

Town of Adams Massachusetts 01220-2087

FINANCE COMMITTEE

TOWN HALL BUILDING
8 PARK STREET

Monday, April 29, 2019, 6:30 p.m.

TOWN HALL, 8 PARK STREET, ADAMS, MA 01220
1st Floor, Board of Selectmen Meeting Room

CALL TO ORDER: The Finance Committee held a joint meeting with the Board of Selectmen at the above date. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Burdick at 6:30 p.m. Members Corrigan, Kleiner, Demastrie, Foster, Tomkowicz, Johnson, Lesure, Parrott, and Cushenette were present as well as Town Administrator Green, the Board of Selectmen, *Superintendent of ACRSD Vosburgh, School Committee Chairman Butler, and ACRSD Business Manager Snyder.*

Both boards were called to order at 6:30 p.m.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes for April 9, 2019 were presented for approval. *Motion made by Member Parrott to approve the minutes for April 9, 2019, second by Member Corrigan. Vote: unanimous.*

FY2020 Budget Review

Adams-Cheshire Regional School District: *Superintendent Vosburgh* advised that there was a mistake made by several School Districts in the Commonwealth and Business Manager Snyder went out of her way to investigate it. He explained that the error will not have an impact on Fiscal Year 2020 for Adams and work is being done regarding the error from Fiscal Year 2019. *Business Manager Snyder* advised that the budget is not changing from what was presented a few weeks prior and the assessment would be unchanged. She gave a background on what the numbers were in Fiscal Year 2018 and explained that the format was changed for Fiscal Year 2019, when an error was made by taking numbers from the town required distribution instead of the District required distribution. She noted that it would have resulted in an increase in assessment for Adams and a decrease for Cheshire. She said in order to mitigate this she used funds from the Excess & Deficiency to reduce the amount of the foundation filtered through to the town. She said she used a larger amount of the funds for Adams and less for Cheshire. By doing this she explained the School District was able to keep both the budget and assessments from changing, and the District used Free Cash to mitigate the changes. The amounts that were used vs. the amount that should have been used were compared, and she reviewed the changes in detail. She noted that the assessment was based on a 75/25 enrollment ratio, which is the Town's required local contribution. She clarified that BART School is not part of the equation, as it is a separate expense to the District. The amount being assessed over the minimum to the Town of Adams was reviewed, and she pointed out that it includes McCann as well, which happened last year as well as this year. The Foundation Budget was reviewed and explained, including the added additional revenues to offset assessments in order to keep from increasing assessments to the Town of Adams. An inquiry was made about whether the state has a system to review the budget for errors or whether they accept it as correct once issued. It was explained that the District submits information to the state only for the End of Year Report in October from the

year prior. The amount within the levy limit was explained and transportation costs were reviewed. The error made in Fiscal Year 2019 was explained, and she noted that \$107,000 was left to technically under-assess Adams and over-assess Cheshire. She advised she had been in touch with the Department of Education and the Town of Cheshire and is trying to resolve it. She said she may have the ability to mitigate it with Excess & Deficiency Funds from ACRSD but is researching whether the fund balance will accommodate it. She advised she will be meeting with the ACRSD Treasurer. She said the Department of Education will give her an answer on Friday. She explained that if the District cannot cover it, the legality of it will have to be navigated. She advised that she is looking into whether more Excess & Deficiency can be appropriated to one town over the other or the District may have to assess a payment plan to the town. A Finance Committee Member inquired if insurance or being bonded covers errors like this and it was explained that being bonded covers for criminal errors, not mistakes. *Chairman Duval* noted that the Board appreciated the District coming to the Town right away about this and inquired how many other districts made the same mistake. He noted that the Board wants to have full confidence during the next budget review that any questions are resolved. *Ms. Snyder* responded that she has updated her own procedures to go to the Department of Education site and provide information not only for the district but each town individually as well. She said it would be a good check in the future.

The Board of Selectmen Workshop adjourned at 7:01 p.m.

Superintendent Vosburgh advised that a full review of the budget would take place for the Finance Committee. He advised that they looked at what could be reallocated or repurposed to make better use of the resources. He explained that he met with his departments regarding the budget and now the departments and Principals are operating more efficiently knowing the process. He stated he would like to include Town Administrators Green and St. John IV in the process going forward. It was explained that enrollment in the District of the 1110 students. 57.8% of the students have high needs, and 24% are students with disabilities that come with an IEP, and this is where a lot of the school resources go. He explained that ACRSD has a large population of high-need and economically disadvantaged students overall. It was clarified that the 57.8% includes kids on free lunch, which Superintendent Vosburgh confirmed would skew the numbers. He explained that there are multiple categories and the Department of Education website provided information on School District profiles. He updated that 2 years ago the District was at Level 3, and had to create turnaround plans and get state assistance. Last year based upon test scores, absentee rate, and graduation rate the District met its targets and is now one step out of requiring assistance. Project Lead the Way (PLTW) was a big investment, and he noted that the Middle School was recognized based on the number of students participating. He expressed that the District hopes to expand on High School pathways next year. He clarified that there are no longer levels for School Districts and either a school is requiring assistance or not. The number of out of district placements for students utilizing School Choice to another school was discussed and it was there were 90 students in School Choice. He listed that 30 kids each year go to McCann Vocational School, and that he saw bump in Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grade over last couple years. He said the District lost about 10 students per grade due to the Cheshire Elementary School closing. The draw of students to McCann School was briefly discussed. *Superintendent Vosburgh* advised he did a survey to School Choice families and the majority reported they left for curriculum reasons. He noted that some advised that they did not have a good experience, and that Middle School is a tough time in students' lives. He pointed out that ACRSD is in a tough spot between BART Charter School and McCann Vocational Tech and the focus was on making test scores climb. He noted that facilities need to be better and he continues to get feedback to make things better. He reviewed that the District took down half of one of the

chimneys, installed air conditioning on 3rd floor, and repaired the portico on McDonald's side of the building. A review of the maintenance records for this year and what was spent took place and *Business Manager Snyder* explained that the air conditioning project used Fiscal Year 2018 funds. The building maintenance budget was reviewed over several years and Finance Committee Member Corrigan expressed concern that maintenance money has to be spent on building maintenance. He noted that after adding it up for this year it came to \$50,000 per school put into the budget and the amount spent on projects was just over \$3,000. He detailed that in 2017 there was \$193,000 left over and only some used in normal maintenance. He expressed concern that money has been appropriated for building maintenance and went into stabilization fund instead. Then, when the building has major issues from not being maintained the Town pays additional money for a project to fix the building. He noted that the hallway in Plunkett School has no light bulbs, and the windows have not been painted since it was revamped. He urged the School District to put the money into maintaining the buildings instead of putting it in the Stabilization Fund. He made the comparison that McCann spends everything they have on building maintenance. *Business Manager Snyder* reviewed the building security systems and supplies funding in the budget for building maintenance and said that she did not give the Finance Committee all of the numbers. She recounted that it had actually exceeded that budget by \$30,000, and the District is expending the building maintenance funds in full this year. *Superintendent Vosburgh* advised that there had been joint meetings with three members of the School Committee, the Interim Town Administrator Cesan, now Town Administrator Green and Board of Selectmen Member Hoyt to talk about building maintenance issues. He advised that there is a punch list that is being kept and the group is going through projects and talking collaboratively about what needs to be done and knocking off a lot of projects. *Ms. Snyder* advised that in Fiscal Year 2020 some line items were decreased because it was discovered that the District was not spending them in full. Some funds are kept in case of unexpected items like broken pipes or repairs. She noted that the department budget is outlined by Department of Education. She reviewed the current cherry sheet which shows what District can anticipate from the state and what will be assessed. It was noted that there is a \$30 increase per student over last year. She explained that School Choice funds received goes into the Revolving Fund and is not showing in the budget. There was only a small reimbursement for the 79 students attending Charter School but the District is charged a tuition assessment for them. She advised that retirements, open positions and net metering credits will create savings. She noted that repurposing of funds allowed for new positions. As there is no longer a need for a sign language interpreter the District is implementing a Reading Interventionist and a Learning Lab teacher at the high school. *Superintendent Vosburgh* pointed out there has been an unusually low graduation rate and higher dropout rate than expected. He explained that the Learning Lab teacher will work with students to recover credits lost during the school day or on their own time because there must be a teacher of record tied to the student, not a Guidance Counselor. He explained that the District also has students trying to take electives and advance placement courses but cannot take them due to schedule conflicts. This teacher would work with those students as well. *Ms. Snyder* added that the District is also maintaining positions that were added over the last few years. Expenditures are increasing by \$35,000 and she stated the District pays the largest portion in the Retirement System. Contractual increases are in the amount of \$140,000, and a large chunk of the budget is the push of the expenditure out of School Choice to the Operating Budget which the District doesn't anticipate needing to do every year and cannot sustain. She explained that the District is still in negotiations with teachers for pay, and working out the details of the Special Education students and their needs. It was noted that out of district placements are expensive and there are currently a few of them. The District is considering having a School

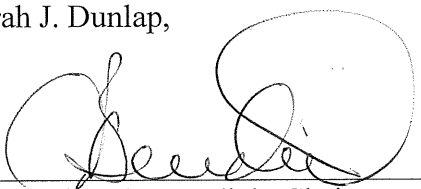
Resource Officer, which would be employed by the Police Department and in their budget. Discussion is taking place on how to split the position between both towns. A brief review was done of the assessments per town. Ms. Snyder advised she did not change the Fiscal Year 2019 numbers until they come to a resolution, and she gave comparison numbers. The actual change from year to year and the over minimum numbers were reviewed. She provided the Committee Members the corrected numbers and gave them the Total Foundation Assessment, which she explained was \$165,000 more than Fiscal Year 2019. Transportation assessments decreased from last year due to increased reimbursement by the state and supplementation from the District. Boiler Bonds for the Elementary Schools will be paid in full in 2023 and amounts assessed to each town are based on Elementary School enrollment. Roof issues at the high school are being addressed and if funds are not used they will be returned to the towns. It was noted that the total Capital Assessment is decreasing as bond payments get closer to maturity. A 22% enrollment decline was noted as being a national situation and conversations are being taken part of for regionalization. *Superintendent Vosburgh* noted the Berkshire County Education Task Force gave a projection for enrollment decline three years ago and were off by eight students. Discussion took place about adding another town to the District though they just got done redoing the District Agreement. Consideration is being given to putting the Elementary, Middle and High School in one building or campus. He explained that the two towns need to talk with MSBA, and the numbers remain pretty steady so he doesn't see it dipping dramatically over the next eight years. He expressed a desire to have 70 Kindergarteners and the District has 53 now. It was explained that the High School was built to house 800 high school students but it would be significantly different to house the different grades. Sharing of teachers with North Adams or Pittsfield in certain subjects was suggested. Another suggestion was made to hire part time specialty class teachers that teach and leave. *Superintendent Vosburgh* noted there is a shared services agreement with Central Berkshire, for a Technical Director. Class start and stop times may be different but the District can look into virtual classes. The limitation to the number of electives possible due to lack of enrollment was noted. A request was made for the District to market themselves via television programs such as "As Schools Match Wits" since every school but Hoosac Valley High School in Berkshire County has been represented. Partnering with BART School has taken place regarding grants for dissemination and they get money from the state. A portion of the funds go toward sharing professional development with other schools, which they participate in.

Motion made by Member Parrott to RECOMMEND the ACRSD School budget in the amount of \$5,140,669 for approval, second by Member Cushonette. Voted in Opposition were Members Johnson and Corrigan. Voted in Favor were Members Kleiner, Demastrie, Foster, Tomkowicz, Lesure, Parrott, and Cushenette. Motion passed.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion made by Member Johnson to adjourn, second by Member Parrott. Vote: unanimous. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 7:59 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by Deborah J. Dunlap,
Recording Secretary



Timothy Burdick, Chairman