

Newtown Board of Education
CFF/CIP/Facilities/Finance Sub-Committee Special Meeting Minutes
September 20, 2023 6:30pm
BOE Conference Room

PRESENT: Deborra Zukowski, Alison Plante, Christopher Melillo, Tanja Vadas, John Barlow, Steve Goodridge, Board of Finance

CALL TO ORDER: Mrs. Plante called the meeting to order at 6:31pm.

BUSINESS

Ms. Zukowski moved to accept the BOE CFF/CIP minutes of August 17, 2023. Mrs. Plante seconds the motion. The motion passes unanimously for the approval of the BOE CFF/CIP minutes of August 17, 2023.

NEW BUSINESS

Facilities Update

Mr. Barlow stated there was not a lot to report. He indicated he is starting to compile information for his budget for year 2024-2025.

Mr. Barlow talked about the ribbon cutting for the MG playground and said it went very well. He stated there is one outstanding piece of equipment that is missing and backordered. The foundation has been put into place and once this piece comes in they will un-mount the foundation and install it.

Mrs. Plante asked if it was affecting the use of the new equipment now.

Mr. Barlow said no that it was a stand-alone piece.

Mrs. Plante stated she has heard great reviews from parents, kids and the PTA. Everyone is very happy.

Mr. Barlow said he defers all of the thanks to his maintenance staff, Park & Rec and Public Works Dept. for all they did.

Hawley – Mr. Barlow stated we have the substantial completion letter. There is an addendum which is a list of 5 items that they need to continue with finalizing commissioning, painting and patching. Because of the timeline as to when we received the switch gear it pushed everything back.

He stated Principal Moretti expressed to him some concerns regarding feedback in that we have spent money on air conditioning and it does not work. Because of the timeline of when the switch gear came in there should have had between 30-40 days at least to do all of the commissioning to work all of the bugs out of the system. Instead, there was 1.5 weeks so they are still working on it and addressing issues as they come up. He has communicated with Downes on this and the system has begun to stabilize as far as air quality and air conditioning in the rooms. He said it's not just an air condition system but an air quality system.

Mr. Melillo stated we knew and were told by Downes there would be at least 30 days minimum to balance the system. He stated all of this should have been done prior to moving back into the building but we did not have the luxury of time.

Ms. Zukowski asked if this work was being done during the school time or after school.

Mr. Barlow stated basically they are out of the building now and anything that needs to happen happens after hours so there is no disruption. He said the sad reality is we have run out of time this year to continue the work on balancing out the air conditioning system as we need the warm hot days.

He said we may have to push it off to the spring and defer to work on the heating system side of and get that all balanced and work on the cooling side in the spring.

Mrs. Plante asked if there would be any budget implications for them coming back in the spring.

Mr. Barlow stated no.

Mrs. Plante confirmed that nothing is wrong it is just part of turning on the system.

Mr. Barlow stated everything else is routine maintenance at this point. He stated we finally got ahead of some of summer maintenance and now we are into our routine maintenance that happens all of the time. He further said the state of all of the buildings is great.

Ms. Zukowski asked about the town building inventory that the former facilities director was involved in. Mr. Barlow said he is familiar with all of it and is on the committee and has been to 4-5 meetings already. He said it is a projected 3 year on-going project and what the town is trying to achieve does not exist anywhere. He stated there is a proposal that will be coming up in front of the council at some point which will involve a funding piece but everyone is not sure about a commitment for the funding. All of NPS building information has been uploaded by the previous facilities director. He said right now we are sitting idle because it is all of the towns departments to figure out how they are going to take their individual systems and match them up.

Mrs. Plante asked Mr. Barlow to keep the Sub Committee posted as to when the council presentation will land.

Mr. Barlow brought up the discussion of a new truck for one of the staff who is also the electrician. He presented some pictures of the ongoing rotting issues with the 20 year old truck. This truck currently has 120K+ miles on it with most being snow plow miles. He stated this cost was submitted in the budget last year but was dropped out due to funding purposes. He talked about all of the issues with the transmission, the body of the truck rotting etc. and stated it is not safe and needs to be replaced.

Ms. Zukowski asked about options new vs. used.

Mr. Barlow stated he could go with the used option and could get a better rate on, typically he has never seen municipalities go to the used truck market which the trucks are basically already half worn out.

He presented two quotes. The first quote was from the former facilities director and Mr. Barlow had to get an updated quote for an F250 truck. He stated the original quote was \$69K but has now gone up to \$82,846. He also went to Tasca Ford, which is on the state contract and received a quote for an F350 truck with all similar options as Hartford truck equipment and that was \$67,121. These are the only two quotes he has at this point and they are both state contract quotes.

Mr. Barlow recommended to go with Tasca because the price is what it is.

Ms. Zukowski asked about the difference in the 250 vs the 350 truck with regards to needs for maintenance.

Mr. Barlow said they are basically the same truck but the chassis in the 350 is more heavy duty and is better for snowplowing.

Mrs. Plante asked if the prices reflect a regular pick-up body or a utility body.

Mr. Barlow stated it was a utility body and what we currently have is a utility body. He further said he is not asking for anything other than the basic truck, utility body and the plow.

Mrs. Plante asked where the money would come from.

Mrs. Vadas stated that we do not have the money in our general fund and we would not know until April but we can't wait for the 2024-2025 budget so they are proposing to take the money from the BOE non-lapsing account.

Mrs. Vadas presented a spreadsheet with the years and transfers that went into the non-lapsing account and where we are pending the approval of the current transfers to the non-lapsing account.

Ms. Zukowski then addressed her concerns of what was anticipated for spending with a possible facility study, the chiller at Reed, and the possibility of purchasing a truck.

Mr. Barlow stated he did not recommend we take money out of the non-lapsing fund at this time for the chiller. He would like to relook at the chiller in the spring when we would have a much better view of what our budget is and then make decisions.

He stated the \$120K is locked in with Omnia for the chiller.

Mr. Melillo stated he would like to make a recommendation. He stated we are asking to deposit \$184K into the non-lapsing fund with \$100K of that money put into special education. He stated the \$84K is not earmarked for anything but unanticipated expenses. The \$84K could be the truck as it is an unanticipated expense. The money that was put into the non-lapsing account last year for the chiller is still there.

Mrs. Plante stated we have sufficient funds to cover the truck, chiller and facility study. She stated what we are saying is we are keeping the funds in the account for the chiller and keeping our options open. We do not need the chiller at this time. By the spring we hopefully will be contracted for the facility study so we will know what that cost is.

The discussion continued around the facility study and when it should be started.

Mrs. Plante stated she agreed that she thought we should start the facility study this year.

Mr. Melillo stated we can still do the truck as the price was at \$67K and we need the truck, and do the facility study and hold on the chiller to see what our needs are around that.

Mrs. Plante stated mathematically we could do all three.

Ms. Zukowski stated we will know for sure about all three come April.

Ms. Zukowski asked Mr. Goodridge what his thoughts were regarding the Board of Finance thoughts on this.

Mr. Goodridge stated he would have to have a discussion with the Board of Finance and to also keep in mind that there is an election coming up and there would be basically a new board. He stated even though the Board of Ed recommended the \$120K towards the chiller from the funds that the Committee designated he thought it is still listed on the CIP as the full amount and if it is explained to the BOF fully he thought it could be considered. He thought it might be beneficial for Mr. Barlow to come and give a complete explanation to the BOF.

Mr. Barlow talked about the building temperature at Reed on the one chiller and how the temp was approaching 76-77 degrees during the heat wave and that was the best he could get the building cooled to.

He stated we do need that extra chiller and he is not advocating to push off the chiller but is more concerned about the fact that this is our emergency savings account and dipping it down. So he feels we should sit back on the chiller until we have a better feel.

Ms. Zukowski made the statement we sit back on the chiller and go ahead with the facilities plan and the truck.

Mrs. Plante stated we all agree on the truck and wish we had budgeted for the facilities study.

Mrs. Plante stated she would like to see that we go out to vendors and get quotes for the facility study on cost and how long it takes and when they can start. Then we come back to this in a few months and then we can wait until January or February to start the study and it could be done by May and still inform the CIP which may buy us some time.

Mr. Barlow stated he has an RFP that needs to be updated and can give to the Purchasing Director to get quotes.

Ms. Zukowski stated the last time we had a CFF meeting we talked about the \$84K that we would tell the Board of Finance and Legislative Council 'pound wise and penny wise to use that money on a facility study'. She also stated out of the two we really need the truck but she does not want to give up the facility study and we should do it now before we have to justify on the following CIP.

Mrs. Plante agreed.

Mrs. Plante stated in a few months the RFP would have gone out and we would have quotes back and then we will have enough information to assess.

Mr. Barlow stated after talking with the Town Financial Director we break the Middle school out of the \$450K to make the money go as long as we can.

Transportation Update

Mrs. Vadas stated the buses are running. She spoke with All-Star and we originally started with 7 spares this year, Brookfield had to borrow 2, we have 2 out on medical and 1 is out sick, 2 are giving notice and leaving. With that, Brookfield will be returning our 2 spares, we are hoping that the 2 out on medical leave will be returning soon and the 1 on sick leave will be returning soon. She stated we are getting by and all the routes are filled including using our spares.

Mr. Melillo stated we have an upcoming meeting with All-Star to go over operations again.

He also stated buses are running on time right now.

Ms. Zukowski asked about the rules on buses going down on cul-de-sacs, dead end roads, and for stopping within a neighborhood and safe to walk for buses to stop every tenth of a mile.

Mr. Melillo stated he would check on the state laws for the rules for buses and stops.

Superintendent Update

Mr. Melillo stated he had no updates as he gave them to the Board the previous night at the Board meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

ADJOURNMENT:

Ms. Zukowski made a motion to adjourn meeting. Mrs. Plante seconds the motion. All in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanne Morris

THESE ARE DRAFT MINUTES AND ARE SUBJECT TO THE APPROVAL OF THE BOE
CFF/CIP SUB COMMITTEE

Newtown Board of Education
CFF/CIP/Facilities/Finance Sub-Committee Special Meeting Minutes
August 17, 2023
BOE Conference Room

PRESENT: Deborra Zukowski, Alison Plante, Christopher Melillo, Tanja Vadas, John Barlow, Steve Goodridge, Board of Finance, Michelle Ku, Legislative Council

CALL TO ORDER: Mrs. Plante called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

BUSINESS

Ms. Zukowski moved to accept the BOE CFF/CIP minutes of June 26, 2023. Mrs. Plante seconds the motion. The motion passes for the approval of the BOE CFF/CIP minutes of June 26, 2023.

NEW BUSINESS

2022-20233 Financials

- **EOY Review**

Mrs. Vadas did a review of the past few years and her role as Director of Business. She wanted to thank board members for their support through the years.

She presented the 22-23 year-end report and stated we are ending fiscal year 22-23 with a positive balance of \$184,274. We have expended 99.78% of the budget. The balance is up \$106K from the previous month due to closeout of purchase orders, encumbrances and forecasts.

She then went through the major objects. She stated we are turning over \$986,528 in encumbrances, which will remain open for one year. A lot of this is due to the pre-purchases from our 23-24 cut which includes textbooks, curriculum, and contracted services. If this is not expended at the end of the year it will go back to the town.

She stated salaries carried the budget for this year due to so many openings. Our ending balance for salaries is \$177,635.

Benefits ending balance is \$59,586 and the driver was our FICA and Medicare which is hard to adjust until year end.

Professional Services ended with a \$66,281 balance which comes from staff training which came in under budget.

Purchased Property Services ended with a balance of \$35,037 due to water accounts and equipment repairs.

She wanted to point out the building & site & emergency repair services account which is at a negative -\$57,157. The account includes our contingencies for all emergencies that arise.

The Other Purchase Services account had a lot of activity. Within this account, Contracted Serves was hit hard with BT's and we spent over \$300K with some of that being grant funded. A transfer went into contracted services of \$427K with the majority of that for pre-purchases from the 23-24 budget adjustment. She stated even in the SpEd out of district tuition account and having to transfer the \$100K from the SpEd contingency account we still ended the year with a negative balance of -\$344,076.

Mrs. Vadas stated with the supplies account, our virtual net metering outshined. With Eversource rates increasing, so did our credits with the virtual net metering. Next year the credits are budgeted a bit higher so we should see more of a level balance. This helped our budget throughout the year and we ended with a balance of \$185,256.

There were small balances in miscellaneous. Local fees for tuition and parking lot fees came in at a surplus of \$15K. Property has a small balance of \$3,900.

She stated to close out the year we will need to take all of the balances and have them all be in a positive position in accordance to the BOE policy #3160. She stated it was recommended by the auditors to do a major object transfers which will be internal.

The committee agreed to recommend to the Board for the transfer of the 22-23 balance of \$184,274 to the non-lapsing account.

- **Activity Account Review**

Mrs. Plante stated as background we reviewed this back in March and now at the end of the year to see where the balances are. Mrs. Vadas presented a report of the school balances. She stated she has been in touch with principals and brainstormed with them to utilize the money in the accounts. They decided going forward to present this to the Board at the end of the year vs. in March as in the past.

2023-24 July Financial Report and Transfers

Mrs. Vadas presented the July financial report. She stated this budget is fully loaded and all accounts are in alignment with the 23-24 budget. There was not much to report.

We are still working on payroll encumbrances and loading them into the financial system. She said the only anticipated obligation that she included in this report is the excess cost grant at the budgeted amount which we know will change.

Transportation Update

Mrs. Vadas stated over the summer All-Star had a major recruiting effort campaign. They put all of their jobs on the following boards; Indeed, CT Hires, and LinkedIn. They visited some professional recruiting resources and programs; American Job Center, American Staffing Association. Social Media they posted on; Facebook, Instagram, Utube, LinkedIn. They are keeping their internal referral bonus, and restructured it and increased it to \$1500-\$2500 which

Mrs. Vadas confirmed that it is their money. They also put banners back up on the trestle in Newtown, Google add campaign, yard signs, banners on side of buses, sent buses to different events, digital flyers, they contacted representatives, VFW, local VA, Hiring Hero's, Vet Inc., and Easter Seal Veteran rally point. They also presented a video at Edmund hall.

She stated at this point, every route is filled with a permanent driver and we have 5 subs. They are still interviewing and recruiting. Mr. Melillo stated we currently have 2 training right now. So we are fully staffed and we did not reduce any routes. We have a total of 54 buses.

Mr. Melillo stated he is feeling good about it. Now that we have all of our drivers we should have drivers for sporting events and field trips.

Ms. Zukowski asked how the moral of the drivers are. Mr. Melillo stated we are supplying a breakfast before school starts to thank the drivers. He stated we will spend some time there and talk with them. He said it is important to maintain a good contact with them and we will do this regularly. He also said he is grateful to be in this position for the start of the year with one less worry.

Mrs. Plante stated she thought it was very wise to invest time with All-Star and the drivers to build those connections. She said it is important to the families and a lot of good will is built if the buses are running.

Ms. Zukowski asked about the previous issues with EdAdvance and Special Ed. Mr. Melillo stated EdAdvance is fully staffed with their buses but they are moving to a new platform and they will not be picking up any excess routes but only the routes that we are contracted for. He stated we may have to go to outside providers for any excess routes.

Facilities

- **Hawley HVAC Close-out**

Mr. Barlow stated air conditioning is on at Hawley School. He stated the tested and balance contractor is starting this week and will finish by next week. He said we have already started the closeout documents and we expect to have the project closed out by early September. He said the Fire Marshall did inspections. He stated they had 2 inspections and the building passed with flying colors. Teachers have already begun to set up classes. He further stated the building was starting to look like a school again. He then said we have also utilized some Hawley fund money to address some of the painting issues in the building. He said we found a local contractor who did an amazing job doing touch up painting.

Mrs. Vadas stated there will be an open house on the 12th and 13th.

Update on Sumer Projects

Mr. Barlow presented a spreadsheet with the list of projects that are currently being done or completed at all of the schools.

High School - B-wing roof top handlers have been ordered. He thought the delivery would be sometime in January and will hold until the April break to be replaced.

He also stated the gym floor was completed and looks amazing.

Repair work to the public restrooms at the high school of the main lobby have been updated and we are just waiting for the floors to be refinished.

Middle Gate- Adjustments were made in the delivery of the playground which is now set at around the 28th of this month. Old playground has been removed and the site is ready to accept the new playground along with the accessible walkway which has been completed. He stated it will take 1 to 2 weeks to install the playground and should be ready for students sometime around September 11th.

Reed School – Survey from Trane on chillers came back as stable and the refrigerant is in good shape. Mr. Barlow state the R-Newal program is definitely a viable solution. He stated the R-Newal program looks at the entire chiller package and determined the coils in the chiller are excellent for its age. With rebuilding the chillers the R-Newal program wipes out all of the equipment except for the coils and puts all new equipment into the chillers and would recover the original R22 refrigerant. The price from Trane came in at \$237K to rebuild the both and we would get 10 more years of service instead of a full replacement. The price to replace the two chillers would be over \$1M.

HOM – Two of the bathroom floors were refinished which included the sand grit in the finish to eliminate slips. He stated with some of the monies from the Hawley fund they were able to do a few other bathrooms at Hawley with the same finish. He stated eventually they would look at all of the bathrooms at all of the schools to complete with the same finish.

He said the new condensers for HOM have been ordered and are expected to arrive by the end of October and if delivery is on target he would get them put on the roof by the end of October or early November ahead of the cold winter weather.

We have ordered new overhead doors for the warehouse space we share with Park & Rec and they are expected within the next few weeks. This is to help block the odors of the fertilizer and chemicals that Park & Rec store in the warehouse.

Newtown public works have removed dead trees at the MS and HOM.

Parking lot lines at all buildings have been done.

Summer HVAC maintenance is completed and we are now doing fall maintenance on all buildings.

Fire sprinklers and life safety devices have been inspected in every school.

Fire marshals inspections have been completed in all buildings.

Ms. Zukowski asked about all of the equipment being purchased and if it was encumbered in the 22-23 school year. Mrs. Vadas did a recap of where the monies were coming from for the purchases.

Ms. Zukowski stated if we are paying \$240K for rebuilds and we are pretty confident for 10 years, our other option we spend \$1M on new and being confident they would last 25 years then it would be \$120K per 5 years on rebuilds and \$200K per 5 years on new. She further stated we can make an argument over \$120K per 5 years vs \$200K for 5 years.

Mrs. Plante asked about the concrete steps leading up to Middle Gate entrance and if they had been repaired and completed. Mr. Barlow stated it was on the custodian list to be done.

Mr. Barlow wanted to publicly thank the individual departments such as Public Works and Park and Rec for their working relationship.

Mrs. Plante asked about Middle Gate field where the big playground is that the kids play soccer on. She stated it should be grassed but it is dirt and could we get that grassed. . Mr. Barlow stated he would look into it.

CIP Discussion

Mr. Barlow stated he made a couple of adjustments with the MS and \$12M for the HVAC project. He stated we had put it out in year 5 but everyone wanted it back in year 4 so he moved it back.

He stated we are just starting with looking at the \$450K that was approved as to how we are going to expel that money. We decided to look at a design bill project so that we can expel a limited amount of dollars out of the \$450K. He stated the concern is the project could potentially come in well over the \$12M.

Mr. Melillo stated the reality of the Middle School could be more from \$12M - \$20M.

Mr. Barlow thought the \$12M was a low number.

Mr. Melillo stated to put \$20M into a building that needs more work does not seem to be a good use of funds.

Mr. Barlow stated the reimbursement rate from the state for Newtown is about 38%.

Mr. Melillo stated he will continue the discussion with Mr. Barlow on the cost and numbers and stated there are also other ways to maybe make it palpable. We need to be prepared to have a plan outside of the \$20M price tag on that building.

Ms. Zukowski brought up the possibility of a committee for long term analysis of our buildings which would include members of the board, public and other boards. Mr. Melillo was in agreement with this.

Mr. Melillo brought up the concern of not having the capacity to move students out of the building as with Hawley. He further stated if you do an HVAC project and keep students in house you will have significant costs with working around them.

Mr. Barlow stated the discussion he had with the town was that the \$450K is a lot of money to spend on engineering to possibly find out that this might not be a viable project. He stated with design build we can probably expel less money to find out what the end result is and would prefer to spend less now than more.

Mrs. Plante asked the difference with design build vs engineering. Mr. Barlow stated design build cuts the engineering cost out because some companies staff their own people for that and design build kind of takes that piece out along with the CM. It would be oversight of a building committee and we would oversee the design process.

Mr. Barlow also talked about a facility study. He stated with a facility study besides looking at your overall facilities and developing a capital projects list, they also look at NESDEC projections, potential space requirements, etc. and he thought it might be money well spent.

Ms. Zukowski agreed.

The discussion continued around a possible facility study.

Mr. Melillo suggested we look at what our options are for financing a facility study.

Mr. Barlow stated the facility study adds a tremendous benefit to where we are going to go and what our future looks like.

Mr. Melillo asked Mr. Barlow about air quality vs. air cooling.

Ms. Zukowski mentioned an air quality test. Mr. Barlow stated there is no state or federal standards on indoor air quality.

Mr. Barlow stated he agreed with Mr. Melillo that to invest \$20M in an indoor air quality/ air conditioning system for that building does not seem feasible with the fact that we know the spaces are not conducive to learning environments.

Mrs. Plante stated she thought we should keep talking about the facility study. Everyone agreed.

Mr. Barlow stated he can write an RFP for it.

Mr. Barlow moved on to state that he made some other adjustments on the CIP. He stated he had a conversation with Garland the roofing vendor and asked to get some realistic quotes per square foot of replaced roof. He said the numbers for roof replacement, the dollars per square foot listed on the CIP were much lower than the \$50/sq. ft. price now. He stated he could not see putting a CIP together with the current numbers listed and not being able to get the jobs done. They need to be more reflective of what the actual number is.

He stated when he ran the numbers for the High School he came in at \$4.1M and divided the cost and separated the years so that we could be sure these roof replacements would happen and look palpable on the CIP. He stated all of the roof, window replacements and HVAC improvements are eligible for state reimbursement dollars. The 38% falls in there. He did state we would have to fund the entire amount before the state reimbursement would fall in.

Ms. Zukowski requested a revised version of the CIP that starts with the proper year 1 as a no bonding year and goes out to year 10 with as a 'TBD' (To Be Decided). She also asked Mr. Barlow on the projects that are potentially eligible for a reimbursement rate and to have an asterisk by the dollar amount.

Mr. Barlow stated he would also pull the actual percentage rate for all projects and input that on the bottom of the CIP and would bring this to the next Board meeting.

Superintendent's Update

Mr. Melillo stated the convocation is scheduled for the 24th of this month. Students start on the 30th and Hawley is now ready to open and he is looking forward to a great second year with Newtown.

PUBLIC COMMENT: none

ADJOURNMENT:

Ms. Zukowski made a motion to adjourn meeting. Mrs. Plante seconds the motion. All in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:09 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanne Morris

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CFF/CIP SUB COMMITTEE