

**BRISTOL WARREN REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
BUDGET/FACILITIES SUBCOMMITTEE VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES**

Wednesday, April 14, 2021

A meeting of the Bristol Warren Regional School Budget & Facilities Subcommittee was held virtually on Tuesday, April 14, 2021, via Zoom Conferencing. Subcommittee Chairperson, Sheila Ellsworth, called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

Present:

Subcommittee: Sheila Ellsworth, Chairperson; Tara Thibaudeau, and Nicky Piper
School Committee and Administration: Marjorie McBride, Carly Reich, Sarah Bullard, Victor Cabral, Jonathan Brice, Ed. D., Superintendent; Diane Sanna, Ph.D., Assistant Superintendent; Diane Brennan, Temporary Chief Financial Officer; Joel Harrington, Interim Business Manager; Thomas Wood, Director of Facilities; Rose Muller, Technology Director; Mary Ann Carroll, District Attorney; Diana Campbell, Recording Secretary;

I. Approval of Minutes

A. March 16, 2021

MOTION: Ms. Thibaudeau made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 16, 2021 meeting; seconded by Ms. Piper.

The motion passed unanimously

II. Discussion/Action

A. Consultant Report/Action Items

Chair Ellsworth reviewed the highlights of the Consultants' Report, covering the Consultants' findings for staffing, financial operations, procurement processes, grant oversight, the after-school COZ program, and food services. In general, most of the report identified lack of staffing, formal processes, and oversight in many of these areas. Chair Ellsworth explained that the Consultants prepared a spreadsheet of Action Items that can be used to track each of the consultants' recommendations. She stated that the School Committee needed to set a priority for the creation of processes for procurement in order to contain costs and to implement cost controls. She stated that, even though many of the issues are the result of not having a Financial Officer, the District could not wait until a CFO was hired before starting on a procurement process. She would like the School Committee to request that the Superintendent ask the consultants, Diane Brennan and Mary King, to begin work on the recommendations from the report. She stated that the Report provides a blueprint for moving forward. Ms. Piper asked if there was enough time in the consultants' contracts to do the work. Chair Ellsworth responded that there was no extra time left on the contracts.

MOTION: After additional discussion on the roles and responsibilities of the consultants and Superintendent Brice, Ms. Thibaudeau made a motion to forward the Consultants' Report and Action Item list to the full School Committee with a recommendation for the Superintendent to utilize Consultants Diane Brennan and Mary King to generate a plan and timeline to implement the Action Items. The motion was seconded by Ms. Piper. The motion passed unanimously.

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B. Monthly Reports

Superintendent Brice called on Mr. Harrington to present the monthly reports to the Subcommittee. Mr. Harrington explained that the reports were for March and included a column for Year to Date, that includes the financials for the entire fiscal year through March. Mr. Harrington explained that there is about \$21m in encumbrances. About half of that is for salary & benefits. This amount will go down when the staff gets their balloon payment at the end of June. He also pointed out the Budget Balance shows three areas that are high: 1) Purchasing of Professional Services, due to pending legal services (Ms. King); 2) Purchase Property Services (Chromebooks); and 3) Property Capital which is for the air purifiers, etc. which are still being looked at. The latter will mostly be covered by SVA and other COVID funds.

He continued his report by stating that General Fund Revenues are still on track. The District is still reporting the reconciled State Aid that was input incorrectly at the beginning. This will be corrected next month. He reported that the District just received its final payment for Debt Services, which will be included in the next report. Re: the grant issue, he is still working on it and it should be corrected in next month's report.

Mr. Harrington explained that the Grant report contains all grants, including Federal, State, and private donations. He explained the account numbering protocol: Account numbers that begin with '21' are Federal grants, with '23' are State grants, with '24' are private donations (Feinstein, PTO, etc), and those with a '6' are self-sustaining Enterprise funds. He noted that the COZ program (6007) is in a deficit but the District is addressing the issue and it should be corrected in the next Budget. Food Services is '6001' and shows a surplus, even though there is a deficit, because there were funds from previous years. Chair Ellsworth asked about tables that were purchased during the Winter for the Take it Outside program, noting the account is over by \$1400. Mr. Harrington explained that more was put in that account because there might be extra funds. Since he hasn't heard anything more about them, he thought that the District will have to get funds from the General Fund to cover the cost.

Chair Ellsworth noted that Budget/Financial oversight of Grants is important because grant-related expenses have to stay within the amount allowed by the grant because there is no room in the General Fund for overages. She noted a few situations where this happened and pointed out that the School Committee should have been notified at the time they were encumbered. She noted that there are some encumbrances that were charged to the wrong accounts and that it is important that this doesn't happen in order to be able to work on the FY22 Budget.

Ms. Thibaudeau asked about the cost of PPE - specifically the hepa filters and the HVAC systems. Superintendent Brice explained that the filters go with the HVAC systems, though they are purchased separately. Superintendent Brice will send the information

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on how much was spent on the air purifiers and the HVAC systems to the School Committee by Friday.

Ms. Thibaudeau also wanted to know about salaries paid through grants. She asked to know who was paid and how much they were paid. Superintendent Brice said that he would share that report.

Ms. Thibaudeau requested information on the Direct Energy Business contract. Superintendent Brice replied that he would follow up.

Ms. Piper asked about the move of the SBA funds to the General Fund. The Journal Entry to move those funds has not been done at this time. Mr. Harrington stated that the SBA funds have been requested from RIDE.

Ms. Piper noted there were funds in an account for the School Resource Officer (SRO) and wanted to know if those funds can be returned to the General Fund, since there was not as much of a need for an SRO this year. Superintendent Brice explained that the District will have to pay for the SRO, but has not yet received a bill. He also explained that RIDE has given funds for this position in past years, but that they may not continue to do so. The District may need to increase the SRO budget for next year if that's the case.

Chair Ellsworth asked about rental of equipment that appears to be in the wrong account. She noted that it's important to have accuracy in recording expenses and encumbrances as a guide for building the FY22 Budget.

Ms. Thibaudeau asked for a detailed report of variances over \$10K.

C. FY22 Budget/Proposed Cuts

Chair Ellsworth postponed discussion of this topic because it will take a lot of time and, for that reason, she plans to hold two meetings during the week of April 26 and May 3 dedicated to the FY22 Budget.

D. Vendor List/RFPs

Superintendent Brice explained that there are four RFPs in the pipeline. There is an additional RFP that he has submitted to RIDE for their approval. Once he has their approval, he will bring the RFP to the School Committee for their final approval before sending it out.

Superintendent Brice asked Mr. Wood to explain two of the RFPs that he has outstanding. Mr. Wood explained that one of the RFPs is for an Owner's Project Manager (OPM) and the other is for Architectural Engineering Services. These positions are recommended by RIDE to assist with compliance with the current Necessity of Need, a 5-year plan that was approved four years ago. The OPM assists the District with

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projects, sets and oversees the schedule, and acts as a representative with outside consultants and contractors through the end of the projects. The RFP is due tomorrow (April 15). The Architectural Engineer will assist with the planning of projects that were identified in the 5-year plan, but have not yet been completed. It's hoped that the projects will be completed by June 2022 in order to get reimbursement for them.

Ms. Muller explained that there are two technology RFPs. One RFP is for 12 laptops, an engraving printer, and a 3-D printer, for the MHHS CTE program to assist with a CAD program. The 2nd RFP is for Chromoboxes that power the large-screen monitors at the middle school. There may be some Title (federal) funding for the latter RFP. Responses for both RFPs are due tomorrow.

Superintendent Brice announced that he has plans for a 6th RFP to assist with the disposal of technical equipment, which he will bring to the School Committee when it's ready.

Mr. Wood added that he is working on a schedule for getting RFPs out for other maintenance contractors, starting with Waste Removal and Recycling.

Ms. McBride asked when the bid openings will happen. Mr. Wood explained that the bid openings will happen tomorrow afternoon (April 15) virtually. Ms. Muller stated that her RFPs will also be opened that same afternoon. Superintendent Brice will provide the Zoom links to those openings for all the members of the School Committee.

Superintendent Brice explained that, once opened, the Building Committee will review the bids that come in for the OPM and Engineering services and then send them with their recommendations to the Budget Facilities Subcommittee. The Technology bids will be reviewed by the Technology Department before being sent over to the Budget Facilities Subcommittee.

Chair Ellsworth asked for the Vendor List and an RFP list report for future meetings.

E. FY22 Update Technology Budget

Chair Ellsworth announced that the Technology Budget will be discussed at the meetings she has planned for discussion of the FY22 Budget.

F. Facilities / Capital

Oliver Building: Superintendent Brice asked for guidance on preparing a letter making a recommendation to turn the Oliver Building back to the Town, given the high maintenance costs. Chair Ellsworth explained that the District cannot be reimbursed for maintenance costs of buildings that are used for non-direct classroom activities. Turning the building back to the Town saves the District the cost of expensive maintenance.

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Motion: Ms. Piper made a motion to recommend that the full School Committee direct Superintendent Brice to draft a letter informing the Town of Bristol of its intention to return the Oliver Building back to the Town; seconded by Ms. Thibaudeau. All approved the motion.

Reynolds School Building: Superintendent Brice explained that the Reynolds Building was part of the District's contingency plan should they need the space to accommodate social distancing in the classrooms. Since the COVID pandemic is winding down and the students can be accommodated in their normal school buildings under the new guidelines from RIDOH, he stated that the District has no need for the building and would like the School Committee to direct him to write a letter, for their approval, asking to return the building back to the Town.

Chair Ellsworth would prefer to have the School Committee direct the School Committee's attorney to meet with the Town's attorney to negotiate the options for transferring the building back to the Town. She does not think that the District should have another building, but she acknowledged that the District needs a place for the Administration to be housed.

Ms. McBride explained that the Town has offered the building for the Administration and she feels that this is something that should be studied further. She agrees that the attorneys should discuss the options and report back to the School Committee. She thinks it would be foolish to go forward with a move to the MHHS building without looking at all the options.

Ms. Piper asked if it would be more expensive to move to Reynolds, given the renovations that would be needed, than to move to the high school building. She also noted that some tenants, specifically the Bristol Theater Company (BTC), received eviction letters.

Attorney Carroll explained that when the Town was asked by the BWRSD for the building, the Town sent eviction notices to all the tenants. The BTC stopped using the building for performances, but continued to use the building for storage. She further explained that the Town's solicitor informed her that the Town may want the district to move into the building, with the Town making the necessary renovations. She stated that the full School Committee needs to make the decision about what to do going forward.

MOTION: After further discussion, Ms. Thibaudeau made a motion to recommend the full School Committee direct Attorney Carroll to speak with the Town's attorney to negotiate a mutual agreement for the use of the Reynolds School building with the Town of Bristol. Second by Chair Ellsworth. All approved of the motion.

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Colt and Guiteras Removal of Sculptures: Chair Ellsworth asked for the timeline for the removal of the sculptures. Superintendent Brice will follow up with the artists to remove the sculptures soon. Attorney Carroll will be asked to send a legal letter if the sculptures are not removed by Friday, April 23.

Building Committee: Chair Ellsworth explained that a School Building Committee is required by RIDE with specific membership requirements. Superintendent Brice has created a list of potential members. Chair Ellsworth recommended that a Town Administrator from each Town be included on the Committee. Superintendent Brice is awaiting confirmation from some of the potential members. The Building Committee will have a total of 10 members, representing the two Towns and the District.

G. Budget Policies - Fiscal Management

Chair Ellsworth explained that two Budget Policies, DLB and DLA, are covered under the current union and administration contracts. She recommended that these policies could be removed.

MOTION: Ms. Thibaudeau made a motion to recommend that the Policy Subcommittee remove Policy DLB - Salary Deduction Policy and DLA - Payday Schedule Policy be removed from the School Committee Policies. Motion was seconded by Ms. Piper. All approved the motion.

Before adjourning, Chair Ellsworth stated that there will be two meetings in the next two weeks to discuss the FY22 Budget and any proposed cuts necessary to balance the budget.

III. Adjournment - 7:32p.m.

Chair Ellsworth adjourned the meeting at 7:32 pm.

**Sheila Ellsworth, Chair
Budget/Facilities Subcommittee**

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