

**Chester Budget Committee
January 26, 2017
Approved Minutes**

I. Meeting to Order

Chairman Weider called the meeting of the Chester Budget Committee to order at 7:05 pm on Thursday, January 26, 2017.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Weider led the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Attendance by Roll Call

Chuck Heuer
Mike Romick
Michael Weider, Chairman
Rhonda Lamphere, Vice-Chair
Brian Shankey
Becky Owens

Guests:

Royal Richardson for the School Board

Absent:

Selectman Richard Trask is attending the Board of Selectmen's meeting.

Stephen D'Angelo arrived at 7:11 pm

Chairman Weider departed the meeting at 7:15 to attend the Board of Selectmen's meeting and returned at 7:41 pm

IV. Announcements by the Chair – Welcome

V. BOS Update – Richard Trask

VI. School Board Update – Mike Romick

VII. Old Business

VIII. New Business

a. Review of Chester School District's 2017-2018 Budget

Chairman Weider thanked Vice-Chair Lamphere, who credited Cheryl, with publishing that the joint meeting with the School Board and Budget Committee will be February 6, 2017 at 7 pm.

Chairman Weider reviewed the answers of Superintendent Lockwood to the Chester Budget Committee's email dated January 23, 2017:

1. "How many buses does Chester send to Pinkerton and what is the % of utilization by students?"

"Chester sends five of the eight buses that we use to Pinkerton. Our last ridership survey indicated that 201 of the 326 students were riding these buses. That is 62% of the youngsters who attend Pinkerton Academy from Chester."

The committee would like to implement a more recent ridership survey as this number appears to reflect a somewhat higher percentage than witnessed. Pinkerton not having available parking for its students who drive may be one explanation for this.

2. "Have we ever thought of leasing our own buses, with maintenance included?"

"We recently went out to bid for bus services. Only two companies (First Student and Salter) bid on the contract and the initial bids were ridiculously high. We negotiated a slightly lower number with First Student, but we were unable to get new buses in that process. We explored the reasons for the lack of interest in bidding this service and found that there was little interest in bidding because of the high cost of setting up a bus depot for so few buses. We also found that the amount being paid to bus drivers in Chester is a bit higher than larger communities like Derry. We have not looked at leasing w/maintenance."

The School Board itself has not looked into this in the past. The Superintendent has reviewed the process elsewhere and found it to be more expensive. While the town has their own SAU and management in place to effectively coordinate this, it was agreed that they would not be looking to set up their own maintenance facility or depot. Provided that the leased buses could be kept in the schoolyard, they have to be plugged in, not hinder snow plowing and consider the insurance liability.

The current contract negotiated with First Student effected a price break in return for older model buses, 2009 and offered no more of a price break for something in between. The older buses in use have experienced some breakdowns but were always addressed effectively. It was supported that newer model buses would not only be more reliable but more fuel efficient. As the older model buses age-out, costs associate with maintenance. At 12-15 yrs. maximum, the company would turn those over.

A committee member proposed consolidating with Auburn who comes down 121 headed for Pinkerton. The committee would like to research pairing with other school districts to increase their buying power in the next contract renewal. Mr. D'Angelo was concerned with

the length of the ride increasing, students are already on some buses for over an hour. Mr. Richardson stated that he would look into that.

7:11 pm Mr. D'Angelo entered the meeting.

7:15 pm Chairman Weider left the meeting room to attend the Selectmen's meeting.

3. "There has been a video studio request of the town side of \$30-35,000 for cameras, etc. and use of Franchise fees to update studio. Is it the intent of School to make use of these upgrades to rebroadcast our meetings, etc., if so are we budgeting our share of licensing fees currently paid by the town?"

"We have not reviewed the PACT's budget requests to the Town. You would have to review what is in their number with them. The School Board is indeed interested in rebroadcasting meetings. However, we have not budgeted any dollars toward that effort in this budget. We are hopeful that the Education portion of the franchise fees could be utilized to offset any costs that the PACT incurs by providing the rebroadcasting service."

Last year the video feed stopped working and they were off the air, the equipment they have is old and hasn't been upgraded for quite some time. The School Board would like to be able to rebroadcast meetings, showcase school events, plays, arts, music, sporting events and how the town goes to internet is attractive to them. They would like smaller cameras that the kids could walk around with. The Board is proposing a three-year plan to implement this, working with the technology director and Bob Grimm.

4. "Maintenance Line 5432 includes Parking Lot Sealing and Stripping, Window washing and repair of softball and baseball fields. Please provide detail to this account."

"There is \$14,000 budgeted for Parking lot sealing and stripping. There will be an RFP for this work. There is \$1,700 for window washing an \$4,000 for softball field and playground. The \$4,000 includes fertilizer lime, grub control and weed killer service plus aeration, mulch for kindergarten play area and play space area by field, grass seed, crushed stone and infield mix."

The School only owns and is responsible for maintenance of the softball field directly across from the fire station.

5. "Maintenance Line 5431 that includes the \$30,000 HVAC repairs, is this one time or will this amount be ongoing?"

"We anticipate that this line will continue to run in this amount as we continue to replace piping valve circuit setters, etc., due to the age of the system and the amount of minerals contained in the water that flows through the system."

Mr. Richardson explained to Vice-Chair Lamphere that the function of the setters controlled the water flow. A company came in and uncovered incorrect installations, wear and tear. Mr. D'Angelo asked if the company provided a budget. Mr. Richardson had only obtained an assessment. The heat in one room can fluctuate drastically from one place to another due

to the inefficiency of the blowers. Repairs would sometimes be done when school was in session, other times during vacation breaks. Mr. D'Angelo expressed concerns whether not addressing this all at once would create property damage or loss of the system in the winter months and wanted to know what the cost would be to just get it all done now. Vice-Chair Lamphere pointed out the age of the building and Chairman Weider asked about addressing this as a CIP.

Last year there was a failure due with the sprinkler system in the Kindergarten and it was handled well due to the response of the fire department, the maintenance supervisor and other volunteers. Roof handlers were an issue that needed replacing two years ago. Mr. Heuer would like to see the school set up a fund to not only set aside maintenance funds annually but be able to draw from it as needed with a minimum of red tape. Things that could be dealt with and wait end up becoming more expensive. Mr. Richardson explained that they did have a fund for catastrophe situations, there is some safety net there. Mr. Romick added that they didn't want to be a bank and should do proper budgeting to take care of the maintenance.

Chairman Weider returned to the meeting room at 7:41 pm.

6. "Question from Brian for Darrell – Where could you find reductions if you had to?"

"This is really a question for the School Board. They represent the community. However, if forced to reduce the requests, I would look to make suggestions as to what maintenance items might be able to be deferred for a year."

Mr. Richardson felt that the parking lot had been deferred in the past couple of years. There have been frost heaves where the buses go around and those have been patched. Vice-Chair Lamphere felt that the parking lot was not going to impact education.

Mr. Romick and Mr. Richardson credited the working relationship with the Budget Committee and the expertise of Superintendent Lockwood with not only keeping a lean budget but providing transparency and a long history of returning reserve funds back to the town.

Mr. Romick offered to share their worksheet with the Budget Committee, one side relates to discretionary spending and the other is coded with mandated items. Mr. Romick added that if we were to pass on the actual cost of the increases, we would be up by 4%. Mr. Richardson stated that he will get the committee a copy of this.

7. "Has the School District ever considered sharing IT services with the Town?"

"Our staff (1 Director and 1 Technician) is fully engaged in providing the services needed for the School District. While we have assisted the town on a variety of technology questions and issues over the years, we have not contemplated sharing IT services. We are not aware of any services that the Town is able to offer to the Director at this time."

Mr. Romick stated that this was something close to him. He shared his experience with the school's own searches and history. Mr. Richardson advised that in the past

outsourcing benefitted the provider more than it did the school, we brought a person in and all of our problems are gone. While they agreed that the town and school teaming up would create more delays and other problems, because of the diversity of their operating systems, each should have their own IT person.

Vice-Chair Lamphere pointed out that we have had some personnel changes, newer people coming in are more IT savvy and have formed a committee. Mr. Romick agreed that this had been his experience with Dr. Lockwood, he gets it and he drove it. Mr. Heuer agreed that having someone in-house provided the best service and cost.

8. "What is the 100-5113 line?"

"This is the Extended Day Kindercare Salaries. This account is completely offset by fees paid by the parents of the children who attend. The amount is listed in our revenues."

If the population of Kindercare drops, the parents assume the extra cost until enrollment increases again. Even if the new governor mandates full day kindergarten, he is not mandating that the parents send them.

9. "Is Chester a sending Town relating to the State collected school tax and how much we send out?"

"The State Education Tax is anticipated to be \$2.26 per thousand. That amount will be raised and applied to Chester. None of these funds go to the State."

Mr. Heuer asked for clarification of how much is currently collected and returned to the town by the state. Vice-Chair Lamphere indicated that the old Claremont decision had been knocked down and Chairman Weider explained that the state uses an algorithm, what is collected is what stays, the rate itself is the only fluctuation between towns now, ours is \$2.26/thousand as indicated on page 102.

Chairman Weider asked about the Collective Bargaining Agreement, do we support that? Vice-Chair Lamphere concluded that the committee still needed to go over that.

Chairman Weider asked the committee members, with one more meeting before meeting with the district, are there any questions for Mr. Romick and Mr. Richardson? Chairman Weider emphasized that after next week its public hearing, I prefer to have one budget, going forward, its much easier to explain to the legislative body. Chairman Weider asked the committee members to go around the table, one at a time, with questions or comment.

Vice-Chair Lamphere stated that after review and analysis of lost revenues and contractual obligations, paving and stripping won't affect education; and she looked at the principal's salary. Mr. Richardson explained that the School Board would begin to look at resumes after the 30th, from there the end of March, the timeline is on their website. Mr. Romick stated that while the outgoing principal's insurance had been for an individual plan, we budged for worst case scenario.

Vice-Chair Lamphere asked if Mr. Richardson can vote if Mr. Romick isn't here.

Mr. Shankey had no questions.

Ms. Owens had no questions.

Mr. D'Angelo had no questions.

Mr. Heuer asked about Vision Services and the 196% increase on page 11.

Chairman Weider explained that on Page 46 the vision services number is broken up for you. Mr. Romick added, that it is contracted services, based on number of students.

Mr. Richardson explained that there was a change in personnel in the office, the extra salary is Cheryl and Lynn coming on board, we had executive and did away with bookkeeping and have people coming in to help out.

Ms. Owens left the meeting room at 8:14 pm and returned at 8:15 pm.

Chairman Weider looked at course reimbursement and maintenance. According to page 49, actuals, we spent \$6,100 last year for course reimbursement and budgeted \$20,000.00. With \$30,000.00 budgeted for this year, we can go back to \$20,000 and save \$10,000.00. If maintenance is going to be a reoccurrence, we can reduce that to \$20,000.00. Will that change anything?

Mr. Richardson stated that he would get these into Mr. Lockwood.

Vice-Chair Lamphere left the meeting and returned at 9:05 pm.

b. BC Calendar

January 30, 2017 – Review
February 6, 2017 - Public

IX. Other Committee Updates

X. Minutes

January 16, 2017. Mr. D'Angelo motioned to accept the January 16, 2017, as amended:

Line 170 will be amended to add: "in the past"

Mr. Heuer seconded his motion. Vice-Chair Lamphere and Mr. Romick abstained, 4 in favor, so moved.

XI. Other Business

XII. Member Comments

Discussed changing meeting date to Tuesdays in June.

Mr. Shankey and Mr. D'Angelo will not be here next Monday. The board meeting is Wednesday, so won't have an answer. Could do it Monday night cos they have a full board.

Chairman Weider asked, for members who will not be here Monday night, would you be comfortable to move it forward? Mr. D'Angelo stated that he was comfortable. Mr. Shankey said yes. If you can save \$20-30,000 great.

XIII. Public Comments

XIV. Next Meeting Date: January 30, 2017

XV. Adjourn -

Mr. Shankey motioned to adjourn the meeting. Chairman Weider seconded his motion, all in favor, so moved. The meeting of the Chester Budget Committee was adjourned at 9:11 pm on Thursday, January 26, 2017.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy J. Hoijer, Recording Secretary