

Newtown Public Schools  
CFF Subcommittee Meeting Minutes  
October 15, 2024, 6:00 PM  
BOE Conference Room

**PRESENT:** Shannon Tomai, Alison Plante, Brian Leonardi, Tanja Gouveia, Anne Uberti, John Barlow, Steve Goodridge, Board of Finance, Jill Soderholm, Legislative Council  
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**CALL TO ORDER:** Mrs. Tomai called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

**BUSINESS:** Mrs. Tomai made a motion to approval the BOE CFF Subcommittee minutes of September 17, 2024. Mrs. Plante moved the motion. Mrs. Tomai seconds the motion to approve the minutes of September 17, 2024. All in favor. Motion passes.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Financial Report**

Ms. Gouveia presented the September financial report. She stated the balance does not reflect a realistic year end projection at this time. We need to wait until the October data to come in. We do have a lot more in our anticipated obligations at \$8.7M. Typically this time of year we go through all instructional supplies, repairs and designate a full spend.

She went on to discuss the sub groups.

In certified salaries there is a \$67K balance. She stated we are fully staffed with our certified staff. We did have some turnover of about 25 employees which either resigned or have retired this year.

In non-certified there was \$120K that was reinstated by the board for a non-certified turnover number which is accounting for open positions. We currently have a pretty large projected balance in our Paras as we have about 13 open positions. We currently have 5 openings for BTs and we have reached out to the service we use to hire BTs at a much higher rate. This falls under the Contracted Services sub group. We have a small amount of grant money available for the BTs and we will have to transfer the salary line over to cover them. The non-certified balance now is \$500K.

In workers compensation we budgeted an increase of 5% cap and that did not happen. Every year they do an audit and depending on the outcome they will charge us a differential or an increase and this year they did not.

In Purchased Property services there is a negative in our equipment rental due to the new copier lease increase and printer upgrades.

In other purchased services there are currently no forecasts in yet.

Our Supply account currently has a projected balance of zero. However, she stated she is very concerned about the electricity. We are having some very high costs. The demand has gone up exponentially. There is also a new public benefit tax that has increased about 157% which came into fruition in July and will remain throughout the end of the year.

Property and Miscellaneous which is mostly our memberships anticipate a full budget spend.

The \$705K projected balance is not realistic at this time. We have a lot more anticipated obligations in place.

Mr. Leonardi asked about the Workers Comp. He wanted to know about the medical, dental and life and how the premium increase is factored in.

Mrs. Gouveia stated we are self-insured. Every year it is a set amount which comes out in November for next year's budget and we built in 9% in this year's budget.

Ms. Gouveia brought the electric portion back to the table to get the board updated on a school by school review of what is happening year over year with this sub category. She presented a brief report of a full year forecast on the demand portion increase and the virtual net metering decreasing. She brought to the boards attention that we could be looking at a deficit of about \$350K in electricity alone. She indicated she needs more data and said that the numbers will change. She also mentioned that our supply rates will remain constant which are fed off of our kilowatts which are locked in.

Mr. Leonardi asked of what we have budgeted for that line item what percent increase are we looking at. Ms. Gouveia stated it would be a bit over a 33% increase.

### **Transportation Update**

Mrs. Uberti and Ms. Gouveia met with new depot manager for All-Star, Tasha Moffett. She comes from Naugatuck where she was a Terminal Manager for 9 years. Mrs. Uberti stated she brings a lot of experience, is very competent, and knowledgeable. She stated the meeting was very productive and issues that we have been experiencing were brought to the table such as, inaccurate information, miscommunication, bus runs, consolidation of routes leading to over-crowding of buses, not enough drivers and elementary runs in the afternoon. She stated they also worked on communication protocols, contacts, and backups. She stated they agreed to continue to have weekly meetings where they would provide us with very detailed information.

She stated they received updates on some buses. Bus 9 the driver may be leaving with a new driver testing this week with the potential of replacing that driver. Bus 10 the driver has been out on leave and that driver was supposed to return this week. Bus 26 the driver had a need to be out on Tuesday afternoons and no longer has that need but does need to be out on Wednesday mornings. She stated that Tasha and STA are working on bringing 2-3 drivers from STA (parent company for All-Star) into Newtown to provide some relief. She said with all of the shifting parts of drivers they do have a spare

driver to fill in. She further stated internally we are keeping track of miss school runs as well as compiling a detailed financial report on the athletic runs that are not happening. She stated it is a complex process as we have to calculate the average cost of the runs vs. what we would be paying for those runs if All-Star was running them. The challenge is that all of the athletic runs are unique unto themselves as the distance to the event comes into play as well as the duration. She stated this report represents a good impact on those athletic runs.

Mrs. Uberti stated we do plan to send a letter to All-Star putting them on notice regarding the aspects of the contract that are not being met. Once they receive the letter they will have 30 days to rectify the situation. If they don't rectify the situation then we will need to bring this back to this committee and to the Board to discuss what would be our next steps and probably consult with an attorney and weigh the probability of our risk of pursuing further damages.

Ms. Gouveia presented a financial report on the Athletic transportation runs that are taking place. She stated there is \$33K that she believes we can recoup from All-Star. There was a further discussion on the language in the contract.

Mrs. Uberti stated she has heard of the talk regarding the tiers. She said we had drivers up to the point of the pandemic. When she was principal at Reed and we went to the two tiered system that was when it became impossible for us to run field trips past the end of the school day. When you have more than two tiers you have other drivers who may be available to run those after school trips. But because all of their drivers are running the elementary routes they are not available to run athletics.

Mrs. Uberti does not think it is an option to change the school times at this point. She did ask are there ways to possibly change this so there are three runs. She stated going back to a three tier system would probably cost the district as you are adding another run and another hour.

Mr. Goodridge stated going to a three tier you would not need as many buses. That would bring the cost down. The two-tier forces the bus drivers to be part-time with a 24-26 hrs/week vs. a three tier would be an average of 31 hrs/wk.

Mrs. Uberti stated the subject has been brought up many times and it needs to be revisited and we really need to think about a better way. She also stated that it would not change this year or probably next year.

### **BOF Budget Workgroup**

Mrs. Plante wanted to verify the dates of the BoF workgroup meetings and who would be attending. The first meeting is October 24<sup>th</sup> at 6pm, Second is November 1<sup>st</sup> which is optional for the BoE because it will focus on the town budget. The 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting is on December 19<sup>th</sup> at which the BoE will present what is known for the 25-26 budget.

Mrs. Plante stated she would be happy to attend both meetings. Mrs. Tomai stated she would be able to attend the December 19<sup>th</sup> meeting. Mrs. Plante stated she will look to another board member to assist her in attending the October 24<sup>th</sup> meeting.

### **Facilities Update**

Mr. Barlow stated the facilities study has been finalized and they are working on an executive summary. He would like to present a full presentation of the study at the next CFF meeting. Mrs. Plante asked if they did the enrollment analysis. Mr. Barlow stated that would be part of the executive summary.

### **MGS HVAC Status Update**

Mr. Barlow stated there is some money in the 144 account with savings from projects in past that are unaccounted and unassigned for. He said we did a review on how we would resolve some of the air conditioning issues that we know impact two buildings. We did a walk-through of MGS and found out that there are only 9 class rooms that do not have air conditioning. He stated we do have the capacity to add the 9 window a/c units into the school. We also have the capacity to do the work in house so we have already purchased the 9 a/c units and expect to have them in the MG school during the April break. He stated every single room that is a classroom will then have air conditioning.

### **NMS HVAC Status Update**

Mr. Barlow stated in the 23-24 CIP which was not a bonding year, there was an approval of \$450K in the CIP listed as engineering for HVAC improvements including CM.

Money has been still sitting there and is still allocated this way. He stated he would like to reallocate the funds to approve for electrical engineering and install a stop gap measure to provide some sort of building air conditioning via a/c window units.

The facility study now is showing \$120M into all of our facilities and maybe we need to look at it holistically. He met with Mrs. Uberti who stated that there is not a vision for facilities out 10 years and maybe that is something the board needs to start looking at. A vision of where and how we want our facilities to be. Although this will take time to do, how do we resolve the air conditioning system in the meantime.

Mr. Barlow stated money was approved but not bonded but it could be a way to utilize this money to alleviate the situation

Mrs. Tomai thought it was a great idea and asked if the engineering would be to confirm the electrical support or what would need to be done.

Mr. Barlow stated yes and the engineering would be relatively small in relation to the \$450K.

Mr. Goodridge asked how many rooms would need air conditioning.

Mrs. Uberti stated our goal would be to put air conditioning into every classroom space. Mr. Goodridge stated not all of the windows are the same to hold units.

Mrs. Uberti stated this is the initial and can we even do this and do some long term planning.

Mr. Barlow stated the MS has 53 regular classrooms spaces and 18 sped spaces.

Mrs. Uberti stated this is very preliminary but she thought it is a worth-while trip to see what we can provide.

Mr. Barlow stated this would be a way to utilizing funds that have already been approved by the taxpayers for that building.

Mrs. Plante stated she would want to see a more detailed budget and would want to understand what kind of a shelf life this solution could have; if it could stay like this or is it a stop gap for 5 years and what it would look like.

Mr. Barlow stated it is a temporary stop gap until we can get through those deeper discussions in our facility vision.

Mrs. Plante left the meeting at 6:53pm

### **Discussion of Bid Results for Reed Intermediate School Variable Speed Drive Replacements and Installation 2025**

Mr. Barlow stated we did go out to bid. The Reed School has 8 variable frequency drives that are no longer functioning at 100% on. He stated HVAC equipment is designed to run at 100% on your hottest or coldest day of the year. He stated these pieces of equipment slow that down and less electricity is being used. He said there is a lot of savings to be had when these are up and running and they have not been running for quite some time. We went out to bid, we budgeted \$60K for this and is in the non-capital recurring. Sartron is the company he is recommending at \$43,900. He checked out their references and equipment and is confident that they are a reputable company. They have done a lot of work for Yale.

### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

None

**ADJOURNMENT:** Mrs. Tomai made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Leonardi moved the motion. Mrs. Tomai 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 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.