



Town of Ridgefield Board of Finance

Approved Meeting Minutes Board of Finance Budget Deliberations Board of Education Operating and Capital

Thursday March 18, 2021

I. Call to order

Dave Ulmer called to order the Board of Finance Budget Deliberations meeting at 7:00 pm March 18, 2021 via Zoom due to Coronavirus. Board Members Dave Ulmer, Greg Kabasakalian, Mike Rettger, Karen Ogden, Amy Freidenrich present.

Others Present:

Town Officials: BOE: Dr. Susie DaSilva-Superintendent, Dawn Norton-Business Manager, Members-Rachel Ruggeri, Jonathan Steckler, Cory Gillette, Sean McEvoy, Nora Gaydos, Elizabeth Floegel, Margaret Stamatis, Tina Malhorta, Ken Sjoberg. Joe Morits, Karen Dewing, Elizabeth Hanaway-RPS staff.

II. BOE Captial-The 2021-2022 school year request \$1,889,830. Projects to be addressed: final phase of removal of asbestos at Scotland Elementary and Branchville schools. Projects out to bid May/June with work to be done July/August in time for school to begin in the Fall. LED lighting at Scotland and well infrastructure at Farmington schools need to be done. This is required due to outdated hydro tank. The sound system at East Ridge auditorium needs to be done, this is a multi-layered project. The continuation of the bathroom repairs at Veteran's Park is also needed for completion. An air quality study at RHS needs to be done for A/C solutions. Technology upgrades for the district needed are for wireless, servers and infrastructure. Fire and light safety at RHS need to be addressed and two main switches need replacement. The cause of erosion to these switches is due to condensation. An installation of a 500-kilowatt generator is needed at East Ridge school. This will also provide an overflow shelter for the town if necessary. End of life equipment needs to be addressed for outdated kitchen equipment throughout the district; this is a 2-year project. Also looking into replacing custodial equipment, and storm equipment is needed for snow removal.

III. BOE Operating-The addition of a Special Ed teacher at RHS reduced contracting services. New staff member was added to the curriculum department. Para support has additional supervisory hours. An art teacher has been added. Art was reduced by 3 teachers but 1 has been put back into the budget. Question posed as to whether BOE surplus to be used or returned to the

town. Per Jonathan Steckler, the BOE will use all budgeted money for this year but will not need to go into the carry over account. BOE can operate out of the budget and stay within the budget. The goal is to not dip into the non-lapsing account. Regarding BOE bank accounts, good progress has been made. The dormant savings account for RHS activities has been closed and merged into other RHS student activity account. The building/rental account is going to be discussed at next BOE meeting regarding \$50,000 base level and return additional funds to the town. Regarding the athletic fund bank account, they will end usage at the end of the season and return overage to the town. All bank accounts are monitored and tracked within ledger. The accounts are maintained and audited and run through the normal accounting process which goes through various approval processes.' The building rental account was recommended to be looked at again next year. This is part of the BOE discussion at their next meeting.

V. General Discussions-2022 budget adjustments are being made to health benefits and Worker's Comp liability. Worker's Comp is more complicated and early conversations have been had. This is still in preliminary discussions. Worker's Comp plans can be combined with BOE. Preliminary numbers are not guaranteed or locked in and is based on salary Changes can be made without union approval unlike health insurance. The health benefits line-a 7% increase was anticipated. Discussion have been had and are able to bring down to 2.84%. Overall health benefit of \$16,040,312, a \$442,000 increase.

Transportation-savings have been incurred to due Covid; the savings in the district will not be as high as other communities. Transportation did occur for some sports, savings due to full remote days. BOE will know more savings after this sports season is over. Next year is a 2.5% increase for the overall contract. Currently down 12.78% in non-public transportation and fuel. The reduction is reflected in the current budget book. Main increase is for Special Ed out of town transportation. Currently in the 4th year of a 5-year contract which expires 6-30-2023. There is savings of approximately \$23,000 a day that buses don't run. There are savings to be had but will know more after all invoices are complied.

RHS student activity account- Student activity spaces around RHS need furniture to meet in groups/clusters. Also, video productions which is student centered, this is not a video studio. BOE is comfortable enough that funds are in the budget without having to ask for more money.

Special Ed-The January BOE workshop shows trends over rate of students with special needs are increasing. Seven years ago, 9% of population had special needs; currently it's 13 ½%. The budget for the coming year doesn't have dramatic changes because population has stayed relatively the same. The next school year will show more affects of children affected by Covid. Special Ed transportation is consistent over the past few years. The difference is where the student is going, either further away from town or less cost efficient with fewer students on a bus.

RHS enrollment-significant adjustments made last year. New enrollment numbers are not reflected in the budget. There's a need to see how RHS works at full capacity.

Electricity-numbers have increased. Currently running maximum air flow due to Covid. The current budget reflects solar savings. Farmingville has the highest production of solar and Scotland Elementary is getting ready to go solar.

Nurses- This has increased 8.37% but the number of nurses is down. This is due to reclassifying of the school nurse coordinator. Nurse coordinator is currently out of the union, but salary is still in the nurse line for salary and stipend.

RHS counselors-Same number of people but turnover occurred after the school year started.

Water-mix of both water supply based on usage and well based schools. Branchville has increased specifically due to a set of tests.

Fuel-Not locked in. Just exhausted yearly oil contract from last year. Oil prices are considerably higher right now. BOE has been very fortunate to capture oil at savings over the past years.

Contact services-decline due to Special Ed teacher at RHS.

Secretarial data-person moving from IT to RHS.

Para pro at elementary level-\$11,000 per school; provides supervision at lunch and recess for kid's safety.

Schools/programs-\$141,000 is for the substitute budget.

Athletics-proposed budget of \$1,226,000. \$30,000 for video production. The Huddle program was discussed which is a program that allows for coaching techniques, a chance for people to view games that they couldn't attend in person. This was essential this past year due to Covid and looking for a discount for next year.

Facilities- "School Dude" is a maintenance work order program. It's software for facility usage and an operational control for the district. "Facilities Dude" supports building rental.

School lunch program-\$65,000 covers the elementary and middle schools. Reimbursements are provided for free or reduced lunches. This is a self-funded program. For every lunch a student accesses, the BOE gets additional funding. The state care package was to pay for lunch and breakfast for all students, not just eligible students. This is not available at RHS. An evening pick up of meals is also available. BOE does not expect this program to continue into next year. \$200,000 loss of revenue incurred. BOE has remediated with the food service program to keep expenses minimal. The density of students is low due to distance learning.

Bank accounts-Checking and savings total \$281,491. Allocations still needed in the budget for Covid.

ARP-priorities are to address learning loss, mental health, technology and PPE/Covid expenses. Grants have been applied for. Esser #1 received in the Fall. Esser #2 applying for next week, Esser #3 has similar priorities as previously stated. Grants are supplemental to the budget. As grants are applied for, the BOE indicates what expenses funds go towards and is then entered into a grant reporting software.

Pay to Play-revenue was dependent on the sport. The loss is due to not allowing spectators due to Covid.

VI. Adjournment-motion to adjourn at 9:10 pm by Mike Rettger, seconded by Amy Freidenrich. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted by,

Mia Belanger

*Thank you to Mike Rettger for facilitating the Zoom process.