

Legislative Council Question March 16, 2017

What maintenance projects from p. 234-5 could be delayed? Which ones could be done with the remaining \$470K end-of-year black ink? Cafeteria and sound system were specifically mentioned.

- The current proposal is \$322,500. The sound system in the café & PA system at the Middle School are currently not working and in poor condition. This is a safety concern and must be prioritized. The estimated cost is \$55,000.

Although each additional project is a priority, moving forward, a delay would not compromise students and or staff safety.

What are the numbers for extra-curricular activities: participants, costs and contributions? (and what would happen financially if pay-to-participate was continued as-is for another year?)

- The current annual cost associated with running extra-curricular activities and sports at the Middle School is \$58,755. Historically and to date, we have never charged for these activities; therefore, there is no revenue offset (pg. 124).

The fees associated with NHS sports program as well as ticket sales are used to offset contracted services. Historically, the pay-to-play fees have been able to cover all of the contracted services with the balance reported as revenue to the Town (Town revenue cap of \$84,800).

With the proposed decrease in pay-to-play fees for the 2017-18 budget year, we will still be able to cover the contracted services with an estimated \$42,370 in revenue. The reduction in revenue will be approximately \$35,080. If this were to be deferred another year, we could anticipate roughly \$77,000 in revenue.

Details for the number of players, teams, coaches, and fees is located on pages 149-151 in the budget book.

What are specific offerings at the high school (this seems to be a follow-up/clarification for question #2 on the Q&A sheet)

- Our high school is high performing, with students who maintain a full academic schedule with very few study halls. This means that our students' course loads frequently consist of more than 5 classes and can range upward of 7 or 8 classes. We consistently respond to staffing and enrollment ratios, over time having reduced 3 FTEs, including the 1 FTE noted for reduction in 2017-18. Some staffing reductions on the general education side are countered by the necessity of maintaining or expanding staff who work with students requiring Special Education services and with 504s, which represents a continuing increased need. In addition, there are new course requirements for high school students in accordance with legislative mandates and may require additional coursework/credits as

a prerequisite to graduation. Some of these requirements have already been included in the high school program, such as Personal Financial Literacy through our B.E.A.T. department and world language as a requirement. Additionally, staff and administration at the high school are working on a pilot for a Senior Year Experience (“Capstone” project), which will enable all students to demonstrate their skills in written performance, critical thinking, spoken communication, and information literacy through an authentic, inquiry-based project as a culmination of their high school academic experience.

What amounts were sent back to Newtown as an adjustment to the Excess Cost Grant recalculation (based on change in per pupil expenditure calculation) and how were these included or excluded from the proposed budget?

- As the 2015-16 budget was being developed, legislation that was in place required NPS to include the costs associated with grant funding into our calculation. Because two of our grants were quite large (Victims grant and SERV) the net current expenditure per pupil cost (NCEP) was higher; hence, reducing the amount received in our excess cost grant. As the 16-17 budget year was underway, legislation was changed that allowed us to remove the large grant expenses which lowered our NCEP, ultimately increasing our excess cost grant revenue.

1) The amount due for 2014-15, \$80,479 will go back to the General Fund because our and the Town's books are closed. This would be the only amount available for discussion concerning alternate usage.

2) The amount due for 2015-16, \$83,284 has been booked as a receivable to prevent a deficit situation for the 2015-16 year due to the significant number of special ed placements. This constitutes an appropriate and necessary use of these funds. This has been included in the financials presented to the board in the year-end report and to the town auditors.

3) The additional amount currently estimated for 2016-17, \$47,422 will be received and deposited in the current fiscal as *excess cost* against the eligible expenses that will be reported for this year. This will be a direct reimbursement and cannot be re purposed in any other way. We have included this adjustment in our current budget.

The new legislation has been in place since the beginning of 2016-17; therefore, since this time we have calculated the excess cost grant using the above methodology and will continue to do so in subsequent years.

Can subscriptions in the libraries be consolidated? e.g. Enchanted Learning

- Each school is given the latitude to spend their allocation on subscriptions and other supplies for instruction according to the needs of their own building, which creates a level of variance in the items the schools choose to purchase. Our schools engage in regular collaboration when planning their budget proposals and monitoring their existing budgets throughout the year. When the principals determine there is a need across multiple buildings for consistent implementation of a subscription, item, or service, they make a request to Central Office to issue a Purchase Order Number to gain leverage in

cost by purchasing as a district for a discounted price. It is the regular practice of our school leaders to manage consolidation of these items in this way.

What is the educational use/value of iPads?

- During the February 2, 2017 Board of Education meeting, a similar question regarding how mobile devices were being used in the classroom was also asked. At that time the four elementary principals shared the usages in their buildings. They all agreed that both the iPad and the Chromebook satisfied existing needs.

Dr. Gombos relayed that the elementary schools wireless devices (iPads and Chromebooks) are wonderful for use in flexible spaces. She had recently come across a child in the hallway making a movie. The mobility provides a freedom to work on projects that would otherwise only be able to be created in the computer lab.

Having the devices available in the classroom allows flexibility in instruction and supports differentiated learning. Mr. Moretti spoke of iPads as good for apps that can provide enrichment and reinforcement. Apps are installed on the iPads in support of skills in all of the core curricular areas. Ms. Gasparine and Mr Geissler elaborated that the K-2 classrooms have iPads assigned to the classrooms so they are available throughout the day.

Grades 3 and 4 have more use for Chromebooks specifically for collaboration as supported by the use of Google classroom. Third and fourth grade teachers in all four buildings have created Google Classrooms for use with their students. Google classroom allows the teacher to share documents and videos, provide feedback on student work in real time and encourage collaboration. Additionally the Chromebooks support the students in gaining typing skills, working on writing assignments and completing research assignments.

We are all learning to use what we have. The lab is great for whole group instruction but, mobile devices allow for usage when the need arises versus when the time slot is allotted.

Shared services document that indicates the top 3 items that are benefit ting the town/BOE.

Shared Services Technology Department

Al and I submitted the following two speaking points that illustrate how our technology departments are working in collaboration on shared services.

- Shared phone system with calls, voicemail and paging handled through a jointly maintained and administered system
- Shared hardware environment, with each group sharing maintenance responsibilities and where three shared systems are run: payroll, H/R and finance.

- Shared knowledge, with priority given to the adopting the same software/hardware solutions to meet business needs and allow for providing support to each other during issue resolution.

**Newtown BOE Security Department and Newtown Police Department
Shared Services**

Areas where the sharing of services are currently taking place:

1. School Security Personnel (SSO & SRO Program – MOU Agreement)
2. Police Department representation on the District Security & Safety Committee (DSSC)
3. Police Department assistance with the District’s Proactive Risk Assessment Procedures
4. Police Department assistance with the District’s Student-Parent Reunification Procedures
5. Significant NBOE member participation on the NPD’s Juvenile Review Board (JRB)
6. Bulk purchase of proximity cards for door access to all Town facilities with S2 readers.
7. NBOE loaning of two-way radios, flashlights, personnel, and electric golf cart to NPD during emergencies.

**Shared Services
Human Resources**

The Human Resource Departments continue to collaborate frequently and purposefully. The following are two talking points of our most recent efforts:

- Compilation and communication of research regarding the shared purchasing agent position (e.g. CCM and CASBO polling, job description, placement of the position into the organizational chart);
- Scheduled bi-monthly meetings with varying topics of discussion (e.g. short/long-term disability leaves, state/federal laws and regulations, benefits, defined contribution pension plan)

**Shared Services
Public Works and BOE Facilities Management**

Gino Faiella, Newtown BOE Director of Facilities and myself (Fred Hurley) Public Works Director have discussed the possible formal integration into a single command and control structure of all building maintenance and repair. The less pretentious question, based on the success of the current seamless interaction between departments, is how to guarantee continuance of that success when the current leadership is gone. Secondary, but of real importance, would also be any pathway that might improve results or reduce costs or both. We will address these questions in reverse order.

First, the issue of cost requires extensive financial data and the descriptive information to understand what the results mean. The problem is quite simply that actual costs are so integrated into a non-structured delivery system that they will be difficult to both capture and then be put into a programmed projection. In English, the problem is that we help each other on inside and outside work depending on who has resource available at the time. For example if Gino needed a paving job done quickly and Public Works wasn't available, he could use our call contractors to get the job done. Conversely, if we needed some plumbing done in one of the buildings and Gino's plumber wasn't available Public Works would

bring in a call contract plumber. How do you track the money and then put it into a budget format. The answer is not easily. This would take time to collect and arrange defensible data. Frankly we don't have that kind of time readily available. It could be done but it would take a long time to get a useable document.

Second, would this effort improve results? In some areas it would make no difference because we often use the same personnel and approach for the same work. Turning that question around we would ask what level of effort or result are you looking for. For example, the Municipal Center has been maintained to a certain workable level but it is not the same standard maintained (in some cases by code) in the schools. Existing results may be the highest possible given the current level of effort and resource that has been applied.

Third, would this approach reduce costs? The simple response is that we don't know. We need both the data and the expectation levels noted above before that answer could be provided. Our gut feeling is that the answer is no because we are very efficient at using the most timely resource available. The cynical observation might be that we are very efficient at using the most timely resource available because in many cases it is either the only resource available or the only way the job can be done anyway. This in itself would be a problem except we are integrated in our approach so it works. We can try to put data together to assemble a more formal response as long as everyone understands it will take time.

Finally, we were asked what we thought about establishing a purchasing agent". From our standpoint it would be a plus. While we still would have to prepare the scopes or technical specifications, it would be helpful to have someone else assembling the packages and more specifically making sure that the front end of the bids are correct for liability, insurance, bonds, and other legal requirements of the State and Federal government. In addition, this agent could follow up on necessary legal clarifications and find new or alternate sources of supply including various purchasing councils, buying consortiums and/or other governmental bid arrangements.

Is there any data that can answer questions about buses - for example, numbers of O-O buses in the last year they were working compared to the current number of buses?

- The year prior to the start of All-Star Transportation, a total of forty-five and a half busses were needed to service the in-district, magnet, private and vo-tech locations. In the current year, All-Star utilizes forty-two and a half busses to service the same locations. With All-Stars current configuration, we are able to service the magnet, private and vo-tech locations at no additional charge. These runs alone produced an annual savings of \$190,000.

As the enrollment declines, the logistical issues of transportation do not go away. This is a factor that is commonly overlooked but needs to be recognized. We are confident in the ability of All-Star to plan the bus routes in the most effective and efficient manner. They have been in business since the late nineties and have over 500 busses on the road today.