Town of Adams Massachusetts 01220-2087

FINANCE COMMITTEE

TOWN HALL BUILDING
8 PARK STREET

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Thursday, May 13, 2020 at 5:30 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

CALL TO ORDER: CALL TO ORDER: On the above date the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee held a meeting on the first floor of Adams Town Hall. It was announced that Board of Selectmen Vice Chairman Bush, Members Nowak, Blanchard and Duval, Finance Committee Vice Chairman Cowie and Members Butler, Corrigan, Cushenette, Foster, Johnson, Kline, Kupiec, Meczywor, and Tomkowicz as well as Town Counsel St. John III and Cheshire Town Administrator St. John IV were attending the meeting remotely for COVID-19 emergency purposes under 9410 CMR 29.10(5). The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Board of Selectmen Chairman Hoyt and Finance Committee Chairman Burdick. Present were Town Administrator Green, McCann Superintendent Brosnan, Adams-Cheshire Regional School Superintendent Dean, Adams-Cheshire Regional School District Business Manager Snyder, and Rebecca Sawyer HVES Principal.

Call-In Connection:

Video: https://zoom.us/j/97946633078?pwd=aGdsZ1dyVDkxdWdWTis4ZjJPVE9jUT09, *Meeting ID*: 979-4663-3078, *Password*: TOAFY21

Phone: 1-929-436-2866, *Meeting ID*: 979-4663-3078, *Password*: 826661

Chairman Hoyt advised that "pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 *Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18*, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Town of Adams Board of Selectmen is being conducted via remote participation. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings as provided for in the Order. A reminder that persons who would like to participate in this meeting while in progress may do so by calling *(929) 436-2866.*

Conflict of interest concerns were addressed.

FY2020 Budget Review

McCann School: *Superintendent Brosnan* advised this is the first year of both the Student Opportunities Act and the adjustment of the formula. He noted there is more money associated with it over a seven-year period. He noted that with the numbers available there is an increase of $331,000 in Chapter 70 funds. Funding for costs in health insurance were reviewed. He explained that the Municipal Minimum Assessment went up by $467,000 and reduced the Over the Minimum Municipal Assessment and Transportation amount by $26,000. Chapter 70 and Chapter 71, state aid for transportation, were reviewed. He pointed out that money not used is returned to the communities. Out of District students were noted as being covered by $82,000. The Capital Assessment was explained as being the same. He reviewed the assessment break outs by town. The state formula was noted as being sent by the Department of Education. It was explained that the cost of transportation and the assessment to the Town was based on the number of Adams students in attendance.

"Hold harmless" or "Stay Harmless" was explained as the school not receiving less than last year's funding. The population of students was reviewed and it was noted that the proportion of costs are recalculated every year. It was noted that there are 141 students from Adams. Last year McCann returned over $16,000 in funds to Adams. An overview was given of the comparison over five years. A decrease on memberships was explained. Clerical salaries were increased for a school security position, and it was noted that there are some public safety grants to pay for equipment but additional staff is required. He explained that over the last decade the increased reporting and requirements from DESE is putting stress on the system. It was emphasized that professional salaries are for the funding of two teachers, both of which were needed for class sizes for science that were unfunded over the last two years. He noted that over the last few years McCann has been reducing to right size and this year must add two, due to the opportunity provided by additional state funds. Instructional hardware and software line items were explained as part of the breakout from technology from the end of year reporting. Instructional software is new. School Security is split with the Principal's line item. Health and life insurance for employees and retirees was briefly reviewed and it was noted that there is a 0% increase. Capital Improvements include the removal of asbestos floor tiles in a three to four-year plan. Paraprofessional fluctuations were explained and a requirement for a particular position for a student. General Supplies deal with the life cycle of computers and laptops on a periodic update for replacements. Instructional software includes ingenuity software for students and credit recovery software for students to log in online from home for twelve-month use by students. Utility services were discussed and it was noted that windows need to be replaced. A solar array was suggested to help cut electricity costs. A $38,000 increase for reinstating employees is for 3 positions of teachers. It was noted that an increase in the refund for transportation is expected due to the current COVID-19 situation. The health insurance split was reviewed and depends on the plan chosen. The potential plan for reopening schools in the fall was briefly touched on. Due to the fact that no information has been received from the state it is intended that McCann will operate under this budget and if fiscal guidance comes out that reduces this budget it will be recalculated. It was noted that if information changes it will have to go before another Town Meeting. Stipends were explained as being for sports and coaching salaries. Skills USA advisors were noted as being funded through a different budget line. Professional Development is required by statute and regulation by DESE for a mentor advisorship program for teachers which fluctuates annually due to number of teachers going through. A list of building maintenance needs that aren't being addressed this year will be provided in the future. It was noted that there would be no roof or glass replacement this year, just removal of tiles and bathroom upgrades. It was clarified that there are not any other savings for this budget expected due to COVID-19, and it would go to the Excess and Deficiency fund with an adjustment made to the end of the year once costs are known. The school building was noted as being in great condition despite having opened in 1962 and there are no plans for reconstruction. A future MSBA project will have to come through for the roof replacement from 1997, single plane glass replacement from 1961 and upgrades to the control system. The DESE website has comparative data and can single out some costs per student and it was explained that vocational students require additional equipment and materials per student. Superintendent Brosnan was thanked for providing information.

Adams-Cheshire Regional School District: *ACRSD Superintendent Aaron Dean* gave an overview of the budget and the 5-year trends. He reviewed his decision-making process and noted his criteria. He recognized that enrollment has trended downward over the years, and is currently at 1108. He explained the decline as having a number of factors and is based on numbers from October 1st enrollment. He reviewed enrollment challenges and numbers for each school. Student to teacher ratio was explained and there is more student/teacher ratio than rest of state. The District is six points

above for students with disabilities and the structure for the models of programming are being reviewed as this is a high needs population. ELL and special education learners are 60% of the school population and require more services by statute. 51.1% of students were noted as being economically disadvantaged. Due to decreasing enrollment and the high level of need more spending is needed but the District cannot sustain current methods. He noted a need to provide more early intervention for struggling students. Data systems are in place but are attracting students that are two or three grade levels behind. He noted the practice of moving forward to shift resources to where they are needed instead of adding staff. Any curriculum that happened through a grant and has no system to renew it or the technology is being looked at. Development of multi-system tiers of support including student support centers was noted. Consistent training and use of reading and math intervention programs was explained as part of the plan. He explained that IEP plans need different practices and pieces as well as a team system as well as social/emotional development and the District will utilize state resources and academies. Reductions include 18 paraprofessionals as part of the process. The District is looking at a tiered system. A cornerstone teacher is being reduced and programs are being consolidated with the reduction of a Physical Education teacher and two Special Education Coordinators. Special Education is being restructured and the District has hired a new Director of Student Services. A Custodian retirement is part of the evaluation of a more efficient and effective use of staff. He noted it is painful on a personal and professional level to cut positions. He reviewed new programming that will be offered and noted the District has a tradition of excellence in athletics and arts. He explained that the budget eliminates essentially 22.2 positions. He pointed out that there was a significant amount of funding left at the end of the year and it was used to reduce the Town assessments. He reported the awareness of making a shift of $346,000 and level funded the budget to be sure there is a responsible spending of taxpayer money. The budget is only $624 over last year. He explained the strategy to mitigate the number of out of district students, and noted a School Choice Assessment increase. Other increases noted were Charter Assessment, SPED Assessment and Contracts. He explained that Chapter 70 funding is driven by enrollment and the District received $6,000 more in state aid this year. Due to the Covid-19 situation, federal funds are questionable for the foreseeable future. He thanked the Adams and Cheshire communities for the support given to the budget and dedication to the district as there have been hard decisions made. *District Business Manager Snyder* reviewed the foundation budget and how it is calculated. She noted the District did not benefit from the Student Opportunity Act. She reviewed the Cherry Sheet and highlighted final numbers for FY20 in comparison to the Governor's budget for the year. An additional $30 per student was received for "Hold Harmless" but pointed out the Governor's budget proposal was for a 75% reimbursement rate where last year it was 79%, based on FY20 transportation costs. She explained that the Charter tuition and assessment formula is constantly updated to reflect tuition costs and reimbursement. She explained the District is anticipating $180,000 for reimbursement but is budgeting conservatively. School Choice is based on October 1st numbers but a final calculation is done in June. She reviewed the process for creating calculations for each section of the budget and explained the District is using Excess and Deficiency Funds to offset assessments to the Town. The fund is now down to $300,000. She reviewed the Minimal Local Contribution for the local towns for only the district numbers. She explained the shift in percentages from Fiscal Year 2020 to Fiscal Year 2021. The split was noted as being 73% Adams, 23% Cheshire, bringing Adams a 4% increase over last year in the amount of a $144,000 increase for FY21. She reviewed the Transportation Assessment and its calculation and noted that routing and hosting software was moved into transportation for FY21, which is the increase over last year's assessment. Boiler Bonds and Building Project bonds were reviewed and there is a shift in ratios for Adams/Cheshire students. The final amount of Capital

Expenses for the Town of Adams was outlined as $663,365, which is a decrease from last year. The total assessment to the Town of Adams was calculated as $5,925,327, which is a 2.29% increase over FY2020 in the amount of $132,678. The Levy Limit was briefly discussed. The five-year trend sheets were reviewed. Revolving Funds and Excess and Deficiency Funds and expenditures were explained. The school closure and restructure of the District were reviewed. It was explained that staff was shifted to appropriate departments. Maintenance, General Administration, Insurance, School Choice and Fringe Benefits were broken out for review. It was noted that there are no large increases from Berkshire Health Group for insurance. It was explained that the District is in the third year of a 3-year shift for retirees on Medex, which was receiving $86,000 in savings. Transportation expenditures and Capital expenditures were reviewed. Clarification was given that Chapter 70 funds are approximately 50% of the District budget. It was also clarified that School Choice received tuition is $207,000 and the District sends out $805,000. She will provide a breakdown of the funds to the Board and Committee. It was explained that this does not include McCann School, but only students that utilize School Choice outside of the District. She noted that 141 students utilized out of District School Choice, and this deficit is one of the problems. The elevator contract was briefly discussed and it was noted that with $3,000 in charges and may be worth looking at the contract. *Board of Selectmen Member Nowak* disclosed that he serves as a substitute teacher at the school and that he received $150 for selling tickets for a football game and another time supervised the kids. ***Member Nowak left the meeting at 7:25 p.m.*** Clarification was given that if the $407,000 appropriated for the Transportation budget is not utilized due to the pandemic, part is anticipated as a reimbursement, and it will go in the revolving fund to supplement the state reimbursements. This year it is anticipated having less transportation costs but reimbursements will also decrease. It will be able to be supplemented with the revolving fund due to less expenditures. It was noted that without any spring sports, coaches are not being paid their stipends. It was explained that the budget will accommodate expenditures and the balance will fall to the Excess and Deficiency Fund. It was explained that $300,000 of Excess and Deficiency Funds were used to offset the Town's assessment for the Fiscal Year 2021 budget. A request was made for Ms. Snyder to provide figures on building maintenance expenditures by the District. She explained that the numbers given were strictly maintenance and repairs but did not include supplies and security. Past history of the request for maintenance funds that were unused and put in the Excess and Deficiency fund was noted and a request was made for unused funds to be either given back to the Town or put into a revolving fund. *Ms. Snyder* advised she will provide the numbers at the end of year to show that the District exceeded the amount they were given by the Town. It was noted that there was no data explaining what the yearly expenditures were, and there have been major mistakes in the school budget over the years that were caught along the way. Board of Selectmen Chair Hoyt recommended attending School Committee meetings and asking questions through the Chair of the Board or Committee to get the answers. Examples were given of facility repairs. It was explained that sometimes there are unanticipated expenses, and the budget gets certified by the state and is also audited. A request was made for an explanation on the student population for 2020 which was outlined as both 1556 and 1108, a difference of 448. Clarification was made that the difference is School Choice. The Transportation budget shows 1006; Snyder which is just Adams and Cheshire attendance and School Choice students are responsible for their own transportation. It was explained that a tuition agreement with Savoy to be their high school is being worked on. It was noted that the new contract for teachers and paraprofessionals is currently in process. An inquiry was made about the difference between McCann and HVHS for Mass Corps. It was noted that the data provided in the inquiry was not correct and it was explained further. It was brought up that a Study in 2001 by Gallup compared educational levels of students by 1940's

and 1950's and jumped to 1990's and 2000's and found in order for students to get same level of educational attainment in 2000 they have to go to college. *Superintendent Dean* advised the District is building a career track with resumes and internships to put students in a potential career path. Discussion on curriculum and graduation requirements took place. An inquiry was made about the percentage of School Choice students with disciplinary problems. Another inquiry was made about the challenges faced in implementing the Collins Report recommendations. A request was made of Ms. Snyder for a copy of the 2021 Budget which she advised she will provide once there is a finalized budget. An inquiry was made about whether the District has surveyed graduates and those selecting School Choice incoming and outgoing students. It was noted this is an aspirational project. Another inquiry was made about whether there was the ability to add or share a grant writer. It was explained that with the restructuring of the Special Education Department, part of the role will be about grant writing and securing grants. Board and Committee Members were asked to follow up any questions in an email to the proper Chair. The process for Voting on the budget was briefly reviewed.

ADJOURNMENT: ***Motion made by Vice Chairman Bush to adjourn the meeting, second by Member Blanchard. Roll Call Vote: Chairman Hoyt, Vice Chairman Bush, Members Blanchard, and Duval. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 8:13 pm***

Motion made by Finance Committee Vice Chairman Cowie to adjourn the meeting, second by Member Johnson. Roll Call Vote: Chairman Burdick, Vice Chairman Cowie, Members Corrigan, Foster, Johnson, Cushenette, Tomkowicz, Kupiec, Meczywor, Butler and Kline. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 8:13 pm

Respectfully Submitted by Deborah J. Dunlap,
Recording Secretary

Timothy Burdick, Chairman