

Newtown Board of Education  
CIP/Facilities/Finance (CFF) Sub-Committee Minutes  
December 14, 2023 6:00 pm  
BOE Conference Room

**PRESENT:** Alison Plante, Shannon Tomai, Christopher Melillo, Tanja Vadas,  
Steve Goodridge, Board of Finance

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

**BUSINESS:**

Mrs. Plante moved to accept the minutes of November 16, 2023. Mrs. Tomai seconds the motion. All in favor of the motion. Motion passes unanimously.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Financial Report and Transfers:**

Mrs. Vadas presented the financial report for November. She talked about what was captured and spent for last month and with looking at variances she stated we are on point with the previous month with a slight change in the balance of just over \$12K. Our projected balance stands at \$541K. She went on to say that there was a large change in our salary accounts which is still the major driver with a projected balance at \$372K. There were small changes in employee benefits, other purchased services, purchased property services and supplies which were all pretty much consistent with last month.

Salary accounts continue to drive our budget which is coming from the Paraeducator Union. Certified salaries carry a small balance in our teacher staff account and we did a realignment of our encumbrances which accounts for teachers on leave and transfers. She requested a transfer this month of \$87K to cover our contracted services BT's which would come from our teacher accounts. We have included projections in the teacher account for a MG sped position, Hawley Psychologist position, and two leaves coming up in Jan-Feb which would account for the turnover. She stated we have 20 sped para positions and 4 classroom positions open.

All accounts in benefits are in alignment with the budget. Our 401A plan is a moving target. New employees go on this plan so when we budget we never know what this number is going to be. She stated we pay 5% towards this plan and the defined benefit is an annual payment.

She mentioned unemployment and that the state is no longer sending bills and we are finding out we now have to go on-line. We have had some turnover in our accts/ payable dept. so we did not get caught up with this until lately. We recently received a \$26K quarterly bill and our budget is \$30K for the year. In the prior year when we were budgeting we did not have that much in unemployment costs. So we will be watching this account.

The Professional Services account includes attorney fees, psychological testing, and all of staff development and training. We are on target right now to spend all of our budget in these educational services.

Mrs. Tomai asked if the psychological testing was considered sped.

Mrs. Vadas stated it is a sped service that is captured in this object...She stated there is a lot of departments that go into this one object as part of government accounting.

Purchased Property Services are accounts at the building level. This is showing a small balance emerging in the water account and is hard to predict because our irrigation costs can be very high.

In the building site and emergency repairs, we have spent 40% of the budget and we are on target for this time of year. In emergency services we have only spent \$3,800 thus far and the remainder has been for general building maintenance.

Other Purchased Services includes contracted services, transportation, insurance, communications and out-of-district tuition. In contracted services we just hired a new firm to help with BT costs and they are providing reduced rates which are much lower than last year. Currently we only have 3 BT openings. This financial report does include a transfer of \$87K from our certified salary surplus to cover the BT contracted services for the remainder of the year. We also have IDEA money of about \$60K which is grant money. We currently are down 3 BT's and we budgeted for 25.

With the Out of district tuition we have readjusted all encumbrances and we are currently showing a negative balance of \$37K. Projections are in place for about \$250K and we have the excess cost grant so we are hopeful to break even.

In supplies we have a balance emerging in our virtual net metering. Next year we will be more in alignment and may not see as large credits with more data available.

The propane fuel for buses was budgeted at \$1.40/gal and it came in at \$1.27/gal.

Mrs. Tomai asked if we were paying separately for the fuel.

Mrs. Vadas stated we have always paid for fuel for the buses even when it was diesel. Propane saved us a lot of money not to mention we can apply for a credit.

Mr. Melillo stated it also meets the requirement of the State's need to have buses be green. Propane is a clean burn. A lot of districts are looking at electric buses but electric buses are \$500K each. The propane buses meet the required law.

Mrs. Vadas stated we are on schedule to use all of the gallons it is just coming in a little bit less.

Mrs. Vadas wanted to discuss the Excess Cost Grant and stated that we did submit our first estimate of \$1.8M to the State which went on December 1<sup>st</sup>. The total estimate was just over \$1.824M and our budget was just over \$1.832M. We are only short \$7,300 based on our estimate.

Mrs. Plante asked to get an explanation of what the Excess Cost Grant is.

Mrs. Vadas stated it is a State grant that reimburses us for 70% of the high costs for out-of-district tuition and transportation that are above an amount known as our basic contribution. The basic contribution and the remaining 30% are the obligation of the district.

**Transportation Update:**

Mrs. Vadas stated we have the same amount of drivers and we are in a really good place. We have 6 spares with another one coming on. She stated last year we had to outsource all athletic trips. Last year at the end of November we had 118 trips. Out of those 118 trips, only 44% was completed by All-Star due to lack of drivers. This year we have 115 trips and at this time 73% have been completed by All-Star.

**Facilities Update:**

None

**Superintendent's Update:**

None

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

None

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Mrs. Tomai made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Mrs. Plante moved the motion. Mrs. Tomai seconds the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 6:50 pm.

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  
CIP/Facilities/Finance (CFF) Sub-Committee Minutes  
November 16, 2023 6:00pm  
BOE Conference Room

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

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

**BUSINESS:**

Mrs. Plante asked for a motion to approve the minutes of October 17, 2023. Ms. Zukowski moved to the approve the minutes of October 17, 2023. All in favor the motion. Motion passes unanimously.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Financial Report and Transfers:**

Ms. Vadas presented the summary of the financial report and transfers of October 2023. After looking at the financial statements, Ms. Vadas pointed out that the projected balance has changed substantially over the past month. She explained that it is early in the year and they did encumber a lot of salaries and made changes in special education by putting in anticipated obligations. Projections of the salaries were also included. Going forward, they can expect to see that change again in November's report which will show a better picture of where the district will be at year end.

Ms. Vadas said that November is a critical month because the excess cost grant calculations are being done which include the special education out of district tuition costs, as well as mediated agreements. The calculations will be submitted to the state by December 1<sup>st</sup>.

Ms. Vadas said that they are requesting a transfer of \$1.14 million in certified staff line item. This transfer request is typical for this time of year as many certified positions have been reclassified. It does not change the bottom line because it is internal transfers.

Ms. Zukowski asked if this includes teachers resigning and/or retiring.

Ms. Vadas said that it does and is in the budget turnover line. This current year, Newtown budgeted \$450,000 and had an exceptional amount of turnover. There were 25 resignations and 8 retirees. All of these positions have been filled and the budgeted turnover number of \$450,000 has been exceeded by approximately \$189,000. There were additional costs in certified staffing which means that the net saving is just over \$80,000. This is a good start as all of our positions are currently filled but it is still early in the year.

Ms. Plante asked why there was an uptick in resignations.

Mr. Melillo answered that there are a couple of reasons. One reason is moving to a District that has higher pay. Another reason is that their family is relocating and there were only one or two that felt Newtown was not a good fit for them.

Ms. Vadas reported that the non-certified accounts are currently experiencing a large surplus in the para profession account. Once again, it is challenging to fill these open positions and internal conversations are being had regarding these openings.

Mr. Melillo spoke about the budget process thus far. He stated that there are issues presented in the budget because there is a flat to increase in enrollment. The good thing is they won't lose any teachers, however, this also means that the budget will be higher. Last year there was a surplus and they were able to pre purchase materials. As a result from that, when we jump into next year's budget, those lines will look inflated.

Ms. Vadas added that pre purchases aren't always the way to go.

Mr. Melillo is planning on talking to other Board leadership prior to the budget.

Ms. Zukowski agrees that is a good idea.

Ms. Vadas continued reporting about the financial transfers. She stated that they are transferring \$162,772 to cover costs for our behavioral therapists. The funding for this transfer is coming from the non-certified salary adjustment line. As of today, there are only two behavioral therapists positions open. They found a service that is less expensive (\$45/hr) than our previous service (\$60/hr).

Ms. Vadas said that there were no emergency repairs over \$5,000 for the month of October.

Ms. Vadas said that out of district tuition can be a wildcard. As of today, they have fully encumbered the anticipated costs for this line item. Newtown has had to hire out for transportation at \$250/day. On December 1<sup>st</sup>, they will be submitting the first estimate to the state of the excess cost grant. The grant is now expected to be reimbursed at %70.

Ms. Vadas answered that they budgeted \$5.3 million for 58 students, which includes mediated agreements but currently only have 53 students and still paying \$5.3 million.

Ms. Zukowski thought it was typically only 42 students.

Ms. Vadas does not recall that number but there are 53 special education students which includes mediated agreements.

Ms. Vadas reported that the supply account has been accounted for as fully expended as they typically make adjustments later in the year. There is a surplus emerging from the electricity accounts due to the virtual net metering program. Last year this program produced a large surplus and reduced the energy costs by two-thirds. This program is complex because it operates on a calendar year.

Ms. Vadas concluded by showing the committee the estimates from the excess cost grant which is at the budgeted amount (\$1.83 million).

Ms. Zukowski asked if that estimate was based on how many outplaced students there were.

Ms. Vadas answered that she would get back to Ms. Zukowski with that number.

### **Transportation Update:**

Ms. Vadas gave an update on Transportation. Ms. Vadas said that Newtown is in very good shape. As of today, the routes are filled and there are six spare drivers.

Ms. Zukowski asked if the spares were back from Brookfield.

Mr. Melillo said that they are back.

Ms. Zukowski asked if any more spares were being lent out to other towns.

Mr. Melillo said it is not a school decision for spares to go to other districts. It is All Star's decision.

Ms. Vadas said that All Star has four applicants in the works along with two additional employees that will get their license in four weeks. Newtown is also staffed for sports and charter buses.

Mr. Melillo believes that he believes our bus drivers feel appreciated.

### **Facilities Update:**

Mr. Barlow was not able to attend tonight's meeting so Ms. Vadas provided the committee with the facilities update. Ms. Vadas said that the \$130,000 facilities study moved quickly through the Board of Selectman, Board of Finance and then was approved by the Legislative Council the night before.

Ms. Vadas said that she will send a memo to the BOF and LC to confirm that the Reed chiller is on their next agenda.

Ms. Zukowski added that the money for the Reed chiller will be coming out of the non-lapsing fund and will not cost the Town any monies.

Ms. Vadas continued with the report by stating that the new truck was picked up on Tuesday and all is good.

Ms. Vadas reported that the repairs to Middle Gate and Hawley playgrounds are complete.

Also, Ms. Vadas said that Mr. Barlow is making some headway on the lighting at Reed. The budget for this project is around \$125,000. He met with Next Stage, who was the original vendor but their quote was very high. He is planning on meeting with another vendor and believes it will come in at budget.

Head O' Meadow's condenser project has officially been pushed back until spring break due to equipment delivery delays.

Lastly, Newtown applied for the HVAC grants for the HOM condenser, as well as the A wing and B wing at the high school. The applications are due December 31<sup>st</sup> so we expect to hear back at the end of January, early February.

Ms. Zukowski asked if Mr. Barlow had the RFP for the facilities study. Ms. Vadas did not have it yet but he is going to work with our Purchasing Director to button it up.

Ms. Zukowski asked for a timeline on when they could expect it.

Ms. Vadas answered that they would have it for review by the week of November 27<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Plante and Ms. Zukowski will receive the RFP via email to review. They can email Mr. Barlow with any questions or concerns that they have.

### **Superintendent's Update:**

Mr. Melillo reported that he has been working on the budget with Ms. Vadas for the past couple of weeks. They have been meeting with the schools to go over their budget as well. He also reported that he will be attending the CABE CAPPs conference the next day in Mystic, Connecticut.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

None

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting ended at 7:05 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Sarah Connell

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