



Finance Committee and Town Council Meeting

April 12, 2022 9:00 a.m.

Virtual Meeting

Minutes

Members participating remotely: Andrew Steinberg, Lynn Griesemer, Bob Hegner, Bernie Kubiak, Matt Holloway, Michelle Miller, Cathy Schoen

Others participating remotely: Pat DeAngelis, Mandi Jo Hanneke, Jennifer Taub, Michael Morris, Doug Slaughter, Sean Mangano, Sonia Aldrich, Paul Bockelman, Ana Devlin Gauthier, Dorothy Pam (arrived at 9:17 AM), Pam Rooney (arrived at 9:40 AM)

1. Call to order

Steinberg declared the presence of a quorum, called the meeting to order at 9:05 am, confirmed members could hear and be heard, and announced audio and video recording.

Griesemer called the Town Council meeting to order at 9:05 am and confirmed Councilors could hear and be heard.

2. Process for May Finance Committee meetings

Delayed until the end of the meeting.

3. FY23 Region Budget Review

Dr. Morris highlighted the important elements of the budget proposal including the assessment method compromise. Outlined the approval process. Thanked Council for taking the region budget early and out of process. Explained that the assessment is moving to 100% statutory method with a smoothing measure and that the budget is relying upon ESSR grant funds.

Steinberg explained the section of the charter that allows the region budget to be taken out of order. Explained that the budget hearing is on April 25th with another Finance Committee on April 26th and that the plan is for the Council to vote on May 2nd.

Lynn shared a question from Councilor Schoen asking for enrollment, staffing, and budget trends.

Councilor Schoen asked about sustainability of the proposed budget for FY24 and FY25 when grant funds go away. Does sixth grade to the middle school help the regional school budget?

Dr. Slaughter said the District will continue using grant funds to smooth transition. Coming years won't be easy when grant funds go away.

Dr. Morris added that uncertainty around COVID impacts how grant funds will be utilized. Highlighted FY25 as the year where grant funds will end and budgets will be more difficult.

Hegner asked about revenue increases.

Dr. Slaughter explained that transportation reimbursement is driven by higher levels of expenditures and the amount should be steady. Explained that E&D is higher than normal because of higher surplus levels. That amount will go down.

Hanneke thanked the schools for the budget document. Hanneke asked about staffing and how the district will transition once grant funds go away? Also asked about the dollars spent on regular education decreasing?

Dr. Slaughter described how school choice works and that it is a relatively stable revenue source. Explained strategy for using higher levels of revenue from school choice. Explained that some staffing increases will go away at the pandemic recedes. Explained that inflationary pressures on other areas of the budget drive them to increase faster than others. Explained that some special education costs are compulsory.

Dr. Morris described a shift of paraeducator need from the elementary schools to the regional schools. Also described other positions asked for by the community such as the restorative practices positions.

Holloway commented on special education tuitions. Also commented on special education staffing. Asked about Medicaid expansion reimbursements.

Dr. Slaughter commented that the district does apply for Medicaid as much as possible.

Pam expressed support for regular education and nursing support.

Dr. Morris clarified that there are no reductions to nursing and that mental health funding has increase and is available to all students. Also noted that class sizes have improved because of schedule changes.

Griesemer asked about model of keeping students in house and whether that applies to the High School? Asked for trends regarding special education students.

Dr. Morris confirmed the high school has inclusionary programming.

Dr. Slaughter confirmed they can add trend information for special education students and commented on how special education tuition in works.

Kubiak thanked Mike and Doug for their work. Asked about threshold for circuit breaker reimbursement.

Dr. Slaughter commented on inflation and explained the circuit breaker program.

Schoen asked about the CRESS program and their support at the High School and whether it will be of use at the High School.

Dr. Morris commented that he met with Earl and their discussion about how issues at the school and in the community are interrelated.

Hanneke asked where to send other questions and about areas of the budget.

Dr. Morris noted no cuts to regular education in this budget and described shift of Summit Academy to the High School.

Dr. Slaughter outlined the difference between the capital assessment and the debt authorization.

Steinberg asked about the other funding sources related to capital.

Dr. Slaughter outlined the other funding sources being explored in each of the four regional communities.

Pam suggested alternative fundraising sources and going after large donors.

Hanneke asked about the debt for the track and field project and the rest of the plan.

Dr. Slaughter described the planning that went into the capital plan and that grant funds will likely be sought. Described that many projects will get extended into the future. Dr. Slaughter also explained the rationale for structuring the debt authorization for the track and field to allow for two different versions of the project.

Steinberg delayed the discussion on water and sewer regulations to the next meeting so that conversation on the regional school budget could continue.

Cathy S asked about debt authorization and capital planning.

Mangano explained how the regional debt assessment fits into the Town's larger capital plan.

Griesemer and Hanneke asked about the regional capital plan and how the debt is shown, and how the debt authorizations are structured.

Dr. Slaughter explained why there was only one debt authorization for the track and field as opposed to two. Explained further that the vote at a minimum is for a new track and potentially for a turf field and reorientation.

Steinberg expressed support for Doug's explanation.

Miller asked about the timeline for the track replacement.

Slaughter and Mangano explained the history of track project.

Kubiak asked about whether thought was given to what portion of the project can be funded with Community Preservation Act funds.

Mangano explained what he has heard from the CPA coalition and bond counsel.

Hegner asked about inflationary pressures on the project and what impact there will be on operational costs.

Dr. Slaughter confirmed there are inflation estimates within the cost estimates for the track and field and explained the maintenance cost differences between turf and natural grass.

Mangano highlighted that fundraising could be done for a maintenance fund and that and rental revenues could be set aside for annual maintenance or resurfacing.

Steinberg asked that the Committee send regional budget questions by April 19th to pass along to the regional schools.

4. Water and Sewer Regs Discussion

Delayed to a future meeting

5. Public Comment

No public comment.

Griesemer adjourned the council meeting at 11:24 AM.

Process for May Finance Committee Members

Steinberg explained that committee members will be assigned to different departments to help generate questions and help complete the recommendation report.

6. Approval of Minutes

Steinberg asked for questions on the minutes. Griesemer motioned to approved minutes for 3/29/22. Steinberg seconded. Hegner – Yes, Kubiak – Yes, Schoen – Yes, Steinberg – Yes, Griesemer - Yes

Michelle Miller left at 11:28 AM.

7. Announcements

None

Steinberg adjourned the Finance Committee at 11:31 AM

Minutes prepared by S. Mangano

Record of Agenda Packet Materials and Documents Presented:

- 04-12-2022 Finance Committee Agenda
- 8.a. Water Regulations - DRAFT - 02-28-2022
- 8.c. Sewer Regulations DRAFT - 03-22-2022
- 8.e. CO FY23 - 01 02 03 REGION - Assessment Method Budget and Capital
- 8.e. FY23RegionBudget_AmherstTownCouncil_04.04.2022
- Finance Committee - Budget Hearing Schedule 4.3.22
- FY23RegionBudgetDocumentProposal02.01.2022
- FY23RegionBudgetSelectedPageUpdates_04.04.2022
- TrackField PPT 2.25.22
- Water Sewer Use Regulations