

At its meeting on April 20, 2021, the Board of Finance (BoF) unanimously approved that the following Memo be sent to the Board of Selectmen, the Board of Education, and the Ridgefield Public School District.

To: Ridgefield Board of Selectmen (BoS) c/o First Selectman, Rudy Marconi

Ridgefield Board of Education (BoE) c/o Board Chair Jonathan Steckler

Ridgefield Public School District c/o Superintendent Dr. Susie da Silva

From: Ridgefield Board of Finance (via e-mail)

Re: Board of Finance Budget Approvals of March 23, 2021

On March 23, 2021, the BoF unanimously approved to send to the April 24, 2021 Annual Town Meeting a FY2022 Town Budget of \$39,316,561 (exclusive of Debt Servicing), an increase of 1.39% versus FY2021 and a FY2022 School Budget of \$102,260,087, an increase of 2.35% versus FY2021.

For the Town, the amount was 0.57% less (\$223,614) than the BoS had approved. For the Schools, the amount was 1.07% less (\$1,103,985) than the BoE had approved. Although by Town Charter it cannot "line item" budget requests, the BoF was aware, prior to the March 23th meeting, of significant savings in health insurance premiums, being negotiated separately, for both the Town and School plans, as well as savings in joint insurance plans for Workers Compensation, Liability and other Insurances being put out for bid by the Town.

At its meeting of April 5, 2021, the BoE reduced its FY2022 budgeted Health Insurance expense to \$15,691,327, or 0.60% more than FY2021, a \$1,003,985 reduction from the original placeholder in its budget, which had been a 7.02% increase. They also reduced Workers Compensation insurance to \$755,570, a \$100,000 reduction from the original projection. Thus, the BoE was able to meet the BoF approved 2.35% increase without having to change any of its budgeted Staff, Programs, Class Size, Curriculum or any other item having to do with education.

The BoF expects that the BoS will also meet to adjust its budget to the BoF approved 1.39% increase by similarly reducing health, workers compensation, and other insurance estimates, again without having to impact any Staff or Town services.

Since its action, the BoF has received several emails asking not to make these "cuts" to the school budget. On April 1, 2021, following the BoF decision that was clearly explained during the March 23 meeting, the RPS Superintendent made the decision to characterize the action to Faculty and Families in the following way – "The Board of Finance voted to reduce the Board of Education 2021-22 budget from 3.45% to 2.35%. This is a reduction of \$1,103,985 to the Board of Education's approved 2021-22 budget." There is no explanation that these savings were going to be found in health benefit premium reductions and insurance savings. Prior the BoE adjustments of its budget on April 5, 2021, press articles also mentioned \$1 million reductions. Those articles did not include an explanation of the expected savings or the BOF's rationale, clearly articulated by various members during the BOF discussions, that the changes could likely be made without impacting programs and services.

We hope that our communication here clarifies the actions and rationale for everyone in advance of the upcoming Town Meeting and subsequent Budget Referendum. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. The BoF looks forward to working with the BoS and BoE for the continued success of our Town.

Signed : David Ulmer, Chair; Mike Rettger, Vice chair; Amy Freidenrich; Greg Kabasakalian; Karen Ogden