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APPROVED
TOWN OF PELHAM
BUDGET COMMITTEE - MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, October 29, 2020

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CALL TO ORDER – at approximately 7:00pm

Chairman David Cronin opened the meeting and read aloud “A Checklist To Ensure Meetings Are Compliant With The Right-to-Know Law During The State Of Emergency” (*regarding access to the meeting*)

Mr. Cronin asked Committee members, when their name is called, to please confirm their presence and to please identify as the right to know law requires, who, if anyone, was in the room.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

PRESENT: David Cronin – Present in person
Amber Capone – Present in person
Bob Sherman – Present in person
Meg Bressette – Present in person
Eduardo Martony – Present in person
Philip Haberlen – Present in person
Jason Croteau – Present in person
Kannan Sasi – Present via Zoom
Jas Moorjani – joined the meeting via Zoom after roll was called
School Board Representative Deb Ryan – Present in person
Board of Selectmen Representative Bob Haverty – Present in person

ABSENT: None

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PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Moorjani joined the meeting.

MINUTES REVIEW:

October 22, 2020:

MOTION: (Sherman/Bressette) To approve the October 22, 2020 meeting minutes as written.

ROLL CALL VOTE: David Cronin – Yes
Amber Capone - Yes
Bob Sherman – Yes
Meg Bressette – Yes
Eduardo Martony – Yes
Philip Haberlen – Yes
Jason Croteau – Yes
Kannan Sasi – Yes
Jas Moorjani – abstained
Deb Ryan – Yes
Bob Haverty - Yes

(10-0-1) The motion carried.

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2021 SCHOOL BUDGET REVIEW

Coming forward in person for budget review were: Superintendent Chip McGee, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Sarah Marandos and Business Administrator Deborah Mahoney.

Mr. McGee told the Committee the School District made a difficult decision to have the high school pivot to remote on Friday. He said they found out late in the school day there were two positive Covid cases.

Ms. Mahoney stated she sent a packet earlier in the day to the Committee containing additional documents and confirmed it had been received. Mr. Cronin answered yes. Ms. Mahoney noted there was a question during the last meeting regarding enrollment in medical plans; the count was included within the email.

District Wide (as of October 15, 2020 budget submission)
FY2021 Adjusted Budget : \$11,191,363
FY2022 School Board Recommended: \$11,529,331 (increase of \$337,968 – 3.02%)

Ms. Mahoney reviewed the budget lines within Special Education and summarized the changes from the previous budget.

Mr. Cronin understood the substitute budget was based on the FY19 information. He inquired about the number of daily and long-term substitutes. Ms. Mahoney will provide the totals to the Committee. She noted last year was an anomaly. Substitutes were not called in during remote learning, therefore the numbers were significantly less in FY20. She said throughout much of the budget they used FY19 as their estimate to base the budget. Mr. Cronin asked for the daily substitute rate this year. Ms. Bressette replied \$75. Mr. Cronin inquired how the long-term substitute salary was structured. Ms. Mahoney replied the rate was based on the first step of the teacher’s union contract; the number changes each year to stay competitive.

Under the Special Education section, Mr. Cronin wanted to know how many students from Pelham went to charter schools and where the tuition was listed within the budget. Ms. Mahoney replied they had an increase from eleven up to twelve. She said they pay for services provided to students who are in charter schools. Mr. Cronin wanted to know the difference in tuition costs to private schools. Ms. Mahoney replied they budget based on the actual tuition per student. Mr. McGee added the difference in tuition was due to each student having a specialized program, even though some attended the same school.

Ms. Capone referenced the lines for professional services and tuitions and questioned if the decreases were due to losing a few students. Ms. Mahoney replied the lines fluctuate based on the services that are needed.

Ms. Mahoney then addressed the budget lines for Bilingual Programs. Mr. Sherman inquired how many students did not have English as their native language. Ms. Marandos replied there were sixteen.

Ms. Mahoney discussed the Extended School Year Program (a Special Education function).

Mr. McGee spoke to the new request for a Speech and Language Assistant. He said they were looking to replace a speech assistant position with a speech and language assistant, which is credentialed. This had to do with the overall demands of the position and required expertise. He explained as it was currently staffed it was not reimbursable through Medicaid; however, if it is filled by a credentialed position, they have the possibility of reimbursement. Mr. McGee discussed the request for a new Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant (‘COTA’) position based on the demand for increased services for preschool through grade two.

74 They are currently contracting for those services and were looking to add a .5 position to offer those same
75 services internally.

76

77 Ms. Capone asked for clarification regarding the COTA position and wanted to know if the \$87,800 (under
78 330 line – professional services) would be eliminated if that position was approved. Ms. Mahoney said the
79 \$87,800 line would be eliminated. Ms. Capone saw that the actual expenditure (under professional
80 services) was \$8,159 and the projected expense was \$14,413 and the proposed budget showed \$109,600.
81 Ms. Mahoney explained they had been securing occupational therapy services through the IDEA grant;
82 however, grant funding has been limited so they looked to try to support where they needed to. The
83 expense was in a different place in the budget. Ms. Capone questioned where the additional (approx.)
84 \$95,000 came from. Ms. Mahoney replied it was a combination of the contracted OT services for charter
85 schools (previous \$7,613) which was now showing \$15,000.

86

87 Ms. Mahoney continued her review of the budget lines. Mr. McGee spoke about a proposed market
88 adjustment in salaries. A study of median salaries was done in peer districts for eleven administrative
89 positions and found there was roughly a \$10,000 per employee gap between what Pelham pays and what the
90 regional median is. He proposed a three-year plan to accomplish bringing administrators on par with the
91 region.

92

93 Mr. Sherman mentioned gas/diesel prices and asked for clarification of what made the elementary school
94 different from Memorial School and the high school. Ms. Mahoney stated she will provide information.

95

96 Mr. Cronin questioned when the transportation contract ended. Ms. Mahoney replied at the end of FY22.
97 They will go out to bid for the following years. Mr. Cronin asked about the status for special education
98 transportation. Ms. Mahoney replied it had the same status. This budget is the fifth year of the contract.
99 Mr. Cronin wanted to know if it was usual to do a five-year contract. Ms. Mahoney replied it varied
100 between the different school districts. Mr. McGee mentioned in his experience a contract term was three
101 years.

102

103 Mr. Martony asked for an explanation of the Google Chrome License for new Chromebooks. Ms. Mahoney
104 replied there was a license fee for new Chromebooks. Mr. McGee added it allowed the school to manage
105 and make changes remotely.

106

107 Ms. Mahoney then went through the Food Service Fund noting it was a self-funding program that provides
108 the nutrition for the entire district. There are twenty-two positions within the fund. She spoke about the
109 increases/decreases and requests for the coming year.

110

111 Ms. Mahoney reviewed the Grants Funds budget lines noting it was a self-funded budget. She followed by
112 reviewing the Other Special Fund budget lines. These funds are special revenues that are not State or
113 Federal grants.

114

115 Ms. Capone asked to revisit her question from the last meeting regarding seal coating. Mr. McGee pulled
116 the Town's Capital Improvement Plan ('CIP') and spoke about the Elementary School paving project. In
117 the CIP, the project is listed as \$144,100 for the year 2024. He said their dilemma was that the figure was a
118 hard number and the more they put it off the more likely the project will get into the substrate and increase
119 the costs. He said they did the budgeted cost a year and a half ago. He said if they removed the seal
120 coating they didn't know if they would need to push up the replacement plan by a year in order to make
121 sure they don't lose the substrate. Ms. Capone saw the replacement project listed under 2023 in the CIP.
122 Mr. McGee noted the school's years were different because they work different from the Town by a 'fiscal'
123 year. Ms. Capone posed a hypothetical question (if they were to have funding this year) if there was a
124 benefit to do the project this year, or if it would be more beneficial to move the project up a year. Mr.

125 McGee replied the presented plan was what they felt would be the right approach. They felt they could get
126 the most life out of the parking lot to do the seal coating in FY22; from that point it will be reviewed year-
127 to-year to determine when it would be brought in for replacement.

128

129 Ms. Bressette inquired if it had been seal coated in the past. Ms. Mahoney replied it was seal coated
130 approximately 5-6 year ago.

131

132 Mr. Sherman clarified his earlier question. He was curious what figure was being used per gallon of gas
133 and per gallon of diesel. Mr. Cronin believed the Town used the figure of \$2.35 for gas. Ms. Mahoney will
134 work on the question.

135

136 Mr. Cronin thanked Mr. McGee, Ms. Mahoney, and the representatives of the schools for providing a clear,
137 detailed, and well-presented budget.

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139 Mr. Cronin asked members to provide him with questions/changes to the budget for the next meeting.

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141 Mr. Cronin ended by asking people to be careful and safe during Halloween events. He also asked people
142 to consider voting during the upcoming election.

143

144 **ADJOURNMENT**

145

MOTION: (Capone/Sherman) To adjourn the meeting.

ROLL CALL VOTE: David Cronin – Yes
Amber Capone – Yes
Bob Sherman – Yes
Meg Bressette – Yes
Eduardo Martony – Yes
Philip Haberlen – Yes
Jason Croteau – Yes
Kannan Sasi – Yes
Jas Moorjani – Yes
Deb Ryan - Yes
Bob Haverty - Yes

(11-0-0) The motion carried.

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147 The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:30pm.

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Respectfully submitted,
Charity Landry
Recording Secretary

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