

Wakefield Budget Committee Meeting
September 7, 2022
Approved

Members present: Jerry O'Connor, Howie Knight, Tom Daniels, Priscilla Colbath, Dave Mankus, Denny Miller, Bob Ouellette, Marc Taliaferro, Ken Fifield and John Parker

School Board present: Brennan Peaslee

School Administration: Superintendent Anne Kebler

Department Head: Joe Williams

Public Present: Max Gehring and Michelle Keating with Clearview Community TV

Mr. O'Connor opened the meeting at 7:15 and asked Superintendent Kebler to come forward.

Mrs. Kebler said we hired Frank Markiewicz remotely for two days a week as our BA. He comes to the office two days a month. Mr. O'Connor said the end of the year report shows a balance of \$115,876.17. Mr. Knight asked if any of the ESSER Funds were reflected in this report. Mrs. Kebler said it's just the operating budget. Mrs. Kebler explained that ESSER 1 is closed, all that money has been spent. ESSER 2, the budgeted amount is a little less than the allocated amount and it closes the end of 2023. ESSER 3 has over \$400,000 and goes to 2024.

There are items in ESSER that have not been realized like staffing. They had a hard time staffing this year. She said they were unable to hire a third and sixth grade teacher but are able to staff all classrooms.

Mrs. Kebler hopes to offset the budget with ESSER Funds. They had a lot to clean up this summer, grants and foodservice being two so most of the work done by the BA was to get those things taken care of.

Mr. Daniels asked if Mrs. Kebler has adequately budgeted this year for the lines that were over last year or are we going to get a surprise again? Mrs. Kebler said the 2022/23 budget is very tight. Mrs. Stiles developed a tight budget and we are fortunate to have the ESSER Grants especially in Special Ed. It's very unusual to have a 16% decrease in those lines. We also received extra IDEA money because of Covid so we're using that money to cover expenses. She feels the budget is looking pretty good and having previously worked with Mr. Markiewicz he will let her know if the budget needs to be frozen. Mrs. Colbath said she thinks some of the lines are budgeted low but they'll be ok because of the ESSER Funds and thinks next year will be a little different in her opinion. Mrs. Kebler said stipends have gone to people for different things and when ESSER goes away we will have to figure out how that will go into our budget.

Mr. Mankus asked if there is an increase in enrollment given the increase in population. Mrs. Kebler said it has stayed pretty level. There are twelve children being homeschooled. Mr. Miller asked what we supply to the homeschoolers. Mrs. Kebler answered that we don't supply anything. When a homeschooler reached 12th grade, they need to supply a portfolio to the state but they are not assessed each year. Mr. Miller asked if we know the cost per high school student next year. Mrs. Kebler said we haven't received that yet but has no reason to believe that it will be a huge increase. Mr. O'Connor asked if things have gone back to normal. Mrs. Kebler said

pretty much. She said we have been fortunate to get three or four experienced teachers this year. Mr. Markiewicz expects to have the final copy of the audit within the next couple of weeks. Mr. Miller said he's heard rumor that we can't get enough bus drivers and we might be selling the buses and hiring someone to transport students. Mrs. Kebler said it wouldn't be her recommendation to contract out. Right now, we have six drivers and we expect another to get her CDL soon. She said the biggest problem now is that our high school students are having to leave Spaulding ten minutes early from their last class because of the Paul School opening and closing times. That's not okay with her. She's trying to make it work so kids are in their full class. That's a priority for her. We may possibly have to contract out for special ed students who need specialized transportation. She said she can't thank Brock and his crew for all the work he did to get the new bus depot behind the school ready. It was a real partnership with the town and school. (couldn't hear Mr. Williams) Mr. Miller asked the cost to contract transport the special ed student. Mrs. Kebler doesn't have a figure yet to see if the cost is within that budget line. We are advertising for another driver and that would fix that problem if one was hired. We are also having a hard time finding support staff. Mr. Miller asked if it was a pay issue. Mrs. Kebler responded that our starting pay for paras is \$12.38 an hour. She said the surrounding districts are paying \$15.00 an hour. Bus drivers start at \$19.00 an hour.

Mr. Miller asked, when the grants run out what addition position will we need to budget for. Mrs. Colbath said when the grant runs out the position ends unless the school finds that need that position and budgets for it. Mrs. Kebler told the Committee that the school has two positions paid for by the ESSER Grant because of the mental health issues from recent events and that they don't believe they will have the need for them next year. We will look more carefully at the second guidance counselor if it benefits the school. ESSER Funds are being used for stipends such as covering duties, teacher prep time, Paras covering classes because of being short staffed. She believes last year the school paid about \$50,000 in stipends. Stipends are in both CBA's so we will have to look at covering that.

Mr. Miller asked Mr. Williams to update the projects from the Warrant Articles that passed. Mr. Williams said the gym floor is complete and it came in under budget. The sidewalks are done. Baseball field and playground are completed using money from the ESSER Grant. A new scoreboard was also paid for through ESSER Funds. \$15,000 was put in an Expendable Trust Fund and we will be asking for an additional \$15,000 this March and will be done next summer. Windows, shades are complete. Three gym doors were done instead of the front doors. He would like a three bay storage building in 2016.

Mr. Miller asked about the Judy Nason Bridge. Mr. Williams said that got voted down by the voters last year. Mrs. Colbath said the additional money got voted down. There is money in that trust fund. Mr. O'Connor said about \$10,000. He said what we're looking to do now is eventually build a new two story SAU building where the white building on the edge of the parking lot. He said we need a vision and a plan. Mr. O'Connor said we usually start Capital Reserve Funds for those big projects that are out 5-10 years. The original amount for the gym floor was \$162,000 and he's at about \$154,000.

Mr. Miller asked that the school give the Budget Committee the number of students attending high school at Deliberative Session instead of the Budget Committee having to continually

request it. Mr. Miller said that when he, Mr. Knight and Mrs. Colbath did the CIP we'd have a CIP meeting and have everything on the schedule and would get into budget season and there were several items added that we know nothing about and it happened two or three years in a row. He asked if they were confident that Mr. Daniels is aware of everything? You're not going to ask for anything new during budget season? He also said in the past sometimes we get the budget package the day of the meeting which is upsetting to us so we would like it two to three days in advance. And if there's a problem than let's delay the meeting because there is a lot of material we need to review. Mrs. Kebler told him that that she agrees.

The schedule for the Budget Committee meetings with the Budget Committee will be Monday November 7th and November 29th at 6:30. The Budget Committee and school will meet some time in December for Warrant Articles review.

Mr. Knight made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Colbath, to approve the Water Precinct Minutes of 2-24-22. (Vote 7-0-3)

Mr. Knight made a motion, seconded by Mr. Miller, to adjourn the meeting at 8:00. (Vote 10-0).

Respectfully submitted for approval at the next Budget Committee meeting,

Priscilla Colbath
Secretary Pro Temp