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FINANCE COMMITTEE

TOWN HALL BUILDING
8 PARK STREET
ADAMS MASS.

MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22, 2017 – 6:00 PM

Adams Visitors Center, 3 Hoosac Street, 1st Floor Meeting Room, Adams, MA 01220

On the above date the *Finance Committee* held a joint workshop meeting with the *Board of Selectmen* at the Adams Visitors Center at 6:00 p.m. Finance Committee Chairman Timothy Burdick presided the meeting, and Members Sandra Kleiner, Jeffrey Lefebvre, Charles Foster, Amy Giroux, Matthew Pitoniak, Mark Chittenden and Craig Corrigan were in attendance. Finance Committee Vice Chairman Leon Parrott and Members Joan Smigel, John Cowie, Paul Demastrie, Brian Johnson, and Rachel Tomkowicz were absent.

Chairman Jeffrey Snoonian presided the *Board of Selectmen* meeting. Present were Members Joseph Nowak, and Richard Blanchard. Board of Selectmen Member John Duval was absent. Also in attendance were Town Administrator Tony Mazzucco and Adams-Cheshire Regional School District Superintendent Robert Putnam and McCann School Superintendent James Brosnan gave presentations.

The Finance Committee Workshop was called to order at 6:03 p.m.

The Select Board Workshop was called to order at 6:03 p.m.

BUDGET OVERVIEW

Adams-Cheshire Regional School District Budget Presentation

Superintendent Robert Putnam advised the budget presented was not the final budget, and the School Committee moved to have the final vote on the budget on March 27, 2017. He advised they were trying to maximize the District's resources by making cuts to personnel recently, making the drastic step of closing a school and reorganizing grade levels into three sections. Pre-kindergarten to grade 3 would be at C.T. Plunkett with 457 students, Grade 4 through Grade 7 would be at the Middle School with 412 students, and Grade 8 through Grade 12 would be at the High School with 444 students. The proposed budget establishes programs for computer programming, and pathways for college and careers. It is also designed to improve student achievement and retain enrollment against rising costs, projected revenue and contractual responsibilities. The District will be adding but not cutting personnel while closing Cheshire Elementary School because they are needed. The contract with DuFour will be renewed. Fiscal Years 2019 and 2020 will show and increase in health benefits. There will be \$127,000 in COLA increases, and a \$60,000 increase in transportation reimbursement. It was noted that retiree benefits are complicated and ongoing employees are already set, but numbers have not been negotiated yet so they could be lower or higher. This year is a \$318,000 increase. The Boiler Bond is in the budget. With the closure of Cheshire Elementary School, Adams picks up more of the expenditure until 2023. There is no rating change for the change of building use. The Capital Assessment includes debt for Hoosac Valley High School and boilers. The savings to close Cheshire Elementary School is \$200,000, and the District is reducing stipends but not filling positions. \$36,000 stipend jobs are in Art, Home Economics, a Secretary and salaried Administration. There is a requirement from the Department of Education for an additional two positions for Special Programs

in order to be in compliance with SPED. The Middle School needs a SPED Coordinator, and there will be three added intervention positions in the Educational programs. An Art Teacher will be cut at the High School level. There will be an implementation of online learning programs in the virtual high school with Rosetta Stone, Plato and Artificial Intelligence Programs. There will be a consolidation of busing and changes are being made in how to handle busing since schools are at different times. Capital Projects for C.T. Plunkett are part of the Town budget. He noted that it was his intention to pursue a full-service school model to include social and health services and a grant-funded dental program because over 50% of the students are economically disadvantaged.

Finance Committee Members asked why the ACRSD benefits are more than other districts. Contractual negotiations were discussed and that staff has not been asked to give anything up before being given a decided-upon budget. Class size numbers were discussed. Nepotism was expressed as a concern and the Superintendent was asked to utilize best hiring practices. The Superintendent was asked to provide the percentage increases expected for salaries. The total amount the District was asking for was noted as not being clear on the handout. It was questioned why one building is being closed but all of the personnel are being retained with no cuts. The District's goals were asked for. Members asked if the District is in crisis, if there is any way to negotiate step raises to something the District can afford, and to solve the problem where it needs to be solved. It was noted that the school is closing and there is no savings in administration costs, and administration under teaching contracts. An inquiry was made when the Common Core data scores will be released. The Superintendent was asked to provide a method for releasing a quarterly update from the schools. It was noted that there was no information on absenteeism, stipends, IEP numbers for students provided, or reports on teachers with undergraduate and graduate degrees.

Board of Selectmen Members inquired about maintenance, which is not changed but there will be an entire building less to maintain. It was noted that more money does not make a better educator. It was asked if the Transportation Contract includes gas price increases, and it was noted that sometimes a large bus is seen carrying only a small number of kids.

Town Administrator Mazzucco noted there was a \$33,000 imbalance in the numbers.

Superintendent Putnam advised he would provide information in the future regarding the maintenance staff staying on after the building closes. Salary increases are based on horizontal and vertical movement and COLAs are under negotiation. The Business Administrator is new to the budget and she is working with the Superintendent to get a model for all the information needed. He advised he agrees with the Collins Center, and has cut so many positions that the District cannot provide for the students they have and are putting students in study halls. All of the positions are needed for the students to succeed, and Intervention positions will stem the losses to other districts. No other District has eliminated Step Raises. It was noted that Cheshire Elementary School has one Principal, Hoosac Valley High School has three Administrators, and C.T. Plunkett School has two Administrators, there is a Business Administrator, the Superintendent and the Dean of Students that is acting as an Administrator, as well as Special Education totaling nine Administrators. The best job for an Administrator is to be in the classroom to watch the Teachers and give them input on where they can improve. There is only one bidder on the fuel contract. There is competition for talent and the other school districts have more lucrative packages. To substantially change step increases would impact recruitment of qualified people. Superintendent Putnam advised there would be \$750,000 in savings if the school district went to GIC, but there are constraints and laws that determine when things can happen. He requested that if intergovernmental requests for information were made that they go through the Chairman of each respective Board.

Superintendent Putnam left the meeting at 7:28 p.m.

McCann Technical School Budget Presentation

Superintendent Brosnan of McCann School gave a presentation on the McCann budget. He gave an overview of the budget. Chapter 70 has been level funded, but costs are going up. He advised there was an \$88,000 cut from the budget. Grant funding was secured to cover some costs. A \$130,000 grant for equipment for Machine Technology and a \$29,000 grant for Robotics were received so they are not assessed to the communities. Reductions were made by moving things around or cutting the budget. There are two schools running, both vocational and academic. There are 2 fewer teacher positions this year. The municipal assessment increase is due to 14 more students. He noted a lack of jobs in the area is the root of the problem, which impacts the tax base. McCann offers after-hours programs with space to teach which is paid for by groups that help eliminate travel out of the area for training. The capital assessment will be paid off and McCann has been doing a good job maintaining the building. Chapter 71 was briefly reviewed. Special Education showed a \$12,000 increase, and salaries, including steps and grades, were explained as having been underfunded in Fiscal Year 2017. New standards for teacher evaluations will meet the requirements of the Masters programs to include mentoring, teacher evaluations, goal setting and setting standards. Transportation showed a \$14,000 increase due to the new contract. Retirement and Health Insurance also showed increases.

Finance Committee Members asked if McCann is at full capacity, and asked about Capital Improvements planned for the building. A breakdown and explanation of the formula was requested to show how the budget was determined. An inquiry was made about voting for the 9 members of the District and whether there was an equal vote or vote weight by population. The Superintendent was asked if staff could be cut because there will be no more money in approximately 2 years.

Board of Selectmen Members asked why the municipal assessment is over the minimum.

Town Administrator Mazzucco inquired if McCann is sharing the same sacrifices in health insurance as the Town of Adams. The Town split is 70/30 for healthcare, and ACRSD is at 50/50 split for Dental. The Town of Adams does not offer employees Dental Insurance. He expressed the desire for McCann to “share the burden” since there is a big inequity, and emphasized he is “Walmartizing” the Town work force. He advised 5 of the 9 towns would have to vote down the McCann budget, and as numbers increase at McCann it decreases ACRSD. He noted that McCann is not sustainable, and the Town of Adams can only afford one school district.

Superintendent Brosnan explained that with 10 more students the school would be at capacity, depending on the shop. 25 to 30 students would be the maximum in some shops. More time is needed to look into better health insurance options. The split is currently 75/25 for Retiree health care and Dental for employees is at 75/25. He noted that the communities are running out of revenue, and all items are being looked at. The elimination of two positions changed the way two departments work. Para-professionals are now funded through grants. The B-Wing student bathrooms are 57 years old, have leaks in the wall and must be upgraded to efficient water systems and floors. The formula was briefly outlined including the poverty levels, number of kids, and the minimum assessment. The vote according to statute is a 2/3 vote for members of the District. Positions were cut this year, enrollment is high and costs have escalated more than past decades. It was noted that McCann has asked for very little for building repairs, and the reserves are very low now. There is a new locking system in the building, and other service

contracts to vendors are being looked at for efficiency. 18% to 23% goes to Special Education annually, and there is an initiative to collaborate with northern county Superintendents for SPED sharing resources. Before making health insurance changes product options for plans will be researched for the best possibilities and for collective bargaining.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Member Nowak to adjourn the Board of Selectmen Workshop

Second by Member Blanchard

Unanimous Vote

Motion passed

Motion made by Member Cowie to adjourn the Finance Committee Workshop

Second by Member Corrigan

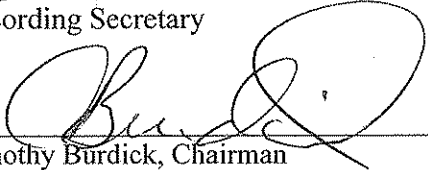
Unanimous vote

Motion passed

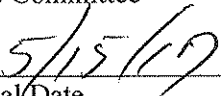
The Board of Selectmen Meeting adjourned at 8:54 p.m.

The Finance Committee Meeting adjourned at 8:54 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by Deborah J. Dunlap,
Recording Secretary



Timothy Burdick, Chairman
Finance Committee



Approval Date