

**Farmington River Regional School District
Otis/Sandisfield
555 Main Road, Otis MA 01253
School Committee Meeting #405
Monday, August 30, 2021, 7:00PM
via ZOOM**

Community participation: Barbara Cormier had a question for Carol Lombardo. Mrs. Cormier asked Carol if she has looked into the training requirements for the Otis Committee members. Carol did investigate the situation by contacting MASC and they said they have not scheduled a meeting yet for the training, but they will get in touch with her when they do.

1. **School Committee to vote on utilizing Capital Stabilization funds to pay for the paving project.** Eric needs a vote for utilizing the \$160,000 in Capital Stabilization fund to help fund a part of the remaining payment for the paving project. One hundred thousand dollars was budgeted in the FY22 budget from the Capital Expense fund to help pay for the paving. Together there would be \$260,000 going towards the project. That leaves \$13,000 that remains to pay for the rest of the paving.

Carl stated that in previous meetings we discussed the funds that remained in the Stabilization fund at the end of FY21 before the items such as street lighting and stair treads, etc. The amount given was \$198,000, now the amount, as stated by Eric, is \$160,000. Carl wanted to confirm the amount. Eric stated that the amount of \$198,000 is incorrect. The Stabilization fund has only been set up for 4 years and \$40,000 goes in the account every year if possible. Eric asked Carl which meeting he stated that there was \$198,000 in the Stabilization account. Carl read the prior update sent to the School Committee on the FY21 budget. In that update, Carl read the E&D limit at \$232,000, and the E&D balance at \$198,000. That is where Carl referred to the \$198,000 in the Capital Stabilization fund. Then he read the availability for E&D is \$34,000. Eric responded by saying that Carl is reading two different accounts. E&D fund is separate than the Capital Stabilization fund. Carl asked Eric what was the remaining balance of the E&D fund at the end of FY21 before the additional projects? Eric stated it is the amount that Carl just read from the report. Roger Kohler wanted to confirm the E&D fund and the Capital Stabilization Fund are two separate accounts.

Carl Nett motioned to approve payment of the \$273,000 for the paving project using \$100,000 from the FY22 Capital Fund that exists in the FY22 budget, then using an additional \$160,000 from the FY22 Capital Stabilization Fund line item, leaving us a little

bit of money to find somewhere else later. Jess Drenga seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous to approve this motion.

2. **Discuss the FY21 budget.** Eric posted the budget for everyone to see and asked if School Committee wanted him to review the budget line by line. Arlene asked what the Special Needs OT stands for. The reply was Occupational Therapy.

Carol asked Eric about the bus contract. She would like to know if the amount of \$265,000 will hold us through the next year, or do we need to recontract? Eric stated that we have a 5-year contract, and we are in year 2, so we are fine.

Roger Kohler had a question why the Pre School Instructional Services was doubled? Eric explained because of COVID last year the 3-year-old program and the 4-year-old programs were combined so Eric put all the expenses in one line item.

Carl Nett noticed the stair treads, the new vans, and the streetlights are included in the FY21 accounting. Has this been approved given the School Committee did not vote on the items until after the Fiscal Year? Eric informed the School Committee that he called Jay Sullivan, Associate Commissioner of Finance and Christine Lynch, Governance and Facilities Program Manager for the Department of Education. Eric had lengthy conversations with them both and learned according to DESE if the district is not deficit spending, we are able to procure what is reasonably needed to operate the district. So, under that guidance, the stair treads, streetlights, and vans were able to fall under the FY21 budget. The paving project is different. The reason being the paving project was scheduled and budgeted for FY22. It creates a lot more confusion. DESE does not have an opinion on whether it is allowable or not. They feel it is a questionable way to use those funds, so it is better for us to have the project fall into FY22. That is why the paving project was removed. Carl stated going forward the Committee should make decisions and vote on things by the end of the year, so we don't run into these issues again. Carl went on to ask Eric the total amount remaining is \$427,00, is this amount going to waterfall through the E&D process into FY22 year and any E&D in excess of 5% of the approved FY22 budget will be credited to the towns towards their FY22 assessments? Eric replied yes, but that \$427,000 is not the number that will be carried through. Carl understands the amount is not the whole amount. The E&D process has to be completed and transfers need to be done before we know the true total going back to the town. Eric stated that the amount should not change drastically. Carl asked Eric after the E&D gets certified, Eric would send a letter to the towns with the adjustments to the assessments. Eric replied that once the E&D is certified, there needs to be a meeting for the School Committee to vote to adjust the budget. Eric can not adjust the budget himself. Once that vote is done, a letter will be sent to the towns

regarding the assessments. Carl asked Eric if the School Committee is going to propose a modified adjusted FY22 budget to the towns. Eric said yes because we must adjust for the surplus for the E&D. Carl meant proposing an adjusted budget not the assessments. Eric stated he doesn't know why they would change the budget. Carl proceeded to ask as of right now do Eric and Tom think that they will present an increase FY22 budget to the School Committee to pass, then take to the towns to vote. Eric responded no.

Roger asked Eric to explain an error that Eric emailed to the School Committee. Eric explained the cafeteria subsidy came through as a reimbursement not an expense, so he had to switch the number from a negative to a positive.

Roger asked why Eric cannot unmute new community members. Carol explained that after the first 15 minutes of the meeting for Community participation, the community cannot speak during the School Committee meeting. Roger found that unusual and stated we have never done that before. Carol informed Roger that is a rule of a meeting and they have always done that.

Jennifer Hibbins had a question about the grant funds. Jen asked what the total was for Esser 1 grant? The answer was \$26,015. We spent \$24,142. Eric does not have the amounts for Esser 2 tonight because it pertains to FY22.

Carl asked Eric why are some things listed have a blank column for FY21? Carl was assuming because those things were not budgeted in FY21 and came after the budget was set. Eric agreed with Carl on part of that column. Some grants are written by Michael Saporito, and they have not been written yet, so we do not have those numbers yet. The local grants that are blank come in and are spent quickly so the amount that is listed is what the amount that was given.

Arlene had a question about the Cultural Council grants. She wanted to know where the money came from. Eric explained that is the total monies given to the teachers in FY21.

Arlene asked about the General Dynamics grant. Tom had written a grant and we were awarded that money for tech equipment.

Carol asked a question on the Superintendent's memberships. Eric explained that Tom had joined the Berkshire County Round Table. What that group accomplishes for us is it allows our teachers and paraprofessionals to join in the County Professional Days.

Arlene wanted to know why the internet charges went down. Eric explained that we now use Otis's fiberoptics.

Carol wanted to discuss the continuation of ZOOM meetings. It seems that we may continue ZOOM meetings. Carol invited a speaker from MASC next month but is not sure if the speaker will be comfortable attending in person. Carol will keep everyone posted. Roger asked if Carol can add a discussion on ZOOM meeting on next month's agenda.

Carl stated that the last 2 meetings we didn't have public input on the agenda, and we went into public input. Carl is in favor for public input, but if we are going to go into public input it needs to be added on to the agenda. Carl requested if we could add it to the agenda. It needs to be added because some people who want to have input do not come because it is not on the agenda. Carol will make sure it is stated on the agenda from now on.

3. **Adjournment.** Arlene Tolopko motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:36 P.M. Jess Drenga seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Teresa DellaGiustina

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