

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Ellington, Connecticut

The Finance Committee of the Ellington Board of Education met Wednesday, June 1, 2016 at 5:10 p.m. in the Board of Education Conference Room in the School Administration Building.

Present were Messrs. Andrew McNamar, Michael Purcaro, Dr. Michael Young and Ms. Tracy Kiff-Judson, Dr. Scott Nicol, Superintendent of Schools; and Michael Varney, Board of Finance (BOF) Liaison. Various others attended for portions of the meeting as noted below.

Meeting called to order at 5:10 p.m.

I. Review of 2015 – 2016 Food Service Financials

This item was taken out of order from the posted agenda for convenience of the participants. Patty Patton reported on the monthly financials for the School Food Services. She reported gross revenues of \$553,143.06. She estimated the program will end with at least a \$13,185.32 loss (June accounting is not complete at the time of the report) in line with last year's performance. She recommended that no changes in hiring or pricing be made for Fall 2016 in hopes that growing participation continues to increase. Further, she recommended that decisions be revisited in January 2017 once the program is underway and participation for next year are apparent.

II. Review of Contract Status for Non-Represented Staff

As normal for the subcommittee, non-represented staff whose contracts are up for renewal were invited to speak to the committee with regard to their interests. Dr. Nicol explained that his goal is to get all the non-represented staff contracts aligned for a two year renewal process. Suzanne Levandoski was the sole staff member making a presentation. She described her duties and actions in organizing the administrative office and supporting new administrative staff. Along with other accomplishments, she mentioned her role in the 30-30-30 Tours and the CAFE Legislative Breakfast. She would like to expand her training in HR and work with new Director of Finance and Operations, Mr. Brian Greenleaf, to organize a paperless office. She requested a general wage increase of 3.2% and maybe a contribution to her Tax Sheltered Annuity.

III. Proposed Chromebook Refresh

Present for this discussion were John Collins, Director of Technology, Michael Nash and Jenna Dhandapani, Technology Integration Specialists; and Michael Varney, Board of Finance (BOF) Liaison. Mr. Collins asked that the subcommittee consider how devices bought recently might be put on a strategic refresh rate, perhaps combining town services and school needs for some

aspects of the renewal program. Mr. Collins presented slides describing his proposed plan that would acquire about 620 Chromebooks/year to allow all students grades 1 to 12 full access in our schools. The plan would start with \$33K/yr to refresh and grow the inventory of Chromebooks in the schools. The \$33K would need to be expanded across four years, adding an additional \$33K each year, until we have a four year cycle created. In addition to the full access to Chromebooks initiative, the schools must also renew their administrative desktop and networking infrastructure. To date, about every four years the schools have worked with the town to complete a capital improvements project to add/refresh computer hardware, each time running about \$73,000. 2018 would be the next cycle if we maintained that process. Mr. Collins in concert with Mr. Varney proposed increasing that amount to approximately \$103K to cover all other equipment beyond the Chromebooks. For the town side, Mr. Varney spoke in favor of this approach to increase the traditional capital improvement bond by \$30K as a modification of the current \$73K, which is up in 2017, to reach Mr. Collin's proposed \$103K.

Extended discussion ensued. Questions included possible paper or other related savings resulting from increased digital school work? Whether a full commitment to Chromebooks meant some Apps would be unavailable for classroom use, apps like Tickle for robotics, some games/ learning environments and the like. It was highlighted that science-based education might well be done better digitally, and that such a Chromebook initiative would support students developing 21st century skills, as exemplified in the competencies continuum currently being piloted. The possibility of increased transparency of the school work for student learning and the curriculum was discussed. And the efforts for sharing and coordinating municipal services was considered an additional positive. The issue of related costs, including network charges were discussed. Changes in CEN rates were reported as manageable and within current plans. A concern for the 5% or so of Ellington homes that lack Internet connectivity was raised and ways to ensure all students have access at home via Comcast or other program help was discussed to ensure that all students would have some access at home.

Mr. Collins' proposal included a change to the way parents and schools share the insurance liabilities for damaged or lost Chromebooks. He suggested a three option approach that should be implemented starting Fall 2016 if possible, in the case administration acts to address a recent parent petition to have Chromebooks for all 9th graders (an action that would cost about \$40K). This led to a possible BOE action item: Parental Chromebook Insurance Options. 9th grade parent petition remains. These options would be for grades 7 and 8, and possibly for 9th graders Fall 2016 if the additional Chromebooks were acquired for that class.

The subcommittee endorsed proceeding with the Insurance Options and agreed to brief the full BOE on the discussion related to Mr. Collin's proposal.

IV. Continued Business/Central Office Reorganization

Anita Yost and Brian Greenleaf joined us for this portion of the meeting. Dr. Nicol briefed the subcommittee on background about his efforts to reorganize and enable cross training as well as expand the roles for a career path within the Administration office. As part of this broader plan, he recommended creating a Coordinator of Accounting position, to exist outside the support staff bargaining unit, and join the other unrepresented staff. This position would expand the current

top tier support staff expectations, adding supervisory duties along with grants accounting responsibilities. Such a revision to the position was endorsed by new Director of Finance and Operations, Brian Greenleaf, who indicated this would enable him to concentrate on additional leadership initiatives. This may be a possible BOE action item to support the proposal of a “Coordinator of Accounting” position in support of this reorganization process.

V. Business Office Staff Additional Compensation Proposal

Justified by the additional workload required in the absence of a Director of Finance and Operations during the budget preparation season, Dr. Nicol recommended \$2,500 for Anita Yost and \$1,000 for Robin Millette, in one-time compensation to recognize their added efforts. The subcommittee endorsed this recommendation. This may be a possible BOE action item at the BOE meeting June 8.

VI. 2016 – 2017 Budget Discussion

Dr. Nicol, based on continuing deliberations with various stakeholders, presented a proposal for the final reallocation of \$360,797 in Health Insurance account savings from the initial 2015-16 budget. The items will be discussed at the June 8th BOE meeting and will be included in an action item.

A motion to adjourn was made at 7:00 p.m.

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

1st. A. McNamar

2nd. M. Purcaro

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Michael Young
Finance Committee Chairperson