



## **Town of Ridgefield**

### **Board of Finance Unapproved BOF Meeting Minutes March 27, 2024 Draft FINAL**

#### **I. Call to Order**

David Ulmer called the Board of Finance budget meeting to order at 7:00pm on March 27, 2024, in the Town Hall large conference room. Board Members David Ulmer, Mike Rettger, Greg Kabasakalian, Andrew Okrongly, and Joseph Shapiro present.

Others Participating: Dr. Susie Da Silva, Superintendent of Schools; Cory Gillette, Assistant Superintendent; Elizabeth Hannaway, Assistant Superintendent of Special Services; Wes DeSantis, Director of Educational Technology; Karen Dewing, Director of Personnel; Joseph Morits, Director of Facilities; Jill Browne, Director of Finance, Tina Maholtra, Board of Education Chair; Sean McEvoy, BOE member. Several other members of the BOE were present for the meeting as well.

#### **II. Budget Deliberations – Board of Education Operating and Capital Budgets**

Dr. Da Silva presented the details of the proposed BOE Capital budget. Questions and discussions about the Capital budget included facility renovation and improvement plans at Veteran's Park (auditorium) and elementary schools with cafeteriums (starting with Farmingville), IT infrastructure (server) upgrades and longer-term technology upgrades, ongoing energy and cost savings of transitioning to LED lighting, the longer-term vision for continued use of Veteran's Park Elementary School building, inflation-driven cost increases, and the status of the district-wide master plan engineering study which was approved last year.

Mr. Rettger noted that he thought the line item for a new HVAC unit in the culinary arts room of the high school had previously been approved at the BOF meeting in November, and thus should not be included in this request. Dr. Da Silva and Ms. Browne responded that they will confirm and report back on the status of that request.

Dr. Da Silva then reviewed the proposed BOE Operating budget in detail. Questions and discussions included legislation-driven staff training and special education programming requirements, the need for and difficulty of hiring paraeducators, the strategy of bringing some previous consultants in-district as employees (i.e., nurse, psychologist, communications specialist, school safety officer) to provide more controllable costs for the district, upcoming

teachers union contract negotiations, right-sizing roles within the district to better suit students' needs, special education student population and how RPS compares to other districts, and the increase in property insurance costs over the past several years.

The members and the BOE representatives discussed the likelihood and potential magnitude of any budget surplus that might be seen for the current fiscal year, for use in the BOF's estimation of the overall projected financial result for the town for the current fiscal year. Dr. Da Silva and Ms. Browne indicated that an estimate of a \$500,000 surplus could be considered a reliable estimate at this time. While the BOE budget might end up with a larger surplus by the end of the year, it was not possible to forecast that outcome with any confidence due to the volatility of cost that could still appear with changes in the student population, particularly in special education. The BOF members acknowledged this uncertainty and thanked the BOE for providing the forecast that was available.

### **III. Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn at 9:04pm by Mr. Rettger, seconded by Mr. Okrongly. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Jessica Green