

Advisory Committee  
February 5, 2020

Those in attendance:

John Lanza, Ralph Tortorella, Mary Scanlon, Mary Gard, Lina Musayev, Julie Bryan, Bill Maynard, Todd Cook, Betsy Roberti, Paul Merry, Deed McCollum, Neal Goins, Patti Quigley, Jennifer Fallon

Todd Cook called the meeting to order at 7:00pm

Citizen Speak: No one came forward.

Town Clerk's Office: KC Kato presented the Town Clerk Office budget, beginning with an overview of what the Clerk's office does for the Town.

Advisory Question: What do you attribute the raise in animal fines to?

- Increased enforcement; easier payment options with online system so collections are up.
- There is a temporary increase in election costs because of the increase in elections with the state primaries and presidential election, plus anticipated STM in the fall.

Advisory Question: How much does early voting increase the cost?

- About \$5000 because we staff voting places during extra days for the Presidential election. More than what we do for the primaries (which is in the current budget).

Advisory Question: When you get tickets online, you pay a pretty hefty fee, so wouldn't people expect to pay additional fees for dog licensing?

- It's only our second year doing it online, so we may increase the license fees for online payments, but for now we are not raising them to cover additional fees.

Continued budget discussion:

There is an expected expense for electronic poll books if approved by the State. This would be for checking in people at the polls. The expectation and hope is to streamline the process of checking in voters during elections.

Advisory Question: Would it be an annual expense or a one time expense?

- It would be for the cost of the equipment, so probably once every 7 years or so to replace the technology.

Advisory Question: Would it be mandatory?

- No.

Advisory Comment: It is too bad that the Town elections cannot sync up with the political calendar.

- The year we had a Town Manager vote, it lined up with a regular election, but it required a STM.

The Chair invited KC to discuss a new warrant article regarding formatting changes in all the different by-laws. Includes some changes to conform to the Zoning By-law changes; also there are gender references being changed to they/them/their; roman numerals being changed to ordinals. A link to the redline will be available before Advisory votes on the warrant article. There is a hard copy available in the Town Clerk's office for anyone to review.

#### 7:20: School Committee Budget Presentation:

Melissa Martin (Chair); Matt Kelly; Sharon Gray; David Lussier; Cindy M; Joan Dumbrowski; Susan Orloff

Budget Presentation based on slide deck from Powerpoint previously distributed.

Guidelines: BOS: 3.5% plus an additional appropriation for SPED  
SC: Up to 4.25% plus additional appropriation for SPED; requested \$75K reduction to Admin's recommended budget.

#### Discussion of the SPED/Stabilization fund

Advisory Question: This year, FY20, you'll need \$483K from the Stabilization fund because of unforeseen expenses in SPED. You're saying there is \$664,203 of foreseen costs in excess of the guideline FY21?

- Yes, we have been working with BOS there should be an additional appropriation for known expenses in SPED that are driven by the needs of students and therefore we have both agreed should be outside of guidelines.

Advisory Comment: And so these costs would be in the budget so there would be no draw for these extra costs from the reserve fund.

- Correct

The additional funds needed for SPED are \$664K (additional appropriation over the guideline amount); then the \$448K would be the replenishment of the stabilization funds. Both amounts would be in the financial plan for the Town.

The changes in the regulations turned the Medicaid program into an insurance program, requiring a medical exam to provide certain licensed services. That would require additional

expenses for liability insurance, etc. if we are using our licensed professionals as prescribed services. This is a change in the regulations.

Advisory Question: 664K is what you anticipate for SPED needs, and the \$851K recommended balance is if we exceed that?

- The \$664K number is part of the School Dept base budget that would be used to cover known needs. The stabilization fund would be used for unforeseen needs in transportation or OOD placements. If the budgeted amount is not needed, it goes to free cash, and TM could appropriate it to the stabilization fund.

Advisory Question: How much are we losing in Medicaid funds because of the new regulations?

- About \$100,000, but in truth it is less, because of the additional administrative costs to manage the Medicaid programs.

The SPED costs are included in level services.

Advisory Question: The FY20 adjusted budget versus the as-voted on budget; what are the adjustments?

- We did about \$200K in budget transfers when we did the adjustment budget; the big change is that we have an overall deficit of \$483K, so we found about \$200K in savings, we have some circuit breaker carry forward, and additional funds from the stabilization fund.

Advisory Question: The budget from last year will require an additional \$3.3 million to accomplish what was done this year (the increase in level services)?

- Yes.

Advisory Question: Is the circuit breaker going to let us down a little this year?

- Our carry forward has to come out of the circuit breaker funds for this year, so we are already in the whole by the amount of carry forward. It's a net cost to the Town of \$224K.

### Discussion of budget process

Discussion of declining enrollment as compared to the budget; the declining enrollment doesn't necessarily mean there is less need for staff, since it is about the distribution. Also, some students might need additional staffing services.

Advisory Question: The difference between the two enrollment projections?

- Spread across the different grade levels. The report is on the Schools website.

CBA's expire at the end of SY 21-22. Cost impact of current staff is close to \$3 million

Some of the increase has to do with staff who are on leave and will be coming back; mandatory steps; lane changes for salaries; the staffing costs based just on the CBAs is about 3.5%, so it's already at guideline, which makes it difficult to budget for increases in any other area.

Advisory Question: OOD vs Settlements: are settlements only one year?

- Settlements can be multiple years like OOD placements.

Advisory Question on SPED OOD Placement slide: What is Collaborative?

- Groups of communities get together to address a need

Advisory Question about the distribution: It looks like the OOD placements have decreased and in district have increased. What's the reason?

- Part of it is that we have robust in district programs/services. Also, the variability of costs skew the numbers, because one student can be a significant cost depending on the need level.

*[Question was based on a misinterpretation of the slide – which is only about OOD placements]*

There are more SPED students than projected. The adjusted budget was for 60 students, but we have additional students since the adjusted was done in October.

Advisory Question: Is the OOD placement adjusted budget the same as the overall adjusted budget?

- Yes. And the additional expenses (\$1.3million represents the carry forward money; the savings; etc.) This launched a discussion regarding the SPED budget:

This budget does not include 4 additional students that have been added since this budget was done. Q2 report will come out in the next week or so, and they will be working to determine additional expenses that may need to be added to the SPED budget numbers.

Advisory Question: There is a chance that the request for stabilization replenishment will increase?

- Yes, but they are working hard for that not to happen.

Advisory Question: Why do we have 64 OOD placements rather than the projected 51?

- It's just very unpredictable. We don't always know what will happen with settlement agreements.
- Sometimes the family is involved in choosing to go OOD with consultation with the IEP team.

Discussion of Circuit Breaker Reimbursement

Reimbursement for transportation will be phased in starting next year, but it is not reflected in the budget for next year because we don't know yet what will be defined as allowable costs for CB reimbursement. The regulation is too new.

Request for warrant article for a TELP because of a reg change. There are two uses for a TELP – Vans replacement and purchase of WHS Multi-Functional School Activity Bus.

The lease payments for the vans are in the operating budget. The change won't affect the funding mechanism; it just requires TM to vote on a signature for the initial agreement because of the new regulation.

There is discussion with the Town about purchasing vehicles to make them part of the capital budget.

Advisory Question: Is the Lease program better than a capital purchase?

- Only if we don't have to pay interest. So, if there is a capital investment of cash to purchase the vehicles, then it would be better, but that is not in the budget for this year.

Advisory Question: Why are there 6 FTEs moving from elementary to middle school?

- There are students who have staffing needs that are moving up from the elementary schools to the middle school, so they are going from the elementary schools with those students.

Advisory Question: Are any of these collaborative programs housed in our district?

- The collaborative that we belong to has programs in various districts: Medfield, Medway, Ashland, Natick, and others (13 total).

In order to get down to 3.5%, it would require an additional reduction in the budget by \$244,000. This would require dipping into level services in addition to reducing strategic plan requests.

SC voted last night on an \$84,000 reduction, which is reflected in this budget.

The budget was at 3.9% prior to the \$84,000 reduction. Now it is at 3.82%.

The BOS has asked the schools to try and move closer to the 3.5%.

There is an overall increase in costs equivalent to 5.9 FTEs, but only an increase in headcounts of 1.0.

Advisory Question: Why can't the school dept be under 3.5% this year, when it could get there the last couple of years?

- Mainly because the CBAs are just naturally increasing.
- Also, because of the tricky math with the SPED numbers.

You have the full 1.3 million included in the budget request, but isn't included in the base.

We have significant SPED costs that were not included in the ask from last year. Paying for some from savings, etc (discussed earlier).

There is a gap in the Town budget, and how can we close it? If it's not in the School budget, then it's in someone else's budget.

The source of the increase is really the \$1.3 million in unexpected expenses.

Advisory Question: is the diversity officer part of the level services? And how is it working?

- We got an update from her during the school committee meeting recently.

Advisory Question: Is the diversity club at the HS a part of that?

- There are many groups across the District and Dr. Curry is involved with all of them.

### Capital Budget

FFEs, primarily

5-year capital plan

Includes replacement costs for existing equipment that are on a certain life cycle.

Discussion of tech budget and cycle.

Advisory Question: How many Creston systems in the district?

- We have them primarily in the high school – the auditorium, dance studio, gym, small auditorium, other spaces. About 9-10 district-wide.

Advisory Question: There used to be a purchasing collaborative; is that how we purchase tech?

- I believe you are talking the tech collaborative. Wherever we have to we buy through a contract. We don't do a tech bid anymore, and it doesn't exist, it seems.
- We deal with certain vendors who give us good pricing because we are long time customers of theirs.

### Minutes

January 15, 2020 Minutes:

Ralph Tortorella moved to approve subject to providing context for the initial question from advisory regarding the 20% increase; Patti Quigley seconded; passed 13-0.

Jan 22, 2020 Minutes:

Mary Scanlon moved and Paul Merry seconded a motion to approve the minutes; passed 12-0

Liaison reports

Deed: CPC will come on March 4, most likely.

Betsy: Library met Monday; discussed the renovation project; The Foundation had promised to come back with a number to contribute to the renovation. They have launched a capital campaign with a goal to raise \$1 million.

John: BOH; Licensed Social Worker has been hired and has started working. Discussed the coronavirus; the flu is killing more people than coronavirus, so the focus is on the flu.

Bill: Planning Board had a hearing on the articles they are bringing to ATM.

Discussion about the Budget Book, calendar and assembly of the Advisory Book.

John Lanza moved and Mary Scanlon seconded a motion to adjourn; 13-0 in favor.  
Meeting adjourned at 9:30pm