

Newtown Public Schools
BOE CFF Subcommittee Meeting
November 16, 2023 6:00pm
BOE Conference Room

AGENDA

CALL TO ORDER

BUSINESS

Item 1 Approval of BOE CFF Subcommittee Minutes of October 17, 2023

NEW BUSINESS

- Financial Report and Transfers
- Transportation Update
- Facilities Update
- Superintendent's Update

PUBLIC COMMENT

ADJOURNMENT

Newtown Board of Education
CIP/Facilities/Finance (CFF) Sub-Committee Minutes
October 17, 2023 6:00pm
BOE Conference Room

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

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

BUSINESS

Mrs. Plante asked for a motion to approve the minutes of September 20, 2023. Ms. Zukowski stated that the CFF stands for CIP/Facilities/Finance so the CIP is redundant. Ms Zukowski moved to amend the motion to say the BOE CFF minutes as opposed to the CFF/CIP minutes Mrs. Plante seconds the amendment. All in favor of the motion as amended. Motion passes unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

Financial Report and Transfers

Mrs. Vadas presented the summary of the financial report of September 2023. She stated there was not much to report as we are still working on salary encumbrances, forecasts, and data that is coming in. The projected balance of \$1.3M is very premature. Once we get through October/November we will have a more realistic balance.

Salaries are driving the overall balance right now. Most of the other accounts are projected as a full spend. We do that this time of year as we anticipate to fully expend our budget.

Other purchased services have a balance of over \$500K which is being driven from out-of-district tuition. We know that this is not going to be the case as there are more encumbrances in the works.

She stated she put in one to two projections with a few encumbrances in the budget but more encumbrances are coming in and again it is early because at the end of November we will send this to the state for review and we will recalculate our excess cost grant at that time.

Ms. Zukowski asked about SpEd and the projected balance and is it due to the fact that we have not received bills that we know students are attending or, is it we anticipate a number of students and some of them are not using the money.

Mrs. Vadas stated there are some changes as some students have graduated, maybe one or two came in and are being held in mediated agreements so we don't know where they are going to be outplaced so the encumbrances have not been entered into the system yet. She feels by October/November we will see a big change. In December when we recalculate all of the students that are in-district we send them out for the excess cost and see what is eligible and then the excess cost grant will be adjusted.

Mrs. Vadas talked about salaries. She stated the certified balance is \$160K but is not too concerned at this time. We are working on teacher reclassifications, movements, and some adjustments with our encumbrances.

Non-certified salaries we see a big balance in our educational assistants. She stated she looked back at last year with many unfilled positions but the balance was not that high at this time. We had 22 open positions at the end of September and we are struggling in this area with bringing in Paras and retaining them. She further stated we have also seen a lot of movement into other positions such as BT's teaching, sub positions, job coaches and clerical positions.

In SpEd services we have a large deficit of \$171K due to an increase in BT's. She said with the BT's we have 2-3 positions still open.

Ms. Zukowski asked how many in-house BT's were budgeted. Mrs. Vadas stated 18 total.

Ms. Zukowski confirmed we have about 15 in-house and 1 out of house.

They continued to talk about the open positions for BT's

Ms. Zukowski asked if this had any impact on our students.

Mrs. Vadas stated the BT's are tied to a student's IEP and they are working double time. She further said they have a contracted service that fills the gap.

They continued to talk about the BT's and how they are filling gaps with schedules and the levels of service.

Mr. Melillo stated he did not think it was the BT's that are stretching us thin but the Paraprofessionals. He said with the BT's we can cover the hours from in-house or contract out for those hours. We don't have the ability to contract out for Paraprofessionals. With that, we have administrators, sped teachers filling the gap. He said we are able to cover but it is coming at a cost. He further stated that we cannot speak too much about this topic in public as we have to remember it's a bargaining unit so this is work that we would need to do with their union.

Mrs. Vadas brought up the electricity account and stated we are at a zero balance. She said our virtual net metering was a huge hit. It runs on a calendar year and we hit our cap this past September. We totaled close to \$1M in credits and continued to say there is an expense offset with this.

She said we are waiting to analyze some data and we had to catch up on the credits and do a lot of work on the forecasts so that is why we are seeing a zero balance in this report. She does anticipate we will likely see some credits emerge in that account.

Ms. Zukowski asked about the total of the offset charges against the credits. Mrs. Vadas stated the overall balance was about \$3K at the end of the 22-23 school year.

Ms. Zukowski asked about the winter increase in electricity. Mr. Barlow stated they always do a winter increase but did not think they were going to go as high as last year.

Ms. Zukowski asked about what percentage of our energy expenses are covered with our credits. Mrs. Vadas said we capped in September so October, November and December we will not see any credits because we are done for the calendar year. We will resume in January with the virtual net metering.

The conversation then closed on the financial statement.

The committee talked briefly about the paraprofessionals, positions and their levels.

Reed Chiller

Mr. Barlow stated there has been discussion of taking the money from the non-lapsing. The price is \$120K. He was notified by Trane if we wait to do the transfer from the non-lapsing to the spring we probably won't see the parts until late August. He stated we need to do the transfer now to get the parts on order. They are seeing a lead time of at least 26 -36 wks on parts. We would like to get the chiller up and running before the heat comes in. If we can get it done now we will have enough time to get it up and running.

The committee had a conversation regarding the facility study and the benefits with the town and community and moving forward.

Mr. Barlow stated the RFP for the facility study is all set.

Mrs. Plante asked the order of operations.

Ms. Zukowski stated it needs to go to Board of Finance before Legislative Council.

Mr. Goodridge stated he would look into how it could be moved forward at a quicker pace.

Mr. Barlow stated in looking at the chiller that we are doing the r-newal, we will take all of the mechanicals off and replace them with new. He said there are a fair number of mechanicals that are functional and talking with Trane they will give them a stockpile of parts to keep the other chiller going.

It was agreed the committee would take this to the BOE meeting.

Transportation Update

Mrs. Vadas stated it is getting into cold and flu season and all-star is running really tight. There are 5 drivers out on medical leave.

The operations manager for All-Star has been out driving with callouts of bus drivers.

She said we are down quite a few drivers. All-star was pulling in others to cover drivers.

Mrs. Plante asked what our full strength numbers are.

Mrs. Vadas stated 48 routes, and typically we have between 5-6 spares.

Mr. Melillo stated part of the problem is when the state decided to go with paid medical leave for bus drivers; the drivers are taking their medical leave now vs. waiting until the summer in order to not lose pay.

Ms. Zukowski made a statement now that the bus drivers have paid medical leave we may need to look to the future to raise the amount of bus drivers/spares that we need to accommodate for absence.

Mr. Melillo stated there are not any bus companies around that will come in to fill in with extra buses. He stated we have not had to use any charter/coach buses for our sports.

Ms. Zukowski asked about the capacity of buses and can we trim routes.

Mr. Melillo stated he has been getting feedback from parents that buses are overfilled.

They further talked about the contract and number of students.

Ms. Zukowski stated it would be good to see the head counts of each of the buses. Also she questioned the amount of time and reducing the stops and getting the number of bus stops per bus. She further stated it would be interesting to see that information and maybe we can't do anything with it but it would be good to know about it.

Mrs. Vadas stated consolidated stops are a big issue in Newtown.
Mr. Melillo stated we did have some consolidation conversations with All-Star.

Ms. Zukowski left the meeting at 6:50.

Facilities Update

Mr. Barlow stated he was informed by Trane that the HOM condensers ship date has moved to mid November.

He stated he was not going to have Trane working on the roofs during the cold weather due to the condition and aging of the roof. So he will set this up for spring so the condensers will be stored on Trane's property until then.

Mrs Plante asked if there was any impact to us before the warm weather. Mr. Barlow said no.

Mr. Barlow also added there could be a potential moving of the ship date for the air handling units at the high school. They are scheduled to come in at this point in March.

Operations has done a lot of work chasing leaks at the high school with 1 leak left and having difficulty finding. The roof needs to be replace but it is holding.

He stated everything else is routine maintenance that is being done now.

Mrs. Plante asked about the final piece for the Middle Gate playground and Mr. Barlow stated we still don't have a ship date yet.

Mr. Barlow stated another note worthy project is the Eagle Scouts project at Middle Gate School for a Ga-Ga Pit. The pit was built by the Eagle Scouts and its very small. It was originally intended for the 3-4 playground and right now it is on the Kindergarten playground. There has been a request from the principal to make it larger. He said our maintenance dept. has come up with a plan to make it larger and move it to the other playground. This will happen in the next couple of weeks.

Superintendent Update

Mr. Melillo stated there was no update for this committee and will speak at the Board meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting ended at 6.57 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanne Morris

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