

Appleton Budget Committee March 16, 2022

Meeting held via Zoom

Committee Members present:

Bob Bocko-

Fred Bucklin-

Ed Carroll-

Rebecca Diaz-

Bill Fiegenger-

Mary Kate Moody-

Tim Peabody-

Ken Ward-

Linda Wyler-

Missing members: None

Selectboard members:

Peter Beckett

Lori Costigan

Also present:

Kate Clark, Superintendent

Susan Stilwell, Principal

School committee member, Elizabeth Grierson

Than Porter, Technology

Chris Bissonette day time facilities

Meeting called to order at 6:03

Minutes from 3/9/22 reviewed

Motion to accepted as presented, 2<sup>nd</sup>

Bob Bocko-Yes

Fred Bucklin-Yes

Ed Carroll-Yes

Rebecca Diaz-Yes

Bill Fiegenger-Yes

Mary Kate Moody-Yes

Tim Peabody-Yes

Ken Ward-Yes

Linda Wyler-Yes

Old Business: The select Board has not yet offered an amount to propose for the off-setting of taxes. PB requested that the B/C meet again next week for this and for additional discussion around Provider Agencies as another one came forward recently.

School Committee has updated the budget since last B/C meeting.

Line 101 was reduced when formula was corrected.

Line 204 Computer Technology. Than Porter has an 'erate' grant to help reduce the laptop rate.

Capitol Reserve split the pre-offered \$50,000 between two separate accounts one being fuel stabilization. Will this be a warrant? Yes, according to SS. \$20,000 was determined by doubling bus fuel plus \$10,000 for building fuel.

New totals are 6.9% and 3.9% without Pre-K.

Line 12 Cost to Taxpayers is now 9.5%

Discussion about State Statutes with Kate Clark (KC). 70% of budget must be for first 3 cost centers. Clarification: Regular Instruction, Special Education and Other Instruction. Should Student Support Services should be part of this statute? Yes, KC. Career and Tech does not apply due to age of students. KC said the statute is sufficiently vague. SS included Co and Extra Curricular along with Student and Staff support to get 70%. Currently 66% with just first 3 cost centers. KC stated that the State has never flagged it. Does that make it right? Can we get clarification? KC said auditor is OK with this format. So, if 70% is not in core cost centers does this impact our state funding? Unknown. KC asked the state for a list but was provided just the statute. Was auditor asked directly? Yes (KC).

### **Student and Support Staff**

Lines 179-187 Library is a reduction due to contracting out the service. Students to be bussed to town library. Is it all set? SS met with Tina and Trudy at the Library and there are still details to work out but in concept "good to go". One year collaboration. Each student every other week. 6 hours of support from the town librarian. \$5,000 built in for transportation. B/C member expressed concerns about the

lack of this resource being on AVS campus. SS expressed the challenges of Covid-19 and staffing. Comments made about the beauty of the town library and the underutilization of the building.

### *Technology*

Security System for the school network, is there a plan for the future to address this? Sensitive information contained in school files.

Than Porter was invited to speak about System Network Security. Will it be a requirement? The plan would be to stay ahead of it according to Than. Much of the use by students is done through Google and UMAINE. School based fire walls keep them secure at the level needed. Question about use at home of school iPads, can sensitive school data be accessed? TP responded that the iPads are limited on school network. No access to a data base.

Line 193 Increase

Lines 201-202 new item due to a clean-up/separation in this cost center at the recommendation of the bookkeeper. 201 is PowerSchool and communications. 202 is tools for managing technology. Moved out of line 210.

Line 204 Substantial Increase- Corrected this week due to grant to cover 7-8 grade laptops. Still increase for 6<sup>th</sup> grade laptops.

Line 205 Travel expenses due to Power School University Training in Boston. Cost shared with Hope. Line 222 covers some of this too.

Lines 208 & 210 decreases- See lines 201-202

Instructional Staff Training no increase

Line 226 Health Insurance

### **System Administration**

Line 245 Auditor fee increase. Comment made on lack of timeliness last year by the auditor. Improvement this year. KC noted federal funds have required town and school audit be combined. KC noted that the auditor has been more responsive to questions this year.

Line 241 Stipends to committee members.

Line 249 Dues and Fees increase in membership in Maine School Management and School Board association.

Appleton % of Union 69 going down

Line 255 Explanation is that the office staff were being underpaid for work and education levels. Offset by the decrease in the Special Education director retiring and the payout of sick days.

## **School Administration**

Line 261 what year of the principal's contract? Contract extended to 2025.

Line 263 % increase for office clerk 4 hours a day. Past two years had additional hours already. SS stated that the replacement person came in a high wage. It was 2 hours per day a few years ago. Does the school really need this? SS "absolutely" the secretary was working 60 hours and only billing 40. She is past retirement age and is back to working 40 hours a week. She does the billing and reporting to the state, a very time-consuming job.

Line 264 What is the benefit? Two adult health insurance. Noted that this year school pays 85% and staff pay 15% and increase from 80/20 last year.

KC notes that Drummond Woodsum attorneys are concerned about insurance increases that could happen.

B/C member voiced concerns about a contracted insurance item being increased and the town has to pay the premium. Another member also voiced concerns. Reflecting an increase in salary might be a better option for residents since health insurance is a wild card. KC acknowledged the comments and made reference to the challenges of negotiations. Last year salary increases were due to State minimum. Salary increases were still lower than other school communities. Negotiations will start again in January 2024. B/C member encouraged all to attend school committee meetings, especially with the turn-over of committee members. B/C commented that health insurance for staff is fine but offering family plan is tough on a budget.

## **Transportation**

Line 284 is \$11,000 going to be enough due to recent increase in fuel? Year to date is inline. This will be supported by the \$20,000 in reserve. Comment made that a reserve is a smart option.

Line 285 is reduced because of one less special education transportation cost. Do we look at alternative each year? (SS)Yes but difficult to staff this.

Special Needs transportation has reduced.

## **Facilities and Maintenance**

Line 291 Increase custodial as three custodians have been hired and left. Each at various pay rates.

Line 293 Health insurance decrease? Person with a high insurance plan has left.

Currently have a day custodian but looking for a new night staff.

Line 301 is this a plowing contract? Is it bid annually? Is sanding is done by the town? Out to bid and the one bid was \$17,000. ARC will do it for \$6,000. Sanding is paid separately to the town.

Line 313 Heating Fuel; \$1.99 gallon this past year but expect \$3 gallon. Maritime Energy. Not locked in for next year. There is a fuel reserve.

314 is fuel for tractor, lawn mower and generator.

315 Not in last years budget. Replaced computer modular for heating and ventilation for over \$6,000. Floor Scrubber repair was \$2,800. Concerns by B/C member about leaving this as miscellaneous. SS talked about moving this to the repair line.

Long Term Maintenance plan, priorities, past work completed. Bottom of page 6 has reserve account to cover facilities. Last line page 7 proposal to move unallocated funds to facilities account. There is a school facilities committee. SS noted that Cordia Assessment (5 years ago) recommended projects that led to the bond to pay for ventilation. The roof will need to be replaced in the next 5 or so years. Estimated at \$400,000. \$112,000 currently in Capital reserve. Old roof had stones current roof is just rubber without stone.

Line 316 for replacement tractor. This is one sixth of the total cost. This could be payment number one on a six-year lease. It may be a lease to own to meet municipality finance plans. A school cannot buy a tractor outright. A bank loan is another option.

Line 317 is Reserve amount. Warrant article to move \$30,000 from balance to this account.

### **Debt Service**

Discussion about separating principal versus interest. This covers the bond from several years ago. Approximately 7 more years to go.

### **Other Expenditures**

Line 329 increase in both salary and the number of hours. Last year Covid funds covered some of this.

Line 330 Health Insurance

Line 332 Is the school charging for food? No, the state is paying for 2 meals a day. We need to account for these tallies, and this is the fee. Free for everyone is new this year. Unknown if it will continue.

PB asked what is the other money for food service used for? SS explained that there are reimbursements to the town but this budget only pays half of the salary and the other half comes from state and fed funds. KC noted that not all 3 school in Union 69 do it the same way.

Additional Information discussed: Page 7 is historical information; \$350,000 unallocated funds and \$200,000 was applied to 21-22.

Audit not yet complete to give accurate numbers.

Proposal to take \$100,000 to apply to 22-23 to reduce taxpayers amount and \$30,000 to Capitol and use \$20,000 to create a fuel reserve account. These will be warrant articles.

Line 10 does show these funds.

Line 15 is EPS. Gifted and Talented is reimbursed. Does this show up in line 15? Yes, according to SS. Pre-K is reimbursed.

Total number of students for this budget year is 119. Last year was 120. Expecting two more in April to enroll. 14 additional possible returns who left because of Covid and masking to reenroll. Are there any concurrent low enrollment classrooms that could be combined? SS commented that it is not a good educational practice. Current smallest class is 2<sup>nd</sup> grade with 8 students. Student count trend is an average of 137.

Another request by B/C member was made to have year to date numbers available on one document. Central office is working on this.

Comment made that audit numbers remains years behind.

Total amount 3,204,772 is a 6.9% increase (including Pre-K)

A thank you was offered to the school committee, principal and superintendent. Kate Clark returned the thanks for due diligence and insights by the B/C. A thank you was also given to the select board. Peter Beckett returned the thanks.

Public Comment time was offered, no comment.

Next meeting 3/23 at 6 pm

B/C member made a comment about concerns of the consistent increase in the school budget without the tax base increasing. Another member agreed. Value of education was stressed as important. Cost of per student public education versus Christian education per student cost were compared. B/C member noted an increase of less than inflation last year (minus Pre-K). Long term planning is a good thing. Remember that we are making recommendations, and this goes to town meeting for the final vote. Are other solutions for education being discussed? There is always talk but the select board has no power over the school. The history of consolidation was mentioned.

Motion to adjourn 9:10

All in favor

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Kate Moody