

GROTON BOARD OF EDUCATION
FINANCE/FACILITIES COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
JUNE 6, 2023 @ 6:00 P.M.
CENTRAL OFFICE, ROOM 11

Members Present: Jay Weitlauf, Beverly Washington, Dean Antipas

Also Present: Susan Austin, Sam Kilpatrick, Ken Knight, Joe Parise (STA)

Chairman Weitlauf called the meeting to order 6:00 p.m.

1. Review May 2, 2023 Meeting Minutes - Prior meeting minutes review and accepted.
2. Discussion re: Electric Bus Pilot in Griswold - Mr. Kilpatrick introduced Joe Parise, manager at Student Transportation of America (STA), the district's transportation partner, to discuss the electric bus pilot program at Griswold. Mr. Parise discussed that this program was through a grant from the EPA. The EPA selected Griswold based on a number of factors, including age of current fleet, district socio-economic makeup and various other factors. The program will replace 6 of their 71-72 passenger buses; there is currently no option available for the smaller buses. The cost for each bus is approximately \$350,000, plus an additional \$25-35k for each charging station. In addition, the bus depot infrastructure needs to be enhanced to accommodate the electric buses at a cost of \$500k to \$1 million plus. The new buses have a range of 100 miles per charge. Mr. Parise also noted that battery fires on electric buses are no more dangerous than battery fires on a diesel bus, but local fire departments should be trained on how to handle. Mr. Parise also reported that using today's figures of diesel and electricity costs, there is no overwhelming fuel savings, but did indicate that there may be some savings on maintenance cost. It was suggested that the district should continue to monitor and if a grant opportunity arose, perhaps start a small program with 1-2 buses.
3. Discussion re: FHS LED Lighting Project - Mr. Kilpatrick discussed an LED lighting project at Fitch High School. Based on a study of the lighting at Fitch High School done by consultant, Resource Lighting & Energy, they propose to replace the indoor lighting fixtures with LED lights. The total cost for this project would be \$1,195,198, minus a rebate of \$411,502, yielding a net cost of \$783,679. The proposed reduction in electricity costs due to this project at today's rates would amount to the same over a 72 month period, effectively making it cost neutral for the district.
4. Discussion re: Field Usage – Maintenance & Costs - Mr. Kilpatrick discussed that there appears to be many requests to utilize the district's fields, and that this is requiring additional maintenance effort and costs. It was suggested that the facility usage policy be reviewed and possibly updated.
5. Discussion re: AEDs & Vape Detectors - Mr. Kilpatrick reported that the district needs a total of 50 vape detector units, 30 at Fitch High School, 16 at Groton Middle, and 4 at Central Office. At a cost of approximately \$600 per detector, the total cost would be approximately \$30k. Mr. Kilpatrick also reported that to ensure an AED on each floor of all seven school buildings, the district would need to purchase an additional 15 units. These units cost approximately \$2,500 each or a total of \$37,500. Mr. Kilpatrick noted that he was not aware of any grants to help with the cost. Ms. Austin stated she would follow up with the district grant coordinator. Ms. Austin also discussed that we were informed this week that the district would be receiving \$555,816 from the Department of Defense (DOD) Supplemental Impact Aid, versus the budgeted amount of \$450,000, and that this overage could offset some of these costs. It was suggested that we utilize this fund to pay for the AED machines and look to fund the vape detectors through operations.

6. Review Out of District Student Tuition Rates - Mr. Knight presented a schedule of the current year and proposed next year out of district tuition rates. As in previous years, the proposed regular education rates were set at 85% of the average cost per student per the Educational Financial System (EFS) report. In addition, under special education program costs, a rate was added for resource room. The proposed rates will be discussed at the next COW meeting scheduled for June 12, 2023.

The meeting adjourned at 7:16 p.m.