



## Town of Ridgefield

### Board of Finance

#### Approved Meeting Minutes

Thursday March 28, 2019

#### **Call to order**

D. Ulmer called to order the regular meeting of the Board of Finance at 7:30 PM on March 28, 2019 at Ridgefield Town Hall Meeting Room, 400 Main St., Ridgefield, CT.

Board Members D. Ulmer, J. Mancini, A. Freidenrich, S. Connelly were in attendance. D. Moccia absent

#### **I. Board of Education Capital Budget**

In attendance from the Board of Education: Dr. Bill Collins, Joe Marits, Margaret Stamatis, Doug Silver, Dawn Norton.

Environmental Compliancy Project-Requires the removal of two underground oil tanks with no needs for new tanks. This is a three-year program with a 30 year by law max life. Tanks to be removed, back-filled and covered.

Asbestos at Scotland-16,000 square feet of the building; 12 classrooms, 3 hallways, then Branchville remaining.

School Security- Requires camera platform, system upgrades with the replacement of servers that control surveillance data. Able to store video data for 30 days. If an incident occurs, surveillance can be saved. There are 45 cameras in the elementary schools. This project needs to be done over time. This is in conjunction with the police and is part of the state audit. The current cameras are from 2012 after Sandy Hook.

Energy & Water- Upgrade of lighting needed at Branchville Elementary will lead to energy savings. Replacing wall and ceiling lighting for better energy efficiency.

Building Improvements-Four projects. (1) Refinishing of the RHS gym floor. Estimate of \$222,000 with a \$10,000 deductible and the work to be done over the summer. (2) Second phase of lighting and changing the dimming rack, going with LED lighting at RHS. (3) Replacement of

main library carpet at RHS. (4) Remove and replace vestibule entrance at Barlow Mountain. The current structure leaks with no current direct fix. Vendor coming out to evaluate.

End of Life Replacements-2008 & 2004 trucks. A two-year program in place of replacing old custodial equipment in all schools. Proper equipment would be quicker and more efficient. Each school to get a new fleet of custodial equipment.

Technology- Need to get main infrastructure working properly. Back ups need to be functional so they don't go down. Currently testing with wireless Chrome Books. Switches need replacing and more band width.

## **II. Operating Budget:**

October 1 enrollment 4882, this number is used for projecting. Kindergarteners have the ability of holding back which causes the numbers to fluctuate. Class size is moderately low at the elementary level and larger at the middle school level. The biggest class is Math at East Ridge with 25 students. The guideline is 25. Scotts Ridge Math: 3 classes with 25 students, 3 with 26 students. Some classes are over max at the middle school level. Trying to steer away from pocket redistricting. Decisions should be based on data; current enrollment is declining. Question posed by J. Mancini "Any possibility of a restructure?" The board is open to look at any options. Their priority is to maintain education and the needs of students. The decisions made are for the best of the students. Changes must be economical and beneficial for kids' education.

The addition of teachers is for Special Ed and is mandated. There is a budget for 3 Psychologists. When looking for cuts, it will be outside of the classroom. They want to first do what's best for the students. Option being looked at to delay the hiring of teachers and consultants.

Math scores are not good; very light in the curriculum department. There is a need to shift curriculum and be re-written by teachers. The standards will determine how to write the curriculum. "We're currently behind the 8 ball" per Dr. Collins. Catching up needs to occur in Math and Science. Assessments need to be realigned and we're short on resources. There is a major shift in all of the standards. A Math and Science individual is ideal for both subjects for this project. Grading practices and report cards will need to shift according to standards. It will take approximately 3 years to see a difference in outcomes of the new curriculum. This will be measured by student growth. There is a direct connection in investment and scores outcome. Our neighboring district scores are going up. RHS is one of the highest performing schools in the state. Younger kids have to catch up by the time they get to high school. Resources and structure need to be provided to them. This isn't fair to students and teachers. Ridgefield spent the least amount on administration and resources need to be provided to teachers.

Insurance- Budgeting of employee and spouse as 2. The premium increase is 7% on all insurance. The last year's increase was requested; Dawn Norton will provide. Health plan is the biggest driver of the increase. 2018-2019 budget based on 595 active employees, 168 retirees and spouses for a total of 763.

Transportation-There is no additional cost for 221 students who don't go home after school; going to Boys & Girls Club, Rec Center etc. There is no additional cost because those buses are going in

those directions. Can't consolidate without impacting other students who are going home. There are no additional buses being added; fleets stay the same. Technically we don't need to provide transportation to out of town Magnet schools. Required by law to provide transportation to St. Mary's and Ridgefield Academy. We pay a portion of the Ridgefield Academy bill due to the timing of their start time. This is a per student cost. An opt-out was tried a few years ago and wasn't successful. 60 out of 5000 participated. The best way to have efficiency is to cut a bus. Kids are getting to school and home late.

Fuel- \$206,600 proposed.

Energy-large increase and is rate driven. On the demand/consumption side. Electricity and oil included.

Carve-out- Takes a conservative approach per Dawn Norton. CCSN numbers are possibly not manipulated. All within the special ed. budget and wouldn't affect the bottom-line number.

Books-New Scient and Social Studies. As curriculum is written, books need to match. Trying to get away from chapters and worksheets.

Insurance Liability-up 63%. The town and Board of Ed. are on the same insurance carrier. Increase due to new policies; added cyber security based on students and equipment connected to the server. Athletics had a new policy added as well. Dawn Norton to provide specifics.

Board of Ed. Revenue-Doug Silver doesn't feel this is good accounting practice. There is no student in the district that's a marginal cost. There is a range of costs involved in educating a student. Is this proper accounting? Resource officers are not budgeted for. They're valuable in our schools. We have no control over their cost. We pay for their uniforms, cars, training etc.

Special Ed- Dawn Norton indicated that there is good detail on the website regarding Special Ed students. There are 651 in Special Ed. 63 are within the excess cost limit.

### **III. Adjournment**

A. Freidenrich moved and S. Connelly seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:20 PM.  
Motion carried 4-0

Next meeting April 1, 2019

Respectfully Submitted by,  
Mia Belanger