

Newtown Public Schools
CFF Sub-Committee Meeting Minutes
September 17, 2024, 6:00 PM
BOE Conference Room

PRESENT: Shannon Tomai, Alison Plante, Tanja Gouveia, Anne Uberti, John Barlow, Steve Goodridge, Board of Finance

CALL TO ORDER: Mrs. Tomai called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm.

BUSINESS: Mrs. Plante made a motion to approval the BOE CFF Sub Committee minutes of September 3, 2024. Mrs. Tomai seconds the motion to approve the minutes of September 3, 2024. All in favor. Motion passes.

NEW BUSINESS
Financial Report and Transfers

Ms. Gouveia stated there are no transfers for the month of August. She stated there has not been any changes since the last finance report. We did included some additional tuition income that gets applied directly to expenses from Prek and the NCP program (Newtown Community Partnership). She stated there are 3 students that come here from out of district and they pay a full tuition along with billable hours for job coaches who are with those students. This revenue goes in to directly offset those expenses in their categories. The pre-school revenue goes towards the teacher salaries.

Ms. Gouveia talked about the local tuition revenue we get and how that goes back to the town. Mrs. Tomai stated it seems inconsistent with the concept of charging tuition and turning it over to the town.

Ms. Gouveia stated as a Board of Education we are not supposed to take in revenue.

Mrs. Tomai stated it is the board who is paying to educate the students.

Mrs. Uberti asked how much it was.

Mrs. Gouveia stated about \$35,000 yearly. This amount typically comes from employees paying the employee tuition rate.

Mrs. Plante stated she agreed with Mrs. Tomai and if it is revenue that we are generating then we should get to realize it but she also does not understand the offset against expenses.

Mrs. Gouveia stated it could be something we discuss with the town.

Mrs. Gouveia then talked about the mandate for the feminine products. She said that for grades 3-12 we will have to provide feminine products in all girls bathrooms, 1 boys bathroom at each building and all gender/neutral bathrooms.

Mrs. Plante asked if we had budgeted for that.

Mrs. Gouveia stated we have not but it is not a lot of money. We will use our operating budget in increments.

Mrs. Plante asked if we have the dispensers in place. Mrs. Gouveia stated not yet.

Mrs Uberti stated we have gender/neutral bathrooms and stated it is now the law and we will comply.

Mrs. Gouveia stated we will need a total of 109 units to complete all bathrooms 3-12.

Mr. Barlow stated the way the law reads feminine products are to be installed in every female bathroom and any gender/neutral bathroom, 1 neutral bathroom and 1 male bathroom in each building unless the wings are on opposite ends.

Mrs. Gouveia stated this year we will need a 1-to-1 nurse which is not budgeted. We will use our medicaid funds and the BT services will be starting again. She stated that the one vendor we are using now is \$73.50/hr. She stated we are short 5 BT's.

Mrs. Uberti stated it is a problem and the previous vendor we had did not have the staff and therefore is no longer available. She said the BT salary is much more substantial then the salary of a Para. She talked about the issues with Paras not wanting to leave the union and that the BT's are not in a union. She said this is a problem as these students can't really function without that person and it is not a job for just anyone. No matter how much money we throw at it unless you have a calling for that kind of work.

Mrs. Gouveia stated we have \$30K in our IDEA grant which will probably be used up quickly and we can use our medicaid and non-lapsing fund.

Mrs Uberti stated we will keep trying to hire.

Mrs. Plante stated the earmarked money in the non-lapsing would be spent for these BT's. Mrs. Gouveia stated yes as they are special education.

Mrs. Gouveia talked about the building projects in the budget for \$455,911 and that these projects were going to be funded by the town's non-capital reoccurring fund. Typically this is recommended at the Board of Finance level. Once they accept it and it then gets moved to Legislative Council. Somewhere along the line the town now is only funding \$404,000 from the non-capital re-occurring for our projects so we are now short \$51,000. She stated that the Facilities Director is aware and that we may have to pull back on some projects.

Mrs. Plante wanted to bring up about the Joint Budget Workgroup that the Board of Finance is putting together.

She asked Mr. Goodridge to give a brief overview of the committee and the goals.

Mr. Goodridge stated we currently get information from all boards and have a very short period to review the budgets. They would like to get more information ahead of time and with this joint committee which would consist of: Board of Selectman, 2 members of Board of Finance, 2 members of Legislative Council and 2 members of the Board of Education. The goal would be to present information and issues ahead of time so that the boards can get a better understanding and therefore make better judgments. He further stated it is not mandatory but is an offer out to all.

Mrs. Plante stated she felt it was a BoE CFF responsibility to participate and the committee will decide which two members will be selected to attend the 3 meetings with the Director of Business and the Superintendent. She stated the 1st meeting is set for October and will talk about the goal, in November, the town would present what they know so far and in December the BoE will present what we know at that point about the 25-26 budget and what we expect to be the budget drivers.

Mrs. Gouveia stated December is a good time to know what will be driving our budget.

Mrs. Tomai stated between the 3 CFF members we will decide who will attend the meetings.

Mrs. Plante stated she thought it was a good stop gap solution and ultimately we as a set of board members across all boards think that the budget process outlined in the charter does not work and we should amend the charter. That is where she thinks this should head because ultimately the charter is what dictates how we move through the process.

Transportation Update

Mrs. Uberti stated she and Ms. Gouveia met with Steve Gardner from All-Star and the General Manager from STA (Student Transportation America) which is the parent company of All-Star. STA bought out All-Star and now the original owners from All-Star want to pull away and retire. STA is looking to be more collaborative which could benefit us in terms of driver shortages. Mrs. Uberti stated some of the current issues with our buses stems from communication. This has been a big problem and during their discussion with STA they have agreed that this needs to be resolved. She indicated the current All-Star depot manager is resigning. She indicated that they are currently in the process of interviewing and may have a candidate soon.

The committee talked about some of the issues including combining routes which leads to overcrowded buses, behavior issues on buses and long rides home. She stated all of these problems except for communication stems from driver shortages and is happening with other transportation systems and school districts as well.

Mrs. Uberti stated All-Star had spare drivers but just before school started they had 5 bus drivers quit. She stated this has happened to other districts as well. She indicated that STA has drivers from other towns that have pulled out due to the ending of contracts. Those employees want to stay with STA so STA has started a 'travelers' group which consists of bus drivers. STA would bring these 'travelers' to Newtown and the benefit is these drivers would only need to undergo 14 hours of training to adhere to company policies and to learn Newtown. These drivers are already trained so we would not have to wait the two months. She thought the meeting with STA was very informative. Mrs. Uberti stated she would like to include in her weekly updates regarding the need for bus drivers and to get the message out to the community more.

Discussion of CIP

Mr. Barlow presented the BoE CIP. He stated this CIP has changes made from the discussion at the last board meeting. The year we care about right now is the 25-26 school year. Relooking at the plan and the immediate needs of the school district, the sheer size of two projects that we need to do we are looking at a \$5.5M request for the 25-26 year which includes the HOM roof. This would be a restoration and not a replacement so the dollar amount is lower and primarily the town has the solar panel grant. By adding the solar panel on the roof we need to do the restoration which will give us a 20yr guarantee on the roof.

Mrs. Tomai asked if we will need to spend the money within a specific time. Mr. Barlow stated we have 3 years to spend it.

Mr. Barlow stated he kept the MS redundant boilers in the CIP as he feels this is important considering what we went through last year with bringing in the portable boiler and the fact that we don't need a redundancy. He stated at the last board meeting he talked about issues that having the potential to close doors at a building, needs to be a high priority. He feels that this does have the potential to close the doors to the building if not addressed.

Mrs. Tomai asked what the cost was for the portable boiler. Mr. Barlow stated the cost was about \$82K out of pocket and we were reimbursed \$63K.

Mr. Barlow then discussed the High School roof. He spoke at the last board meeting that this number is a large number and one of the reasons is because it is so bad that there is a fair amount of insulation that needs to be replaced. He talked about a nuclear testing. A company out of VT will come and map out where all the wet spots are and where we would have to remove and replace insulation. We don't want to do this now because this money will not get approved until April and at that point we can start non-priority grant from the State which will give us a 35% reimbursement on the total number. So on \$4.3M we would get the 35% reimbursement of the eligible costs back through that grant. The requirement of the grant is that we would have to meet current R-value standards of the State which is R30 right now. We would have to replace the insulation that is bad and increase the level of insulation which will be sustainable and help with energy costs. The \$4.3M is an estimated number from a roofing manufacturer.

Mrs. Tomai asked if that included the additional insulation that is required and Mr. Barlow stated yes.

Mrs. Plante asked if it was the full roof of the whole building. Mr. Barlow said no it is everything except the gym, the roof over pool and roof over F-wing.

Mr. Barlow talked about an ADA study in year 26-27 which will look at accessibility at the MS and HAW. Mr. Barlow said that Reed has the original carpeting of 30,000 sq ft. This was affected by the flood. He had a cleaning company come in to clean the carpet and dried everything out and it ended up really clean and everyone was happy with the outcome of that.

He mentioned he shifted some things as placeholders out to years 7, 8 and 9. The CIP is somewhat driven off of the facility study at this time and there are bigger discussions to be had down the road such as interior renovations which is a huge category.

The committee talked about 'new' vs a renovation and the difference in the % reimbursement and how the state views each from a space calculation aspect and that they also look from a financial perspective and not an education perspective. He stated there needs to be bigger conversations about what we are going to do with our buildings going forward.

Mr. Barlow talked about the facility study and that he received the corrected drafts back and has gone through them. He has another follow up meeting and then he should have final drafts. He is hoping that at the final meeting they will be able to dial in the functionality piece as to how our space is used. The next driver is for the Superintendent to look at the data and information and maybe as a group we can start to talk about some short term discussion and long term discussions.

Mrs. Uberti stated the facility study was driven out of a discussion on whether or not to do the HVAC project at the Middle School.

Mr. Barlow also stated the facility conditions assessment is only looking at the conditions that exist right now, not what we might put into the building or what we want to do. He further stated right now the facility study with the Middle School is looking at \$30M in repairs. If you add HVAC to that which was estimated at \$20-25M that is a lot of money.

Mrs. Uberti stated if you are at that place then maybe you want to talk about a renovation and that is where the bigger conversation comes in.

Mr. Barlow asked for an executive summary of the entire facility study per building and simplified to make it understandable with the numbers and priorities.

Approval of Amended BOE CFF Sub Committee Meeting Schedule

Mrs. Tomai asked for a motion to approve the Amended BoE CFF Sub Committee meeting schedule for the remaining 2024. Mrs. Plante moved the motion. Mrs. Tomai seconds the motion. All in favor.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

ADJOURNMENT: Mrs. Tomai made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mrs. Plante seconds the motion. All in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 6:58 pm

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanne Morris

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

Newtown Public Schools
Cff Sub-Committee Meeting Minutes
September 3, 2024, 6:00 PM
BOE Conference Room

PRESENT: Shannon Tomai, Alison Plante, Brian Leonardi, Tanja Gouveia, Steve Goodridge, Board of Finance, Jill Soderholm, Legislative Council
1 Public

CALL TO ORDER: Mrs. Tomai called the meeting to order at 6:01pm.

BUSINESS: Mrs. Tomai made a motion to approval the BOE CFF Sub committee minutes of May 16, 2024. Mr. Leonardi moved the motion. Mrs. Plante seconds the motion to approve the minutes of May 16, 2024. All in favor. Motion passes.

NEW BUSINESS

EOY Financial Report and Transfers

Ms. Gouveia presented the end of year financial report. She stated we ended the year with a positive balance of \$250,902 and we expended 99.71% of the budget. We have \$358,771 in encumbrances remaining and those are various departments which we will carry throughout the year until we close out at the next fiscal end.

She began with reviewing the major objects.

The certified salary account has a balance of \$63K. The majority of that came from certified subs, specifically our building subs. On an average we had about 5 positions open. Salaries throughout the year had a positive balance, primarily driven by the para balance. There was a transfer of \$170K which was used to covered shortfalls in other non-certified areas as well as some benefits. We ended the year with \$63K in our para union. In our custodial union, we ended the year with just over \$106K due to a fair amount of turnover along with Worker's Comp claims that came in later than anticipated.

Mr. Leonardi asked about the difficulty in filling open positions. Ms. Gouveia stated its been extremely challenging. We experienced vacancies in Bldg Subs, Para's and BT's. We budget for about 25 Bld Subs and our average is about 20 which has been consistent for the last 4 years.

Mrs. Gouveia stated the non-certified ended with a \$207,884 balance with a combined total for salaries of \$270,896. She emphasized that salaries all along has been our driver behind all of our balances. She stated we have been able to use some leverage of salaries towards our 24-25 pre-purchases because of our budget adjustment for next year.

In benefits we ended the year with a positive balance. Early projections showed a deficit in our FICA and Medicare that was based on filling the open positions. We did a transfer of \$40K to cover the shortfall however we only needed about \$8K so we have a remaining balance of \$32K.

Another early projection was our unemployment. She stated claims were coming in higher than she has ever seen however the last quarter fizzled out and only required \$4K.

Mr. Leonardi stated if it was not for the transfers we would have been in the red.

Ms. Gouveia stated that in May she was forecasting a negative \$40K so that is why we did the transfer.

In Professional services she reported all year we had two SLP's come in and cover for our speech and pathologist teachers that were out on leave. The total cost was \$70K. We also needed an additional \$21K for Nixon. This was for the last payment and they had submitted travel expenses as an added cost.

Mrs. Tomai and Ms. Gouveia talked about the vendor contract and the travel costs that were covered.

Ms. Gouveia stated that there was an approval by the former Superintendent and therefore we paid the additional expenses.

Mrs. Tomai asked if a check was done prior to approval to ensure the additional costs were included in the contract. Ms. Gouveia stated yes and the invoices did get approval. Mrs. Tomai stated if this was the case then maybe we should look at the offset of future expenses to them.

Ms. Gouveia stated she would review.

Ms. Gouveia talked about nursing services who worked with a student on a one-on-one basis which cost us an additional \$30K. We did not transfer any more than \$140K into this account but we still need an additional \$26K which will be addressed with a budget transfer.

Ms. Gouveia moved on to Purchased Property Services and stated this object fared pretty well with a balance of \$21,676 despite a larger deficit in the Building Site & Emergency Repairs. She stated the Building Site & Emergency repairs account started out strong and she thought it would be coming in under budget but we ended coming in over budget. She stated we budgeted \$475K and costs came in at \$513K. She stated these are contingency accounts and if we have emergencies it will hit this account.

Mrs. Plante stated the boiler was the driver of this account. Ms. Gouveia stated roof repairs as well.

Mr. Leonardi asked about when we do an RFP for the roof at the high school what account that would go under. Ms. Gouveia stated it depends, if it is a project it would be in our capital non-reoccurring which is on the town side. If it is over \$200K it would land on the CIP, and if it is under \$50K it will land in this account.

Ms. Gouveia stated we had a few surpluses and overall Purchased Property Services ended in a positive balance.

With Other Purchase Services Ms. Gouveia stated the contracted services account has a deficit due to the BT (Behavioral Therapist) contracted services. She stated the amount we spent was quite high although lower than last year and we spent \$270K with grant dollars for our BT Techs.

Mrs. Tomai asked if they were hourly services. Ms. Gouveia stated yes they are all hourly positions.

Internal positions are paid hourly and the services are paid hourly but the services get about \$60-70/hr.

Mrs. Plante stated the way she understood this is that we have a big surplus in our salary accounts because we cannot fill the positions. If we can fill the positions we would be paying our BT's out of that account. But we can't so we have a surplus in that account. We therefore have to pay outside

contractors to come in and provide the services because they are special ed which are required to deliver the services and therefore cost more than if we were to hire internally.

Ms. Gouveia stated the transportation deficit of \$32K was due in part to displaced students needing to be picked up outside of our district and the addition of a monitor for one bus.

She talked about out-of-district tuition which we came in above budget. Overall this major object ended with a positive balance of \$31,788.

Mr. Leonardi asked about the transportation account and if that was just the All-Star contract.

Ms. Gouveia stated it is All-Star and our Out-of-District. She said our Out-of-District is about \$1M and we currently have EdAdvance as our main vendor. They have also had a hard time with drivers so we have had to outsource.

Mr. Leonardi asked about the term of our transportation agreements.

Ms. Gouveia stated All-star is a 5 year contract which we are currently in year 3 and this is the last year for EdAdvance so we will be putting an RFP together.

Mrs. Tomai asked about the insurance-property and liability costs and how do we not know for sure what the cost for insurance is going to be.

Ms. Gouveia stated that our insurance gets renewed every April and we budget in October so we don't know and we assume it will stay the same. Our LAP insurance we usually get a heads up. Workers comp is variable and there is a cap. Typically we put in for a 3% increase. She said the Cyber is a small policy which used to be about \$40K and now with putting in protocols in place the costs have been going down a bit.

Moving onto supplies Ms Gouveia stated we have a deficit which we will take care of with the year end transfers. We went over budget in instructional supplies by \$20K, Software was a bit over, plant supplies was also a bit over budget. Last year's budget was adjusted at the superintendent's level but they purchased everything they need at the school level as far as software supplies and plant supplies. In the electric we had made an early transfer in April to cover for textbooks and some of our pre-purchases for the 24-25 budget. After virtual net metering credits came in and bills were settled we ended with -\$120K negative due to the transfer we made early on.

Mr. Leonardi asked about the budget amount of 23-24 was significantly larger than what was expended in 22-23. Ms. Gouveia stated our virtual net metering budget was different. First year we did not budget for any of the credits. Second year we budgeted a bit more. This year was more aggressive and we received a full year of credits on the virtual net metering. Also, Hawley's budget was significantly increased last year because of the new HVAC. Ms. Gouveia stated she would further follow up on this as she did not want to miss-speak on the exact differences year over year.

In the Property major object our technology equipment has a small balance and other equipment balance of \$22K with a total of \$24K as the balance. The \$22K was going to be for an upgrade to our radio system but we have put that project on hold as we are looking into grants and we want to make sure we are in alignment with the town.

The excess cost grant came in at 66.71% which is a less revenue than we anticipated at 70%. All in all we have a favorable balance in our out-of-district tuition. She talked about the various other revenues that get turned over to the town such as local tuition, parking permits and fees.

Mrs. Tomai suggested this should be annotated in the summary report as it is not actually revenue to the Board of Ed.

Transfers

Ms Gouveia stated per board policy all major objects need to be in a positive state at the end of the year so she is requesting a transfer from the salaries accounts to cover the deficit in professional services, supplies, and miscellaneous.

She said the unexpended balance is to be transferred into the non-lapsing and speaking with the Superintendent we would like to recommend that \$80K does go towards SpeEd reserves and the balance of \$170,902 goes towards the general reserve.

Right now without the transfer we have \$300K in sped. We have a total of \$115,675 in general reserves for a grand total of \$415,675 in the non-lapsing. That is without this request going in.

Non-lapsing account deposit

Mrs. Plante then gave a background on the non-lapsing account for the newer subcommittee board members explaining the non-lapsing account that was established for the BOE. She explained that all accounts in the budget expire on June 30th. From the BoE perspective, state statute enabled us to create what is essentially a savings account where we can deposit all of the unexpended money into this account which we can then use that money for unforeseen emergency expenses, capital expenses etc., as long as the money we deposit each year does not exceed 2% of the total budget and as long as the funds are used for educational purposes. This account is called the Non-lapsing account.

Historically we have earmarked funds towards the SpEd overages since this area is hard to predict.

Mrs. Tomai asked if there is an ability of the town to not permit us do this and to take the money that is left over. Mrs. Plante stated there was a recent change in state statute at the end of this legislative session where in previous years we had to get fiscal authority from the town to approve our deposit.

We had just revised a policy last November how this process would work. Now the state has changed the process and on our own recognition the BoE can approve the deposit without requesting further approval from the Board of Finance and Legislative Council.

Mrs. Plante stated it is now up to us how we want to handle it as we are no longer required to request that approval and wanted to know how the subcommittee felt about it. She stated we are no longer required but we still work in partnership with the Board of Finance and Legislative Council and she thought it was appropriate to provide transparency on this with the balance we are seeing, the balance of the account and amount we expect to deposit.

Mr. Leonardi agreed and stated it was a professional courtesy. Mrs. Tomai also agreed with the transparency.

Mrs. Plante stated that the Policy committee will update the policy to reflect the statute.

July Financials

Ms. Gouveia presented the July financial report. She stated the total budget is \$87,409,066 and all accounts have been adjusted per the BoE budget that was approved in May. Right now we don't have any anticipated obligations and we have \$28M in encumbrances. She stated we don't usually start analyzing these accounts and putting forecasts in until October. The first couple of months we want to make sure all of our salaries are in alignment, encumbrances are up to date especially in salary accounts as this is the driver for our budget. We will then begin to look at forecasts. There is not anything to discuss regarding the July report at this time.

Transportation Update

Ms. Gouveia stated the end of year athletic trips came in at \$10K under budget for athletics. This year All-Star provided 64% of the trips, last year it was 44% but the cost went down significantly due to finding cheaper transportation.

She stated we are still facing driver issues. Beginning last week we had 4 drivers, two went out on FMLA and two quit. We had 4 spares that went into those permanent spots. All-star has 3 in training and 1 is being tested this week. So all in all we are still down drivers. We will be conversing with All-Star to be sure there is a plan in place. We are holding our own right now and All-star has been doing advertising and still offering a sign-on bonus. She stated there are other towns experiencing the same issues.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION none

ADJOURNMENT: Mrs. Tomai made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Leonardi moved the motion. Mrs. Plante seconds the motion. All in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 6:58 pm

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanne Morris

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

Newtown Public Schools

BOE CFF Sub Committee

2024 Meeting Calendar - AMENDED

BOE Conference Room – 6:00 p.m.

January 11, 2024

February 13, 2024 - CANCELLED

March 19, 2024

April 11, 2024

May 16, 2024

June 13, 2024 - CANCELLED

July 2, 2024 - CANCELLED

August 15, 2024 – CANCELLED

September 3, 2024

September 12, 2024 – CANCELLED

September 17, 2024

October 15, 2024

November 19, 2024

December 17, 2024

January 21, 2025