



Board of Finance Special Meeting

Monday, March 7, 2022

Mary L. Tracy School - 7:15 p.m.

Upstairs Conference Room

Approved

Attendance

Board of Finance Members Present: Chairman Kevin Houlihan, Vice Chairman James Leahy, Joseph Nuzzo, Kevin McNabola, and Ajeet Jain

Board of Finance Members Absent: Kevin Moffett

Staff: John Cifarelli, Finance Director; Deborah Satonick, Recording Secretary

Guests: Dr. Vincent Scarpetti, Superintendent of OBOE; Mr. Mike Gray, Director of Operations, OBOE; Christine Kosh, Business Administrator, OBOE, OPOE members in audience

1. Call to Order & Introduction

- Chairman Houlihan called the meeting to order at 7:27 p.m. and asked everyone to introduce themselves. He also asked Mr. Kraut to introduce the members of the OBOE who were present in the audience.

2. Public Dialogue

- There was no public dialogue at this time.

New Business

2. Orange Board of Education 2022-2023 Budget Presentation

- Dr. Scarpetti began with reading the Mission Statement of the OBOE, citing that this is their compass that they follow with educational goals. Next, he discussed student enrollment predictions with the actuals, noting that the latter has been consistently higher every year.
- Dr. Scarpetti stated that the 2022-2023 proposed budget has a 3.67% increase from last year. Some of the major budget increase drivers include salaries and benefits, permanent substitute teachers, repairs and maintenance, utility software, curriculum software, and gas, electricity and gasoline. There is a decrease in Special Education for next year not due to reduced services,

but rather, correlating to the needs of the students.

- Dr. Scarpetti noted that the 2022-2023 proposed budget includes one first grade classroom teacher, a Technology Specialist, and three additional paraprofessionals. Dr. Scarpetti mentioned that they also provide staffing for three preschool classrooms. The current kindergarten has 144 students with a projection of 150 students for next year.
- Dr. Scarpetti noted that there was a slight increase in their legal line item due to COVID related issues as it pertained to FMLA. Another increase was in District Travel in the Technology Support Services, as more classes are needed for the changing technologies. He proceeded to review each individual line item in the proposed budget and addressed all questions from the Board members.
- Dr. Scarpetti reported that there are currently nine interns working in the school system and eight permanent teaching substitutes. Both of these strategies haven proven cost effective and enabled the school district to remain open during the COVID pandemic.
- Dr. Scarpetti explained that each principal prepares their own budget for their individual school and presents and justifies that budget to the administration. School supplies overall have increased as the Town of Orange is a public school district and is expected to provide basic school supplies to all students. Dr. Scarpetti also noted that the buses to the elementary school are almost full.
- Mr. Gray explained that the school buildings are older and need occasional repairs. To point, copper pipes were leaking in the boiler room at Mary L. Tracy and they needed to be replaced. Due to the pandemic, the HVAC ducts were cleaned and filters are now being changed every three months versus six months. Also, the univentilators are running longer and their motors are beginning to wear out. The Board members felt that some of the anticipated building repairs might be considered as Capital items.
- Mr. McNabola inquired about the increase in transportation and Ms. Kosh explained that there is a 3% annual increase in the transportation contract. Mr. Scarpetti reported a decrease in healthcare insurance, and an ongoing deficit in cafeteria services.
- Mr. Leahy noted that class size in the Town of Orange has varied over the years and students have continually done well. He proceeded to compare the Town of Orange average class size with similar towns in the same DRG. He suggested that the OBOE could save taxpayer dollars by increasing class size. Some neighboring towns, such as Ridgefield, Darien, and Simsbury, have larger class sizes and are doing remarkably well. Chairman Houlihan thanked Dr. Scarpetti and the entire administration for their budget presentation and the great work they do.
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Mr. Leahy made a motion at 9:20 p.m. to take a five-minute break. Mr. Jain seconded the motion and all were in favor. The motion PASSED.

2. Budget Discussion

- Mr. Leahy discussed the recent article he wrote in the Orange Town News which discussed the ongoing Amity surplus and its impact to residents in Orange.
- Mr. Cifarelli noted that he can balance the budget now without any increase in taxes or moving items into the Capital Account. A flat mill rate is possible due to the fact that the Grand List is slightly over 5%. Mr. Leahy felt that with a Grand List at 5%, there should be a reduction in taxes and a flat mill rate is unacceptable. Chairman Houlihan felt that the Board of Finance should review each line item at another Budget Workshop meeting.

3. Setup Next Budget Workshop Meeting

- Mr. Leahy would like Dr. Mohammed to provide, in advance, an Excel file for the Board members to review. Mr. Leahy would like to see how the allocated money was spent and what activities were completed. He would like Ms. Pimenta and representatives from the OVNA to be in attendance as well. The Board members felt that COVID cases are decreasing and future funding is questionable. After Dr. Mohammed makes his presentation, the members will continue working on the proposed 2022-2023 budget. The next BOF Budget Meeting will be on March 28th.

4. Discussion and Approval of Minutes – February 28, 2022

- As the Board members did not receive copies of the February 28th minutes, it was suggested to table their approval.

Mr. McNabola made a motion to table the discussion and approval of the Board of Finance February 28, 2022 minutes. Mr. Nuzzo seconded the motion and all were in favor. The motion PASSED.

- Mr. Cifarelli will put the approval of three sets of Board of Finance minutes on the March 28th Agenda prior to Dr. Mohammed. He requested that OGAT be present to air the first portion of this meeting.

1. Adjournment

Mr. Nuzzo made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:50 p.m., seconded by Mr. Jain. All were in favor and the motion PASSED.

Respectfully Submitted,
Deborah Satonick

Recording Secretary