

<p style="text-align: center;">BUDGET ADVISORY COUNCIL Meeting Minutes - Monday, March 28, 2022</p>

Members Present: Karen Arthmann, Andrea Catena, Kathryn DeLaVergne, Maria Hamilton, Dan Hentschel, Paul Hoak, Nichole LaPlaca, Bob Logel, Cheryl Lomedico, Jessica Mattice, Suzanne Maxim, Ken Nelson, Pam Reinhardt

Members Absent: Chuck Allan, Lisa Clar, Regina Decarr, Clay Harris, Baldish Kaur, Dan Knapp, Nancy Kula, Molly McLaughlin, Lauren Purvee, Jim Schultz, Millie Sefranek, Dina Statholopoulos, Brian Usselman

Ex-Officio Members: Scott Adair, Mary Ann Exler, Andy Whitmore and Lawrence "Bo" Wright

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDED BUDGET

Andy Whitmore, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations, reviewed the highlights of the Superintendent's Recommended Budget for 2022-23. Since the proposed budget was last reviewed with the BAC, funding for 2 Special Education Teachers and 1 Elementary Reading Teacher have been added. The proposed budget is now \$151,625,968 which is an increase of \$10,532,668 (7.5%) over the 2021-22 budget. The majority of the budget increase will be funded by an increase of \$5 million in Foundation Aid from NYS and \$4.1 million of federal stimulus funds.

We are budgeting for increased expenses in the following areas:

Instructional - 10 new positions added to address learning loss, social emotional learning needs and Special Education enrollment increases in addition to contractual wage increases.

Non-Instructional Salaries - wages increased to attract and retain employees in addition to contractual wage increases.

Contractual - increased use of contract transportation and drivers to remedy bus driver shortage.

BOCES - placements for Special Education enrollment increases.

Employee Benefits - Health Insurance rate increase in addition to increases in benefits paid as a percentage of wages.

PROPOSITIONS

Andy reviewed the propositions that will be presented to the voters in May. In addition to the proposition for the budget, we will be proposing to spend \$2.5 million from the Bus Reserve (6 large buses, 6 small buses and 4 three-quarter buses) and to establish a new Capital Reserve with a multi-year funding limit of \$20 million. We anticipate substantial expenses in the coming years for purchasing propane and/or electric buses and possibly building an electric charging station.

FIVE YEAR FINANCIAL PLAN

Andy presented the Five Year Financial Plan and reminded the members that in recent years our district has faced a structural deficit and needed to use reserves to balance the budget. The influx of federal stimulus funds and increase in Foundation Aid from NYS will change that for 2022-23 and 2023-24. However, by 2024-25 we will return to being in a structural deficit. The deficit will be manageable with reserve usage until 2026-27 unless action is taken to alleviate the deficit. Possible actions could include increasing the use of reserves, reducing expenditures that were added to remedy effects of the pandemic, reassessing programs to find reductions in expenditures, and overriding the tax cap.

Lawrence "Bo" Wright, Superintendent of Schools, added that the Five Year Financial Plan shows that we need to continue to maintain reserves for the future. The large influx of funds has a limited time span and was targeted for responding to the effects of the pandemic. In a couple of years, after we have addressed the academic and social-emotional learning needs created by the pandemic, we can reassess the positions we added to decide if they provide long-term benefits and should continue. Any necessary reductions have the potential to be offset by attrition and staff reassignments.

TAXPAYER IMPACT

Andy explained the tax levy required to support the proposed budget for 2022-23 will be \$87,123,380. This is an increase of \$2,548,330 (3%) over the levy for 2021-22 and projects an increase of 1.98% in the tax rate for tax payers. This rate is based on current information regarding the assessed value of properties in the district. Historically, the actual tax rate is lower than the projected rate when the tax roll calculations are finalized. Based on the projected rate, a taxpayer owning a property valued at \$190,000 would see an increase of \$71 per year in their school taxes.

BUDGET COMMUNICATION PLAN

Andy presented the plans for communicating the proposed budget to the community. A variety of methods will be used including print media, electronic media, public presentations and signage.

PLANS FOR NEXT YEAR'S BUDGET ADVISORY COUNCIL

Andy asked the members for their opinion on the meeting schedule and number of meetings to be held by the council next year. The members agreed that three meetings held in January, February and March worked well. The members were also asked about their preferences for in-person meetings versus virtual meetings. It was felt that in-person meetings allow for more participation from older members of the community, better interaction between members, and better attendance by members. Virtual meetings were preferred for the ability to participate when childcare, student schedules or job travel would make attending in-person difficult. The topic of in-person versus virtual meetings will be revisited with the members of next year's council.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Bo concluded the meeting by thanking the members for their investment of time in the council and the district. We truly appreciate and consider their thoughtful input and feedback in the budget development process.

TOPICS FROM THE COUNCIL

Members of the council raised the following topics during the meeting:

Can RG&E handle the demand on the infrastructure to support converting to electric buses?

Can the district get access to electricity being provided by the solar farm in Rush?

Do we have plans for handling possible position reductions in future years when additional funds run out?

Are we mandated to keep the positions we have added using federal stimulus funds?

It would be helpful to include information in the budget communications regarding how changes in assessments affect the tax levy and the tax rate for tax payers. Tax payers hear that assessments are going up and assume that means their taxes are going up and the school district is getting more funds.

The meeting adjourned at 7:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Mary Ann Exler, Budget Technician