

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 3 PRIMROSE STREET, NEWTOWN, CT
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 5, 2023**

MINUTES

PRESENT: Jeffery Capeci, Tom Long, Phil Carroll, Chris Gardner, Dan Honan, Lisa Kessler, Ryan Knapp, Michelle Embree Ku, Matthew Mihalcik, Charles Gardner, William DeRosa

ABSENT: Angela Curi

ALSO PRESENT: First Selectman Dan Rosenthal, Finance Director Bob Tait, BOE Chair Deb Zukowski, BOE Director of Business and Finance Tanja Vadas, BOE Superintendent Chris Melillo, Jordana Bloom, Douglas Lord and Rose Marie Zaharek

CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Capeci called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:46 pm.

VOTER COMMENT: None

MINUTES: Charles Gardner moved to approve the minutes of the 3/15/23 Public Hearing and 3/29/23 Regular Meeting. Matt Mihalcik seconded, all in favor.

COMMUNICATIONS: Jeff Capeci received an email from BOE Superintendent Chris Melillo explaining that they did not get the grant for the HVAC at Hawley. Superintendent Melillo explained why they were denied the grant.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: None

FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT: No Report

NEW BUSINESS

Resolution: Charles Gardner move the Resolution with Respect to the Authorization, Issuance and Sale of Not Exceeding \$25,000,000 Town of Newtown Connecticut General Obligation Refunding Bonds. Matt Mihalcik seconded, all in favor.

Motion to authorize and direct the Board of Selectman to call a Referendum to be held on April 25, 2023 between the hours of 6:00 am and 8:00 pm (E.T.) for the purpose of a vote by electors and qualified voters of the Town. Charles Gardner moved to authorize and direct the Board of Selectman to call a Referendum to be held on April 25, 2023, between the hours of 6:00 am and 8:00 pm (E.T.) for the purpose of a vote by electors and qualified voters of the Town. Ryan Knapp seconded, all in favor.

Charles Gardner moved to wave the full reading of the following three resolutions. Matt Mihalcik seconded, all in favor.

Resolution: Charles Gardner moved a RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR A SPECIAL APPROPRIATION IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,200,000 FOR THE PLANNING, DESIGN, ENGINEERING AND INSTALLATION OF HVAC SYSTEM REPLACEMENTS AT NEWTOWN HIGH SCHOOL AS AUTHORIZED IN THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (2023-24 to 2027-28) AND AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF \$1,200,000 BONDS OF THE TOWN TO MEET SAID SPECIAL APPROPRIATION AND PENDING THE ISSUANCE THEREOF THE MAKING OF TEMPORARY BORROWINGS FOR SUCH PURPOSE. Matt Mihalcik seconded. Motions unanimously approved by roll call vote.

Resolution: Charles Gardner moved a RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR A SPECIAL APPROPRIATION IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,550,000 FOR THE REMEDIATION AND REPLACEMENT OF THE MUNICIPAL CENTER ROOF AS AUTHORIZED IN THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (2023-24 to 2027-28) AND AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF \$1,550,000 BONDS OF THE TOWN TO MEET SAID SPECIAL APPROPRIATION AND PENDING THE ISSUANCE THEREOF THE MAKING OF TEMPORARY BORROWINGS FOR SUCH PURPOSE. Matt Mihalcik seconded. Motion unanimously approved by roll call vote.

Resolution: Charles Gardner moved a RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR A SPECIAL APPROPRIATION IN THE AMOUNT OF \$450,000 FOR THE PLANNING, DESIGN, AND ENGINEERING OF HVAC SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS AT NEWTOWN MIDDLE SCHOOL AS AUTHORIZED IN THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (2023-24 to 2027-28) AND AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF \$450,000 BONDS OF THE TOWN TO MEET SAID SPECIAL APPROPRIATION AND PENDING THE ISSUANCE THEREOF THE MAKING OF TEMPORARY BORROWINGS FOR SUCH PURPOSE. Matt Mihalcik seconded. Motion unanimously approved by roll call vote.

Resolution: Charles Gardner moved a RESOLUTION TO AUTHORIZE THE PREPARATION AND PRINTING OF NON-ADVOCACY MATERIALS RELATED TO THE PLANNING, DESIGN, ENGINEERING AND INSTALLATION OF HVAC SYSTEM REPLACEMENTS AT NEWTOWN HIGH SCHOOL REFERENDUM QUESTIONS SCHEDULED FOR APRIL 25, 2023. SUCH MATERIALS MAY INCLUDE MAILINGS, FLIERS AND POSTERS AS WELL AS EXPLANATORY TEXT ON THE BALLOT. CONTENT OF THESE MATERIALS TO BE APPROVED BY THE TOWN ATTORNEY, SUBJECT TO CGS 9-369B (A). Matt Mihalcik seconded, all in favor.

Resolution: Charles Gardner moved a RESOLUTION TO AUTHORIZE THE PREPARATION AND PRINTING OF NON-ADVOCACY MATERIALS RELATED TO THE REMEDIATION AND REPLACEMENT OF THE MUNICIPAL CENTER ROOF REFERENDUM QUESTIONS SCHEDULED FOR APRIL 25, 2023. SUCH MATERIALS MAY INCLUDE MAILINGS, FLIERS AND POSTERS AS WELL AS EXPLANATORY TEXT ON THE BALLOT. CONTENT OF THESE MATERIALS TO BE APPROVED BY THE TOWN ATTORNEY, SUBJECT TO CGS 9-369B (A). Matt Mihalcik seconded, all in favor.

Resolution: Charles Gardner moved a RESOLUTION TO AUTHORIZE THE PREPARATION AND PRINTING OF NON-ADVOCACY MATERIALS RELATED TO THE PLANNING, DESIGN, AND ENGINEERING OF HVAC SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS AT NEWTOWN MIDDLE SCHOOL REFERENDUM QUESTIONS SCHEDULED FOR APRIL 25, 2023. SUCH MATERIALS MAY INCLUDE MAILINGS, FLIERS AND POSTERS AS WELL AS EXPLANATORY TEXT ON THE BALLOT. CONTENT OF THESE MATERIALS TO BE APPROVED BY THE TOWN ATTORNEY, SUBJECT TO CGS 9-369B (A). Matt Mihalcik seconded, all in favor.

OLD BUSINESS

2023-2024 Budget – Charles Gardner moved that they approve the BOF recommended BOE budget for 23/24 in the amount of \$85,484,651. Dan Honan seconded.

Phil Carroll moved to amend the motion of approving the BOE budget in the amount if \$85,484,651 and reduce it by \$550,000. William DeRosa seconded.

Michelle Embree Ku moved to amend the motion to make the reduction a \$200,000 reduction, Dan Honan seconded. Michelle Embree Ku explained that the Superintendent and Director of Business did identify \$200,000 that could be taken from this year's savings and used for purchasing of a mandated reading program book for next year. That is why the \$200,000 reduction is more reasonable. Motion fails 8 NO to 3 YES (Chris Gardner, Honan, Embree Ku). First Amendment to reduce \$550,000 passes 8 YES to 3 NO (Chris Gardner, Honan, Embree Ku).

Ryan Knapp moved to reinstall \$135,000 to the BOE technology equipment line of the BOE budget that was otherwise funded capital non-recurring, Phil Carroll seconded. Ryan Knapp explained the concern about getting more dependent on capital non-recurring. It isn't changing the spend, just the funding source. Motion passes 9 YES to 2 NO (Chris Gardner, Honan).

Charles Gardner moved to amend the BOF budget for FY 23/24 to \$85,069,651. Ryan Knapp seconded. Motion passes 8 Yes to 3 No (Chris Gardner, Honan, Embree Ku).

Charles Gardner moved to approve the BOS budget as recommended by the BOF for 23/24 in the amount of \$47,526,160. Matt Mihalcik seconded.

Ryan Knapp explained that in practice we purchase 3 police cars each year. Things that we buy every year are in fact recurring and should be funded out of the operations budget and not capital non-recurring for fear that there could be a year capital non-recurring is down, we will have to come up with the additional money.

Ryan Knapp moved to amend the BOS budget by decreasing the reserve for capital non-recurring transfer out for \$65,500 taking out the designated police vehicle and increase police vehicles in the Police Budget by \$65,500. Also decrease reserve for Capital non-recurring transfer out for \$135,180 decreasing

the BOE technology equipment for the same amount. Matt Mihalcik seconded. Motion passes 10 YES to 1 NO (Chris Gardner).

Ryan Knapp moved to amend the line item for the First Selectman Salary to reflect \$135,000. Phil Carroll seconded. Ryan Knapp explained that by charter this needs to be visited every two years. This is a funding action, to set it, it will also need to be an agenda item at a future meeting. This is comparable to what department heads make and in line with the median income data for Newtown as well. Charles Gardner offered a friendly amendment to adjust the motion to \$125,863 which reflects the projected increase for a 7 month period, instead of a 12 month period. Ryan Knapp accepted the amendment. Phil Carroll seconded.

William DeRosa moved to amend the amendment from \$135,000 to \$165,000. Phil Carroll seconded. Motion fails 8 NO, 2 YES (Kessler, DeRosa), 1 Abstain (Mihalcik) Original amendment for \$125,863 passes 9 YES, 1 NO (DeRosa), 1 Abstain (Mihalcik)

Tom Long moved to amend the BOS budget line item for the library, by amending the increase at a new amount of \$10,000 for a total line item of \$1,417,621. Dan Honan seconded. Michelle Embree Ku asked why the \$20,000 increase which is 1.4% was reduced. Tom Long responded that the original goal was to reduce additional funds and go with level funding. There are other accounts that could be leveraged as opposed to tax payer dollars. Ryan Knapp amended the motion on the floor to change the number to \$1,327,231 reflecting contributions to Outside Agencies to \$1,301,469. Phil Carroll seconded. Ryan Knapp explained that last year they had conversations about outside agency's contributions with fund balances. This is a difficult time with the reevaluations. The town supports the CIP process for the roof project. The town is already taking care of a large project. He would like to see the fund balance spent down for operations. The amended motion reduces the amount the BOF recommended to CH Booth Library by \$100,000.

Doug Lord, Director of CH Booth Library made comments. He articulated that he was not asked to come to present, this is just public comment. Asked that they do not cut the library. The more you invest in the library, the more return you will get. Last year they spent \$109,000 from reserves and they anticipate the same this year. Much of the fund balance is restricted.

Rose Marie Zaharek, President of the Library Board of Trustees, she cares about the town library and hopes they do to. She asked that the LC support their budget.
Motion passes 7 YES to 4 NO (Chris Gardner, Honan, Long, Embree Ku)

Lisa Kessler moved to reduce the salt line item by \$60,000. Ryan Knapp seconded. All in favor. Lisa Kessler moved to reduce the street light line item by \$3,500. Phil Carroll seconded, all in favor.

Michelle Embree Ku moved to reduce the contingency line item by \$50,000, Phil Carroll seconded.
Michelle Embree Ku explained that the town appreciates the flexibility of the budget and there is saving from staff turnover. First Rosenthal responded that we have had outside salary saving but not sure that we will have the same luxury in saving. Contingency was \$250,000 when he took office, and he has trimmed it to \$115,000. Rating agencies do look at contingency, but they do look negatively at using capital nonrecurring to fill holes in the budget. There are also 2 pending labor contracts. Motions fails 9 NO to 2 YES (Chris Gardner, Embree Ku).

Charles Gardner moved the amended budget for the BOS in the amount of \$47,526,140 for the 23/24 fiscal year. Phil Carroll seconded. Motion passes 9 YES to 2 NO (Chris Gardner, Embree Ku).

Charles Gardner moved to set the amended BOS and BOE budget at \$132,595,791 and allow the Finance Director to adjust for any rounding errors. Ryan Knapp seconded. Passes 9 YES to 2 NO (Chris Gardner, Embree Ku).

Announcements - None

Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:10pm

*Respectfully submitted,
Arlene Miles, Clerk*

Attachments: Answers to subcommittee questions

Looking at state edisight data for our DERG, both Trumbull (85.6) and Monroe Schools (81.5) are nearby districts that are outperforming us in the Accountability Index and other metrics, but have lower Per Pupil Expenditures (PPE) at \$17,385 and \$18,225 respectively. The state has Newtown at 78.9 with a PPE of \$20,503. Recognizing this impacts not just families with children, but property values as it is considered by people looking to buy a home, where does Newtown spend more than these districts?

We believe that this budget is a step in the right direction as it provides excellent services to our community, while taking into account the fiscal stressors that are impacting our residents. Below please find the area superintendent requests.

Area Superintendent Proposed Budgets

Bethel 5.95%
Brookfield 5.78%
Easton 4.30%
Monroe 5.77%
New Fairfield 5.99%
New Milford 5.03%
Newtown 4.69%
Oxford 4.60%
Redding 5.50%
Trumbull 5.58%

Post 12/14 Newtown has invested in extensive mental health support to our families. Concurrently, our community is vigilant in regards to school safety. In turn the community has made investments in our security infrastructure and personnel that is at a higher level than our peers. We acknowledge that our overhead is higher, because we do have 7 school buildings. Five of these buildings are over 40 years old and may require more maintenance and have higher energy costs due to the age of the materials used to build these facilities.

What in this budget will help close that gap and get our district out of the bottom third in our DRG? When comparing the three towns using the Next Generation Accountability Index, the largest discrepancies between the three towns are in the areas of chronic absenteeism, physical fitness, and arts access. We are looking at ways to improve in those areas in an effort to raise our overall Index score, something we believe can and will be done.

In terms of academic achievement, as mentioned in the first set of questions the 21-22 test results are trending up in both ELA and Math. In fact, for the first time since the Next Gen Accountability Index all four of our elementary schools were recognized as Schools of Distinction for Growth. Head O'Meadow was also recognized as a School of Distinction for High

Performance indicating that its performance was in the top 10% of schools in the state. We believe that recent changes in curriculum and programming is driving improvement.

The Curriculum and Instruction budget includes funding for curriculum development, new teacher development and support, and digital learning platforms. Most importantly, the budget also includes the cost of a new comprehensive reading/language arts program K-4. We believe improvement in reading and language arts instruction will greatly impact improved outcomes.

- According to state data, Newtown's on track to graduate number has declined almost 7% from 2016 and was a trend that started before the COVID pandemic. What is being done to address this?

Indicator 7 of the Next Generation Accountability Index reports the percentage of 9th graders earning at least six full-year credits in the year. From initial implementation in 2014-15 through 2018-19, this indicator measured the percentage of 9th graders earning at least five full-year credits in the year. Effective 2021-22, a student is considered "on-track" for this indicator if they earn at least 6 credits by the end of Grade 9. This update from the original requirement of 5 credits better aligns with Connecticut General Statutes 10- 221a, which requires that students starting with the graduating class of 2023 and after must earn a minimum of 25 credits to graduate. The decrease in on track for graduation percentage is the result of a change in how the indicator is calculated and does not reflect our consistently high graduation rate.

At the High School we track all students that do not meet the minimum credit requirements to move onto the next grade. In order to be considered a sophomore, students must have successfully earned 6 credits their freshman year, followed by 12 to be considered a junior and 18 to be considered a senior. All students who fall short of these have the opportunity to catch up and matriculate at the mid year point after semester 1. Students are followed and progress update meetings are held regularly to assure that students are on track to graduate. This is evidenced by our graduation rates which are consistently over 95%.

Current 4 year graduation rates over time:

Graduates

Four-Year Graduation Rate by Year

District	District Code	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Newtown School District	0970011	94.6	96.5	96.6	97.4	96.4

Each budget year as new programs, initiatives and mandates have been added, I have asked about crowd out given instructional hours are finite (as negotiated by contract,) and during the past few years our ELA and Math scores have regressed, particularly at the elementary levels. What does this budget do to address this? Are there some initiatives that are not bearing the results as intended that could free up resources for core instruction?

As mentioned in the first set of questions the 21-22 test results are trending up in both ELA and Math. In the last two years, we have implemented new comprehensive math programs K-8. In this budget, we are including the cost of a new comprehensive reading program K-4. There are also funds to support teacher professional development that will assure high quality instructional practices that align high quality curriculum. The District is required to meet specific instructional hours requirements mandated by the CSDE. The allotment of time to core instructional content areas are in alignment with those requirements. We have also made adjustments to next year's school calendar which will further bolster instructional hours in all grades.

- How many current open or unfilled positions does the district have? How long have they been unfilled? What is the exposure of not having these staff members the district planned for? What is being done to address vacancies?

We currently have 5 SPED para positions posted. Because of the impending instructional para reductions, the principals have pulled the instructional para postings at this point. It is important to note that since the school year began, we have hired about 18 new paras but

have also lost 12 paras to resignations. So we have been able to hire, retention has been a bit of a challenge in this union.

We have struggled to fill our 5 BT openings this year. The Special Education Department has filled this gap with contracting out these services.

We had one recent resignation of an SLP position at HAW. The SLP will be leaving us in April and we have had the position posted. Interviews will be conducted in the near future. We have not had any prolonged openings in this union this year.

All other unions (admin, nurse, custodian, ed. personnel) and employee groups (security, NELC, therapists) are currently fully staffed and we have not had prolonged openings this year. The only other position that has been challenging to fill has been the tech support position but I am pleased to say that Dennis has made an offer to a promising candidate just this week.

Currently, many of the unfilled paraprofessionals and the behavior technician positions are embedded in Special Education Student's IEP (Individual Education Plans). These hours have been covered by teachers, administrators and building paras who are working through their planning, lunch, and duty times. In cases where the positions are specialized or no substitutes exist, we are using sources from a third party provider. The BOE is requesting a reduced number of paraprofessionals in their budget proposal to address the shortage. By reducing non special education paras, the district could use those displaced paras to cover special education para positions.

How many staff members are expected to retire? For example top step teachers retiring and new teachers earlier in their career being hired would represent a savings.

We have received 5 letters of retirement to date. I have been made aware of possibly one more that may be coming in. Historically the average number of retirements annually have been around 10 positions.

- With Transportation being an issue over the past year, I am reminded that a past superintendent was trying to bring more out placement students back into town, saving on these transportation costs and potentially being a place other districts could out place students to. We

had discussed this being a good use of all the space we have in facilities due to declining enrollment. Has this effort been abandoned? If so, could it be revisited?

With our students who are currently outplaced and those in the process, we always reach out to other districts to "ride share" whenever possible which reduces the cost. The district is currently working with Ed Advance on a regional transportation collaboration project that could take place as soon as next year. This group of five districts would work with Ed Advance to coordinate and develop additional ride-share opportunities that will lower overall transportation costs.

The district has had students return from outplacements and we always try to keep students in-house when it's appropriate. However, this decision requires a lengthy process that involves the parent's, educators, administration and sometimes an attorney.

We currently have 3-4 students enrolled into our programs each year and pay tuition.

An in house regional program could possibly reduce special education costs, but it was my understanding that there was little interest from surrounding districts. In order to create such a program, there would need to be regional support. As the fiscal climate has change, we may find a more willingness to explore this again.

Last summer I was questioned by a parent about a dumpster full of books at the Newtown Middle School the librarians had apparently "weeded." After speaking to the then superintendent it was clear that Board Policy 3260 regarding disposition of obsolete or surplus materials/equipment was not followed. What processes exist to ensure the district follows its financial policies?. What repercussions exist when they are not followed?

Legally: If a board of education adopts a policy and its agents act contrary to it, such action will likely be considered *per se* unreasonable, with the result that school officials may be liable for negligence or even violation of constitutional rights. Aside from statutory requirements, boards of education are well-advised to develop policies to guide schools officials in the daily operation of the district. A board of education has a duty to be consistent in dealing with students and parents. To do otherwise would subject the board to constitutional claims, because people have the right to equal protection of the laws from governmental agencies, such as boards of education. A written policy can be invaluable in such situations to guide administrators and to inform parents as to what the rules are.

By Contract: Certified Employees can be disciplined to the extent permitted by contract and the nature of their job responsibilities, except non-renewal or termination of a certified employee's contract shall be conducted in accordance with section 10-151 of the Connecticut General Statutes. This statutory provision sets forth the grounds and procedures for non-renewal and termination of contracts held by tenured and non-tenured staff, including the employee's right to appeal.

The District will be investigating how we can better inform our employees of our current policies. Over time, policies change, an onboarding program or an update summary of changes may help support our employees to understand the policy which governs them.

- Comments made during the last two CIP processes and the bus contract situation have given the impression the district often deals with just one vendor. The HS chillers project comes to mind. Did the district get three bids on this project? Is the district following its Purchasing Policy of getting three bids? If not, why and what justification and approvals are required to waive the policy and move forward?

The district follows all purchasing policies. The HS chiller work was performed by Trane who is under the state bid; therefore, following our purchasing policy, we were able to use them for this work.

In the case of the Reed chillers, our facilities department decided to rebuild the existing chillers instead of replacing them. This would allow us to in essence have a new rebuilt chiller for at around half the price. It was important to have a warranty or reassurance that the chiller would be rebuilt to last. Using the original manufacturer (Trane) would allow the town/district to have a warranty for the rebuilt equipment. When getting a quote for the work the district used the purchasing cooperative which is allowable under current purchasing policies.

Understanding that state law has specific requirements for Special Education services, what are the consequences if the district cannot fill the vacancies for Special Education Paraprofessionals?

The district is in compliance with services provided per a student's IEP. While the need to fill the empty paraprofessional positions is worked on daily, we have been able to get creative on providing the students with the adult support (Director, Supervisors filling in as professionals, bus aides, classroom para's, etc). However, this is not ideal as we have to pull others away from their duties.

Last year we discussed using Capital Non Recurring creating a cliff for some otherwise level funded accounts like Technology and Maintenance, and were asked not to take it away all at once as it gives the false appearance of a spending increase. If this and/or future Councils were to transition away from using Capital Non Recurring in this way, what would an ideal phase out look like to the Board of Ed?

The moving of these line items from the Board of Education LEA to the Capital Non-Recurring line item has been very much appreciated. It has been a synergistic process, as the Board of Education and the town taxpayers have benefited. The process in essence keeps the Minimum Budget Requirement lower, which results in the MBR starting at a lower rate the following year. Understanding that the Capital Non-Recurring fund is not limitless, we have presented a BOE budget that has all of these projects included. However, the BoF has made a recommendation that these costs be removed from the BoE budget.

In terms of a plan, this would be a much larger discussion between the Boards. Cooperatively, the tri boards could work together to find a plan that is in the best interest of our community.

The BOE has sole line item authority of it's budget, and the BOF and LC can only reduce the top line number. That said, how are the Capital Non Recurring adjustments handled procedurally? Does the Board of Ed need to approve them as it is their discretion?

The capital non-recurring is a separate fund; however, handled in the same manner as all costs and must go through the requisition process and require quotes if over \$5,000.

In the past ten years district enrollment is down 1,214 students from 5,126 to 3,912 and had been declining before that. This mirrors population trends as the late 90/early 2000s bubble moves through and our population demographics balance out with more seniors and young adults. Have the projections been updated with the latest Census data which shows minor growth in Newtown projected over the next ten years? Are our overhead costs the reason our PPE is higher than several of our peers?

Yes, this year we received updated enrollment projections from Peter Prowda and NESDEC. Each year we update our enrollment projections using outside consultants as well as an internal review based on historical trends. Both consultant projections show a steady growth of students in the next ten years. This budget was built on our internal projection while comparing to our consultants as well as historical data. We believe this process is a more accurate and more conservative approach to school staffing and class sizes.

What drives the decision to have such low class sizes in some schools? 13 per class with 4 staff as opposed to 17/18 with 3? Other grades have 20 per class.

The District adheres to class size guidelines outlined in our policies and strives to have balanced classes when possible. Unfortunately, imbalance can occur based on the number of students in a particular grade within a school. For example, if 65 Kindergartners register in a school and our guideline is 18, we will need 4 teachers and class sizes will be approximately 16. If 58 students register, we will still need 4 teachers to meet our guidelines, but that will bring the number of students per class down to 14 or 15. Other factors that may be considered include limiting disruption to staffing. For example, there may be a smaller group that moves through but there are larger classes ahead and behind that one cohort. In such a situation, rather than cut a teacher and have to rehire the next year, the decision may be made to go with a smaller class size for that one year. Lastly, numbers alone do not always indicate the needs of a specific cohort. Certainly numbers are the first thing that we look at. But sometimes there are significant needs in a specific cohort that warrant smaller class size.

- Page 170 shows 2022-23 current Transportation spend just shy of 2022-23 budgeted. What is the projected final number for 2022-23 transportation? Where has the funding for coach buses for athletic transportation come from?

As of February, we are anticipating a balance; however, it's still early in the year and there are many factors that could adjust this balance.

At this time, the funding of the additional coach buses is still within our budget. However, if needed, the additional costs could come from the balance in our regular in-district transportation.

Page 170 shows Newtown running 6 fewer buses, which results in longer ride times. Talking to drivers, a Two Tier System dissuades candidates from working here when they can get more paid hours in other districts, hence why we have lost so many. It also means Newtown needs more drivers running less routes, resulting in more positions to fill. This was exposed during the past year to the frustration of many parents and at the cost of lost instructional time. Given the district has reduced routes, is there a consideration to go back to a Three Tier amidst the ongoing staffing issues? Why or why not?

The BOE approved a two tier bussing system after over two years of extensive science-based research. According to the CDC, not getting enough sleep is common among high school students and is associated with several health risks including being overweight, drinking alcohol, smoking tobacco, and using drugs, as well as poor academic performance. One of the reasons adolescents do not get enough sleep is early school start times. The American Academy of Pediatrics has recommended that middle and high schools start at 8:30 a.m. or later to give students the opportunity to get the amount of sleep they need, but most American adolescents start school too early. Moving back to a 3 tier system and keeping the High School as a late start time would mean that the high school would need to align sports, activities and magnet school start times. An early start time, according to medical experts, would be detrimental to

student learning.

Consequently, we recognize that a three tier system could help support our drivers and stabilize a bus driver shortage. The three tier discussion is certainly on the radar of the BOE, understanding that this would be a long term project as the same care and analysis would need to be taken to evaluate the change.

Page 155 of the BOE Budget Book indicates that there is a \$22,288 increase requested for Security Staff and that this includes an increase in hours for school security guards who are assigned to traffic duty. Is this due to temporary changes in traffic patterns, or will this be a longer term shift?

In October 2020, the Newtown Police Department (NPD/ Captain Chris Vanghale) notified the Superintendent (Lorrie Rodrigue) and the Director of Security (Mark Pompano) that the NPD would no longer employ or attempt to hire traffic agents to perform traffic duties on the public streets in front of Newtown High School (Berkshire Road), Newtown Middle School (Queen Street), and Hawley School (Church Hill Road), during the morning arrival and afternoon dismissal times. The NPD strongly suggested that the BOE utilize our school security officers (ASSO & SSO) to perform these traffic duties going forward, or hire an outside contractor (e.g. Flagger company) to handle school-related traffic. The NPD did agree to assist the BOE by utilizing patrol units (only when available) to perform traffic duties for a few weeks until the BOE had the ASSO/SSOs in place or an outside contractor was hired.

The DOS contacted three traffic agent contractors, and the estimated cost for them to provide traffic agents (3 agents x 182 days x 4 hours per day) was upwards of \$45,000 per school year. The BOE (through the DOS) was able to secure three school security officers (2 ASSO, 1 SSO) with experience in directing vehicular traffic, to fill the positions vacated by the NPD at NHS, NMS, and HAW, by offering a monetary stipend in addition to their hourly salary. By taking this on, the BOE also assumed the costs of annually outfitting the ASSO/SSO (all weather gear, reflective vests, winter gloves, boots, reflective gloves, etc.) to perform these traffic agent duties.



Michelle Embree Ku <michelleku.newtown@gmail.com>

Muni Ops Question

5 messages

Michelle Embree Ku <michelleku.newtown@gmail.com>

Sat, Mar 25, 2023 at 8:50 PM

To: Jeffrey Capeci <jeff@thecapecis.com>

Hi Jeff. I missed the opportunity to submit questions about Muni Ops through the committee. Would it be possible to discuss this question with the Council?

Energy costs are going up throughout the budget. This is understandable in light of increased costs particularly for electricity. How are changes in electricity pricing affecting our Virtual Net Metering program?

If so, should I give Dan a heads-up?

Thank you,

Michelle

Jeffrey Capeci <Jeff@thecapecis.com>

Sat, Mar 25, 2023 at 8:57 PM

Reply-To: Jeffrey Capeci <Jeff@thecapecis.com>

To: Michelle Embree Ku <michelleku.newtown@gmail.com>

Michelle,

I will get an answer for you.

Jeff

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)

[Quoted text hidden]

Michelle Embree Ku <michelleku.newtown@gmail.com>

Sat, Mar 25, 2023 at 9:04 PM

To: Jeffrey Capeci <Jeff@thecapecis.com>

Thank you!

[Quoted text hidden]

Jeffrey Capeci <Jeff@thecapecis.com>

Wed, Mar 29, 2023 at 8:09 PM

Reply-To: Jeffrey Capeci <Jeff@thecapecis.com>

To: Fred Hurley <fred.hurley@newtown-ct.gov>

Cc: Michelle Ku <michelleku.newtown@gmail.com>, Dan Rosenthal <dan.rosenthal@newtown-ct.gov>

Hi Fred,

Can you answer Michelle's question regarding virtual net metering?

Thanks,
Jeff

[Quoted text hidden]

Fred Hurley <fred.hurley@newtown-ct.gov>

Thu, Mar 30, 2023 at 10:39 AM

To: Jeffrey Capeci <Jeff@thecapecis.com>

Cc: Michelle Ku <michelleku.newtown@gmail.com>, Dan Rosenthal <dan.rosenthal@newtown-ct.gov>

Hello Everyone,

The increase in Rate 30 also increases the savings from VNM which helps to soften or hedge those increases. It does not completely offset the increases from Eversource. The more understandable part of this is that while we have no control over transmission and delivery increases from Eversource. The supply component is a fixed price which helps to keep the overall increase down from what it would be if Eversource was our supplier. Constellation is our supplier, as well as for the BOE. We are coming up to the end of a 3 year fixed contract for supply which for the Town is \$.0725 per KWH thru the end of this calendar year or the first half of the next budget. We have new fixed price contracts in place with Constellation that covers the last half of next year's budget at \$.1165 per KWH. Higher but cheap compared to the Eversource offering for supply at \$.21 per KWH.. It is this \$.044 per KWH increase in the second half of the next budget which we had to factor in.. Averaging over the entire budget that is a \$.022 increase for supply for the year. So, yes the rise in rate 30 will increase the credits rolling in from VNM but these other factors will still create a need to increase the budget.

Hopefully this answers the questions.

Best regards,

Fred Hurley

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