

Frank Todisco, Board Chair called the special virtual meeting to order at 7:01p.m. Members present were Heidi Simmons, Board Secretary, Craig Esposito, Farouk Rajab, Gordon Lord and Jack Morehouse. Also present were Ana de Oliveira, Recording Secretary Dr. Van Riley, Superintendent of Schools, Mary Anne Butler, and Gary Shettle, Director of Finance. Board member absent: Alisa Morrison

Comments from Citizens Relative to the Budget -There were no comments from citizens.

2021-2022 Budget Discussion and Direction - Chairman Frank Todisco noted the purpose of the meeting was to continue budget discussion and provide additional direction based on how the Board feels. Chairman Todisco thanked Dr. Riley and the administrative team for putting the documents together that the Board was provided this afternoon. He noted he had not been able to go through all of the documents due to the timing involved, and most of the Board might be in a similar position. Dr. Riley also thanked the Cabinet and the Leadership teams, Ana de Oliveira, Gary Shettle and Mary Anne Butler for their part in preparing the budget documents. Dr. Riley noted that several things happened this week that changed the perspective on our budget. Two items that impacted were the funds received from the CARES Act 2 and information received from Brown and Brown and the town with regards to health benefits. He explained the CARES Act 2 funding, suggesting those funds be kept separate from the operating budget because those funds can only be used for certain COVID-19 related items. He recommended separating out of the general operating budget the summer school funding of \$352,600, custodial staff for additional cleaning of \$121,478 and new programs/staffing for next school year of \$331,287 moving them to the CARES Act 2 funds. Dr. Riley noted that those items would reduce the operating budget by over \$800,000. He also shared other items that he suggested the Board consider removing from the operating budget; OPEB money for \$125,000, look at combining bus routes and reducing two routes for \$129,000 and reducing special ed tuition by \$81,900. He explained if the Board decided to take all seven items it would reduce the operating budget down to 4.2% increase for this coming year, this a 0.95% three year average increase. Dr. Riley gave a detail explanation on the summer school program he is proposing as a three day a week for five week program. He explained the impact of eliminated two bus routes and added this would be an increase in bus run times to approximately 55 minutes each way for students. This is a money saving item but noted the Board might want to think about this option. He does not suggest this cut. He spoke on the health reserve funding and how the percentage can be maintained to meet the MOU and still decrease this item. He spoke on the reduction of special ed funding and what impact outplacements had on the funding. Dr. Riley shared information on elementary projections, magnet school tuition and enrollment. He also answered Board questions that were submitted prior to the meeting.

Chairman Frank Todisco clarified that the math of 4.2% over three years is actually 1.4% as opposed to 0.95%. He confirmed this with Dr. Riley and also commented that based on his math between contractual salary increases for teachers and health insurance makes up about 75% of the budget increase, Dr. Riley concord. Chairman Todisco had dialogue with the Board and Dr. Riley regarding the historical conversations surrounding the health reserve funding to better understand background on this issue. Heidi Simmons noted her insight on the OPEB funding. Dr. Riley and Chairman Todisco further explained how the funds are managed and budgeted. The Board discussed the impact of the increase of health insurance funds on the proposed budget. Gary Shettle, Director of Finance further explained how the town budgets for this expense compared to the education budget. Chairman Todisco spoke on the discussion surrounding the health MOU and how that discussion started and why it was generated. Dr. Riley also added more information regarding the MOU. Heidi Simmons commented she feels you would need to make a projection to decide what the health reserve is going to be. She questioned how the projections were made.

Jack Morehouse had questions regarding health care and how does the fact that this year people are using a lot less health care affect the budget going forward. Gary Shettle explained the dental claims were down for the first six months. The underwriters from Anthem were projecting not necessarily in ours a 20% increase in projected claims for the upcoming year. The underwriters usually go back 12 months but are considering looking at 24 months because of the COVID-19. Craig Esposito asked if we have an estimate of how much will be left in the health insurance fund since there is underutilization. Mr. Shettle noted at this point he does not have that. Heidi Simmons questioned the way in which health insurance funds are projected compared to previous years. Gordon Lord noted he would like to attend any upcoming meeting with Brown and Brown to understand the health care better. He spoke on the global budget spreadsheet and noted would be helpful to separate the CARES Act 2 funds out and create that as one section within the spreadsheet and also be able to see what the contractual obligation items are on the spreadsheet and the net new asks. He voiced his concerns about CARES Act 2 funding and asked what happens when that funding goes away in two years, how those items will be funded. Dr. Riley explained the summer school is to have students get caught up with what they lost in the next two summers. He is not suggesting that we will need any of those items after the two years. If there is another need he will bring back at that time. The current special ed summer school and a program at the high school will still run. This summer school is an expanded one. Dr. Riley to provide Mr. Lord with an updated more segmented budget spreadsheet.

Chairman Todisco asked is there going to be some type of requirement in place for submission to the state for what we are going to use the CARES Act 2 money for. Dr. Riley explained from what he understands it will be flexible on how we spend it as long as we are using it for COVID-19 related costs and it can be put out over two years. Dr. Riley noted the Board looked like they were in agreement of separating out the CARES Act 2 funds from the operating budget and will bring back that option next week. He also asked the Board what their direction is on eliminated the two bus routes.

Jack Morehouse asked with the CARES funding why are we letting students fall so far behind and then do something on the back end with summer school. If the money is available why not have the younger kids go four days a week and do something upfront rather than try to mitigate it with summer school where many will not attend. Dr. Riley explained the rationale for the summer school program. Mr. Morehouse voiced his concern for the younger students, that they cannot stay home alone and asked if there is any way we can get more of those kids in school more days. He added child care is an issue for some and if there is any other proposals you can bring to the Board that would help with these two issues, he would be very receptive to them. Dr. Riley explained factors involved in bringing younger students in for more days, such as staffing needs, space and splitting of classroom and students mid-year. Mr. Morehouse noted the available space at District Office and how we can be creative using the space. He suggested maybe having students be with a teacher part of the day and a para the other part. He asked that administration to think outside the box to do what is best for the kids to get the best experience they can. Heidi Simmons backed up what Mr. Morehouse said and feels those were really good points. She asked what about the District Office it has a lot of empty classrooms, would it be too difficult to set up and meet the CDC requirements. She has always promoted the elementary school in particular have as many days as possible. You can have summer school but there is a reason why they go to school. Dr. Riley noted he will bring these suggestions to the principals and will bring this back to the Board. Mr. Lord noted he liked this idea but I have a third grader and would not like the idea of his class being split up. If we knew about these dollars ahead of time it is a fantastic idea. If we think we will be in a hybrid model in the fall, then that would be a possibility and it is a fantastic idea. Heidi Simmons noted I was not thinking mid-year but if this continues in the fall I think what Mr. Morehouse is proposing is a good idea.

Chairman Todisco noted Dr. Riley at this time is asking the Board's direction on the consolidation of the bus routes and separating out COVID related expenses that you will in turn use CARES Act 2 money to fund. The Board was in agreement to move forward with separating the CARES Act 2 money from the operating budget and Chairman Todisco gave Dr. Riley that direction. Chairman Todisco opened to the Board the discussion regarding the elimination of the two bus routes. Farouk Rajab asked if there was any data what happened this year based on the CDC guidelines. Chairman Todisco voiced he was not in favor of eliminating the two bus routes at \$129,000. Dr. Riley explained the impacts of doing this. Farouk asked for a true estimate of funds for the remainder of the year and he had questions regarding the CARES funds and whether we are able to ask for additional funds. Mr. Shettle noted we will not be able to ask for more funds. Chairman Todisco asked for the Board's feedback on the elimination of the two bus routes. The Board members were in agreement and unanimous not to cut the two bus routes.

Chairman Todisco asked the Board to get any questions to Dr. Riley for the next meeting and would like the information a littler early in order to review.

Jack Morehouse noted he recently looked at the East Lyme Schools budget and how it was broken down and shared their format. He also spoke on equity and asked how this is determined when making cuts. Dr. Riley explained there is not just equity but other needs to consider and priorities. Every school and child has different needs. Mr. Morehouse asked how we can distribute funds more equitably specifically in sports and coaches. Mr. Morehouse also asked for a five year staffing comparison and would be interesting to see how we are tracking student enrollment compared to staffing. Dr. Riley will be sharing that with the Board for the next meeting. Mr. Lord asked where in the budget extracurricular activities is. Mr. Shettle explained it is in the added teaching line item in the budget. Mr. Morehouse asked would like a column in the budget showing the difference between budgeted and expanded.

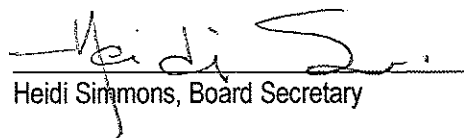
Chairman Todisco said any questions or asks from the Board to do so by noon on Monday. Dr. Riley will turn that around quickly so the Board has it before Thursday and hopefully provide direction as it impacts the bottom line.

Adjournment

The following motion was made by Farouk Rajab and seconded by Craig Esposito.

Motion 1: To adjourn at 8:34p.m.

All: Aye


Heidi Simmons, Board Secretary