we have to renew. Each year it has to be approved by the State.

Mr. Barlow left the meeting at 7:10pm

The Only change we had in this renewal was the management and admin fees which they are allowed to increase up to 4.6% inflation rate given by the state. She stated we agreed on a 4.2% rate. All other language in the contract remains the same.

She stated Chartwells has done a great job with a lot of programs that they have rolled out. The state has approved our renewal so we will take it to the board for final approval.

She also mentioned that Sandy Hook school would be starting a Recycling program next year.

Mr. Melillo stated we applied and received a Grant for \$5K for recycling. He stated we will begin a program at SHS where we take food waste and bring it for compost. It will lower our cost for hauling as we pay by the tonnage. We will teach the students on how to be green. He stated it's a program that he has alot of knowledge on as he implemented it to one school district and it grew to other schools within that district. He said, besides being a benefit to the community and teaching the students about recycling it actually saves money. The town will also benefit from this.

School Activity Account Balance Review

Ms. Gouveia presented the current balances as of March 2024 for each school activity account. She stated that last year we contemplated changing the timing of presenting to the board once the school year ended to capture final balances. The accounts are presented to the Board yearly which are approved by the Board to allow these accounts to exist at each school.

Ms. Gouveia talked about the different accounts within the High School activity account. She mentioned talking with principals in the near future about spend down plans as some of the accounts can be used for students within the classroom.

Mrs. Plante stated these accounts exist outside of our regular budget and these accounts do not expire. Ms. Gouveia agreed.

Mrs. Plante moved to discuss this at the end of August for the Board to approve.

Superintendent's Update

Mr. Melillo stated everyone in the Central Office was working hard on determining budget cuts and making recommendations that will be brought to the Board. He stated we would Keep cuts away from students as much as possible. We have a good plan in working with the Board and coming to a consensus with a mind-set that decisions are for the students.

He stated the \$3.5M that we obtained through our grant writer with the town is part of a greater mind set with working together as a municipality and that the Board of Education is not a separate entity and that the work that we do helps all. We have approached the town about having the grant writer split between the two entities because she does write grants for the town also. He has spoken with the First Selectman to see if that is something that could happen and hopefully we can look at that position and others down the road where we can regionalize within our own communities and work together.

Mrs. Plante stated she thought that makes a lot of sense and there has been a push to explore those kind of shared services across the district and town in the past.

He also stated he was participating in the dunk tank at MG school where people will be lining up to take their shots!

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION None

ADJOURNMENT: Mrs. Plante made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Leonardi seconds the motion. All in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 7:27pm

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanne Morris

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

Newtown Board of Education
CFF Sub-Committee Minutes
April 23, 2024, 6:00 PM
BOE Conference Room

PRESENT: Shannon Tomai, Alison Plante, Brian Leonardi, Christopher Melillo, Tanja Gouveia (Vadas), John Barlow, Steve Goodridge, Board of Finance, Jill Soderholm, Legislative Council

CALL TO ORDER: Mrs. Plante called the meeting to order at 6:04 pm.

BUSINESS: Approval of BOE CFF minutes of March 19, 2024. Mrs. Plante tabled the motion to the end of the meeting due to a Board member arriving late.

NEW BUSINESS:

Financial Report and Transfers

Ms. Gouveia presented the March financial report. We have a new projected balance of \$401,759 which is a slight increase from last month by \$35,638. She stated the majority of changes came from Other Purchased Services and Supplies.

She stated with certified staff there was not much in change with a \$9,100 difference from last month. With non-certified staff we had a decrease in the balance of -\$43,390 with the majority of that coming from our custodial maintenance staff and special education special services staff. We adjusted for a new hire at HOM. We also adjusted for custodial overtime which has been high in this area. She stated we have had some custodians out on leave and we recently hired a custodial sub at the Middle school. This sub is here to try and mitigate or offset some of the overtime.

Mr. Barlow stated we currently have two custodians out on workman's comp for most of the year. The sub gives us more cleaning hours at a slightly less price as we are not paying for overtime for the hours the sub works. Contractually custodians are given 3 hours of time and a half of overtime to make up for the absence of a person.

Ms. Gouveia stated the account is running in the red by about \$20K.

Mr. Leonardi asked for a brief description and understanding of the financial report information which Ms. Gouveia provided.

Ms. Gouveia stated the non-certified staff account budget driver is still our Paraeducators. We currently have a \$152K balance. She stated we are down to about 10 positions that still need to be filled.

Mr. Leonardi asked about budget analysis at year end. Ms. Gouveia explained the year end process.

Ms. Gouveia stated employee benefits are still seeing a deficit of -\$34K due to unemployment costs which came in higher than projected.

Professional services which includes our SLP services reflects two teachers that are out so we have had to contract outside services to cover for those teachers which are projected to be out for the end of the year.

In Purchase property services we have a \$20K balance in bldg & grounds which has emerged due to the Director of Facilities being able to collapse some of these services and do some of the work in house. Equipment repairs now shows a new negative balance that could wash out in April.

Ms. Gouveia stated within Other Purchase Services she talked about the following sub accounts. In contracted services we had to encumber an additional \$35K for our Behavioral Techs due to 4-5 unfilled positions which are required by students IEP, therefore, we have to bring these positions in from an outside service. As a year to date update, this year we have spent \$140K using grant dollars and \$120K from the general fund.

Mrs. Plante asked how it compares to last year and Ms. Gouveia stated last year we spent about \$360K.

Mrs. Tomai joined the meeting at 6:20pm.

In transportation services which currently have a deficit of -\$85K due to two families displaced and a student who was outplaced.

Insurance-Property & Liability is showing a savings of \$10K. She stated kudos goes to our Director of Technology who has been locking down on some of our cyber security protocols and putting new security processes into place.

Mr. Leonardi asked for an explanation of what is out-of-district tuition.

Ms. Gouveia stated Tuition - out-of-district is the cost for all of our students who are outplaced to places that have services that are not provided in Newtown. This is a big driver in our budget and is usually a deficit during this time of year. This budget is over \$4M. This includes the excess cost grant which is a state grant that provides some funding. It's a reimbursement of 4.5 times the number of per pupil expenditure. The last projection update from the state on 3/1/24 came in at 66.71% reimbursement. We have lost from the original grant projection of about \$77K based on the state not being able to fund this.

The discussion continued regarding the excess cost grant and types of services and programs that are needed for students.

Ms. Gouveia continued with the financial report and talked about the supply account. She stated there are some sizable balances in this account. In plant supplies, our Director of Facilities was able to find some new vendors with lower costs which then enabled us to close out some purchase orders that were put in place earlier this year.

In the electric account the virtual net metering continues to provide us credits from energy off of the grid with a projected balance of \$120K. She stated next year we may not see a balance.

Mr. Leonardi asked if we shop for energy electric providers. Ms. Gouveia stated yes and is in-house.

In the sub-object of fuel for vehicles we received our excise tax credit which is a federal credit for use of alternative fuel for buses. The credit came in at \$76,833 which was projected.

Ms. Gouveia stated there was nothing to report in property or miscellaneous.

Transportation Update

Ms. Gouveia stated there was nothing much to report and everything was running smoothly. She stated we have spares and drivers and we will be meeting with All-Star to talk about summer routes with needs and expectations.

She stated athletic transportation is doing great. She said as of last year at this time we had run 292 trips and this year we have done 291 runs. All-Star has done 75% of the trips this year vs last year when they only ran 42% of the athletic trips. There is a difference in savings of \$40K.

Mrs. Tomai asked if the athletic trips were included in what we are already paying them.

Ms. Gouveia stated it is not included in the main contract but is included in the sports budget. The costs are cheaper than hiring out.

Mrs. Plante asked about the gap between All-Star providing 75% of the athletic runs vs the 100% of all the athletic runs.

Ms. Gouveia stated it had to do with staffing in that earlier in the fall school year All-Star was not fully staffed.

Mr. Leonardi asked about our agreement and service levels.

Ms. Gouveia talked about certain clauses that are stated in the contract.

Facilities Update

Mr. Barlow did a recap. He stated the NMS boiler was installed into the bldg last week and was hooked up and running. The portable boiler will be removed. There are still issues that need to be addressed and the issues will come to light with the facility study.

Mrs. Plante asked after the warranty payment how much did the temp boiler cost us

Mr. Barlow stated two months of payments. Month #1 was \$15K and month #2 was \$9,800.

Mrs. Plante asked if that included the fuel. Mr. Barlow stated no that was separate. Ms. Gouveia stated that she does not know the final cost right now as it comes from the town in the quarterly report.

Mrs. Plante stated the cost of the temp boiler/oil was covered by insurance/warranty. Mr. Barlow stated the only thing covered under insurance was the replacement of the entire boiler which was \$63K for the piece of equipment. Once the rep comes out to do the official inspection and an official start up then they will start the process of issuing a check back to us.

Mr. Leonardi asked about the new equipment and if it is covered by a new warranty. Mr. Barlow stated yes.

Mr. Barlow stated at HOM new condensers were put on the roof and that there is enough money left in the project. He met with the Director of Finance with the Town and there was enough money in the project to do some leak work to determine where the leaks were in the system and the repairs for those leaks are all being funded out of the project and will still leave a balance in the project of over \$100K.

Mr. Barlow stated the RTU's at Hawley were installed. They are currently wired and running. There is some work that has to happen from the building automation company to make the heat pumps the primary source of

heat. He stated he signed all of the LOA's with the power company for \$85K reimbursement. That money came out of the contingency fund for the Hawley school which will leave about \$150K balance. That project was quoted at \$800K and we did it for \$150K.

Mrs. Tomai stated that Mr. Barlow was full of a lot of good news tonight.

Mr. Barlow stated the air handling units for NHS were installed. He said the heating system is back on. There were some control issues due to updating the BMS system and everything is up and running.

He talked about the greenhouse at the NHS. The seed system is all completed. They were able to locate and pull all of the network cables up to the greenhouse. The seed computer will be networked and the new generator will be installed soon.

Mr. Barlow talked about the maintenance dept working at the high school in the weight room off the boys locker room. They relocated some of the squat racks and made it a more usable space and installed a new floor.

The roof at the high school is holding it's own. They found two small splits in the b-wing roof which they took care of right away. They also found another split on the c-wing roof. They are working to stay ahead of these issues.

Mr. Barlow stated that the Park & Rec Dept. went out for a bid on lawn maintenance. What was always an extra in the bid was the courtyard at Middle Gate and Reed and the garden in front of Sandy Hook school. These extras were put into the bid as an add alternate and the price came back at \$24,600. It is way more money than we are currently spending. Mr. Barlow stated to Park & Rec that he did not want these areas included in the bid and that he would go out on his own and try and get a better price. Mr. Barlow stated he would be putting an RFP out.

He stated we are out to RFP for the Reed lights on the stage and the Reed Chiller.

Mr. Barlow stated our issues with cooling will be the Middle School and Middle Gate.

Mrs. Plante asked about the landscaping in the Reed courtyard and if we have to air lift equipment in there to clean out the area. Mr. Barlow stated that is a different project which we put in the projects budget and the LC/BOF took those out and put them into capital non-occurring as a project moving forward provided that everything gets approved and voted for. This summer we would bring a crane in to move some equipment into the courtyard to make the area more manageable.

Mr. Barlow mentioned about the Sandy Hook school and that the garden was originally set up to be an aquatic garden and there is a cistern tank sitting there for that purpose that is not in use. He stated this topic should be up for discussion.

Middle Gate Recess Field

Mrs. Plante stated she received an email regarding the recess field at middle gate school with the field being rocky.

Mr. Barlow stated he needs to talk with the principal as there is a beautiful field up top but they cannot use that field due to it being unsupervised. In order to get the field fixed it would have to be shut down and the summertime is not the best time to grow grass due to the heat. He stated if they could move the kids to the top field he could probably get something done to the rocky field and work with the PTA on this.

Mrs. Plante is concerned over a safety issue of this field with the students playing on it. She stated it is a worth-while investment.

Mr. Barlow stated he would have a deeper conversation with the principal regarding this and see if some sort of plan can happen.

Superintendent's Update:

Mr. Melillo stated he would give an update at the full Board meeting.

BUSINESS: Mrs. Tomai made a motion to approve the minutes of March 19, 2024. Mrs. Plante seconds the motion. All in favor. Motion passes to approve the CFF minutes of March 19, 2024.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: None

ADJOURNMENT:

Mrs, Tomai made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Mrs. Plante seconds the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 6:55pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanne Morris

THESE ARE DRAFT MINUTES AND ARE SUBJECT TO THE APPROVAL OF THE BOE CFF SUB
COMITTEE.