

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

Wednesday, October 20, 2021

A meeting of the Bristol Warren Regional School Budget & Facilities Subcommittee was held on Wednesday, October 20, 2021. Subcommittee Chairperson, Sheila Ellsworth, called the meeting to order at approximately 6:04 p.m.

Present: Subcommittee: Sheila Ellsworth, Chairperson; and Tara Thibaudeau; Nicky Piper. **School Committee and Administration:** Marjorie McBride, Chairperson of the School Committee; Diane Sanna, Ph. D., Assistant Superintendent; Thomas Wood, Director of Facilities; Anthony Ferrucci, Chief Financial Officer; Mary Ann Carroll, Esq., District Solicitor; Rose Muller, IT Director; Remotely, Brenna Toland, Director of Student Support Services; Diana Campbell, Recording Secretary

I. Discussion/Action

A. Approval of the Minutes of previous meetings

Motion was made to approve the minutes of September 22, 2021, meeting by Ms. Thibaudeau; 2nd by Ms. Piper. Motion passed unanimously.

B. FY23 Budget Process/Schedule

Mr. Ferrucci reviewed his proposed draft of the FY23 Budget schedule/timeline. He noted that with the transition of the Finance Department after he was hired, the schedule is a bit behind from the schedule required by School Committee policy.

Chairperson Ellsworth asked if headcount would be included in the Budget proposal when it gets to the School Committee. Mr. Ferrucci replied that it is included in the instructions to the Principals and School Administrators.

He stated that as part of the process, it is very important for the full School Committee to adopt a revised FY22 Operating Budget at their November 22

meeting.

MOTION: Ms. Thibaudeau made a motion to suspend the School Committee Policy and accept the proposed timeline for the FY23 Budget Process and to forward it to the full School Committee for approval. Seconded by Ms. Piper. All approved the motion.

C. FY22 Capital/Facility Projects

Mr. Wood reviewed the status of the FY22 Capital Projects:

- Guiteras plans have been submitted to RIDE for preliminary approval for the design.
- Security upgrade planning will be coordinated with Principals and SRO to start to reevaluate the project that was started 2 years ago. The original project came in over budget and was tabled. Mr. Wood plans to organize a committee to revisit the project. Ms. Ellsworth volunteered to be on the committee to review the security planning for the District. Mr. Wood hoped to have the first meeting soon for completion by June 22 so work could be done over the summer break.
- Facilities: Ms. Ellsworth asked about regular maintenance. Mr. Wood reported that the District is using in-house staff where possible. He is working on a comprehensive list of bigger projects.
- Memorial Tree for Rockwell & KMS: Mr. Wood presented a request for a memorial tree at Rockwell Elementary School. He noted that he is concerned about the long-term maintenance. He noted that such requests are not formalized. Ms. McBride suggested that he request a formal proposal from the donor, to review the proposal and make his recommendations to the Budget Subcommittee. Ms. Thibaudeau recommended a process that is similar to the Town of Warren's where certain trees and designs are set as options for potential donors to choose from. She volunteered to help Mr. Wood. Ms. McBride also pointed out that there are people in the Town of Bristol that can help with appropriate selection of trees.

D. Update on move to Reynolds

Mr. Wood reported that there is progress on the move. Much of the delays have been due to electrical work. There is still no date for the delivery of light fixtures. Additionally, for IT, there is still no date for delivery of switch gears.

Chairperson Ellsworth asked about the hard walls. Mr. Wood replied that the bids for hard wall installations came in over budget. He reported that the Town recommended their contractor for non-permanent walls, who can do the work for about \$45K.

MOTION: Ms Thibaudeau made a motion to accept use of the Town's contractor to build the interior walls at Reynolds and move the proposal to the full School Committee for approval. Seconded by Ms. Piper. All approved.

E. Grants

Chairperson Ellsworth clarified the process for Grant approvals. For grants over \$5000, the subcommittee needs to approve the Purchase Order. For grants under \$5000, they just need a summary of the project.

ESSER Grant: Assistant Superintendent Sanna explained the amendments she is proposing for the ESSER II application. The High School auditorium upgrades were not approved and the amendments are necessary to re-allocate those funds to other line items. She is proposing to increase the number of Fellows to support teachers. The Teaching and Learning Fellows provide coaching for the new ELA curriculum, small group intervention, and long-term substitutes. The Fellows will be District-wide for coaching, but attached to specific schools for substituting.

She explained that she was working with the existing line items because adding new items would require further approvals and would delay the funds. New items would be included in the ESSER III application. An interventionist for the Elementary level will be included with the ESSER III application.

Ms. Thibaudeau asked what would happen if the Fellows were not hired. Assistant Superintendent Sanna explained that with a new curriculum, if the teachers are not supported as they learn the new curriculum rollout, they tend to not use it. Ms. McBride asked what happens when the funds are no longer there to fund these Fellows. Ms. Piper pointed out that having them there now is a greater value than regular substitutes. Currently when teachers have to go to professional development sessions, other teachers have to be pulled (at added expense) to cover for them.

Chairperson Ellsworth asked for a breakdown of substitutes and teachers. She would like to understand the reasons for the absenteeism. Ms. Thibaudeau added to that request, seeking the number of subs, the daily attendance, and how the Fellows are being used.

MOTION: Ms. Thibaudeau made a motion to approve the ESSER II Amendments, less the COVID-19 stipend (covered under a different grant), and send it to the full School Committee for approval. Ms. Piper seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

FCC Emergency Connectivity Grant Fund: Ms. Muller explained the extension to the existing E-Rate program to close the gap to cover unplanned technology resources due to COVID requirements and remote learning. The proposed request is to acquire devices for K-Grade 1. Funds will come directly from the government. Kindergarten will get touch screens.

Chairperson Ellsworth pointed out that \$13,450 is not in the Budget and will have to come out of ESSER III funds.

MOTION: Ms. Piper made a motion to approve the application for FCC Emergency Connectivity Fund and proceed with the purchase of equipment, depending on the long-term refresh plan and the ESSER III application.

F. Special Education Request

Ms Toland reviewed her request for additional positions for the Student Support Services Department. She is looking to hire new Special Education Facilitators to facilitate required meetings, which will help to provide more data driven solutions to help students.

Ms. Piper asked how much of her request is absolutely needed and how much is “nice to have”. Ms. McBride asked how the cost gets paid; suggesting that perhaps only 2 positions get funded instead of 3.

Mr. Ferrucci supports the proposal, but the District is facing a shortfall. He noted that if the positions help to find funds by pulling back students who no longer have to be placed out of district, could free up funds to be re-allocated to fund the proposed additional staff.

Chairperson Ellsworth suggested that the District wait until Mr. Ferrucci presents his updated Budget in November and January to determine if the District has the funds. She pointed out that parts of the proposal can be done now with existing ESSER II funds. She proposed that the Subcommittee recommend that the .5 Special Education Teacher and 1.0 Early Childhood Coordinator, as well as the proposed reorganization be sent to the full School Committee for approval.

MOTION: Ms. Piper made a motion to approve the plan for additional support for Student Services as presented with the intention to revisit the plan in December, to immediately approve the .5 Special Education Teacher for Rockwell and the 1.0 grant-funded Early Childhood Coordinator, for full School Committee approval. Motion was seconded by Ms. Thibaudeau. The motion passed unanimously.

G. Standardize Monthly Financial Reports

Mr. Ferrucci reviewed the highlights of the monthly report. Chairperson Ellsworth asked that the monthly Financial Reports be posted on the District website for the public.

Mr. Ferrucci stated that, in November, there will be a comprehensive report for a REVISED budget adoption.

H. Substitute Rate Increase

Assistant Superintendent Sanna described her request for increases to the rate of pay for substitutes for the District. The net cost of the increases could reach about \$215K. She noted that it is very difficult to attract substitutes at the current rate of pay and that the alternative is to pull regular teachers (at a higher cost) to cover for absent teachers.

MOTION: Ms. Piper made a motion to recommend the Substitution Rate proposal to the full School Committee for approval. Second by Ms. Thibaudeau. All approved.

I. Bids / Proposals Review

Assistant Superintendent Sanna reported that there is a need for professional development to support and train High School teachers in Problem-based

Learning that will make the subjects more relatable to students. She requested \$7000 to hire a consultant to conduct the professional development, noting that the program itself is grant funded.

MOTION: Ms. Piper made a motion to approve the grant-funded consultant to provide professional development on Problem-based Learning for High School teachers. Seconded by Ms. Thibaudeau. The motion did not pass, with a vote of 1-2; Ms. Thibaudeau and Chairperson Ellsworth voted in dissent. Ms. Thibaudeau noted that she was concerned about the background of the consultant.

J. POs/Requisitions \$5000 and over

Chairperson Ellsworth asked to pull the ESSER III items from the list.

MOTION: Ms Piper made a motion to approve the Purchase Orders >\$5000, without the ESSER III items. Second by Ms. Thibaudeau. The motion passed unanimously.

II. Adjournment - 9:04 p.m.

Motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Thibaudeau; 2nd by Ms. Piper, at 9:04PM. All approved the motion. Chairperson Ellsworth adjourned the meeting at 9:04 pm.

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

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