

NARRAGANSETT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES OF BUDGET WORKSHOP HELD February 25, 2015

The form and content of these minutes conform to commonly accepted standards and shall become the official record of the meeting after review and approval by the School Committee. By definition, minutes are not a verbatim record of the proceedings.

The budget hearing was held on Wednesday, February 25, 2015, at the Narragansett Town Hall, Administrative Offices, 25 Fifth Avenue, 3rd Floor, Narragansett, Rhode Island.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE ATTENDANCE: Ms. Tammy McNeiece, Chairperson; Ms. Diane Nobles, Vice Chairperson; Mr. Frank White, Clerk; and Mr. Keith Ranaldi. Absent: Mr. Guy deWardener.

SCHOOL OFFICIALS ATTENDANCE: Ms. Karen Hagan, Director of Finance & Administration; & Mr. David Correira, Director of Transportation; Mr. Gary Minett, Director of Maintenance; and M.J. Gray, Secretary of Transportation and Maintenance.

CALL TO ORDER: Ms. McNeiece called the meeting to order at 6:03 PM and the Pledge of Allegiance was observed.

PUBLIC COMMENT: No one spoke.

FISCAL 2015 BUDGET: Ms. Karen Hagan, Director of Finance & Administration, explained the information contained in the school committee packet.

TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Correira, Director of Transportation and Grounds, answered questions regarding the number of buses we own and the use of those buses. Ms. McNeiece asked about transportation for residents attending private schools and asked for a detailed explanation about the maintenance of the buses. Mr. Ranaldi asked about the staff of mechanics to keep up with the workload and whether or not they keep up. Mr. Correira explained that the Town assists the school department by letting them use the more sophisticated equipment for the newer electrical mechanisms. They also do a lot for the grounds by sweeping lots, sanding, tree removal during storms, netting along the soccer field the Town did all the tree cutting. They are very helpful with special projects like that.

Ms. McNeiece asked about mileage and Mr. Correira said its more about age – wear and tear with the salt air down here. Most buses last 10- 12 years and spare buses can last a few years longer, and the mini buses have a shorter life. She asked which were of concern that may come out of service. Mr. Correira indicated that they would be bus numbers 7, 8, 27 and 28.

Ms. McNeiece asked about the purchase of the bus and the value of the bus in a year or two if we didn't need it. In a year it would be worth \$85,000.00. He asked why she would want to sell them back. She answered that the School Committee has been discussing the privatizing of the busing. He explained to Ms. McNeiece that she wouldn't trade it back in, that you were work the purchase of the buses into the cost of the deal with the new bus company. Mr. Ranaldi went on record to say that he does not like the discussion about privatizing, and would prefer to talk about how we continue what we have and then pass the torch when he retired.

Ms. McNeiece thanks Mr. Correira and Ms. Gray for everything they do to make our transportation department what it is. Ms. McNeiece went on to say that the Committee gets pressure from the Town Council and some residents about privatizing every year at budget time. She doesn't want people to think that it is all about the bottom line and that may be by looking at the 22 North Kingstown students that we are

transporting, and then also being thoughtful that we may need to work with them next year with the incoming students. She explained that asking to review the costs again, and the costs of the pensions. Mr. Ranaldi reiterated that he did not want to hear the discussion of privatization across the table as he is not in favor of this.

FACILITIES AND GROUNDS

Mr. Gary Minett, Director of Maintenance, one of the biggest costs in the budget \$24K of the \$50 - \$70K for back flow prevention retrofitting at each school. In response to State Legislation, Atlantic Controls did an Inspection and submitted a list to the water company to see what is needed. (RIGL 46-13-22, Cross-connection control). Mr. Ranaldi asked about the new Law and commented that it was an expensive proposition.

Mr. Ranaldi asked about the rubbish removal contract and whether or not we share services with the Town. Mr. Minett replied that no we don't share services, and indicated that they have tried to collaborate with other services that it doesn't help our cost. Ms. Ranaldi would be interested in partnering with the Town in any area that he could think of, he would like to know.

Ms. Nobles asked if there was any area that he might consider reducing his request to get him closer to the level fund numbers. The Committee asked about the figure for custodial supplies. He explained that the request includes all paper products, cleaning supplies, buckets, mops, brooms, etc.

Ms. McNeiece asked the Committee to move on to the Capital Plan.

CAPITAL PLAN

Mr. Minett indicated that the original Greenhouse options were to either fix what we own, modify, or replace with all new. The plan seems to be to relocate the building in closer proximity to the main building to avoid the current situation where the students are coming in and out of the buildings. The Committee looked at the schematic drawing which plans include a sugar shack, potting shed, and chicken coop. There is a problem with the present building anyway being situated directly atop the sewerage line.

Ms. Hagan informed the Committee that the project should be ready to go to bid soon, possibly the spring. Mr. Minett would like to see the HVAC project start this summer. Mr. Ranaldi asked about how the RFP goes out to the Architects for Projects. Ms. Hagan explained that it is advertised in the paper, on our website, and local Architects and others we have previously worked with are notified. The placeholder is \$1.1M.

Other projects reflected in his budget include asphalt work for partial repair of the parking lot this summer at NES; \$40K for the state approved health and safety for additional lighting at NES; replace NPS smoke detectors with the state helping to defray the cost; new corridor lockers, a continuation of the replacement of the existing lockers in phases to include less lockers and larger in size; new furniture in the Guidance Counselors and Administrative offices at NHS which are 25 years old; cafeteria tables at NHS. Mr. Ranaldi doesn't like the \$30K line item for office furniture. He would prefer to use that monies for programs. Ms. McNeiece reminded the Committee that they are looking for \$500K to cover the shortfall of this budget. Mr. Ranaldi would like to come by and take a look at the office furniture that needs to be replaced.

Ms. Hagan noted that they included an additional \$5K for the walking Trail.

OTHER FUNDS

Ms. Hagan reviewed the other funds. The Committee had questions about Grant for Nancy Devaney and how the money comes to us and is spent. Ms. Hagan explained about the match portion of the Grant. She explained that Ms. Devaney controls how the grant is spent.

PENSION Ms. Hagan reviewed the ARCC report, which is what the employer would contribute on behalf of their employees. Ms. Hagan reviewed the reports and informed the Committee that we have actually contributed more than required according to the study. We currently have 53 retirees. How much are our retirees costing us? Ms. Hagan referred to the charts in the packets and suggested that the information shows that the Town has more retirees than they actually have working employees, so they are upside down.

OPEB Ms. Hagan informed the Committee that we will be putting another \$100K into the OPEB. The Actuary study shows that we are underfunded, but that it is not critical. She recommended that they may consider funding it at a lesser number this year. Ms. Hagan indicated that we might explore investigating money to earn interest, which we are not currently doing. Ms. McNeiece asked for clarification as to whether Ms. Hagan would recommend possibly not making the \$100K contribution this year.

Ms. Hagan asked the Committee to look at Tab 2 – pay as you go. The numbers are the actual numbers. Ms. McNeiece asked about other areas that she might recommend for them to look at to reduce. Ms. Hagan recommended that possibly funding some of the requests with the surplus from this budget for the end of the year instead of waiting for the next fiscal year. Also, she might recommend possibly in Capital, possibly in Transportation, by using the statewide transportation in Special Education as the state reimburses a portion of the cost.

Ms. McNeiece wanted to talk to the Committee about the article in the Independent that the NCAC is a work in progress and that they are not over budget by a million dollars. She is disappointed in the headlines. The Budget goal was always between 3.2 and 3.6 million. There is a \$1.8M bond, \$1.2M from pledges, and \$400k from a placeholder from find balance. Ms. McNeiece asked Ms. Hagan what an appropriate fund balance we should be carrying. Ms. Hagan thought about \$2.5M would be a comfortable number. Ms. McNeiece would like a concrete answer about how much money we could use. She would like to have a discussion about how much should be committed.

Mr. Ranaldi would like to review previous Minutes to see what number was actually discussed and committed. Ms. McNeiece recalled that it was discussed in a workshop. Ms. Ranaldi reminded the Committee that Gale is the experts and they were given the project to save us the money. Ms. Hagan has an email that she can send ahead to the Committee with the % of the find balance.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE DISCUSSION AND QUESTIONS ON LINE ITEM BUDGET: Members asked questions of Karen Hagan and Katherine Sipala on particular line items in the Fiscal 2015 budget.

ADJOURNMENT: MOTION to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 PM.

White/Ranaldi (4-0)

Respectfully submitted

Frank White, Clerk