Committee members present: Tom Croteau, Jim Richards, Nathan Fennessy, Pam Wicks

Other Board members present: Clint Cogswell, Barbara Higgins, Maureen Redmond-Scura

Others: Terri Forsten, Superintendent’ Jack Dunn, Business Administrator Jack Dunn

Committee chairperson Tom Croteau opened the meeting with an overview of the agenda for the evening’s meeting. Business Administrator Jack Dunn addressed the ongoing issue of sound on the live feed of meeting videos, noting that this issue is being addressed.

Mr. Dunn reviewed the agenda: Budget finalization, review of Budget FY 2017, review of Budget FY 2018 and associated recommendations, considerations for the committee, and the important October meeting.

Mr. Dunn reviewed a handout, Fiscal Year 2016-2017 Budget Summary at June 30, 2017 (attached). Total funds available to contribute to the unreserved fund balance are $1,411,560. Mr. Dunn reviewed the revenues and expenses from the budget year that closed June 30, 2017.

Nathan Fennessy requested that Mr. Dunn provide a quarterly review of the “real time” budget for the Finance Committee.

Mr. Dunn reviewed the total revised appropriation for 2017-2018 and explained each of the lines of the Trust Fund balances. He encouraged Finance Committee members to commit to set aside funding for the Facility Renovation Fund.

Mr. Dunn reviewed the revenue received for selling used iPads ($160,000). The administration recommended that the Board move to appropriate these funds to support the purchase of 160 laptops for teachers. Several Committee members asked why these funds would be used for this purpose at this time, as opposed to considering setting these funds aside in the technology innovation fund, and asked the age of the laptops to be replaced. Mr. Dunn explained that this revenue could be set aside in the technology innovation fund; however, the Board would have to vote to pull those funds out at another time. The administration recommended that the Board move forward to purchase laptops for teachers with those funds now, as that would be part of the request coming forward in the future. There are a number of teachers with laptops that are eight years old. In response to a question about what would happen to the used laptops, Mr. Dunn explained that some would be discarded and others would be recycled, potentially to students.
Mr. Dunn presented several options for the Finance Committee to consider in revising the total appropriation for 2017-2018. The option to set aside $25,000 to support the Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Program (FFVP) at Abbot-Downing and Christa McAuliffe Schools was discussed. There was a conversation about other initiatives such as full-day kindergarten and a middle school project, and the Board’s need to be mindful of these in planning. The Finance Committee had a lengthy conversation about their understanding that the FFVP is well received and positively impacts students at the elementary schools. Three elementary schools will continue to be eligible for the FFVP this school year.

Mr. Fennessy asked about the tax impact of the three options. Mr. Dunn referred him to slide #20 of the presentation to review the projected tax impacts. There was a conversation about the potential tax impact and a consideration of real growth. The Finance Committee members had a focused conversation on the tax rate and the work to best predict the tax rate over the years, and caution about associated increases/decreases.

Mr. Dunn reviewed current FY 2018 budget expenses. There are unknowns in the areas of utilities, snow removal, special education, homeless transportation, community education, and Medicaid. The conversation about special education included a concern from Mr. Cogswell about the cost of transportation for students who are traveling to schools outside the school district. Superintendent Forsten shared information about a meeting earlier this week with the preschool/elementary special education coordinators to begin to review students’ needs and consider how to build capacity in programs in the schools.

It was suggested that the Finance Committee consider holding quarterly meetings for updates on the budget in real time and updates on special education costs.

Mr. Croteau moved that the Finance Committee vote to move forward Option #2 as recommended by the administration. Mr. Fennessy seconded this motion. Jim Richards asked Pam Wicks if she was comfortable moving forward with option #2. She responded that she would like to see the laptops and the FFVP go forward. Mr. Fennessy agreed that option #2 would be the best among the options, but still had questions about the FFVP funding.

Option #2

The Finance Committee recommended to the full School Board that it adopt the following changes to the FY 2018 Budget for the purposes of appropriating unreserved funds to pay for increased FFVP costs, transfer to the Facilities and Renovation Trust Fund and purchase laptops. This would bring the total budget to $85,290,497 with a general fund of $79,821,373 (motioned by Mr. Croteau, seconded by Mr. Fennessy).

Mr. Croteau requested a motion to adjourn the meeting and it was moved by Mr. Fennessy and seconded by Ms. Wicks.

The meeting adjourned at 7:11 p.m.
Respectfully submitted,

Tom Croteau, Chair
Terri Forsten, Recorder