

Finance Committee Remote Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, October 14, 2020 @ 5:30 PM – ORHS Auditorium

Attendees: Al Howland, Michael Williams, Brian Cisneros, James Morse, Sue Caswell.

Visitors: Josh Olstad, IT Director.

Al Howland began the meeting with the first agenda item, - Review of the Status of the 2020-21 Budget by stating the health insurance was budgeted for 10% and came in at 6.5%, and also possibly pulled \$352K for the busport. He turned the meeting over to Sue Caswell, Business Administrator to update the committee on the budget status.

Sue explained that she didn't pull the \$352K for the bus port but did adjust for the health insurance which now brings us to 2.95%. She also explained that we have been doing the budgets for each department and schools this past week.

Jim Morse stated all budgets except special education and the district budget which includes the bond payment. Those will be reviewed tomorrow. He went on to say that everyone is doing great.

Al Howland stated that we would still need to see what 2.5% and 3.5% would look like and what would be in there. Al posed the question to the committee if they should make a recommendation of addition of positions as it seemed to be a topic of interest at the last meeting.

Brian stated that he only heard one person mention this and what would drive this.

Michael stated that he would be reluctant to add anything right now and we should wait to see the adequacy picture.

Brian stated that if we are going to add a position he would rather wait until the middle school is open because we know we will need World Language teachers. Jim stated that we will need 2.5 custodial positions to cover that square footage.

Al agreed that we really do need to hold the line for post COVID and when the middle school opens.

Brian stated he believes that COVID is going to be around for a while and that next year we have a cushion. He went on to say that the talk is that the State is going to take the gopher money from the towns and re-allocate it at about \$500 per student. This is a fairer allocation of funds. Jim stated about \$100K.

Jim stated that he and Sue have been working on this as a singular objective of goals and adding positions would blow this out of the water. Would like to be ½ way through the year before we start thinking about spending money. There are a lot of unanticipated costs associated with moving to a hybrid model including busing increases. The school nutrition account experienced a loss of \$50K in the first quarter as participation has decreased. This is a statewide problem. If we don't take an action to mitigate this that is a \$200K loss outside of the general fund.

There was a brief discussion surrounding the details of the status of the school nutrition program and also ways to hold the line on the budget.

Al stated that we need hold the budget goal and will need to have whatever from the 2.95% up to the 3.0%, and if you wanted to add something, what would it be.

Jim explained that if you wanted a 3.5% budget then you would need to add back the things that Jim R has cut. We would recommend that it is put into the capital account. The same thing will happen with the 2.5%. Taking out the savings from the solar array would bring it down to the 2.5%. Presenting a budget at the workshop of 2.5%, 3.0% and 3.5% is achievable.

Brian asked if the \$250K savings was included in the COVID Line. Jim stated no.

There was additional discussion surrounding the projects that were listed on the capital improvement projects and the costs associated with the projects. There also was a discussion surrounding the priority of the projects that would go back in. Jim stated that he would need to go back to the list and have Jim Rozycki prioritize.

Michael explained that he would prefer a snapshot version of the capital improvement plan that would give a fixed beginning date and then when adjustments are made, they can be tracked more easily. Jim stated the this can be done moving forward.

Al looked at the 2022-23 CIP and the projected projects that are slated for that year and asked if there was anything that could be pulled to make it easier. He also spoke of the possibility of the financing for the solar array needing to be added back in. There was a brief discussion and Al moved the meeting to the next agenda item.

Agenda for Budget Workshop on 10/29/20.

Al explained that we already touched on a lot of this. We will have all three options presented. Denise expressed in an email that she prefers the traditional update from the departments and schools. Al clarified by asking that when they present that they explain what does the update look like.

There was a brief discussion surrounding the time allotment for the district being less and the Board being more, tying into the strategic plan as much as possible, and not a lot of discussion surrounding curriculum and just get to the finance portion of their budgets. Michael asked for class size drivers of teacher placements is helpful especially considering the retirements. Al asked about the 4 positions not being replaced and how that plays into next year, and also who's leaving, how it impacts and how its refilling.

Brian asked the committee if they were going to have a discussion amongst themselves for how we got to our stand and if we are going to make any recommendations to the full Board.

Al ran through the scenario that they should convey at the budget workshop and also to explain that changes could happen in December. Thoughts on sharing the budget books ahead of time, highlight the pros and cons and different scenarios of how we came to the 2.5%, 3.0% and 3.5%. There was additional discussion on possible ways to convey the budget information to the full Board at the workshop.

Jim will draft an agenda and send to the committee for review. He also stated that he could do a possible narrative letter of introduction signed by both him and the committee chair. He went on to say that he appreciated that the ownership of drafting the budget this year was not solely on him and Sue and that this process has made it less stressful and a relief that he is not in a panic over the budget.

Jim turned the meeting over to Josh Olstad, IT Director for his proposal and overview of the Technology plan.

Jim began by explaining that the demand for technology exceeded expectations and that the turning point was at the elementary level.

Josh began by passing out his proposal to the committee and administrators outlining his 1:1 expansion.

He explained that a year ago he planned to expand 1:1 for high school, so he budgeted and it was approved but with this past spring things looked different and we planned on getting quotes, and I tried to order as many machines as I could. We also had additional needs that we would have to provide laptops to the para-educators. He went on to explain that he ordered 856 new student devices and what was left over he could provide 1:1 for 2-4, 9,11, and 12 as 10th grade already have laptops. He explained that they are having trouble finding parts and that they fix a lot of the machines in house. He explained the process for replacing machines that are not working and that he likes to keep a pool of spares to hand out. He explained that three a lease is about to expire and that they will buy out 90 of the laptops for the para-educators at a cost of \$260 a piece for a total of \$23,400.

The committee asked the cost of cases for laptops, why as a district we are not using chrome books. Josh answered all questions posed.

He also went on to explain that to get K-1 1:1 we will use some of the existing iPads but will need to purchase 60 iPads with an estimated cost of \$18K. The total cost we are looking at is \$50,586.

The committee asked if this request needs to go before the full Board for approval. Jim explained that this is money that is available in the budget, through a grant and from one of Josh's equipment line. Additional discussion ensued.

Jim expressed praise for Josh and his team for not only this proposal, but for all the work that they are doing to keep the district technology running. He also praised the para-educators for all of their continued work in supporting the teachers and students of the district.

Michael asked that we need to determine a new day of the week for the finance committee to meet and also to lock in on a date for the committee to meet again with the towns. It was determined that November 19th is confirmed for the towns at 7:00PM. It was determined that the finance committee will share an email to clarify their new day of the week for their next meeting.

Al Howland adjourned the meeting at 6:52 PM.

Next meeting: November 19, 2020 at 7:00 PM with the towns.

Respectfully submitted,
Wendy L. DiFruscio