

TOWN OF STONINGTON
BOARD OF FINANCE SPECIAL MEETING
District Office Meeting Room
Tuesday, March 10, 2020
7:15 PM

A meeting of the Board of Finance was held on this date at the District Office Meeting Room. Members present were Chairman Tim O'Brien, Glenn Frishman, Lynn Young, Michael Fauerbach, Deborah Norman, Bob Statchen and David Motherway Jr. Director Jim Sullivan was in attendance.

Chairman Tim O'Brien called the meeting to order at 7:15 pm.

Pledge of Allegiance

New Business

Board of Education Budget Presentation

Alexa Garvey, Board of Education Chair, presented the FY20/21 budget of the Board of Education this evening to the Board of Finance members.

Noting a 2.88% increase over last year, Ms. Garvey outlined some of the highlights of the department over the last year. For the first time the district earned a higher score than East Lyme and Waterford on the Connecticut accountability report card and Stonington High School SAP scores were higher than those towns as well.

Stonington Middle School was accepted to present its Encore Class Programming at the New England League of Middle School Conference. Deans Mill School earned the title of School of Distinction from the State for the second year in a row. Ms. Alicia Sweet Dawe was recognized as Connecticut Elementary School Principal of the Year and a student from West Vine Street School earned a spot on the Kid Governor Cabinet 2020 in Hartford.

Chairwoman Garvey acknowledged the recent Board of Finance questions on enrollment and administrators. Noting salaries for administration and staffing carries an increase of \$674,000, Chairwoman Garvey stated the increases are contractual obligations which are on the median, however, the administration and faculty are at the bottom of the pay scale when compared to common districts similar to Stonington.

The school district is decreasing by one administrator position at Stonington Middle School and one teaching position at the High School. Chairwoman Garvey noted an increase in the number of paraprofessionals directly related to the special education program.

Chairwoman Garvey stated that the Stonington High School is offering a greater variety of programming to meet the needs of the college work bound students and special needs population ages 18 to 21.

Enrollment for the 20/21 school year is anticipated to decrease by approximately 40 students and continue downward. Chairwoman Garvey indicated that this Fall, the administration will be presenting to the Board of Education a plan for this decrease in enrollment.

Chairwoman Garvey remarked that with the recent reconfiguration of three schools within the district and merging two schools into one, the Middle School has experienced the largest impact. The changing of grades and staffing has had a large impact on climate and culture. Middle School teachers are requesting assistance and training support to address an increase in serious disruptive behaviors.

Noting that the Stonington High School has decreased five teaching positions over the past five years, Chairwoman Garvey said any further cuts in teaching staff will affect programming.

Noting other increases in the proposed budget, Chairwoman Garvey noted a \$71,000 increase in transportation, \$212,000 increase in outside tuition, and a \$47,000 increase in Professional Technical Services. The offering of space to the recreation department, Human Services and other town committees for meetings and programs adds approximately \$130,000 to the school budget.

Recognizing that the Board of Finance had questions and concerns on the administrative staffing levels in the schools, Dr. Van Riley, Stonington School Superintendent spoke to the Board to address those concerns. Stating that previously due to the school consolidation, there were five administrators between two schools, each school having one assistant principal, one dean and a shared principal. After the consolidation, one dean position was reduced, and it is the intention to reduce another dean position next year.

In support of the administrative positions, Dr. Riley stated the administrators work with the teachers so they can spend more time on instruction in the classroom. The counselors, social workers and administrators are an entire staffing support system supporting the teachers with providing top quality programs and support.

Dr. Riley also stated that in the fall, the school board will assess the number of district wide teachers and support staff in anticipation of a decline in enrollment numbers and work towards maintaining a permanent staffing level appropriate for the student population.

Chairwoman Garvey and Dr. Riley inquired to the Board of Finance if there were any questions or concerns the Board may have on the budget as presented.

Mr. Fauerbach asked for clarification of a \$26,772 increase in Line #133 - Added Teacher/Stipend Positions. Mr. Gary Shettle, Director of Finance, Board of Education, stated that the increase was capturing the expenses incurred through extracurricular activities. Coaches and club instructors are paid through this account. Mr. Shettle stated there will be 5 or 6 new clubs this year with an associated cost of approximately \$600 per club in addition to changing the dynamics of current clubs and added teacher curriculum.

Mr. Fauerbach asked if there should be any concern with the Line #250 - Retirement not having being funded for this year but also acknowledging that the commentary from the Board of Ed states the account has remaining positive funding from the FY18/19 budget year. Director Shettle explained that any surplus funds at the end of the fiscal year can be deposited to this account. Questioned on who would make the decision to deposit the surplus funds or repurpose them into another account, Director Shettle said the Board of Ed and administrators make the suggestion to the Superintendent who will make the decision with the Director of Finance.

Mr. Fauerbach asked if a 4% increase in Line #510 - Regular Transportation was a yearly contractual increase. Director Shettle stated the contract is in the first year of a five year contract and the increase is due to inflation and additional volume.

Ms. Young inquired if it was known how much of this years budget

increase could be attributable to programs mandated by the State for special education. Dr. Riley said he did not have that figure at hand but it could be calculated.

Mr. Frishman mentioned funding provided in last years school budget for renovations to the District Office building to include an annex for special education students. Mr. Frishman asked if those students were in the District Office building and were those expenses easily tracked. Chairman Garvey asked Director of Special Services Allison Van Etten to speak to the Board of Finance. Ms. Van Etten stated there is one classroom established, in the District Office building, with nine upper Middle School and High School students. Tuition for each student is approximately \$65,000 with an additional \$10,000 for transportation. The program is run by a Special Education teacher and a STEM tutor. Ms. Van Etten is looking into expanding the program for next year.

Mr. Frishman inquired to the 11.3% (\$46,921) increase to Line#319 - Professional/Tech Services. Mr. Peter Anderson, Director of Operations and Facilities addressed the Board of Finance, stating the increase was due to anticipated increased costs for the HVAC equipment at the High School and a service contract for a building management system for all facilities in the district.

Capital Improvement Program:

Discussion took place on the following Board of Education Capital Improvement requests:

- District Wide Security System and Cameras \$50,000
Director of Technology Chris Williston provided supporting documentation to the Board of Finance members. The cameras would be additional security for the District Office building.
- District Phone System \$30,000
Director Williston noted that the District Office is 50% complete and the funds would be used for updated the phone system at the Middle and High Schools.
- BOE Computers - One to One Purchase \$145,000
Part of the Chromebook program, the goal is to refresh one school every year.

Capital Improvement Program: con't

- BOE Computers and Peripherals - Purchase \$410,000
Equipment consists of network service equipment, uninterruptable power supplies and switches.
- BOE Staff Laptops - Purchase \$65,000
A lease program, this funds staff laptops.
- District Office Paint, Walls, Flooring \$350,000
Director Peter Anderson noted that this funding will be used over a four-year period to address new paint, walls and flooring in the most in need classrooms in the Middle School and High School. The work is completed in house and contracted.
- Kitchen Equipment Upgrade SMS & SHS \$52,000
Director Anderson reports that there are several pieces of kitchen equipment at both the Middle School and the High School that are beyond repair. Currently two freezers used for food distribution at the Middle School are inoperable.
- Kubota Tractor Replacement \$45,825
Per Director Anderson, this line item can be removed from the CIP request due to the Town taking over Field Maintenance operations.
- Upgraded Building Management System \$179,460
Director Anderson notes that this is part of the hardware solution to upgrade the building management system. These funds will be used to replace the valving and computer controls that need to be upgraded as well. The service contract is \$22,260 annually and could be taken out of the school operating budget.
- Classroom Furniture (District) \$20,000
A general upgrade of furniture throughout the district with the exception of the two new schools. Director Anderson pointed out that new stools at the High School and new desks for the science rooms are priority.

Capital Improvement Program: con't

- Flooring Repair \$20,000
Director Anderson advised that the funds would be used for general flooring and carpeting anywhere throughout the district with the first target being the High School Library carpet replacement. It was Director Anderson's opinion that the entire amount would likely go towards the library carpet.
- Roof Ladders & Cables (SHS) \$101,000
Director Anderson stated a section of the academic wing of the High School has a pitch stainless steel roof with ten HVAC units that have not been serviced due to inaccessibility. Without proper roof ladders, cables or harnessing, contractors are unwilling to work on the units.
- High School Generator Upgrade \$45,000
The current 500,000 kilowatt generator is not operating at full extent due to the limitations of a 600 amp switchboard. Upgrading the electrical panels would allow enough electrical feed in the building to operate the generator at full capacity.
- High School Gym Upgrade \$96,500
Director Anderson noted that the High School gym has multiple coats of finish on the floor that needs to be removed in order for proper care and maintenance of the floor to continue. The floor requires to be sanded to bare wood and refinished. Gym matting, the scoreboard and divider curtains all require replacement. The gym is also used by the Rec Department, Human Services and others.
- High School Roof Top Unit Rebuild/Gym A/C \$599,000
Director Anderson spoke about his presentation last year regarding the corroding coils in the roof top units. Currently running at 50% efficiency in cooling mode, the funds would be used for an internal replacement and not an actual roof top unit replacement.
- Sports/Maintenance Utility Vehicle \$12,000
Director Anderson noted there is no ability to remove an injured student from the playing field without damage to the field.
- Tennis Court Resurfacing
Moved to the Human Service CIP request

Capital Improvement Program: con't

- Ductless A/C & Heating Upgrade (SMS) \$2,000,000
Director Anderson state this project may be eligible for an energy rebate from Eversource.
- Middle School Science Room Upgrades \$30,000
The Science room is a 25-year-old dated room that is in need of safety equipment upgrades, new sinks, tables and equipment.
- Replace maintenance truck \$17,000
Director Anderson states the money would be used to start a savings fund for the purchase of a new truck. Currently the two trucks the department has are almost to the point of becoming unsafe and in need of major repairs. The trucks are used for plowing and deliveries.
- Locks and Keys District Offices \$20,000
Director Anderson states that 35% of the locks have been changed. Currently there are 5 different keys for different door locks.

With no further business Ms. Young made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:50 p.m, Mr. Fauerbach seconded. **Motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted,

Jill A Senior
Recording Secretary Board of Finance