

Newtown Board of Education Virtual Meeting
CIP/Facilities/Finance Sub-Committee Minutes
December 9, 2020, 6:00 p.m.

Call to Order: The BOE CIP Sub Committee meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by Mr. Delia.

Participants: Dan Delia, Chair, Sub-Committee, Tanja Vadas, Director of Business, Robert Gerbert, Director of Operations, Deb Zukowski, Sub-Committee & Board Member, Debbie Leidlein, Sub-Committee & Board Member, Allen Adriani, Sustainable Energy Committee, Keith Alexander, Board of Finance

Pledge of Allegiance

Item 1 Approval of November 11, 2020 BOE CIP Sub Committee Minutes

Ms. Zukowski moved to approve the minutes of November 11, 2020. Mr. Delia seconds the motion. Mrs. Leidlein abstained. All in favor. Motion passes.

Item 2 Discussion of CIP/Hawley

Mr. Gerbert stated he updated the CIP based on the Board of Finance meeting of November 30th (attached).

Ms. Zukowski asked Mr. Gerbert if there is a regulation or statute which requires airflow respective of air quality that we have to meet for the project. Mr. Gerbert stated there are codes that are governed such as ventilation international construction codes, ICC, and mechanical codes and the guidelines are specific to ventilation. He said the path we are going is the prescriptive method with air quality tests and study. With this method you use the data numbers to provide data for determining more or less ventilation.

Mr. Delia asked Mr. Alexander to speak of the \$8M number and how that number went from \$6M to \$8M for the project.

Mr. Alexander said the number the Board of Finance concurred from the Architect at the meeting before Thanksgiving was \$7.1M. At the November 30th BOF meeting the idea was to add a bit more since there could be potentially other things to increase the cost. The concept was putting in the \$8M for the BOF planning purposes, using the CIP as a planning document and how much bonding could be done going forward. He said putting the \$8M in could be worked down later, rather than a lower number that would have to be worked up. He said the expectation was that the \$8M was a definite maximum, with a better number coming in by February and then a further better number by April. By that point, when the board talks about what to take to the voters in either April or November, and whatever the number it would be more specific and down from the \$8M.

Mr. Delia asked Mr. Alexander if he would recommend we air on the side of high when we bring our numbers to the BOF and said we had started at \$4.2M. Mr. Alexander stated the \$4.2M did not have any basis to it and that the Board should come with the closest number they can and the most accurate. He also stated when you don't know, that's where you air on the side of caution because it does help with planning. Bringing numbers down is always easier.

Ms. Zukowski asked if the \$1.5M would be on the April referendum. If the plan is to put the \$2.5M in November and the \$4M the following April, how can we be sure that if we start we can actually complete the project.

Mr. Alexander stated the Board of Finance level does not including the Legislative Council thinking since they have end jurisdiction as to what goes on the referendum. The Board of Finance thoughts would all be on the November referendum. The \$1.5M has to be in the first year so that it could be used following that referendum. If the referendum passes the full amount then work could start. Building and Site gave the impression that work could be done while school was open and students in place. He said we don't have a full verification on this yet. The idea was the \$1.5 M would be plenty to get started with. The numbers specifically in each year are more of a planning metric than a requirement. We don't have to bond all \$1.5M in the first year if it's not being used. He stated we generally bond after some work is done for smaller amounts because there is money in the system to be used to start paying out, so the bonding can come after. He said the bonding schedule vs. the total amount is what we will be looking at. The Board of Finance discussion in getting it all in is a preferable thing. The number would not be specific enough to go in the April referendum.

Mrs. Leidlein stated being on the board for 11 years she has gone through several iterations of what the process looks like for getting the numbers and maintaining the numbers for this project. She said there have been different descriptive methods used in order to obtain an accurate number prior to a project being put on the CIP. She stated she has a level of frustration in regards to the process and the required information that seems to continue to change on a regular basis. She said this board has continued to work to get the project active. She asked Mr. Alexander what is the method and what is required to go forward on the CIP. She addressed her concerns and is asking for a solid process between all three boards that everyone can agree to and the BOE Sub Committee can use as a navigation.

Mr. Alexander said he would take that concern back to the Board of Finance. He then stated the Board of Finance does not have a lot of jurisdiction as to what happens next, but next year they do.

Ms. Zukowski asked Mr. Adriani if work would actually start in the summer with the electrical and the chase work.

Mr. Adriani said electrical work could be done over the summer of 2021 but it also depends on what gets approved for money. If we put \$1.5M for referendum we can do electrical work in the summer with some abatement and some of the chase work. If it's not approved until November, we can probably do the work over the holiday break but it would be up to Mr. Gerbert when he

wants to schedule that. He said we want to bring a construction manager on board to coordinate all of this.

Mrs. Zukowski asked if we would have the construction manager by the end of January.

Mr. Adriani said he would have to follow up on that.

Mr. Gerbert said there are a few construction management companies interested and we might be able to get someone before the holidays.

Mr. Delia stated he is concerned about spreading this out over a long period of time. In 3 years a lot can happen. He agrees we should have an agreed upon process which would eliminate a lot of miscommunications, understandings and issues. It would serve the town better.

Mr. Adriani left the meeting at 6:30.

Item 3 COVID Expenses

Mrs. Vadas discussed the various expenses related to COVID and shared the spreadsheet (attached) with the group. She broke down the groups of expenses and talked about current costs and what the Corona Relief Grant (CRF) covered and what the net total of expenses above what we anticipated at \$1.5M. Our total potential estimated costs are now at \$2.3M. With the Corona Relief Grant we have a net total of \$1.9M in expenses.

Ms. Zukowski stated the spreadsheet was very clear and wonderful and thanked Mrs. Vadas for her work.

Ms. Zukowski asked Mr. Alexander what he thought of the breakouts and did it capture the information the Board of Finance needed. Mr. Alexander stated he thought it was a good forwarding document and stated the BOE will have to go to the Legislative Council to get money back or possibly the First Selectman could start the steps across. The specific accounting of the document looks good.

Mrs. Leidlein was surprised there was not enough money to fully cover PPE (Personal Protective Equipment). She asked what is the method in looking at numbers and determining what or how much to cover.

Ms. Vadas stated with the Corona Relief Grant (CRF) we were able to re-allocate those funds. We allocated mostly towards the personnel because with the town fund of \$400K we have set aside we can use those funds for everything except personnel. So when we bring that fund to the board side we will use it for technology, facilities and to what we see fit.

Mr. Delia asked since we are spending all of this money on chrome books now, will that help in budgeting for next year and are we pre-buying chrome books. She said we are not pre-buying. We will be reviewing technology budget this week.

Mr. Delia asked with schools being closed is this helping with any of these expenses. Mr. Gerbert stated we would not be accumulating any COVID overtime for the month of December.

He said even prior to closing we were starting to scale back.

Mr. Alexander left the meeting at 6:45.

Item 4 Financial Update and Preliminary Budget Discussion

Mrs. Vadas presented a draft of the November financial report. (Attached). The General fund is down with a negative projected balance of \$121K which is largely due to the lunch program.

Salaries number are concerning. Projected Teacher and Specialist salaries are at a negative \$304K which goes back to our turnover number which was large this year. Typically we see our turnover in the beginning of the year, so this is a concern as it is driving our total certified salary number in the negative by \$215K.

She continued to talk about the other various expense categories and where we are at the end of November.

Ms. Zukowski questioned the numbers between the covid expenses and the financial report. Mrs. Vadas stated our budget is absorbing COVID expenses. There are areas that are offsetting and you can't compare them. If we fully expend every area you would see the numbers coincide within each spreadsheet.

Mr. Delia stated time will tell.

Mrs. Vadas stated there are areas that are 'what if's' as in if we were to shut down again, so time will tell if people are going to spend or not expend more of their budget.

Mr. Delia stated he is concerned that items that were budgeted for are not being purchased due to COVID expenses. He then said we need to bring this to the board so they understand.

Mrs. Vadas stated we have discussed with administrators the need for them to purchase what was budgeted for.

Mrs. Leidlein stated the Board needs to be aware of the budget summaries, and with things changing radically this impacts the whole Board along with the decisions that are made. She also stated in the past there have been freezes in certain areas so there would not be the necessity to overspend. She said as we look at certain areas where the budget is escalating it would make sense to look at other areas where we can economize. She then asked if there are areas where we can ask and identify in order to start a safety net so that we can slow down the escalating costs. Mrs. Vadas stated she feels we have the \$400K that the BOF is holding and she is waiting to use that to restore some accounts and then to recalculate and look at our spending more closely.

Ms. Zukowski stated she fully supports Mrs. Leidlein's suggestion on identifying areas we can freeze on spending. She then asked would it make sense every few months to have a meet-and-greet with the town finance director to keep him abreast of our expenses and where we are. Mrs. Vadas stated she does work closely with the Finance Director of the town.

Item 5 Discussion of Meetings during Budget Season

Mr. Delia stated he thought a good step for the Sub Committee Board is to start to have the initial discussions regarding expenses, financial reports, before the Board of Education meetings to create a significant efficiency and would also help prepare Mrs. Vadas for questions they may have.

All were in agreement.

Item 6 Tentative 2021 CIP Meeting Schedule

Mr. Delia wanted thoughts on more CIP meetings especially during the budget process.

Mrs. Leidlein stated we should continue to meet especially with this year's monitoring the current year's budget and to keep on top with regards to spending and the costs that are being incurred as a result of COVID. She said we base a lot of our future budgets on what's going on in the current budget.

Mr. Delia stated he was in total agreement with that and the committee should meet in between board meetings.

The Sub Committee members decided to meet monthly on the Thursday before the last full board meeting of the month at 5:30 p.m.

Mrs. Leidlein asked if we can extend an invitation to the Board of Finance and Legislative Council so they have the option if interested to send a representative to come.

All were in agreement.

Mr. Delia said he would be sure to send an invitation to them before each meeting.

A schedule of the CIP Sub Committee meetings will be presented at the next meeting.
Mr. Delia will set the next meeting in January.

Public Comment: No public comment.

Adjournment:

Mrs. Leidlein moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Zukowski seconds the motion. All in favor. Motion passes and the meeting was adjourned at 7:40 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanne Morris

THESE ARE DRAFT MINUTES AND ARE SUBJECT TO THE APPROVAL OF THE BOE
CIP/FACILITIES/FINANCE SUB COMMITTEE