

Newtown Public Schools  
BOE CFF/CIP/Facilities/Finance Sub Committee Agenda  
November 10, 2022, 6:00pm  
BOE Conference Room

CALL TO ORDER

BUSINESS

Item 1 Approval of BOE CFF/CIP Minutes of October 13, 2022

NEW BUSINESS

- Hawley HVAC Update
- Financial Report and transfers
- Superintendent update

PUBLIC COMMENT

ADJOURNMENT

Newtown Board of Education  
BOE CFF/CIP/Facilities/Finance Sub-Committee Minutes  
October 13, 2022 6:00 p.m.

**Call to Order:** Mrs. Zukowski called the meeting to order at 5:59 pm.

**Participants:** Deborra Zukowski, Alison Plante, Bob Gerbert, Tanja Vadas, Chris Melillo, Superintendent, Michelle Ku, Legislative Council, Steven Goodridge, Board of Finance

**Item 1: Approval of September 15, 2022 Minutes**

Mrs. Plante made a motion to approve the BOE CFF/CIP minutes of September 15, 2022.

Ms. Zukowski seconds the motion.

All in favor, motion passes to approve the BOE CFF/CIP minutes of September 15, 2022.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Hawley HVAC Update**

Mr. Gerbert presented an updated summary sheet from Downes of the overall project budget. He stated that not much has changed since the last update in terms of approved changed orders. He stated we are only scratching the surface of tapping the contingencies. They have approved about \$9K to date and have another \$35K pending which are all approved through Building & Site. He stated progress is continuing. They have been on schedule with everything except for the electrical switch gear and transformer which still remain with a long lead. He stated those items probably won't arrive until May/June of next year. He stated if things progress as they are there should not be a problem but it just delays the physical installation of those pieces. He then went on to discuss other areas stating they are installing duct work in every classroom, they started putting up vav boxes, running plumbing connections for the reheat coils, running conduit, back boxes for some of smaller electrical distribution. He said the demo is pretty much behind us except for the attic. He then said the next big milestone will be pulling out the 3 dormers on the back so they can rig in the equipment in the attic and then they will build a new shed dormer which will function as an air intake. He continued with they have erected roof curbs for the equipment that goes on the 1948 wing, and they installed 3 large steel beams that will support the 2 roof top units that go on the 21 wing. He stated he can't say enough of Downes for being on our side and keeping the budget in check. Overall things are progressing.

Mrs. Plante asked if we were planning to move teachers and staff back in right after school ends. Mr. Gerbert stated they will be substantially completed by April/May. He further said, when the school year ends we can undo the moves we did for this school year. We have to wait to see what is going to impact us at that time. He stated he does not expect that it would push into the next school year. He said if there comes a point where it looks like things will linger then we will have to come up with a plan. He further

stated a discussion to make all things work is in progress. There will be some contingencies in place if this does happen.

Ms. Zukowski stated if we are talking April/May then we most likely will not need heat or a/c in those months so is the reason we could not move things in is the fear that we might not get this project completed until August, in which case we would really need the HVAC capability, or will there be things that are undone in the building that would interfere with actually moving the classrooms back in.

Mr. Gerbert stated the intention from the beginning was to move out for the full school year. He stated we had great success in moving out of the school and to interrupt the school year, it would not be realistic to move anything back into the school until the school year is over.

Ms. Zukowski asked about the material procurement that was critical for discussion and was listed on the summary.

Mr. Gerbert stated that is really just a focus on the electrical. All of the other big items such as Hvac equipment and such is still coming as planned.

Ms. Zukowski asked about the demolition & abatement that is left in area C and confirmed that that was the 97 building. Mr. Gerbert stated that was correct. Ms. Zukowski stated that the asbestos, lead paint are all moot for this particular area. Mr. Gerbert stated that is correct.

There were no other questions.

### **Building & Grounds Operating Projects Update**

Mr. Gerbert stated the only news of significance is, he received a quote from Ultiplay who we use for our playground inspections and playground apparatus. He stated he had a discussion with the Middle Gate PTA president and reviewed a couple of designs this company presented for the lower level playground area. He said for \$83K which is a large investment, this would be a complete revamp of that area. He stated the project would entail demolition of all of the playground equipment in that space including digging out all of the mulch and concrete footings. He said essentially it would be a brand new playground. He stated it is a significant cost but it's an investment that would last for many years.

Ms. Plante asked if the \$83K included all of the demo etc. Mr. Gerbert stated this price includes equipment, all of the installation and new wood chips. We would have to recruit Park & Rec who has equipment to help us out with the demolition part.

Ms. Zukowski asked if there is a field that kids can get to play kickball, tag or whatever they want to do and do the other schools during playground times use the fields or are the fields the backup for the playground. Mr. Gerbert stated at MG you have the playground that serves the lower grades and another playground on the other side of the building for the older kids. MG also has two asphalt areas that have basketball hoops etc., and in the back of the school there is a ball field.

Ms. Zukowski asked about the other elementary schools.

Mr. Gerbert stated Hawley has the one playground, SHS has one playground and HOM has two separate playgrounds similar to MG.

Ms. Zukowski asked if they have access to spread out to other areas.

MR. Gerbert stated HOM has ball fields, SHS has ball fields and Hawley has ball fields.

Ms. Zukowski wanted to know if the schools use the fields as part of their playground.

Mr. Gerbert stated SHS uses the ball field for gym class, as well as the same for the other elementary schools.

Mr. Gerbert stated the one issue is we only have \$20K in the budget to play with. He stated he was under the impression that the PTA would contribute but did not think it would be the total difference of the cost. He stated we do have money available if we want to commit more than the \$20K to try and make this happen.

Ms. Zukowski stated that gets back to the equitable as the kids at the Reed school have the overflow into the fields and we currently can't do that with MG. We would have to look and see if we can do that overflow and then it may mean that it would have to go into a decision making and who would be making that decision.

Mr. Melillo stated the Board would have to make the decision because it would be a transfer of funds from one account to another.

Ms. Vadas stated we could do it this year or budget it for next year. She said we would probably need to obtain a few quotes.

Mr. Gerbert stated the benefit of this company is they are a state contract so that is why we started using them as there is built in discounts.

Mr. Melillo asked about Public Works to install. Mr. Gerbert stated he does not think there is a lot of savings for them to do the install because this project is so specialized. He stated there are savings with Public Works or Park and Rec to help with the demo because there is a lot of work in that. He said he would stick with Ultiplay to do the physical installation.

Ms. Zukowski asked if Mr. Gerbert could produce a breakout of the cost.

Mr. Gerbert stated he could do that with a full itemized breakout.

Mrs. Plante asked if this is something that could be done in stages.

Mr. Gerbert stated in the long term if you were to do one thing at a time you would spend more money.

Ms. Zukowski asked how long it would take to install.

Mr. Gerbert stated he would get a firm estimate but he is thinking 2 wks.

Mr. Goodridge asked about the two playgrounds at MG and if this would be replacing both.

Mr. Gerbert stated it is just for the playground for the little kids. Mr. Goodridge asked how old the other playground is. Mr. Gerbert stated not as old as the one for the little kids...maybe a 5-10 year range where the playground for the little kids is probably 15-20 years.

Ms. Zukowski stated the two questions are the breakdown of the cost and the equity of the ability to play during recess with a flow-over field.

Mr. Gerbert stated the only other project on radar is that there are two computer labs at the Middle school where they would like to replace the flooring and he had asbestos testing done which came back negative so now they can schedule installation.

Mrs. Plante asked about the playground equipment and are they built into the building inventory and if not can they be included.

Mr. Gerbert stated it is not included but he agreed it should be.

Ms. Zukowski also agreed it should be included in the inventory.

Mrs. Ku asked about the building Inventory and if it is in use now.

Mr. Gerbert stated it is still in progress.

There were no other items or questions.

### **State HVAC Grant**

Ms. Zukowski stated there is currently a Chair conversation where CAGE is asking Chairs from School boards if their school districts are going to apply.

Mr. Melillo stated the state is releasing a HVAC grant. He said the issue with the HVAC grant is that they are looking for turn-key programs that favor cities over smaller towns. He stated he had Mitch Bolinsky our State Representative who is one of the sponsor's for the HVAC grant come in. Mr. Bolinsky would like the school district to do a full fledged application that would look at MG, the Middle School and others. Mr. Melillo stated the real issue is we don't have quotes or specs for MG or Middle School for actual costs and that is what they are asking. He further stated we do have the ability to pull Hawley into the grant.

Mr. Gerbert stated we are putting together a grant application for Hawley since we have all of the information they are looking for. He said in terms of other projects that are further down the pipeline the grant has a December 1<sup>st</sup> deadline for applications to be submitted and the physical construction needs to be completed by December 31, 2024.

Mr. Gerbert stated the next big project for us is the Middle school and for this budget cycle we are looking for the design money. He said what we learned from Hawley is all of this takes at least 6 months time.

Ms. Zukowski stated hopefully they would have another grant program in the future.

Mr. Gerbert stated in terms of trying to put everything together and go for these bigger dollar projects such as the Middle School, they are so far out there and not realistic to put an application together because we will not have a lot of information they are looking for.

Ms. Zukowski stated the hope part of this grant would be that it would be continuous every two years which would get the school districts to take the time to come up with plans that would be an incentive for school districts to have on file turn-key plans.

Mr. Melillo stated the time table does not take into account the budget and approval process. He then stated we read the grant and felt it was more slanted towards groups of cities.

Ms. Zukowski asked about the CIP and two of the HVAC projects, one being the units for the top of the B wing at the high school which that does not require that much planning as we have already done a good amount, and could we look at the Reed school chiller instead of re-building it, we could have a project request that we get it brand new.

Mr. Gerbert stated we would have a better shot with the NHS and even put an application in for A-wing which is going on right now.

He stated with the Reed chiller the lead times would be difficult trying to get those type of units.

Ms. Zukowski stated we have a process where we do an engineering study and wait a year and then do the work, so that we can get estimates of what things will cost. If we know we are doing MS and MG within 5 or 6 years would it make sense to frontload those studies so that we have something that is turn-key if this grant happens again.

Mr. Gerbert stated yes and no...he said for the MS yes and MG we have already had the discussion to do the windows first. It would not be as beneficial to get someone in to do a study now and then 3-4 yrs do the windows and now that study is no longer good.

Ms. Zukowski stated in the future if we have HVAC we might want to think about putting the studies in one year if these grants are long lived.

Mrs. Plante asked what is the size of the pie of funds available.

Mr. Melillo stated it was \$170M.

Ms. Zukowski asked if Mr. Gerbert could put in a request for the machines for the HS on the roof.

Mr. Gerbert stated we would have to fill out another grant application. He said one of the things he needs to provide is an educational specification and would have to draft something and be approved by the board. He stated work has begun with the grant application for Hawley and that will be forthcoming for an upcoming board meeting and as part of the requirement, they want to see the board minutes approving the application.

There was no further discussion.

## **Financial Report**

Mrs. Vadas presented the September financial report. She stated the biggest change was that everything was expensed at a high percent. The projected balance had two line items of salaries and other purchased services. She said the total of \$1.8M is in no way any indication of what we are going to have at year end.

She stated September is still really early to predict a balance and October is when we narrow down expenses while November provides a good estimate.

Ms. Zukowski asked if we would know Special Education by then.

Mrs. Vadas stated December 1<sup>st</sup> is when the first allocation is due to the state. Typically in December we will have a better estimate of our Excess Cost grant revenue.

She talked about sub accounts that are experiencing some pressure. Teachers & Specialists salaries shows a negative balance of \$212K. Most of this is due to the high budgeted turnover number we have this year. We budgeted \$550K which was high and partly due to anticipation of having some open positions in our non-certified categories.

She stated currently our non-certified salaries shows a projected balance of \$697K and a lot of this has to do with unfilled positions. She added we have 10-12 open Para positions, Behavioral Therapists and a turnover of Custodial and Secretarial union positions.

She further stated in October we start projecting overall salaries.

She said the overall salary (certified and non-certified) balance is just over \$600K.

She stated Professional Services are projected at 100% spend. She said some accounts are variable, FICA, Medicare, Pensions (part of that) and unemployment. She further talked about the categories within this object.

She said within Purchased Property Services we have building & site emergency repairs which is known as our wild card. We have fully expensed everything in these categories for now.

She said Other Purchased Services is seeing a large surplus that will not stay. She said that with transportation we have work to do with our out-of-district costs and also part of our excess cost grant which will be adjusted in December. She further said, in transportation we added the reduction of 6 buses so we will have a surplus for that amount.

Mrs. Plante asked even once you have accounted for the retention bonuses there would still be an excess in that account. Mrs. Vadas stated yes.

Mrs. Vadas stated we are not anticipating any excess cost grant to be allocated towards the salaries this year. She reminded the board that we would only be receiving 70% of the grant even though we budgeted for 75% so we will see a loss in that grant this year.

She further talked about the supplies account and how they need to collect more data in order to have some better projections.

Mrs. Zukowski asked if and when we would lock in with oil etc.

Mrs. Vadas stated we combine with the town for oil and diesel and this year the town decided to go with the market. The town is now looking into potentially locking in in January. She said we only have 1 school that uses oil and minimal diesel usage.

Ms. Zukowski asked about in terms of the surplus we got for the 6 buses we took out and how much we spent on the retention bonuses.

Mrs. Vadas stated the first installment should be coming through for \$42K and that was for the September payment. We are going to pay in a 3-tier payment. The next installment will be before Christmas on December 16 and the last installment will be June 30<sup>th</sup>.

Mrs. Vadas stated we have one newly licensed driver that came on board. We have two drivers in training. One has his CDL so he just needs his endorsements. And we have 3 that are going to start training. That's a total of 5 in the program now and we currently have 2 spares that we are borrowing from other towns. She said two of the drivers that are coming on will replace the 2 spares and by early December, we could be fully staffed and potentially have enough buses to run charters.

Mr. Melillo stated we had a couple of missed routes due to absences and for the most part it has been pretty consistent.

Ms. Zukowski stated we should hold this conversation until the agenda item.

There was no further discussion on the financial report.

### **Food Service Update**

Ms. Vadas stated everything is going well. She is meeting with Chartwells every week. She stated part of their entry plan was to come in and meet the community and talk with everybody. She stated they did a great job with that. She said the first week they attended all of the open houses, have been in contact with PTA, they provided meals for our convocation and new teacher orientation. They also came to our A-Team and Board meeting. She said they are trying to get out there in the district to meet everyone and to understand how we operate and understand our community members.

She stated another program they will pick up is the Senior Center meals. Whitsons had done this last year. She stated we will be meeting in the upcoming week to discuss this further.

Mrs. Plante asked how this works.

Mrs. Vadas stated it is a partially funded program with the community center and the seniors will pay the other portion of it and there will be some revenue for us.

She stated she met with Chartwells today and shared some numbers; they produced 42,000 meals in September. In our al a carte income we received over \$55K in revenue. We are servicing about 55% of our district with meals, which Chartwells stated that is about average. Our average daily meal income is \$2100 and our al a carte is \$2700.

Mrs. Zukowski asked if Chartwells has projections of what that number was going to be.

Mrs. Vadas stated the manager is putting together a projection and will also be preparing a forecast for Mrs. Vadas for the full year.

Mrs. Plante asked about a projection and when the Smart program will expire.

Mrs. Vadas stated right now projection looks like it will run through the first week of December. We have to get a notice out to parents 30 days prior to the end of the program.

Mrs. Vadas then discussed the potential of using the dinning fund to subsidize some of the free meals to get us through the holidays. She stated it is kind of hard to stop this program right before the holidays and wanted the Boards thoughts on this.

Ms. Zukowski asked about the ramifications of drawing that fund down to zero and what that might be.

Mrs. Vadas stated it would not be zero. She stated we have quite a large surplus. We are allowed 3 times our operating expenses by the state and that is roughly \$300K. Right now she indicated our fund was over \$700K and this is because of last year.

Ms. Zukowski asked what we traditionally use those fund dollars on.

Mr. Melillo stated historically you would use it to reinvest it in your kitchen equipment. Because of COVID and all the meals we served over the last few years there is a surplus.

Mrs. Vadas stated all of the districts are in the same boat and the state is allowing us to use it towards funding meals for students.

Ms. Zukowski confirmed that we had roughly \$400K over our allowable balance of \$300K and the \$400K would be all we need to tie us over for the remainder of December

Mrs. Vadas said we are looking at a forecast of roughly \$150K to subsidize meals through December.

Mr. Melillo said we are looking at ending in early December and subsidizing through the month of December.

Mrs. Vadas stated December will not cost us that much as there is only half of the month.

Mrs. Zukowski stated we could put this on the Board for discussion.

Mrs. Vadas stated she would like to wait until we get a good forecast from Chartwells on this.

Mrs. Vadas then talked briefly about a retention bonus for the cafeteria employees. The discussion continued within the group. Mrs. Zukowski asked about bringing this conversation back to the sub-committee another time.

Mrs. Zukowski asked about food share.

Mrs. Vadas stated the idea is to have a table where if a student has a wrapped item they are not interested in they could put it on a table for someone else to take if they choose to. Items that are not wrapped we could donate to a farm and/or a greenhouse compost program.

She stated she did not believe we have a policy in place that eliminates students from food sharing.

Mr. Melillo stated in the last district he worked he was able to secure a grant that taught students how to share food and they had a table where students could take from, items went to shelters and with the grant it paid for a dumpster to take the scraps to a compost place. He stated you are actually paying by the ton for trash so it's a win-win. Once you eliminate the waste you are getting a discount on your trash.

Mrs. Plants said she has to believe that this is a common problem with other districts.

Mrs. Vadas stated she wanted to look into this more.

Mr. Melillo stated he would investigate this more with WestCog.

### **Transportation**

Ms. Zukowski asked about a couple of buses that did not run on their trip and was this due to absences and was their adequate communication.

Mr. Melillo stated the first one was adequate communication and the second one was a person who was the communicator with All-Star but was out that day and there was no plan-b.

Mr. Melillo stated we worked with All-Star to come up with a plan-b.

Ms. Zukowski stated it was good that we were working with them cooperatively to set up better communication but she also stated she wants to be sure we set the precedence that we expect the service we contracted for.

The discussion further went on regarding damages and not adhering to the contract.

Mr. Melillo went on to talk about the influx of cars at the high school.

Ms. Zukowski asked if this was in part due to the traffic conditions around the high school.

Mr. Melillo stated some if it is and the other is more people are driving to school since COVID. He stated students are driving and parents are dropping off. He said the buses are getting hung up at the high school due to the influx of cars and the buses can't get out.

There were no other questions regarding transportation.

### **Public Participation**

None

### **Adjournment**

Mrs. Plante made a motion to adjourn

Ms. Zukowski seconds the motion. All in favor. Meeting was adjourned at 7:15

Respectfully Submitted,  
Joanne Morris

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