

## **Budget and Finance Committee Meeting December 4, 2023**

**Called to Order:** 5:15pm

**In Attendance:** Members- Tracey Bigney, Linda Graban, Heather Lander (arrived 5:24pm, departed 6:00pm), Jared Fulgoni, and Kelly Theriault.

### **Transportation – Clean Energy Bus Grant**

Zachary Chenier, Transportation Coordinator, discussed the different options under the clean-energy bus grant [Electric, Propane, and Compressed Natural Gas (CNG)]. He recommends that RSU 63 apply to the grant for an electric bus. He stated that our current fleet has a bus ready to scrap and a need to purchase at least one new bus. If we meet all the criteria for the grant, the grant would pay up to \$345,000, which will cover the bus with a little left over that can go towards charging equipment. Mr. Chenier estimates that the district would need to pay approximately \$20,000 to cover the rest of the startup costs. Kelly stated this would be comparable to what would be budgeted for one lease payment. Zach has spoken with a couple of transportation companies who are currently running electric buses in their fleet, including John T Cyr in our region, and has gotten positive feedback. He will contact additional schools that have electric buses to get a better estimate of ongoing costs, such as batteries, electric bill increases due to charging, and other charging costs. He also went over the reasons he does not recommend a CNG or propane bus. In order to apply for the grant, he will need board authorization. The Committee asked that he bring some additional information and the Board will decide whether to sign. If RSU 63 wins the grant award, the Board will still need to vote to accept the award. This current approval is to only to apply for the grant. New regulation states that by 2030 each district must have 10% of their fleet be clean energy, this amounts to just one (1) bus for RSU 63 district.

### **Budget Update**

Superintendent Fulgoni restated that the invoicing issue experienced last year with Brewer so far has improved this school year. Communication notifying RSU 63 about students no longer attending Brewer has improved and there are not as many discrepancies on the invoices due to this communication. The history of Tuition Agreements was discussed, specifically Brewer High School compared to John Bapst Memorial High School. Currently, there are 247 students budgeted for high school tuition and there are currently 245. The vast majority of tuition invoices will start being received soon, therefore next month the business office will have projections for all cost centers.

Kelly Theriault, Business Manager, discussed current FMLA situation with Staff. RSU 63 has three (3) staff currently on leave, (1) just returning and one (1) staff that will be on leave in the near future. Financially, this means that we must pay the staff out on FMLA, as well as a substitute. While FMLA itself is not paid, it runs concurrently with personal leave (sick and/or otherwise.) If the staff member contributed to the sick bank, they could still be paid the twelve (12) weeks of FMLA with the additional time from the sick bank. With the paid language around the sick bank, depending on an employee's personal sick time balance, potentially a staff member could be paid more than the 12 weeks of FMLA leave time.

The Business and Special Education Departments continue to work at managing high need students in-house. Superintendent Fulgoni stated that he will begin to visit out of district classrooms so that he has a better understanding of needs and subsequent tuition billing.

### **FY24 Financials**

Kelly discussed the ongoing subject of students receiving seconds at lunch. There will be a message in the School Newsletter to notify parents and students that they are allowed second helpings. Heather Lander asked if non-utilized food can be given to the after-school program. Kelly explained that the current process entails using the leftovers for other meals and breakfast, but that the after-school program would be a great other option to discuss with the cooks. The trial of the salad bar will start with one (1) day a week sometime in January and has one individual who volunteered their time to assist with the additional prep time if needed.

A new convection oven is scheduled for installation on December 27, 2023. The old convection oven will go out to bid. This will allow the district to recuperate some costs.

### **Other**

It was also discussed that RSU 63 needs at least one additional bus next year, regardless of the clean energy bus grant. RSU 63 applied to the state of Maine's bus replacement program for a diesel, eighty-three (83) passenger bus to replace the scrapped bus for next year. This will be a \$122,000 lease over four (4) years.

The committee discussed a transportation issue that occurred in November with the contract between RSU 63 and Dedham/Orrington around transporting Orrington students to Hampden Academy. Superintendent Fulgoni discussed the history of this relationship and confirmed to the Committee that RSU 63 followed the contract.

### **Next Meeting**

January 8, 2024 at Eddington, 5:30pm

**Meeting Adjourned:** 6:17pm

**Approved: January 22, 2024**