

**HOLLIS BROOKLINE COOPERATIVE SCHOOL DISTRICT
BUDGET COMMITTEE
JUNE 23, 2022
MEETING MINUTES**

A regular meeting of the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School District (COOP) Budget Committee was conducted on Thursday, June 23, 2022, at 6:41 p.m. at the Hollis Brookline Middle School Library.

Chairman, Darlene Mann, presided:

Members of the Budget Cmte. Present: Raul Blanche, Vice Chairman
 Brian Rater
 Anthony Stanizzi
 Tom Whalen

Members of the Budget Cmte. Absent: David Blinn
 Matthew Maguire
 Cindy VanCoughnett, School Board Representative

Also in Attendance: Kelly Seeley, Business Administrator
 Lance Finamore, Facilities Director
 Holly Deurloo Babcock, Chairman, COOP School Board

There being no objection, the Committee went out of the regular order of business to take General Business.

GENERAL BUSINESS

- Facilities Review

Lance Finamore, Facilities Director, provided a presentation (can be viewed [here](#) (beginning at tape counter 11:44).

The evaluation methodology used to determine the status of the Hollis Brookline facilities is referred to as the Facility Audit Tool, which was created several years ago when developing the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). This tool is utilized by everyone in the Facilities Department, Building Maintenance Supervisors, Facilities Director, building Principals, Superintendent, and many others in the SAU.

The Facility Audit Tool is presented in a spreadsheet designed to capture the status of all the systems in each building. The evaluator assigns points based on functional condition and safety/compliance concerns. When sorted, the final totals bring the highest priorities to the top.

Chairman Mann commented across the SAU there had been a significant amount of projects at varying degrees of implementation status, continuation projects, etc.

Vice Chairman Blanche commented the scoring system is just an assignment of a number. Director Finamore stated it to be based on criteria of past experience the personnel have dealt with; if an issue has been persistent for days or months to include it on that list.

Vice Chairman Blanche questioned if a demonstration of the tool could be provided at a future time. Director Finamore stated that could be accommodated. The audit tool is reviewed closer to the end of the school year.

Areas of concern were noted as:

Hollis Brookline Middle School (HBMS)

HVAC

Quite a few rooftop units that are approaching end of life (manufacturers anticipated useful lifespan).

Electrical

Interior lighting - Multi-Purpose Room (MPR)/gym, exterior lighting new and replacement, replace aging electrical panels.

Plumbing

Replace aging plumbing.

Buildings & Grounds

Old section of roof, classroom flooring, paving issues, tables/chairs (MPR), classroom furniture, exterior door repair/replace, window repair/replace (north end).

Safety

Elevator, handrails, sprinkler system leaks, door security (north end doors).

Chairman Mann commented on the folding of certain items and questioned if that is intentional or to identify items that are being addressed perhaps through the next budget cycle. Director Finamore responded none of the items listed were ordered by priority.

Vice Chairman Blanche spoke of an interest in the methodology behind the tool used to arrive at a prioritization, noting that prioritization drives budgets. Director Finamore provided the example of a door that swells in the heat and does not close. That would be a security risk and a priority 1 item. Whether it is repaired or replaced would depend on the age of the door. The point score associated with an item determines whether it is an item placed on the budget (under a 4).

Chairman Mann remarked, in general, it is a 1-4 scale on function versus safety and once you combine the two the lowest items rise to the top from a point of priority.

Vice Chairman Blanche provided the example of a \$10 million budget and 6 parameters used for the criteria, not all parameters have the same weight. Each parameter can have a value of 1-5, but safety might be 30% of the total versus another parameter that might be 10%. He suggested the need for a system that provides a more realistic prioritization.

Chairman Mann remarked, at this time, it appears they are weighted equally. Asked, Holly Deurloo Babcock, Chairman, COOP School Board, stated the tool has been used for the last 5-7 years to develop the CIP (five-year plan).

Kelly Seeley, Business Administrator, commented she is uncertain they would want to weight it more on this form as once reaching the budget process there is a weighting that occurs there. Some items are cut from the proposed budget and others continue through the process. It is a subjective determination based on what the Facility Director feels is the weighting of that particular item.

Chairman Mann added the example of adding the next section of roof, if in the midst of a ten-year plan to address the overall project.

Ms. Seeley agreed the items that are planned for in phases would have more weight. Safety has a large weight depending on what kind of safety issue is of concern.

Vice Chairman Blanche remarked he is pleased a tool/process is being utilized, but that does not suggest they should stop thinking about how to improve it. Ms. Seeley agreed they should always strive for improvements, which will be a role for Director Finamore; however, the current tool is working well.

Director Finamore commented this is a great tool, and one he has not come across in his past experience. This organizes the required tasks and provides criteria. Work can be organized and documented.

Vice Chairman Blanche questioned the origin of the tool and was informed it was developed by Ms. Seeley. It was implemented as a budgeting tool. Ms. Seeley noted before the creation of the tool there could be 50 items placed on the budget, some of which are really important and others of less importance. Noted was the planning that is able to go into covering the costs of large ticket items over a period of time (savings mechanism) thereby avoiding large fluctuations in the budget from year to year.

Member Stanizzi commented on the amount of subjectivity that goes into prioritization and the need for objectivity so that items elevate to a visibility before deciding on timing of repair/replacement. Ms. Seeley noted that to be the reasoning for choosing to consider functional condition as well as safety concerns. Those two in combination should give you the right number to evaluate for the budget.

Member Rater questioned the issue of sprinkler system leaks and was told it is a backflow in the dry pump room.

Asked about the issue of interior lighting for the gym, Director Finamore stated lamps in the MPR are behemoth and slow to operate. Asked if it would be more of an upgrade or repair, he responded it is an upgrade and would result in savings in the long-run.

Chairman Mann spoke of opportunities for LED replacements and the potential of gaining credit on the bill. Ms. Seeley responded she believes, at this point, we are looking at more of a big picture over the SAU buildings, and a portion of that would be for Brookline. Asked if that is part of the energy overview, she stated it would be. Currently being addressed is Phase I of that with the HVAC units at the HBHS. They have not yet developed phases 2, 3, and 4, but are working with architects and will be able to roll that out over the next couple of years.

The reason lighting is on the list is because of the energy use. That is being watched. At some point these will reach end of life. If having to replace them it will be with LED lights. If not presented as an immediate need, they will likely wait for that larger phased-in approach to energy savings and renovating the building.

Member Rater commented on the number of items listed under the heading of HVAC and questioned if the items are there due to aging maintenance issues, efficiency upgrades, or a combination, and was told it is a combination. Noted was the number of issues (2-3) in the building in the past 3 weeks due to the age of the units.

Member Rater remarked he divides the items into two categories; maintenance issues and efficiency upgrade.

Director Finamore commented for a lot of the HVAC items at the middle school, if we did what we did at the high school many of those issues would be resolved.

Hollis Brookline High School (HBHS)

HVAC

Equipment near end of life, duct work cleaning, HVAC hot water pumps, energy efficiencies

Electrical

LED replacement cycle, exterior wall lighting

Safety

Rear entry security, elevator overhaul, egress, exterior doors

Chairman Mann commented on the importance of noting that doors are locked at a certain point right after the start of the school day.

School Board Chairman Deurloo Babcock questioned if what was being considered is creating a situation similar to the front entrance where visitors/students have to be buzzed in and was told that is the case.

Asked about the level of training received by staff for the variety of security scenarios, Director Finamore responded that is not something that falls within his purview. Vice Chairman Blanche commented we would be remiss if focusing on capabilities and budgeting and neglect to provide resources for training.

Ms. Seeley noted Homeland Security evaluates the district every 3 years. There are 8 or 9 drills the Department of Education requires the district to perform. The goal is to have 100% of staff ICS trained. In each building in all 3 districts, there exists a Building Safety Committee, which is part of the larger Health & Safety Committee where included are first responders from both towns. Many different security scenario issues are discussed. This November a representative from Homeland Security will be in district for tabletop training involving all 3 districts with their Building Safety Committees. There will be an active shooter scenario to go through. From her perspective, we have pretty extensive training.

Buildings & Grounds

Interior doors, storage shed, masonry work, roof sections, parking lots/roadways, painting, tile flooring, window ballasts, kitchen equipment repairs

Member Rater questioned if the storage shed is additional storage space and was told it is. He requested additional information on the kitchen equipment repairs. Ms. Seeley spoke of the aging serving line, exploring renovations to the kitchen, and replacement of the commercial dishwasher. The design includes a more robust snack area as well. The design and costing are being worked on. School Board Chair Deurloo Babcock spoke of the desire to improve upon the design to address the long serving lines; students have a 22-minute lunch period.

Identified were two approaches for implementation of the Facility Improvement Plan:

1) The Energy/Enrollment Vision

- Phase I: HVAC cooling/dehumidification upgrades in FY23
- Phase II+: Plans being developed by Energy Efficient Investments, Inc. and Banwell Architects will be put forth in future years
- The COOP plans will complement the HSD and BSD plans

- Results will include new equipment and fixtures that will save on energy costs and solve the end of life equipment issues the COOP is starting to face
- Results will also include renovations to accommodate rising enrollment in HSD and BSD

Chairman Mann questioned if the goal of the vision is to have a plan move forward in the next budget cycle. Ms. Seeley responded she would expect that we may have a phase, perhaps not the big picture, or we may explore more with the Board this year. It may be that is more in FY25. There are a lot of pieces to this puzzle and the desire to ensure it is addressed as thoughtfully as possible.

2) The Updated Capital Improvement Plan (For Non-Energy Related Issues)

- Broken out into two categories:
 - Under \$20k
 - Over \$20k
- Updated annually using the same methodology
- Ballpark estimates refined annually as time permits

Displayed were Capital Improvement Plan spreadsheets broken down by projects having a cost under \$20,000 and those having a cost over \$20,000, prioritized by year, and identifying the potential funding source; operating budget, expendable trust, and bond.

The yearly totals were identified as \$498,250 for 2023 (\$116,750 total for projects costing under \$20,000 and \$381,500 for projects costing over \$20,000), for 2024 a total cost of \$668,000 (\$71,000 total for under \$20,000 and \$597,000 total for over \$20,000), for 2025 a total of \$547,000 (\$78,000 under \$20,000 and \$469,000 over \$20,000), for 2026 a total of \$560,000 (\$30,000 under and \$530,000 over), and 2027 a total of \$380,000 (\$20,000 under and \$360,000 over).

Vice Chairman Blanche asked for clarification if the prioritization tool is used to establish the estimated costs. Director Finamore stated for 2023 they did last year. He asked if the under and over \$20,000 is combined in the same analysis or separately and was told it depends on the item.

Asked if the totals identified in FY24 and FY25 are the numbers the Budget Committee will be asked to plan for, Ms. Seeley responded yes and no. This is what the Facility Audit Tool is telling us. We have budget sessions that start in July with the Principals, Superintendent, and Assistant Superintendent. It is very likely that many of those items will be pushed out to FY25. This is the starting point of the budget process, and she is certain not everything will make it through the budget process this year.

Areas for continued discussion include egress, energy efficient initiatives, security upgrades, parking/paving, storage solutions and rear security entrance at the HBHS and energy efficiency initiatives water solution and elevator at the HBMS.

Chairman Mann remarked, what the information enables us to say is that, at a quick glance, we are looking at half a million dollars in maintenance items. It provides a frame of reference.

School Board Chair Deurloo Babcock commented on the \$300,000 identified for high school paving in FY25. That alerts her, as a Board member, that there are some luxurious paving things that we need to be aware of and focus on. Then there is the \$175,000 for security, which is something that has to be talked about as boards and committees to ensure we are prioritizing those items. She commented when looking at this she considers what are those things that are really budget impacts.

We have been talking about egress for a lot of years. For the public's information, there is more than one way out. There is a second egress, it is just a difficult challenge. It is through a different area and not as easy to

access. Although not for traffic, it is sufficient for emergency apparatus to traverse. Ms. Seeley commented that was helped a great deal by what we did last summer, which was to pave around the school and make that area wider so that emergency apparatus could traverse the area.

Chairman Mann spoke of the importance of having a tool and approach like this.

- Financial Update

Ms. Seeley spoke of the public hearing on the requested expenditures from the Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund:

FY23 Requested Items/Estimated Cost

HBHS	Roof Section	\$ 70,000 (Phase 7 of 10; Section 1)
HBMS	HVAC Upgrades	\$ 60,000
	Road Paving	<u>\$ 70,000</u> (Road 122 to newer pavement on Cavalier Ct.)
Total Requested		\$200,000

With a few weeks remaining in the fiscal year, on the expense side of the ledger, the anticipated year-end balance is \$1,064,904. Over 75% of that amount is driven by special education (\$743,101). The district has students who have switched from residential to day programs, unfilled paraprofessional positions, and families who have declined services. In addition, there is \$40,000 over what was anticipated to be received in revenue from Medicaid.

Projected to be returned to the tax base is \$959,754. That amount includes items approved by the School Board over the past few meetings. The student dirt lot across from the baseball field will have gravel put down. It will be left to sit for a year and the use expanded. Eventually we will be able to pave that and gain a lot of spaces. Part of the budget includes costs associated with the creation of a parking lot for the turf field. FY22 funds will be added to that allocation to result in 50 parking spots. Some security items will be addressed such as cameras on the dirt lot and turf field parking as well as additional flat panels beyond what is budgeted for in FY23.

School Board Chair Deurloo Babcock noted the Board also approved an expenditure up to \$85,000 for science lab equipment, which, if not approved, would have been a budgeted item for FY24. That number was not included as part of the projected amount to be returned to the tax base.

In the absence of the unanticipated savings in the area of special education, the amount likely to be returned to the tax base would have fallen into the projected amount (\$200,000 - \$300,000).

Member Rater requested maps of the high school and middle school be provided the Committee for reference during discussions.

- School Board Update

School Board Chair Deurloo Babcock spoke of the amount of discussion that occurred at the School Board meeting around the substantial amount being returned to the tax base. There is the desire to return as much as possible. A member of the Board made the point that taxpayers are very generous with us and vote to approve our budgets. We include in that budget everything that we need for our special education students.

One student moved out of district and another to a less restrictive environment resulting in monies coming back to the district. We continue to provide excellent services to our special education students, but in this case, we

have \$743,101 in savings. When we change someone's placement, we might change their transportation needs. There is a savings in the area of transportation in the amount of \$321,383. Those two together are over \$1 million. School Board Vice Chair Solon indicated he would like to see unencumbered funds from the special education line items always given back to the tax base or held in a format only to be used for special education expenditures. Superintendent Corey had explained the only way to do that would be to increase the cap on the special education trust fund. Further discussion will occur on that issue. Some members of the Board feel very comfortable with the \$250,000 cap because it really does cover an out-of-district placement unless we were to find that out-of-district placement was \$350,000-\$400,000.

School Board Chair Deurloo Babcock commented, for her, as a School Board member, she keeps in mind the whole budget. When we make those decisions and are building the budget with knowledge of special education needs, we may actually be taking away from some of our regular education students in those decisions and compromises.

Chairman Mann noted some of those regular education items are items that special education students benefit from as well. The district has worked very hard to keep students in district and develop programs that enable a lot of use of district facilities.

Chairman Mann stated her belief we landed at the maximum cap with this last budget cycle. She believes any member sitting here would say they are happy to have the discussion of increasing that cap if we do see things like out-of-district placements costing more, transportation costs increasing, etc.

Another discussion that could occur during the budget cycle is to consider the use of Retained Fund Balance. We do fund that at a level significantly below the maximum allowed by Statute. It would have to be a determination by the Legislative Body, and a Warrant or Petition Article would have to be brought forward through the budget cycle.

Member Rater questioned if it would be possible to look back over the past 5 years to identify what was budgeted versus actual expenditures. That information will provide a better sense of where the cap should be set. Chairman Mann stated that information is available in the budget trend file. She suggested a five-year lookback to areas where we place students to see how costs have changed over time would be helpful.

Ms. Seeley noted Hollis and Brookline are in the opposite situation right now. It may be that the Brookline School District is able to return a few dollars to the tax base this year and it is only because we have unfilled paraprofessional and/or custodial positions. In the absence of that, they would be dipping into the Special Education Trust. Chairman Mann commented, during the budget cycle, there was the anticipation that Brookline was going to need most of its trust fund. Ms. Seeley noted Hollis is in a similar situation where they have had a lot of move-ins or changes in programming, and because of openings we are not going to have that problem. They were facing the potential of using the trust as well.

Chairman Mann suggested another thing to consider as we move into the budget cycle is legislation that changes how long we need to provide services. It used to be up until the age the student reaches their 21st year and the legislation takes that until the student reaches the 22nd year.

School Board Chair Deurloo Babcock commented there are students who experience things over the course of their life that could change their status. There was mention of positions that are not being filled that result in savings, but it is over-stressing our current staff.

The Committee returned to the regular order of business.

AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS – None

APPOINTMENT OF MEETING OBSERVER

Chairman Mann appointed Tom Whalen to serve as Meeting Observer.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

COOP Budget Committee [May 26, 2022](#)

The following amendments were offered:

Page 1, Line 47; replace “between” with “among”

Page 2, Line 35; replace “of” with “on”

Page 3, Line 4; replace “is” with “has”

MOTION BY MEMBER STANIZZI ACCEPT, AS AMENDED

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER BLANCHE

MOTION CARRIED

4-0-1

Member Rater Abstained

PUBLIC INPUT - None

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next meeting is scheduled for August 25, 2022.

AGENDA BUILDING

The Auditor will attend the August meeting to discuss the audit report.

There may be time spent reviewing the Department of Education website and available reports located there. It was suggested an overview of Student Services be provided as well as a discussion on enrollment. Chairman Mann commented on the possibility of doing a legislative update.

PROCESS OBSERVER READOUT

Member Whalen provided feedback on how the meeting ran.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY MEMBER RATER TO ADJOURN

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER BLANCHE

MOTION CARRIED

5-0-0

The June 23, 2022, meeting of the COOP Budget Committee was adjourned at 8:13 p.m.

Date: _____

Signed: _____