

A meeting of the Finance Committee will be held on Wednesday, May 11, 2022, at 6:00 p.m. in the Center Elementary School Library, 49 Main Street, Ellington, CT.

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m. by Liz Nord.

PRESENT Liz Nord, Chair, Steve Veins, Miriam Underwood

ALSO PRESENT Mr. Brian Greenleaf, Director of Finance and Operations
Ms. Lindsay Steller, Ellington Director of Food Services, Whitsons
Mr. John Punier, District Manager, Whitsons
Ms. Stephanie Veturis, Coordinator of Accounting

AGENDA ITEMS

Food Service & Healthy Food Certification

Mr. Brian Greenleaf, Director of Finance and Operations

Mr. Greenleaf indicated that each year there is a renewal of the contract for food service.

Ms. Lindsay Stellar shared key points of the discussion with regard to food service in the district:

- a. Tremendous increase in breakfast and lunch sales this school year
- b. Continued meal growth (i.e., new menu offerings - pop up shops, new meatless meal choice options and scratch cooking to enhance our harvest of the month selections
- c. Nutritional Safari presentations with some increase in nutrition resources which Food Service gave out to the teachers and parents
- d. Whitsons corporate assistance with much needed equipment upgrades
- e. Staffing changes for a total of ten new team members hired

Next school year Whitsons is looking to focus on the following:

- a. Continued expansion of our wellness initiatives which include farm to school plan and continue to expand on our nutrition safari
- b. Work collaboratively with school principals to make sure there is communication with parents with regard to our program
- c. Continue to increase team training and skills

Ms. Stellar's presentation showed that last year the district averaged about 320 meals per day and this year the district started with over 500 meals per day. Pop up shops were created to replace the chef promotions. This included the Link Shack and Yardbird. Menu expansions are also part of the initiative. Additionally, Whitsons provided veggie nuggets, more veggie burger samples, and creative options to increase student's veggie and fruit choices. Lesson plans were shared with the high school and middle school teachers for additional nutritional education and anticipate reaching out to provide more events for the elementary students.

Mr. Greenleaf shared that the budget is going to be \$400,000 to \$500,000 in the plus. As a result of the increased meals being served, the district chose to add an additional part time staff member to each school for a total cost of approximately \$50,000. In addition, the district is looking to use some of this funding to upgrade our kitchens.

Funding for next school year has not been finalized. The state set aside \$30 million, with the intent of the funding to make school meals free for half of the school year. With inflation and other circumstances, a state

rate has not yet been determined. It is projected that, at the midway point of the next school year, families will have to pay the full amount for lunches unless they qualify for free or reduced meals. Mr. Greenleaf indicated that based on the projections the district will probably lose some money next year but because of our healthy fund balance, the district can use that to offset costs. The FY23 year is being looked at as a year in flux, with the sales impacted by broader policy changes and the district will likely need to reduce labor through attrition or reassignment to make the program profitable. On average, 18% of our students qualify for free or reduced lunch. The district would also like to help those families that fall close to the free or reduced lunch guidelines.

It was also noted that this is the fourth renewal on a 5-year contract with Whitsons. The total management fee increase could increase by 5.9%, however the district has negotiated with Whitsons to only increase by 2.85% for next school year.

Healthy Food Certifications

This is a state program that limits the items that can be sold based on nutritional standards that the state has developed. This will equate to a 7-cent bonus on all meals for complying with the standards. There are exceptions for food and beverage sold outside of school for booster club fundraising.

MOTION First: L. Nord
Second: M. Underwood
Move to recommend to the Board of Education to approve the Administration to enter into renewal agreement with Whitsons for the 2022-2023 school year pursuant to applicable statutes and regulations.
Motion carried unanimously

MOTION First: L. Nord
Second: S. Viens
Pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215f, the board of education or governing authority certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, culinary programs, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or non-school organizations and groups.
Motion carried unanimously.

MOTION First: L. Nord
Second: M. Underwood
The board of education or governing authority will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards and beverages not listed in Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the food and beverage items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An "event" is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The "regular school day" is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. "Location" means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the food and beverage sales.

Motion carried unanimously.

2021-2022 Budget Update

At this time, the district has a healthy balance of \$433,000. It is anticipated that the district will have a balance of less than \$10,000 by the end of the year. A budget freeze has been implemented for all purchases; freezing the budget allows the district to have the necessary funding available to pay the encumbered purchase orders and outstanding bills. This freeze includes end of year purchases for technology items, equipment, textbooks, etc. The main implications on the budget are energy usage, unanticipated property repairs, and substitutes for staff on extended leaves of absence.

2022-2023 Budget Update

The town meeting took place on May 10th, and it adjourned to referendum for May 24th. The one item that was voted at the May 10th meeting was the \$385,000 for the cyclical update on computer and AV equipment purchases for the district.

Medical Self Insurance Update

Anthem proposed increasing allocation rates (premiums) by over 20%. The district projection alongside its broker indicated a more modest 7.5 % for payment of premium by employees. The teacher's contract had an increase in deductible which reduced the premium increase by 1.1%. The district anticipates negotiating with Anthem the stop loss insurance coverage and third-party administrative fees. The district projects that the 7.5% paid by employees and deductibles will cover the claims and fixed costs for the next school year.

Unaffiliated Salary Discussion (anticipated executive session)

MOTION

First: L. Nord

Second: M. Underwood

Move to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussion of salary negotiations by Brian Greenleaf, Director of Finance and Operations and Stephanie Veturis, Coordinator of Accounting.

Motion carried unanimously.

7:14pm entered into Executive Session

7:35pm returned from Executive Session

MOTION

First: L. Nord

Second: M. Underwood

To recommend to the Board of Education to approve salary notifications for unaffiliated employees with salaries or hourly rates listed within the schedule enclosed as Exhibit A.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION

First: L. Nord

Second: S. Viens

To adjourn the meeting of the Finance Committee (7:38 p.m.)

Motion carried unanimously.