

**Joint Meeting
Finance Committee
Selectboard
March 23, 2021**

Finance Committee Attendees: Paul Antaya, Dan Kennedy, Jim Kirkendall, Fred Baron, Tom Mahar, and Patricia Devine; Also present via Zoom were Selectboard members, Joyce Palmer Fortune, Fred Orloski, and Jonathan Edwards; and Town Administrator Brian Domina and Administrative Assistant, Amy Schrader.

The meeting was opened at 6:05 pm by the Chairperson Paul Antaya.

Discuss and vote approve meeting minutes of March 16, 2021.

The Committee voted to approve the meeting minutes from March 16, 2021. All in favor.

Roll call vote: Tom – yes, Jim – yes, Fred – yes, Paul – yes, Fred Baron – yes, Patricia – yes, and Dan – yes.

Review and discuss fiscal year 2022 operating budgets

Frontier Regional – Darius Modestow (School Superintendent) and Shelley Poreda (Business Manager) virtually appeared before the Committee to discuss Frontier Regional's FY22 budget. Frontier held their public hearing on March 9, 2021. Shelley Poreda (Business Manager) discussed Frontier Regional's FY22 budget with specific attention to Whately's contribution, Chapter 70 funds, remote learning financial impacts, and funding sources. The Committee/Board had a brief discussion regarding Frontier Regional's FY21 budget reduction efforts, education quality/services, administrative/instructional costs, per pupil cost estimate, Frontier's educational competition, track bond inquiries, track project status, remote learning financial impacts, and potential for enhanced educational programming. Shelley Poreda stated that the proposed budget increase is primarily personnel related. Darius Modestow (School Superintendent) stated that the track bid was awarded to Mountain View Landscaping. The loan will not begin until the project begins. All capital improvement projects were put on hold due to the COVID19 pandemic. There are six projects listed to be paid for with capital funds. There is not a clerk of the works for the track project. The accepted bid was \$637,000 not including designer fees. There will be weekly meetings with the contractor and work must be approved by Berkshire Design. Shelley Poreda discussed remote learning financial impacts with specific attention to increase staffing, instructional assistants, transportation funding, school lunch program shortfalls, supply replenishment costs, and the potential for additional federal funding. Darius Modestow (School Superintendent) discussed enhanced programming with specific attention to the school's district performance statistics, summer programming, and administrative support efforts. After much discussion, no decision was made at this time.

Whately Elementary – Shelley Poreda (Business Manager) virtually appeared before the Committee/Board to discuss Whately Elementary School's FY22 budget with specific attention to the 2.5% budget increase, COLA increase, IA funding, non-union staff, custodian staff, support staff, non-salary expenditures, enrollment projections, retirement payout expense challenges, general/revolving fund expenses, and general revenue/expenditures. There are no significant non-salary expenditures. The FY22 budget increase is primarily due to the COLA increase. Early childhood programming and education has been directly impacted by the COVID19 pandemic. The school plans on trying to rebuild the early childhood program. There are grants that are being used/looked at for FY22. Shelley discussed previous budget percentage increases. The Committee/Board had a lengthy discussion regarding the early childhood program challenges with specific attention to teacher salaries, early childhood enrollment, school choice tuition, and previous/current revenue and expenditures. Bob Halla (WES School Committee) stated that the School Committee does hold public hearings and encourages the Whately Finance Committee to attend those hearing. After much discussion, no decision was made at this time.

Franklin Technical – Rick Martin (Franklin Technical) and Russ Kaubris (Business Manager) virtually appeared before the Board to discuss the Franklin Technical FY22 budget with specific attention to programming, grant funding, COVID19 administrative support, COVID19 safety protocols, enrollment, and the potential for additional staff support. Russ Kaubris (Business Manager) discussed FY22 budget summary sources for funding with specific attention to town assessments, Chapter 70 aid, regional transportation aid, pre-employment program, transportation costs, other revenues, E/D funds, FY22 annual assessments, and FY22 capital assessments. The Committee/Board inquired what the average cost per pupil is? Russ stated that the average cost per pupil is around \$22,000. The Committee/Board had a brief discussion regarding FY21/FY22 percentage increases and transportation costs. Russ and Rick discussed the percentage increase factors and transportation challenges. After a brief discussion, no decision was made at this time.

South County Senior Center – Christina Johnson (South County Senior Center Director) virtually appeared before the Board to discuss the South County Senior Center's FY22 budget with specific attention to budget funding sources, SIG Grant, administrative support, transportation costs, and budget increase factors. The Committee/Board had a lengthy discussion regarding the utilization of the Senior Center by Whately residents and numerous previous requests for this information. Christina Johnson (SCSC Director) reviewed utilization reports with specific attention to event participation (630 participants), active members (52 active members), meal delivery program and vaccine utilization. A tent plan has been requested for future event uses. The Committee/Board requested that they continue to receive utilization reports and they be presented at future Finance Committee meetings. The Committee inquired how the event participation number for Whately compares to the overall number of participants? Christina stated that she does not have that number at this time but can forward that number to Brian to distribute. After a brief discussion, no decision was made at this time.

Fire Department – John Hannum (Fire Chief) virtually appeared before the Committee/Board to discuss his FY22 budget with specific attention to COVID19 impacts. The Whately Fire Department staff/volunteers are fully vaccinated. No decision was made at this time.

Foothills Health District – Fran Fortino (Board of Health Chair) and Michael Archbald (BOH) virtually appeared before the Committee/Board to discuss the Foothills Health District FY22 budget with specific attention to COVID19 impacts/challenges, new Public Health Nurse, administrative support staff, and IT updates. The Public Health Nurse position was hired on a part-time basis to assist with the COVID19 pandemic and any future public health needs. The Committee/Board had a brief discussion regarding the Foothills Health District organization, Board of Health requirements, and on-going public health needs/challenges. The Committee/Board thanked the Board of Health for their service during the COVID19 pandemic and for assistance in any future public health needs.

Town Buildings – The Committee/Board decided to table this discussion until their next meeting on April 6, 2021.

Audit - The Committee/Board decided to table this discussion until their next meeting on April 6, 2021.

Review articles proposed for the April 10, 2021 Special Town Meeting. FC vote to recommend or not recommend articles. SB vote to sign the Special Town Meeting warrant for April 10, 2021.

Brian informed the Committee that there is a Special Town meeting scheduled for April 10, 2021 at 1:00 pm. The meeting will be held outdoors at the Whately Town Offices. The urgency for this meeting is to address Article 1 - the Water Department Enterprise Fund – Retained Earnings to pay for upgrades to the water system at the main pump house on Chestnut Plain Road or take any other action relative thereto. Brian read the warrant articles for the Special Town Meeting.

A motion was made to approve Article 1, Article 2, and Article 3. Motion was seconded. All in favor. Roll call vote: Tom – yes, Jim – yes, Fred Baron – yes, Patricia – yes, Paul – yes, and Dan -yes.

A motion was made for the Selectboard to approve and sign the STM warrant including all four warrant articles as presented. Motion was seconded. All in favor. Roll call vote: Fred – yes, Jonathan – yes, and Joyce – yes.

Items not anticipated within forty-eight (48) hours of the meeting

none

The meeting was adjourned at 8:01pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Domina, Town Administrator

Next meeting – April 6, 2021

Document List on File in the Selectboard Office

FY22 Whately Elementary School Draft Budget

FY22 Frontier Regional Complete Budget

FY22 Frontier Regional Public Hearing Notice