HOLLIS BROOKLINE COOPERATIVE SCHOOL DISTRICT
BUDGET COMMITTEE
JUNE 22, 2023
MEETING MINUTES

A regular meeting of the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School District (COOP) Budget Committee was conducted on Thursday, June 22, 2023, at 6:39 p.m. at the Hollis Brookline Middle School Library.

Chairman, Darlene Mann, presided:

Members of the Budget Cmte. Present:	Raul Blanche, Vice Chairman Anthony Stanizzi Tom Solon, School Board Representative
Members of the Budget Cmte. Absent:	David Blinn Matthew Maguire Brian Rater Tom Whalen
Also in Attendance:	Kelly Seeley, Business Administrator Lance Finamore, Facilities Director

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PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Mann lead in the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS - None

APPOINTMENT OF MEETING OBSERVER

Chairman Mann appointed Vice Chairman Blanche to serve as Meeting Observer.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

COOP Budget Committee . . . . . May 25, 2023

There being no objection, acceptance of meeting minutes was postponed until the August meeting.

PUBLIC INPUT – None

GENERAL BUSINESS

- Facilities Review

Lance Finamore, Facilities Director, provided a presentation to inform and discuss the status of the facilities of the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School District (COOP), project priorities and the facilities department vision (can be viewed here, beginning at tape counter 18:43).

The evaluation method used to determine the state of facilities is referred to as the Facility Audit Tool (Tool), which was created several years ago when developing the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Areas

of concern resulted from discussions with building administration, district maintenance personnel, the Superintendent, and outside sources and vendors.

The 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.

Both buildings in the COOP are in great shape. Some areas of concern were noted as:

Hollis Brookline Middle School (HBMS)

HVAC

Aging HVAC infrastructure; rooftop units are approaching end of life.

Director Finamore commented on the HBHS project completed last year that resulted in 6 rooftop units being replaced. In contrast, the HBMS is lacking in that area.

Ductwork cleaning is always a concern. The desire is for that to be placed on a regular cycle going forward.

Electrical

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

Plumbing

Replace aging plumbing, e.g., sinks, faucet wall units.

Buildings & Grounds

Roof sections, classroom flooring, paving, tables/chairs (MPR), classroom furniture, exterior door repair/replace.

The concern with flooring is more in the area of age. Personnel do a great job maintaining them. Paving is one of the concerns noted by Principal West.

Safety

Main Office Security Renovations

As has been done at HBHS, the desire is to move forward with security renovations at the main office.

Hollis Brookline High School (HBHS)

HVAC

Remaining HVAC equipment near end of life, duct work cleaning, and HVAC hot water pumps.

Although a project was undertaken last year, areas that were already equipped with air conditioning were not included, and require attention, e.g., main office, guidance, computer labs.

All of the reheat coils were cleaned this year, which made the dehumidification units even more efficient. This past summer with the first implementation of the dehumidification units, the building temperature was well below 68 degrees even during high 80 to 90 degree days. HVAC hot water pumps were not included as part of last summer's project.

Member Solon asked why the boilers are not on this with the context of what came up last year. Director Finamore stated it was not included in this area of the presentation as it was not part of the Tool, which is more of a guideline of what is being done outside of a large-scale project. The boilers are already on the CIP and could be added to the Tool.

Electrical

LED replacement cycle, remaining exterior wall lighting

A good number were replaced on the outside auditorium this year.

Safety

Rear Entry security, elevator retrofit overhaul, emergency egress, exterior doors

Principal Girzone has been instrumental in bringing these issues to the forefront.

The elevator is aging. Instead of replacing it completely, the decision was to retrofit/renovate it. Although expensive, it is not as costly as replacement.

Buildings & Grounds

Remaining roof sections, parking lots, tile flooring, equipment repairs.

Ideally, after August, there will be two sections of roofing remaining; mini-gym and cafeteria. Paving the student parking lot has been a topic of discussion for some time. The surface is approaching 30 years of age. The summer project last year was part of the CIP/energy vision.

1) The Energy/Enrollment Vision

- Phase I: HVAC cooling/dehumidification upgrades in FY23 **- Completed this year**
- 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.

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

- Updated annually using the same methodology.
- Ballpark estimates refined annually as time permits.

A chart was displayed depicting the timeline for project completion and CIP totals by year: FY24; $609,575, FY25, $1,567,000, FY26; $1,315,000, FY27; $1,375,000, FY28, $327,000, and FY29 $286,000.

Chairman Mann asked for clarification, for FY25, the items identified through this Tool exclude any of the large initiatives such as boilers, and the $1,567,000 is related to the CIP and more of those issues that were mentioned such as doors, lighting, etc.

Ms. Seeley noted there is $350,000 included in the CIP for the oil pipes. Director Finamore clarified when indicating something is not included, it is that it is not included in the Tool. Chairman Mann commented it is part of the energy and enrollment plan. The $350,000 identified for the oil pipes is the minimum expenditure for the work that is required to be done as a minimum project.

Director Finamore remarked the CIP identifies projects, the majority of which are necessities, some needed, and some niceties. Identified needs were categorized and prioritized.

Asked, Director Finamore stated any visible asbestos has been removed from the HBMS.

Director Finamore spoke to the categories and timeline for expenditures noting areas such as painting that occur yearly.

Member Solon questioned the number of doors that can be purchased for the $3,000 and was informed it is roughly 3-4 (addressed through a phased approach)

Noted was that costs identified are subject to change as they represent estimates. There are also items planned for out years that may present as an urgent need earlier than anticipated.

Auditorium improvements will include LED lighting which will result in energy efficiency.

As mentioned, the oil tank piping identified at a cost of $350,000 is the contingency that is in place to satisfy requirements if unable to move forward with a larger project.

Areas for improvements with regard to safety are always reviewed/addressed, e.g., aging electrical panels are being upgraded.

An SAU-wide radio system would be a phenomenal implementation as it would allow for that communication / connection among all 7 buildings.

Asked about the potential for grant opportunities to assist with the acquisition and implementation of an SAU-wide radio system, Ms. Seeley stated the SAU applied for grant funding through the State but was not successful. Application for a federal grant has been made. An amount was identified in the budget to address the required work should the grant application not be successful.

Asked what is envisioned to be included in the radio system, Director Finamore stated every staff member and members of SAU personnel would have radios that would allow for communication among the 7 buildings and enable direct lines to police and fire. The current radio systems are building specific. Vice Chairman Blanche commented on the cost for what could be perceived as old technology. Ms. Seeley stated her belief it is not old technology. The equipment is what has been recommended by police and fire. The cost encompasses hundreds of units.

Asked if a proposal would be forthcoming, Ms. Seeley stated her assumption that would occur depending on whether the district is successful in its grant application(s).

Asked if the system would have the full support of staff, Ms. Seeley responded in most of our schools staff already have walkie talkies and are already utilizing them, particularly the elementary schools. She does not believe there would be opposition there.

Vice Chairman Blanche commented the questions to be considered are whether we should have it, and if the answer is yes, then what the best device would be. Ms. Seeley remarked that is why we are leaning heavily on emergency services for input. Police and fire are driving this initiative and have been of tremendous help with the federal grant application.

Member Solon spoke of being a little nervous understanding in some neighboring communities there is a lot of political activity around radio upgrades and justifying the need to expend millions of dollars on communication centers being driven by the volume of traffic that has to go over those lines. He believes it to be an issue that needs to be understood before assuming that it is a done deal. Ms. Seeley suggested it may be best to have the presentation come from emergency management personnel. Member Solon commented that an expenditure of that size, whether grant funded or not, warrants a level of awareness and comprehension. Ms. Seeley will ensure a presentation is available for a future meeting.

Member Stanizzi suggested Emergency Management services in Concord could be a good resource for identifying best practices in terms of security measures. Ms. Seeley noted both towns in the district have an emergency operations director who has been assisting the district. They are plugged into the State. They are probably more likely to be willing to provide a presentation.

Director Finamore commented on the need extending beyond that of what one might initially think of in terms of safety. There are building specific needs that come up whether that be student or facility related. Events arise and the quickest way to get ahold of someone is through the radio. We see it all the time.

Member Stanizzi commented when looking at school security issues, to him, that involves more than just a radio. There are cameras in the halls, etc. He would look at a holistic approach; what is a secure school, how far do we want to go, and what do we have to do to get there. Ms. Seeley noted Homeland Security is onsite every 3 years to evaluate each school and produce a report. Many of the things we are doing are based on that report.

Director Finamore continued noting the middle school water system study is always on the CIP because we are on Rocky Pond in Hollis. Ideally, he would like to move away from that to well(s) onsite. The High school water tank filtration system will be replaced this year. Asked if the amounts listed are cumulative or placeholders in each year not knowing which year it will hit, Director Finamore stated it to be almost a phased approach as well, $250,000 each year (FYs 27, 28, and 29). It is believed that will be the cost of a study and implementation.

Asked what would be implemented, Mr. Finamore stated the study would ideally be a study of the well system and the years following (FY28 and 29) incorporating those funds into the implementation. Asked for clarification that would actually be creating wells and a standalone supply independent of the Hollis system that we now manage, he suggested that to be one of the options. Ms. Seeley remarked another option is to continue the way we are and replace all of the pipes and structure. We're anticipating that whatever option is chosen will be costly. Member Solon suggested the word study be removed from the description.

Asked if paving student lot refers to the entire back lot, Director Finamore stated it does; the area would be leveled and graded before paving.

A facilities shed is identified as $5,000 in FY25 and $250,000 in FY26. The $5,000 is for a study design and the $250,000 construction/implementation. When referring to a facility shed intended is a structure anywhere from 1,000 sq. ft. to 25,000 sq. ft. Much like a highway department/DOT shed, is what he envisions for the structure. The building would accommodate maintenance equipment and storage needs. There is a limited amount of storage in the buildings.

Director Finamore spoke of his vision for the Facilities Department where individuals on staff have the knowledge and equipment needed to address a wider variety/complexity of issues as they come up rather than utilizing contracted help. He can work on outlining that plan on paper in the future.

Vice Chairman Blanche questioned if the purchase of a snowplow is intended to allow the district to bring the task of snow plowing in-house or to address an immediate need in times when the contractor is not available, etc. The response was that would be part of the evolution. Member Solon commented the dollar amount identified would not result in the Facilities Department being able to take over the plowing. It is clean-up and odds and ends.

Chairman Mann questioned the athletic line striper and was told the equipment cited would be utilized on grass. Vice Chairman Blanche commented when the artificial turf was considered, he believed the longevity to be 10-12 years. Asked, Chairman Mann stated her recollection it was a 10-year bond. Member Solon noted there to be a difference between what the manufacturer will commit to and what they believe to be the longevity with proper maintenance and because we have a relatively cooler climate.

Asked about the Maintenance Trades Position, it was noted the amount represents a partial cost for a position that would be shared among the districts.

Director Finamore commented during his tenure he has observed certain items that have cost the district money long-term such as the need for a scissor lift. One can be rented at $700/each occurrence. Ms. Seeley noted the purchase of a trailer would allow for the lift to be utilized in other districts that would reimburse the COOP for use. There is a great deal of work that could be done within the SAU. Lifts are rented when necessary.

Asked if the items identified in FY25 are fairly solid in terms of estimates and timing, Ms. Seeley stated they are not. Ballpark figures are utilized for the CIP. We do a lot of shifting. Asked if the items/amounts are believed to be what will come into play for the first pass at the FY25 budget, the response was absolutely.

Vice Chairman Blanche suggested there to be a few amendments that can be made to the table included in the presentation to make it more easily readable and acceptable. For example, items approved and being addressed in the current year do not need to be shown as there is no further discussion/debate to be had there.

Chairman Mann responded while she understands the point being made, for this time of year where we are, other than maybe bolding the FY25 column in some manner, to identify where the attention should be placed for the next budget cycle, that is really all she would be looking for. This presentation is really directional; gives the Budget Committee an idea of the more immediate things that will be looked at and get flushed out as we work through the budget process. It is meant to be an overview and provide an idea of the direction we're heading in.

Vice Chairman Blanche stated the desire to see a single sentence on the CIP that explains the purpose of the table and the fact that it is an initial estimate to create a sense of what we may be asking of taxpayers in the future. In some cases the estimates are more accurate than others. He would like there to be included an idea of whether the estimate is solid or rough.

Director Finamore continued with the presentation addressing the slide titled "Future/Concerning Discussion Area":

- Energy efficiency initiatives
- Oil tank piping vs. new boilers (propane vs. alternative fuels)

- HBHS parking/paving
- HBHS storage/facilities solutions
- HBMS water solution
- HBHS rear entrance
- HBMS front entry
- HBHS egress

Member Solon noted the School Board approved the formation of a Facilities Committee at its meeting the prior evening.

Director Finamore spoke of annual oil tank inspections. During an inspection it was indicated to him that the system (boilers) will not pass the hydrostatic test. Each school would require an allocation of $150,000 to address the issue. Having that information generated the discussion of whether we move in that direction and remain on oil for the next 10, 20, 30 years or look at alternatives.

Member Solon noted when this was brought forth the immediate reaction was support for addressing it. The level of appreciation for the concern expressed and the proactive approach was there. What happened, unfortunately, is that the decision process of how to address it was done in a way that was not clear to the public and as a result there were a lot more questions raised than could have been addressed in the available time. There was never any dispute that it was the right thing to do. It wasn't a when or if, but simply a how. The perception the Board was provided was that after talking with the State, Director of Facilities and his support group, it was believed to be reasonably safe to take one step back to allow us to dig a little deeper on the how because of the fact that any decision that we make on this is a long-term decision, short of the end date. The desire is to ensure that when making that long-term investment all stakeholders are on board.

There was never any question about the value of knowing it early and the fact that this has to be addressed. It wasn't until the Board received input that delaying it for the one budget cycle did not put us in extreme jeopardy and the Business Administrator and Superintendent's insistence in regard to the monies budgeted for the plan B that the Board ultimately made the decision to postpone it for one year.

Member Solon commented that the Board has always been chasing these issues. With the Facilities Director and other members of the SAU leadership team working as they are (Ms. Seeley gets a lot of the credit for this as well), in his nearly 19 years as a Board member in SAU 41, this is the first period in his tenure that we are seriously doing planning versus reacting.

Member Stanizzi commented when he was receiving questions, he would respond that we were okay with risking the $300,000 cost this year to get it right and ensure all questions were answered.

Asked if he wished to provide additional information, Member Solon remarked at the previous evening's meeting, a proposal was brought forth to form a Facilities Committee that would have representation from the Administration, School Board, and community members. Rob Mann will head the committee in large part due to his experiences with similar work done at the Hollis School. The deliverable is an action plan by the December meeting in time for it to become part of the formal budget going forth. There will be at least monthly updates that come out through the reporting to the Board, formal postings of the meetings, minutes, etc. This is going to be a clear and well publicized activity. He stated his belief Director Finamore has been volunteered as a committee member, and there will be representation from an outside party of the committee's choosing. Whether it is the same individual that assisted last year or not will be a decision of the committee.

Chairman Mann stated it to be an 11 member committee that includes a member of the Budget Committee. The distribution is a Hollis and Brookline school board member, 3 administrators, subject matter expert, a

Selectman from each town, and a community member from each town. She will look to Budget Committee members to determine availability and interest in serving in this capacity. Asked, Member Solon stated both School Board members Williams and Stoll felt it was unlikely that they could participate. It may be that he represents Brookline. Vice Chairman Blanche stated an interest.

Vice Chairman Blanche suggested there could be an approach of focusing on say the top ten or perhaps add some level of refinement whereby the least expensive of the top ten are identified and addressed when monies are available.

Ms. Seeley commented we are starting to get into an area where we could do more of that, but the situation was more like you had 25 things that all needed to be done yesterday. That is how we started doing the phased approach.

Asked about the MPR lighting and whether the current lighting has generated sufficient savings to have paid off the initial cost and is at the point of providing the anticipated savings to the district. Ms. Seeley was uncertain whether that had been reviewed. Member Solon remarked if still in the mode where we are not seeing the benefit as it continues to backpay for it, he is uncertain we can just walk out of that contract without having to pay a penalty. The other question is if the LED technology is a sufficient cost improvement to make up for the cost of installation because these were supposedly the best in their day when we installed them.

Director Finamore stated when visiting the buildings with the Hollis Energy Committee years prior, those came up as huge energy source (middle school lighting). Member Solon stated the lights in the MPR were supposedly a 75% reduction or something of that nature relative to what was there prior. We had an energy consultant come in and conduct an audit. They put together a finance plan in conjunction with Eversource to replace those lights at no cost to the school with a split of the savings so that our bill stayed level, reimbursed the upgrade cost, and he thought the estimate was 7-10 years after they would be fully paid off, at which point we would see a dramatic reduction in our bill because of that.

Ms. Seeley stated she would conduct the necessary research on that.

- Financial Update

Ms. Seeley stated the report (as of 6-12-23) shows an anticipated fund balance of $330,221. The School Board was asked to consider a number of potential expenditures with monies remaining beyond the $200,000 intended to be returned to the taxbase:

- HBHS Dugouts - At least one bid was received - maximum cost for this project would be $30,000. This can be funded by the Athletic Capital Reserve Fund, which currently has a balance of $84K.
- HBMS Main Entrance - Security Retrofit (similar to HBHS) Quote - $120,000
- HBMS Exterior Cameras - A recent audit of exterior cameras shows that HBMS needs several additional cameras to be up to par with our safety standards - Quote: $26,000
- Additional Interactive Flat Panels - We have six scheduled to be purchased in the FY24 budget, but we need 44 (for both buildings) to be fully supplied. Recommendation: six additional panels at $30,000

The School Board did approve the expenditures. The dugouts will be funded by the Athletic Capital Reserve Fund and the others by the Unreserved Fund Balance with the caveat that we maintain the $200,000 to be returned to the tax base.

Member Solon added there is the prospect of a donation of materials for the dugouts. The estimate is that the material cost included in the bid price is in an amount under $10,000. The Board approved the contract

for an amount up to $30,000 contingent upon receiving a materials list in advance and not commencing work until a determination is made of whether the materials can be donated.

Ms. Seeley noted the School Board conducted a Public Hearing and approved the requested expenditures from the Maintenance Expendable Trust:

FY24 Requested Items/Estimated Cost

HBHS	Roof Section	$117,000 (Phase 8 of 10; Section 4)
	Road Paving	120,000 (student dirt lot & front area additional edges)
	Kitchen Renovations	40,000 (project pieces not eligible for food service funding)
HBMS	Flooring	$ 21,200 (Library landing, Music, CS and Teachers' room)
	HVAC Upgrades	10,000 (targeted upgrades to improve airflow and operations)
	Elevator Replacement	68,000 ($43K in Trust being held for this repair)

Total Requested $376,200

Although not anticipated for this summer, the elevator replacement will occur as soon as possible. With $43,000 already in reserve (accounted for) and the added amount, the necessary construction can be addressed. Member Solon stated there to have been an additional $68,000. Ms. Seeley stated of that $68,000, the $43,000 is already in reserve. Member Solon stated it was explained to the Board that the cost is over $10,000 and it was $68,000 plus $43,000. Ms. Seeley stated that is not the case. We should be able to do the entire project for $68,000. That $43,000 has been held back when discussing available balance as it was restricted so to speak. She has let those funds go and when looking at the current balance that has been unrestricted.

Member Solon noted if the difference between what is available in the unreserved fund balance to cover the $200,000 to be returned to the tax base and the cost of the approved projects is greater than anticipated, the likely retained fund balance would be lower. The decision of the amount of Retained Fund Balance is made in August. What has been identified in this view is a Retained Fund Balance of 2% where an amount up to 2.5% is permitted.

Chairman Mann commented the State budget did pass and includes a revised adequacy calculation. The amounts are preliminary at this time, but it does boil down to a larger baseline amount per student that will be allocated. There will be a higher adequacy amount than what was estimated when going through the budget process.

Over the summer she will look at some of the components of the legislation that passed. State funding of part of NHRS may have become permanent and would continue to be like a rebate to the district. Since it is a bi-annual budget it includes an inflation adjustment into the second year. It will be in place for a two-year period.

- School Board Update

Member Solon remarked the Board had some late and some unexpected staff resignations as well as some really good hires. It was a little bit disappointing that it is unclear what that message is, but a significant part of it is people who are leaving education. Two significant losses indicated they are, for the time being, getting out of teaching. The Letters of Resignation expressed the need to do it for personal and family reasons. It is unclear whether that is financial, quality of life, etc. It is important that we recognize that we have not seen the end of the shift in people's prioritization and education for many tend to be in math and

sciences as these people are able to go into industry and commercial areas for dramatic compensation differences.

Asked if replacements have been able to be identified, Member Solon stated there to be 2 openings for full-time in the math department and one of them was filled. One of the losses was in the science department and we had a hire for that. Ms. Seeley noted one of the resignations literally just happened.

Member Solon informed the Committee he reached out to the New Hampshire School Boards Association (NHSBA) concerning the possibility of including members of the Committee in NHSBA activities. The feedback he received was that they do not add Budget Committee members to their official roster mailing list just because of the logistics of turnover. However, they had no objection to forwarding their emails. His plan going forward will be to forward communications to the Chairman when concerning issues such as legislative updates. The Chairman can distribute to Committee members.

In terms of seminars/webinars/educational activities, they have no objection to Budget Committee members participating in that process so long as it has the support of the School Board. School Board members are supportive of that. When receiving notification of those types of activities he will forward them to the Chairman for distribution. When registering for such activities, members will need to utilize their SAU41 email address.

ANNOUNCEMENTS - None

AGENDA BUILDING

The next meeting is scheduled for August 24th. The auditor is usually present at that time.

PROCESS OBSERVER READOUT

Vice Chairman Blanche commented the meeting was very lively.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY MEMBER STANIZZI TO ADJOURN
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER BLANCHE
MOTION CARRIED
4-0-0

The June 22, 2023, meeting of the COOP Budget Committee was adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

Date: _____ Signed: _____