

Board of Finance
Special Meeting Minutes
Thursday, April 28, 2022

Present: Sandy Brodeur, Ken Dykstra, R. David Lee, Andrew Dionne, Aaron Soucy, Heather Allen, and Sara Deshaies, substitute Recording Secretary

Also Present: Austin Tanner, Lou Brodeur, Rushie Bean, Patricia Bruell, Justin Phaiah, Rick Ives, Melissa Parker-Banas, Joe Voccio, Mae Lyons, Kayla Burgess

1. Call to Order – S. Brodeur called the meeting to order at 7:00pm
2. Public comment - None
3. Action on minutes of 4/5/22 special meeting – A. Dionne made a motion to accept the minutes as presented with one correction, from barracks to departments on page 3. Aaron seconded. Motion passed 6-0.
4. Presentation of Parks and Recreation Amended Budget proposal for 2022-23 year – No need to be here for presentation. Budget was previously accepted.
5. Mrs. Buell will present the Board of Education budget – P. Buell stated it is slightly revised based on a Board of Education meeting held last night. She stated that the Board of Education was also present to lend support. The handout provided was intended to give a summary of how the budget was created and specifics of the numbers themselves. She stated the process started months ago. The administrative team met with teachers to find out what the needs were and anticipated needs for the following year. The budget was then presented to the Board of Education in January. The Board has reviewed the budget extensively asking for explanations where needed. One of the big items in the budget is staffing. At the schools the number of staff is the same from last year. Decreased paraprofessionals this year. That number fluctuates based on students needs from year to year, and even within a given year. She reports to the Board every month with numbers that are current at that time. There was a custodial position added. Needing more cleaning done due to COVID. There was also a look at the Finance office, there is shared staff between the Town and schools. To that end the Business Manager position is being increased from a .6 position to a 1.0 and decreased the Financial Assistant position from 2.0 to 1.5. Contractual changes not monetary.
Schools are partnering with Parks & Rec to offer a free summer program. It is already filled. Some of these monies are COVID funds. Grant funds are significant, but there is still going to be other monies needed. Capital improvements is a significant request for boiler replacements. Those in place now are around 30 years old. They've been on the list for replacement for some time and is now an urgent need.
P. Buell pointed to where each line item can be found as well as an explanation of codes and difference from last year to this. She then directed everyone to the 4th page. She stated that last year's budget was \$19,629,374. This year they are requesting \$20,540,776, an increase of 4.6% or \$911,000. The justification for this increase was salary changes, one of them being the tech director. That position was originally funded with a grant. That grant is going away so they will have to absorb that salary. Insurance has increased by 6% or \$184,000. High school tuition is \$153,000 increase this year. Technology, hardware software and supplies used to be presented in the Capital budget. Last year it was removed from the Capital budget and ESSER funds were used instead. This year a small amount was put in the local budget, the actual cost is much higher. \$280,000 is funded through ARC/ESSER for this next year, \$235,000 ARC/ESSER funds for the year after. After that there will be no funds available. It will then need to be absorbed into the local budget.
The middle school is making changes to the math curriculum based on state guidelines. That math program is around \$45,000.
Fuel and diesel costs were locked in in December, it had gone up \$35,000, but still a significant savings compared to fuel costs now.
Local and high school transportation is a decreased amount. Schools are down from 14 buses to 13 due to a driver shortage. It should be fine; it has worked so far.
Special Education transportation is up, tuition is down, Medicare is high, \$66,000. This is due to the fact that it was not properly calculated previously.
Water and sewer have a 15% increase.
Budget is further broken down by location and object. Central office budget represents 44.8% of the total budget. It includes high school tuition, transportation, insurance. Middle school budget is 13%, elementary

school is 12.7%, the special education portion is 25%, it's a higher cost.

Maintenance budget is a small 4% increase.

Grant funds \$589,463 is the TBD in the handouts provided. The increase is 4.64%. Two years ago, the schools had ESSER funds. CRF is COVID Relief funds, those has since run out. ESSER 2 came in for this year and next, and hopefully carry over to the third year. These funds were distributed to the tech director position in 21-22 for \$50,000. In 22-23 \$100,000 went into hardware and software. In 23-24 more money will need to be moved around.

P. Buell then directed the Board where to find what funds are granted and how the money was used. To apply, the Board of Education needed to assess the needs to continue to teach students during the pandemic. Capital improvement request includes the boilers, being top priority.

Another larger improvement project request is the air conditioning systems at both schools with an estimated cost of \$1,600,000. It doesn't just address the air conditioning; it also addresses the HVAC system as well. There may be a time in the future when a grant could be applied for to cover the HVAC improvements. It would work like the solar project. It is not possible at this time due to legislation.

Phone system needs to be upgraded. It is partially digital as well as analog. State guidelines stated that any phone in public space a person should be able to pick it up and dial 9-1-1. That is not the case in the schools. Also, emergency response should know where that phone is located. That is also not the case at the schools. The upgrade would allow for those things as well as move away from costly repairs/changes. With a fully digital system the IT Person could make those changes/repairs in house.

School enrollments were covered. P. Buell explained that the numbers are pretty consistent from year to year. She then directed them to where to find the various high schools Brooklyn students attend. The estimated high school population was addressed. Current 9th-12th grade students are accounted for. 8th grade students the list is projected as it changes frequently.

Examples:

Woodstock Academy contract is based on a 10-1-2021 number. That means the enrollment from previous year (21-22), Brooklyn has 85.5 students on October 1st. Brooklyn schools will be charged \$15,875 x 188.5 students. This is 4.1% increase.

Killingly High School, 25 students are projected to attend. Contract is based on 10-1-2022. October 1st we will get billed \$14,547 x 101 students.

P. Buell then reviewed the staff salaries, salary schedule, degree, grant offsets. There are 7 pages addressing these, grouped by location/job title.

P. Buell stated the solar project was complete. Significant cost savings now and moving forward.

P. Buell opened the floor to questions:

A. Tanner asked if the summer program could be expanded to include more students. P. Buell stated it's more of a staffing issue and not having the funds for that. She is open to suggestions.

D. Lee asked about the custodian position wanting clarity on the number of 6. P. Buell confirmed.

D. Lee asked about the new math curriculum and whether it was required. Is it need to have or nice to have?

P. Buell responded that it is a need to have based on math scores.

A. Dionne asked if the current organizational chart represents current staffing or proposed. P. Buell stated it's current staffing. He then asked if the two proposals are in the budget being presented. P. Buell clarified that proposal #1 is in the Board of Education budget.

H. Allen asked if the bid process was the same as it would be for the Town. P. Buell stated that the bid request was posted locally.

H. Allen asked if the bidding process was over. P. Buell said yes. Bid request was for propane, or dual fired boilers as well as fuel-fired boilers. Three bids were submitted. The bid chosen would work in alignment with the monitoring software. There was significant review of current systems. Taken into consideration were things like what can be reused/salvaged, etc.

D. Lee asked if the \$169,000 increase is by contract. P. Buell stated it is both contract and need.

He then asked if the 4 FTE is current or additional. P. Buell stated that was a decrease.

D. Lee then asked for clarification of the \$169,000 increase. P. Buell stated it's not all a salary increase, but also unbudgeted staff.

K. Dykstra asked if the technology, hardware, and software budget was standard from year to year. P. Buell stated that part of it is in the budget, part of it is in a grant. The Technology Director reviewed current systems and assessed needs and wants. It was presented to the Board of Education with a 5-year plan. Most of the cost is replacement.

K. Dykstra asked if it could be put into Capital. P. Buell stated that it was for years. One year ago, it was decided that the local budget was a better place for it to be.

K. Dykstra asked, if other than this year's bump in costs, would the rest of the 5-year plan be level. P. Buell

stated that it would.

D. Lee stated that the budget has an assumption that the Town would pick up .4 Business Manager salary. If that doesn't happen, the schools would have to adjust their budget. P. Buell stated that is not necessarily the case. The Board of Education has made the determination that from a financial standpoint the schools need 1.5 people.

D. Lee also asked about the \$42,000 for the additional finance person. P. Buell stated that she asked ARP/ESSER is that could be a grant and it can until the third year, then it will need to be budgeted. A. Tanner explained how they got together to come up with the plan.

A. Dionne mentioned that one high school has drastically increased tuition. He asked if that school is that a forecast for other schools or an anomaly. P. Buell explained that Woodstock Academy is very different from other schools.

S. Brodeur asked if there was a reason Ellis Tech keeps losing students. P. Buell stated that they didn't accept as many students as in past years. Also, the process changed administratively from a local decision to a State decision.

K. Dykstra asked if ARPA funding being used for continued use. He's concerned about the void created when the funding goes away in two years. P. Buell stated that the positions created with the funding were stated as two-year positions. So, there is an end date. The one position in the \$58,000 is the funding of a special education teacher.

A. Dionne made a motion to accept the Board of Education budget as proposed to anticipate further discussion, K. Dykstra seconded. Motion passed 6-0.

6. Mrs. Buell will present her request to replace the schools' boilers ASAP. The estimated cost is \$420,000. R. Bean has prepared a schedule of available Capital money from completed projects. A town meeting will be necessary to approve using this money for the boilers. S. Brodeur stated they should have a discussion now rather than waiting another year. It should be done during the summer shutdown. A. Soucy commented that things are far more expensive than they were when he first joined the Board. A. Tanner stated that R. Bean has the wording necessary to move this to a Town meeting request. R. Bean stated that the handout shows where the funding is coming from in Capital projects. She read the statement:

Town of Brooklyn, Board of Finance, Resolution to transfer unexpended funds between projects. Whereas the Town of Brooklyn, the "Town", has previously adopted a resolution to appropriate \$898,850 for the Brooklyn Middle School roof mounted solar project and to authorize the issue of bonds, notes or temporary notes in an amount not to exceed \$898,850 to finance said appropriation and too, a resolution to appropriate \$903,405 from the Brooklyn Elementary School roof mounted solar project and to authorize the issue of bonds, notes or temporary notes in an amount not to exceed \$903,405 to finance said appropriation, collectively, the "Completed Projects", and whereas, the Town needs funds for the purchase and installation of boilers at the Brooklyn Elementary School and Brooklyn Middle School, the "Project" and the Completed Projects are completed and eligible to be closed and excess funds are available from the completed projects to be transferred to other projects, and whereas the Board of Finance hereby recommends that the Town approve the transfers from the Town of Brooklyn Middle School solar project original amount of \$898,850 transfer of \$202,903.43. The Brooklyn Elementary School solar project original amount of \$903,405 transfer of \$197,096.57 to transfer. It is transferring to the purchase and installation of boilers in Brooklyn Elementary School and Brooklyn Middle School in the amount of \$400,000. Further resolved that upon completion of the transfers the Director of Finance is authorized to close out the completed projects. Further resolved that the First Selectman and the Director of Finance and other town officials are allowed to take all other actions necessary to complete project.

D. Lee made a motion to accept the statement as read. A. Dionne seconded. H. Allen pointed out the handout stated Brooklyn Elementary School amount says \$903,406. R. Bean stated that was a typo and \$903,405 is the correct amount. K. Dykstra thinks it is important to point out to taxpayers should know that originally when voting for money on the solar project, say \$2,000,000, that any money spent on the solar project would be reimbursed at a certain rate from the State. Taking \$400,000 for the boilers means no reimbursement for that portion. S. Brodeur stated that that is why a town meeting is necessary. It needs to be approved by the taxpayers. Motion passed 6-0.

The Selectman said the town meeting will be held May 16th.

7. The Selectmen and Capital Committee will present their budgets on May 3, 2022.
8. Public comment – G. Maiato asked for clarification on Town meeting dated. S. Brodeur stated it is May 16th. In relation to the \$5,000 request from B. Lohbusch, A. Tanner says that he and L. Gilpin, in HR, have struggled over this issue. The Highway Department has been getting compensation for working overtime and Rec has not. They feel that's not fair and have been working on a program that would address both in an equitable way. They realize

that salary positions don't get overtime, so technically wouldn't be compensated, but both go beyond what's required. A. Tanner feels it's important to have a system to address this and not just pick a number and pay them an amount. A. Tanner and L. Gilpin did some work on the hours that were put in this year, 50 additional hours were put in beyond the normal 35 hours per week for snowplowing, which come out to about \$2,000. He realizes this may have been an easy snow year but, that forces the idea that there should be a system that works instead of just being given a number to pay out. He also feels it's unfair that B. Lohbusch brought this directly to the Board of Finance instead of administration. The plan is to have a system in place for the next fiscal year. While he doesn't want to diminish the Town's appreciation of these people, there must be an equitable system. Additionally, work is being done on a salary survey. Those results may be able to go into effect next year also. It will raise almost everyone's wage. He suggested some funds be set aside in Contingency just in case. A. Dionne asked if the salary compensation would be in place for both. A. Tanner clarified it would be in the next fiscal year. He suggests a funding of \$3,000 to start and they can both draw on it. At the end of that year look to see what's left of if more drawn than funded. Also, need to provide the option of money or compensated time off. H. Allen suggested that there be given an opportunity to cash out the time built up. L. Brodeur stated one doesn't want that. S. Brodeur like the option of either/or. They would need to punch in and out. J. Voccio asked where the \$5,000 figure came from. S. Brodeur stated that Rec came up with the number. A. Tanner asked B. Lohbusch if there was anything to back that number up and B. Lohbusch said no. S. Brodeur stated that his explanation to her was that he normally works approximately 90 hours of over time. That calculated with his salary plus 1.5 comes to about \$5,000. S. Brodeur asked if anyone else is in this situation. A. Tanner stated only these two for now. G. Maiato asked what salaries are. S. Brodeur stated it's 35 hours per week. G. Maiato asked why it's even a question if they are salary. Discussion took place. This is an ongoing project.

9. Adjournment – A. Soucy made a motion to adjourn. A. Dionne seconded. Meeting adjourned at 8:48pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sara Deshaies, Substitute Recording Secretary