

Town of East Bridgewater Finance Committee

175 Central Street
East Bridgewater, MA 02333
Town Hall



Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 29, 2023

REC'D EB TOWN CLERK
'23 APR 5 AM 9:37

Members present: Dan Picha, Dave Walsh, Karen Harhen, Lisa Allington, George Jouvin

Member(s) absent: Karin Gilman

Guest(s): Melanie Dean, Town Accountant; Elizabeth Legault, Superintendent of Schools; Charlie Seelig, Town Administrator

1. Meeting called to order at 6:00 PM by Dan Picha, Finance Committee Chair.
2. School Budget Presentation by Liz Legault, Superintendent of Schools
 - a. Presented FY24 budget to School Committee on March 7, 2023
 - b. Liz attended a MA Association of School Superintendents Testimony to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means with the state recently re: the FY 2024 Budget Hearing and provided info for background
 - c. New program with EBFD to train future EMS/fire fighters (Fire Academy)
 - d. 2023 Budget is \$23,607,473 budget; 2024 budget is \$25,245,009
 - e. Main budget drivers are: salary, technology, transportation, special education, vocation education, and external factors
 - f. No contractual increases this year (first year of 3-year contract)
 - g. Currently there are two contract cycles; may collapse into one at some point
 - h. Non-Salary includes: special education (+12.5%), technology (+41.4%), transportation (+1.2%), alternative education/early college academics (no change), and Southeastern VoTech (TBD)
 - i. Liz talked to Lucini about future of electric buses
 - ii. Increased Chapter 70 funding related to: student hospitalizations, low-income students, homeless/foster care standards, students with ESL, added access classrooms CS/GMS/EBSHS, unfunded mandated student placement (DCF)
 1. 30% of students are in special education
 2. 19% receive free/reduced lunches
 3. Many homeless students in the district
 - i. District Expenditures: 78.7% salaries; 10.6% Special Education; 4.4% Vocational; 3.6% Transportation; 2.7% Technology

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Tuesday, February 28, 2023

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- j. Capital Expenditures: Mitchell School driveway and parking lot (\$500,000); Mitchell School dishwasher (\$50,000); District Passenger Vans (\$30,000) for out-of-town transportation for students out of district; Central School Driveway Improvement – fire lane (\$100,000); Dust Collector Relocation HS (\$21,750) and Cafeteria POS System for district (\$25,000)
 - k. 2024 Capital Requests: Box Truck Replacement (\$73,000); Outdoor Security Camera Replacement (\$49,992); Technology Upgrades (\$132,050) and Stadium Turf Field Replacement (\$1 million)
 - l. Looking to add an RTI Instructional Coach (for teachers) in the classroom using School Choice Funds supported by School Committee for: Professional Growth, Personalized Support, and Closing the Achievement Gap; Looking to add in-classroom support so students stay with peers
 - m. Special Projects: Central Elementary School Renovation or New Building (will be requesting a \$1.3 million feasibility study; cost of new elementary school is anticipated to be ~\$100 million); Junior/Senior High School Maintenance (new track, new HVAC controls); Gordon Mitchell School Maintenance (new roof, new boiler system)
 - n. Submitted capital request for a second backup for cloud-based storage related to information/cyber security (may be able to split cost with I.T. department)
 - i. School technology staff can address outstanding questions at a future meeting.
3. Dave Walsh reiterated that the stabilization fund is not designed to support ongoing expenses. He suggested to Melanie Dean and Charlie Seelig that we look at the debt relief over the next few years, and if possible, take money out of capital stabilization fund to pay down high interest bonds, and replenish the funds in the stabilization fund. Dave said that multiple steps might be needed to reduce the budget deficit.
 4. Dave Walsh said we need to look for additional aid and suggested that we enlist the help of our state senators and representatives to assist. Liz has recently attended functions with Senator Brady, Rep Alyson Sullivan, and Rep Cassidy and has proposed hosting an event in East Bridgewater to engage their help.
 5. Dave Walsh provided a Capital Budget update and stated that a plan to create a new 5-year strategic plan will be undertaken this year. Many department heads have made changes in their budgets to reduce the amount of money requested from the capital budget, including using alternative funding sources, reallocating money, and/or delaying projects needed to a future date. Alternate funding sources have been identified, including ARPA funding, bonding out debt relief, and other recommendations to ensure that money in the capital stabilization fund remains stable. DLS recommends stabilization funds have 5-10% of their annual budget, and we are less than the lower limit now.
 6. Dan Picha sent out revised budget from Melanie Dean earlier today to Finance Committee members for review and to ensure the town is budgeting correctly. The town also received a supplemental bill from Plymouth County Retirement that significantly offsets any new growth.
 7. Motion to adjourn meeting was made at 7:28 PM by Dave Walsh, seconded by Karen Harhen; Approved 5-0.

Danny B...
4/4/2023