

Wakefield Budget Committee Meeting

November 15, 2021

Approved

Members present: Jerry O'Connor, Relf Fogg, Connie Twombly, Howie Knight, Tom Daniels, Priscilla Colbath, Dave Mankus and Denny Miller, Paul Romano and Elizabeth Connor

School Board present: Bob Ouellette

School Administration: Pamela Stiles and Kristen White

Department Head: Joe Williams

Public Present: Jim Miller with Clearview Community TV

Mr. O'Connor opened up the Budget Committee meeting at 6:30 and told Mrs. Stiles how much the Committee appreciated the clear concise formatted information she provided. Mr. Miller appreciated getting the budget in advance of the meeting.

Mrs. Stiles gave the highlights and summaries and a general overview of the School Board's budget. This budget is \$37,000 less than the current operating budget. There is a 3.3% increase to the high school tuition for close to a \$400,000 increase next year. They took a close look at Special Ed and there is a decrease in that function to meet student needs. Administrative salaries have increased partly because what was budgeted last year was lower than the actual hiring amount. Health premiums are in and we estimated a 5% increase and we just got word that there is a 4.9% increase and dental is a 1.5% decrease.

She said they are restructuring at the SAU. Staff, roles and their salaries are listed next. Health and dental benefits costs, and the number of people are also listed. She feels they have a good handle on the enrollment for high school tuition. Special Ed was very carefully looked at by Mrs. Kebler and herself and feel they have really landed on something that will benefit the school, children and families. CIP, trusts, grants and what the grant money is being spent on is next in the book. The two CBA's are included. Lastly, the Operation Budget that has been approved 5-0 by the School Board.

Mr. O'Connor said he appreciated the staff and their responsibilities list.

1100 Regular Education

Mrs. Stiles said this function is up because of high school tuition at \$387,000. That line is actually more than the increase in that entire function. Mr. Daniels asked about the substitute teacher line. He said we budgeted for \$20,000 for want versus need. Mrs. Stiles disagreed with that. He said a substitute teacher will be added for \$33,000 which would cost \$20,000 plus benefits and we don't see this person working full time. Mrs. Stiles explained that she/he would be permanent and substituting every day. Mr. Daniels said it would be costing us an additional \$20,000 to have a permanent substitute. Mrs. Stiles said that is correct and explained the benefits of having an in-house person in every day. The consistency this person could supply who knows

the school, kids, staff and procedures is a huge plus. Trying to find different subs daily for a teacher that will be out for a while isn't very effective educationally. We did shave off some of the day-to-day costs from that sub line to offset that cost. Mr. Romano asked if she had difficulty finding subs. Mrs. Stiles said tremendous difficulty. She gave an example of the loss of the health teacher who is out because of Covid and having to piece that class together day by day. A sub needs a high school education but she would look for someone that has teacher credentials for an in-house sub. Mr. Daniels said essentially, you're hiring one more teacher than you need. Mrs. Stiles explained she was hiring as sub. Mr. Daniels said you will pay this person based on a contracted rate for a teacher. Mrs. Stiles said it will be long term sub pay. He asked what's the difference between a long term sub and a teacher. Mrs. Stiles said a sub gets paid differently than a teacher she would be paid at the lowest teacher position. Mrs. Colbath said a long term sub doesn't have to be certified and is not part of the Collective Bargaining Unit.

Mr. Mankus made a motion, seconded by Mr. Romano to approve Function 1100 for \$5,687,649.38. (Vote 9-1)

1200 Special Education

Ms. Conner asked, how were you able to bring that function down that much? Mrs. Stiles replied that there was great success with the ten seat Partner Program and that will be down to a seven seat program next year based on need. Some of that funding will be coming from the IDEA grant. Taking a look at each students needs the proposed staffing is what we will need for next year. She said we also get a grant for preschool. Mr. Miller thanked her for taking a good hard look at this function. He said he wasn't happy with the increase over the years as we have no control over this and can't even ask questions. Mrs. Stiles said they have taken a look at the services Paul School can offer versus the high school as we have to pay additional for those services so this year, we've added school psychologist to our grant so they're doing the testing for the high school and saving \$5,000

Mr. Miller made a motion, seconded by Mr. Knight, to move the 1200 function. (Vote 10-0)

1410 Co-Curricular Activities

Mr. Knight made a motion, seconded by Mr. Romano, to move the 1410 function. (Vote 10-0)

1420 Athletics

Mrs. Miller made a motion, seconded by Mr. Knight, to move the 1420 function. (Vote 10-0)

1430 Summer School

Mr. Miller made a motion, seconded by Mr. Knight, to move the 1430 function. (Vote 10-0)

Mrs. Stiles listed the staff and items that were being paid from grants. Mr. Knight asked what happens to staff paid by grants? Mrs. Stiles said the people that have been hired know at the end of the grant the position goes away. These are funds to offset the effects of Covid and at the end of the two and three year grants we should be able to mitigate the impact and not need the positions. Mr. Daniels asked for clarification on the grant page. Mrs. Stiles explained that these are multi-year grants so are listed correctly.

2110 Truant Officer

Mr. Miller made a motion, seconded by Mr. Knight, to move function 2110. (Vote 10-0)

2120 Guidance/Social Worker

Mr. Miller asked how many people are in this function? Mrs. Stiles said two

Mr. Romano made a motion, seconded by Mr. Miller to move function 2120. (Vote 10-0)

2130 Nurse

Mr. Miller made a motion, seconded by Mr. Knight, to move function 2130. (Vote 10-0)

2150 Speech

Mr. Miller made a motion, seconded by Mr. Knight, to approve function 2150. (Vote 10-0)

2210 Professional Development

Mr. Knight asked if this amount was spent last year. Mrs. Stiles said no and she would like to see it lowered but contractually it has to be budgeted for .

Mrs. Colbath made a motion, seconded by Mr. Miller, to approve function 2210. (Vote 10-0)

2220 Library

Mr. Daniels asked why line 10 had such a large increase. Mrs. Stiles said there was an increase for the half time person as she is also doing some technology work managing the one to one device .

Mr. Knight made a motion, seconded by Mr. Miller, to approve function 2220. (Vote 10-0)

2310 School Board

Mr. Knight asked why the background checks line increased. Mrs. Stiles replied that this is the funds to fingerprint staff and volunteers and to cover the actuals of a large turnover .

Mr. Daniels made a motion, seconded by Mr. Knight, to approve function 2310. (Vote 10-0)

2320 SAU Administration Expense

Mr. Fogg asked about adding funds to this function for something the full Board has not addressed. It was decided that monies could be added at the next meeting when warrant articles will be addressed. Mr. Knight said when he looked at this budget, he made comparisons between actuals and next years budget. Mr. Daniels said we had a full time Superintendent and a part time BA in the budget and now we have a part time Superintendent and a full time BA but now we are going to change that and have a part time Superintendent, part time Financial Manager and augment that with a \$45,000 Administrative Executive Assistant. Mrs. Colbath said she was going to say something she has never said before, with this trust the administration. She said she's School Board Secretary and what Mrs. Stiles says is needed, is needed.

Mr. Knight made a motion, seconded by Mr. Romano, to approve function 2320. (Vote 10-0)

2410 Principal

Mr. Knight asked about the software line. Mrs. Stiles said they currently have PowerSchool. It is unreliable, not user friendly and hard to manage. The principal would like to move to a program called Infinite Campus which is easier for teachers and parents. They buy the package and there is a yearly annual fee. Mrs. Twombly asked if we have a full time assistant principal. Mrs. Stiles said we do. Ms. Conner asked how the position changed from part time to full time last year. Mrs. Stiles said the decision was made last spring and the job became assistant principal/curriculum liaison. This is true in many of the positions because the budgeted amount is so different than the actual salary.

Mr. Romano made a motion, seconded by Mr. Knight, to approve function 2410. (Vote 10-0)

2510 Fiscal Services

Mr. Daniels asked for a breakdown of the Financial Manager positions salary. Mrs. Stiles explained that last year this position was budgeted for \$61,000. The actual salary of the person in the job right now is \$80,000 so we based the \$49,200 on the current salary. Ms. Conner asked why the increase in auditor costs? Mrs. Stiles said because the school received more than the limit of \$750,000 in grant money for a regular audit, we need to do what's called a single audit which requires more detail and more paperwork.

Mr. Romano made a motion, seconded by Mr. Knight, to approve function 2510. (Vote 10-0)

2610 Operations/Maintenance

Mrs. Twombly asked if the Town still plows out the school. Mrs. Stiles said they do. Mr. Daniels asked if the increase in the Facilities Managers salary is enough. Mrs. Stiles said she doesn't believe this is a stopping point but increases will be in reasonable chunks. We are also

looking at ways to compensate, through grants, the work that's being done. Next year you may see an adjustment to increase that amount. Mr. Daniels said the proposed budget will be lower than the default budget and this might be the year to increase that line. You have \$4,900 this year and if you add \$4,900 next year it might be better to do it in one large chunk this year. Mrs. Stiles said if the Board wants to adjust that we will bring it back to the Committee.

Mr. Knight asked what the special project was that's in this year's budget but not next years? Mrs. Stiles said that was the fire panel. HVAC control will be done next year and will be done through the grant so it's not in the budget.

Mr. Romano made a motion, seconded by Mr. Knight, to approve function 2610. (Vote 10-0)

2721 Regular Student Transportation

Mrs. Stiles said we are talking about purchasing a bus. Mr. Knight said you should. Maintenance is being done regularly. The Board will be talking tomorrow night about purchasing a bus. Cressy has already been down to look at the two buses that they will trade in. Mrs. Twombly asked if there was a bus coordinator. Mrs. Stiles replied she has been doing a lot of bus coordinating and there are two lead drivers helping to do it all right now as well. The new Executive Assistant will be doing all this next year.

Mr. Knight made a motion, seconded by Mr. Romano, to approve function 2721. (Vote 10-0)

2722 Special Ed Transportation

Mr. Miller made a motion, seconded by Mr. Romano, to approve function 2722. (Vote 10-0)

2724 Athletics Transportation

Mr. Knight made a motion, seconded by Mr. Miller, to approve function 2724. (Vote 10-0)

2725 Field Trip/ Co-Curriculum Student Transportation

Mr. Knight made a motion, seconded by Mr. Romano, to approve function 2725. (Vote 10-0)

2820 Technology

Mr. Daniels made a motion, seconded by Mr. Knight, to approve function 2820. (Vote 10-0)

2900 Other Benefits

Mr. Knight made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Colbath, to approve function 2900. (Vote 10-0)

Operating Budget Total

\$10,728,148.64 A reduction of (\$37,387.36)

Mr. Miller mentioned the reduction of the Health Teacher position by the School Board several years ago then at deliberative session teachers voted to put that position back in the budget. He wondered why that position still exists. Mrs. Stiles said that health teacher is a required position. Mr. Daniels asked if there was a tuition for the Pre-K program. Mrs. Stiles said there is not. The school gets \$7,000 in grant money for the program. He also asked about the teacher turnover last year. There are four new out of the six Middle School teachers, fourth and fifth grade there is one, in K-3 there are three. Mr. Daniels said when you look at how much our teachers are being paid I myself don't know why they do it. He feels it's terribly low. He believes that is contributing to the turnover. Mr. Mankus asked about the Freedom Fund. Mrs. Stiles said this has not affected our school. Mr. Knight said working at the food pantry and seeing people who can't afford health insurance he has a problem with the Para's contract and the taxpayers paying for a Cadillac plan. He's expressed this feeling year after year.

Mr. Knight made a motion, seconded by Mr. Miller, to approve the Operating Budget of \$10,728,148.64. (Vote 10-0)

Mrs. Stiles asked to readdress the in-house sub position, what she neglected to say is that next year they are anticipating two Kindergarten classes instead of three which will require only two of the three regular ed paras, so we would make that position into the in-house sub so there will not be an addition to staff.

Minutes

Mr. Miller made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Twombly, to approve the Town/Budget Committee minutes of 11-3-21. (Vote 8-0-2)

Mr. Romano made a motion, seconded by Mr. Daniels, to adjourn the meeting at 7:46. (Vote 10-0) The next Budget Committee Meeting will be sometime in December for Warrant Articles.

Respectfully submitted for approval at the next Budget Committee meeting,

Priscilla Colbath
Secretary Pro Temp