



Town of Medway

FINANCE COMMITTEE

155 Village Street
Medway MA 02053

Tel: (508) 533-3200

Fax: (508) 533-3201

Wednesday, October 14, 2020 – 7:00 PM
Sanford Hall, Town Hall
155 Village Street

Present in person: Todd Alessandri, Chair; Frank Rossi, Vice Chair; Jeff O'Neill.

Participating Remotely: Ellen Hillery, Clerk; Brian Cowan; Will Lane; Michael Schrader; Jim Sullivan.

Absent: Sue Segarra.

Staff Present: Carol Pratt, Finance Director; Medway Public Schools: Dr. Armand Pires, Superintendent of Schools; Don Aicardi, Director of Finance and Operations; Melissa Richard, Business Manager.

Staff Participating Remotely: Michael Boynton, Town Manager.

Call to Order

At 7:02 PM Chairman Alessandri called the meeting to order, noting that three members were present in the meeting room, and five members were participating remotely via teleconferencing. All votes will be by roll call as is customary with remote participation.

Discussion of Increased School Costs and Additional Revenue Sources

The committee reviewed a document outlining Medway Public Schools 2020-21 Re-Opening Expenses

Dr. Pires briefly reviewed how the schools reacted to the increased attention to COVID-19 precautions, utilizing existing resources initially. He noted that the schools were prudent in use of resources by avoiding use of circuit breaker monies. The CARES Act has provided additional funding which helped support the expenses to reopen the schools. Budget-wise, there are fairly sizable increases related to personnel that were unanticipated due to the format/model of schooling currently in place; those individuals have not been added as permanent staff. He indicated that some of these costs are estimates and will continue to change.

Mr. Don Aicardi reviewed some of the available funding resources such as grants and reimbursements, explaining the primary use of each. He reiterated that they approached the School Committee about not utilizing the circuit breaker funds in order to keep those in abeyance for potential future use. The

Governor has issued a new budget today which will be closely reviewed for adjustments in circuit breaker funding. Mr. Aicardi emphasized that while these are primarily estimates, as time goes on, they are becoming more solid as the submission of reimbursements starts to go forward. Brief discussion followed. In the event that the schools decide to move forward with staff and student COVID-19 testing, funds have been set aside. It is anticipated that the reconfigured school budget will come forward in November.

Dr. Pires noted it is not typically the practice to turn money back at the end of the year, adding that, if the current school year goes relatively smoothly, some advance purchases of things for the coming year may happen.

Mr. Boynton spoke briefly about the ways funds have been utilized in a very efficient and thoughtful manner. There have been some outstanding conversations at the leadership level. There is an assumption that local aid will be coming as budgeted, yet things can always change.

Mr. Lane asked if additional Chromebooks were purchased to facilitate virtual learning. Dr. Pires responded that there were additional purchases as each student needed their own device because students were in the building only part-time with the remaining learning done remotely. Additional laptops were purchased for staff in case they needed to work from home in a completely virtual scenario. Regarding the Go Guardian software, Dr. Pires stated that it was used as a tool to support teachers in monitoring online behavior. He was not sure if there was an additional cost to upgrade.

Responding to a question about COVID testing, Dr. Pires reported that regular testing for students and faculty/staff is being discussed. There are some challenges to it. We have an RFP out right now and bids are due October 28. The RFP asked for costs to test every two weeks. If the cost is higher than expected, we are trying to assess whether there was interest in the parent community in supporting this initiative. We have a few more days before the survey goes out. It is important to determine where the remainder of the funding will come from.

Brief discussion followed. Dr. Pires stated that the schools are working with the assumption that FY22 may be more difficult to manage than FY21. We are fiscally conservative and will continue to be so. Mr. O'Neill asked about \$160,000 for custodial services. Dr. Pires responded that the first four months of the fiscal year included not only custodial but sanitizing services which accounts for the increase in that line item. There are also instances where they do additional cleaning when a positive test result is learned, and they focus on the spaces that individual was in.

Mr. Rossi asked about the 25 additional FTE's. Dr. Pires explained the usual process of arranging for substitutes was abandoned in favor of hiring permanent building-based subs as part of the paraprofessional contract. This eliminates the potential for cross-contamination from individuals moving between buildings. Additional classrooms were also opened in the lower grades in order to accomplish social distancing. Brief discussion followed. He noted that students, especially in the younger grades, are struggling with the virtual learning scenario.

It was noted that the majority of expenses are done and the money to cover them is already encumbered. There was an additional purchase of air purifiers to have one in each classroom.

Dr. Pires noted that there will be a reconfiguration of the budget in a few weeks which will feature retirements and other cost savings that will have occurred. Our balances in School Choice and circuit

breaker will be better known at that time. Funding has not limited our ability to do what we need to do to keep our students both safe and engaged in learning as much as possible.

At 7:37 PM Dr. Pires, Mr. Aicardi and Ms. Richard exited the meeting.

Review of Fall Town Meeting Warrant Articles

The committee reviewed portions of the Fall Town Meeting Warrant.

Present: Michael Boynton, Town Manager; Carol Pratt, Finance Director.

Chairman Alessandri reported there are a number of planning articles; there is an upcoming public hearing for those. The Finance Committee will discuss those on the October 28. After our public hearing, we will discuss all articles and vote official recommendations.

Mr. Boynton spoke briefly on each of the non-planning articles:

Article 1 – Raise and Appropriate Funds: FY21 Operating Budget – Mr. Boynton does not anticipate any action on it. It is a placeholder article should a need arise. He spoke briefly about the unknowns surrounding local aid and how to facilitate a budget given the unknowns.

Article 2 – Prior Year Bills – Much of it is attributed to COVID-19 precautionary action as well as late invoices. Ms. Pratt reported that these bills came in after the fiscal year had closed so Town Meeting has to approve them. She clarified that Town Meeting can authorize the use of FY21 funds to pay FY20 invoices.

Article 3 – Accept Gift of Land: 76 Summer Street – This property abuts the athletic field. It presents no significant value to anyone other than the Town.

Article 4 – Fund Affordable Housing Production Plan – the Town is required to vote on this plan every two years. We can't be certified for our 10% level unless we have a Plan in place. Ms. Pratt theorized that the funding is coming from the unreserved balance in Community Preservation Act Funds.

Article 5 – Fund Fence at Gurnsey Dog Park – Ms. Hillery reported that the Historical Commission has not met on this but they are meeting on November 2. It is to replace a fence at a historic property to separate it from the dog park area. Committee members asked for more information.

Article 6 – Street Acceptance – Applegate Road --- Mr. Boynton reported that the developer has opted not to complete the roadway components in this subdivision so the Town intends to utilize funds available through the surety bond. It is anticipated that no additional funds beyond the bond amount will be spent to accomplish incomplete tasks, mostly drainage work. The component relative to Cedar Trail Trust of Medfield involves a parcel of land that will eliminate the need for easements.

Articles 7 – 17 are Zoning Articles. These will be reviewed on October 28 after the public hearing.

Article 18 – Citizens' Petition: Board of Selectmen Change to Select Board – Mr. Boynton explained that this is a petition to change the name Board of Selectmen to Select Board as well as Selectmen to Select Board Member. These changes have to be voted at Town Meeting as it would amend the General Bylaw. A favorable vote would amend all references consistently. How is it listed in the Charter? Mr.

Boynton responded that, at present, the Town does not have the mechanism to change the Charter at present, we will likely have to update the Charter at a later date with an Article or similar action specific to the Charter. Brief discussion followed during which it was clarified that a simple majority vote at Town Meeting is what is required. Mr. O'Neill asked for a cost estimate for staff time in order to accomplish this. He was a member of the Bylaw Review Committee. There was just a major Charter review in the fall of 2018. The major Charter changes were reflected in a Town Meeting Article. He noted that, at the time, the option to "leave it alone" [the language referring to Board of Selectmen and members] garnered 40% of those responding to the survey.

Lastly, it was noted that the Board of Selectmen will meet on October 19 at which time it will make its recommendations on the non-zoning articles.

At 8:11 PM Ms. Pratt and Mr. Boynton exited the meeting.

Miscellaneous Reports

Chairman Alessandri had no report other than general discussion of meeting dates.

Ms. Hillery, Clerk, had no report as there was no change from the previous month.

Regarding Liaison Reports, Chairman Alessandri encouraged people to meet with people for updates thus far, especially things done around COVID-19 issues.

Review/Approval of Meeting Minutes

The committee reviewed draft minutes from September 9, 2020.

Mr. Rossi made a motion to approve the minutes of September 9, 2020 as amended; Mr. O'Neill seconded. No discussion. ROLL CALL VOTE: 8-0-0 (Alessandri, aye; Cowan, aye; Hillery, aye; Lane, aye; O'Neill, aye; Rossi, aye; Schrader, aye; Sullivan, aye).

Upcoming Meetings

Chairman Alessandri noted the November meeting falls on the 11th which is Veterans Day. The meeting may be cancelled or rescheduled based on whether there is a need to meet. The committee may finish its work on October 28 and/or at the pre-meeting before Town Meeting.

Adjourn

At 8:20 PM Mr. Rossi made a motion to adjourn; Mr. O'Neill seconded. No discussion. ROLL CALL VOTE: 8-0-0 (Alessandri, aye; Cowan, aye; Hillery, aye; Lane, aye; O'Neill, aye; Rossi, aye; Schrader, aye; Sullivan, aye).

*Respectfully submitted,
Jeanette Galliardt*