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PEMBROKE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, July 13, 2021
Pembroke High School Library

Call to Order

Mr. Tropeano called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Present from Administration: Erin Obey, Superintendent; Marybeth Brust, Assistant Superintendent; Jessica DeLorenzo, Director of Student Services

Present from Committee: Michael Tropeano, Chair David Boyle, Vice Chair; Susie Scholl, Secretary; James Agnew and Lance Kennedy

Acknowledge & Schedule Visitors

No audience members were present.

Adjustments to Agenda

None

Communications

None

Approval of Bill Schedule

Warrants were sent out electronically for approval.

School Committee Subcommittee Reorganization

Mr. Tropeano presented the updated list of subcommittee membership and said he did his best to balance requests and ensure proper distribution of workload while maintaining continuity. He added PTAD, Social Justice Committee and Legislative Agent.

VOTE: On a motion made by David Boyle and seconded by Lance Kennedy, it was unanimously voted to approve the subcommittees as presented.

Voting Yes: Michael Tropeano, David Boyle, Susie Scholl, James Agnew and Lance Kennedy

Voting No: none

Abstaining: none

Absent: none

School Committee Goal Work

Mr. Tropeano said this can be reviewed and approved at the August meeting so continue to forward him any comments.

Superintendent's Report

FY Budget Closeout

Mrs. Obey said additional invoice have been paid so there is about at \$3100 difference between the documents in the packet and the one presented tonight. The funds that from FY 20 that are being returned directly to the town go to free cash and this year the amount is \$23,934.80. It comes from purchase orders that are encumbered from

FY20 into FY21 that weren't expended. She gave an example of an order for staples for \$1000 that came in at \$900 instead and the extra \$100 is on that purchase order and the district can't spend it because it was from the year before so it goes back to the town as free cash. There was just under \$22k in purchase orders as well as just under \$3k in payroll make up that amount from FY20 that will be returned to the town.

Mrs. Obey said the FY21 purchase orders and summer payrolls which take place on 7/20, 8/3 and 8/17, total \$3,064,469.24. The FY21 budget is \$34,300,000 leaving remaining funds of \$376,257.30 and in here time in Pembroke the district has never had remaining funds of substance. This is a result of operational efficiencies associated with the pandemic such as not running the school buses on Mondays, special education families chose to transport their student instead of riding the van and also being fiscally responsible when it came to all of the opportunities available for funding. With \$376,257.30 there's an opportunity to think beyond this fiscal year and what could be done to mitigate some of the liabilities that have come up in the past mid-school year as well as some of the larger capital improvement projects that have been on the radar. She said the Budget Subcommittee meeting on Friday discussed a special education stabilization fund which is a fund that is set up by the vote of town meeting and also a vote at town meeting for the original deposit into the account. It allows the district to create something similar to a savings account specifically for special education tuitions and costs associated with transportation similar to the town wide stabilization fund. Once the line is funded it takes a vote of the school committee to add funds to that line so in any upcoming budget year if there additional funds within the operating budget, they can be added to the account with a vote of the school committee. To access the funds for a cost that arises that was not planned for it takes a vote of the school committee as well as the Board of Selectmen and that shows there's more oversight to the account than just the school committee.

Mrs. Obey said she and Mrs. Brust met with the Town Manager following the Budget Subcommittee meeting and his suggestion was putting \$200k into a special education stabilization fund which would cover half of year of a residential placement for one student. The other area where there is opportunity is with the HVAC units. There are 23 units on top of PHS and many of them are existing from the split from Silver Lake. Nine units are between 40 and 43 years old and one was replaced two summers ago, one was replaced from a previous year's town meeting vote and one through the capital plan this year. It took over three years to replace three units which is not cost effective. The ESSER III funds have a component associated with HVAC and air quality, but the district has not yet been given the amount that will be earmarked for it. She recommends earmarking the funds for a combination of a special education stabilization fund as well as for HVAC units. The Budget Subcommittee is in favor of this along with the Town Manager, who is optimistic that the Board of Selectmen would feel the same. The only caveat to that is whenever money is returned to the town there is no ability to say what it is to be used for as it is the will of town meeting but going in with a thought out project and timeline there should be no reason to negate the need for a special education stabilization fund or the need to continue to chip away at the HVAC needs at PHS.

Mr. Tropeano added that the HVAC units have been on the capital plan and the goal at different times was to replace two, three, or four per year but some years the district couldn't replace any because there was no capital funding in town. Some of the ESSER III money is going to make it possible to purchase at least one unit, potentially two and if the units are bundled it can potentially be a better deal. He added that the district had a significant shortfall because there were several special education move in students, and it resulted in a several hundred thousand dollar deficit. As a result of going to fully remote learning it changed the budget, so we were able to balance without major cuts. Having a fund like this gives the district a tremendous amount of flexibility going forward. Mrs. Obey added the special education stabilization fund will not only give flexibility in future years not just for a move-in but to creatively look at what is available as the district is unsure of what the needs of the students are going to be when they return in the fall. Mr. Kennedy said he thinks both components are really important because it shows that we were good stewards with the funds that were given to us this year so we're able to give back. Also, we have the foresight to say these are our needs and this is where we know we can help support because we're going to eventually probably have to ask for that down the road. We're thinking about that now so that do not have to put any more pressure on the town. Mrs. Scholl asked if there are caps or local level restrictions. Mrs. Obey said with the ESSER III money for the HVAC piece she believes there are minimums but not caps. There is a restriction on the Sped stabilization fund of a cap of two percent of your net school spending amount, which for Pembroke is about \$600k. Mrs. Bollinger asked the cost for an HVAC unit and Mrs. Obey said two years ago it was around \$107k.

VOTE: On a motion made by David Boyle and seconded by Susie Scholl, it was unanimously voted to return to the Town \$400,192.10 of which \$376,257.30 is from unspent monies in FY21 and \$23,934.80 is for unexpended purchase orders for FY20 also to encumber \$3,064,469.24 for FY21 invoices to be paid in FY22.

Voting Yes: Michael Tropeano, David Boyle, Susie Scholl, James Agnew and Lance Kennedy
Voting No: none
Abstaining: none
Absent: none

VOTE: On a motion made by Lance Kennedy and seconded by Susie Scholl, it was unanimously voted to authorize the superintendent to submit up to three articles for the fall town meeting the first is to establish a special education stabilization fund, the second is to transfer \$150,000 to the special education stabilization fund and the third is to purchase up to two HVAC units at the cost of \$213,254.

Voting Yes: Michael Tropeano, David Boyle, Susie Scholl, James Agnew and Lance Kennedy
Voting No: none
Abstaining: none
Absent: none

Mrs. Obey said it's important to keep reminding everyone that the district was in a really tight fiscal place before COVID 19 and that didn't go away just because of an influx of one-time money. These two decisions the committee made tonight show that we're trying to think multi-year about how to approach that problem and that it didn't just go away. In talking about the FY 22 budget just because there are additional monies doesn't mean that the struggles the district has been having in years past have gone away. We are putting aside monies for the future to combat those struggles. Mr. Tropeano said this is a responsible plan because it hits the capital piece that we've been talking about for a long time, and it also gives the ability to plan for the unknown around learning loss and also plan for the unknown of any shifts in special education.

Future Meeting Dates and Topics

6/29/21

VOTE: At 7:32PM, on a motion made by David Boyle and seconded by Susan Bollinger, it was unanimously voted, by roll call vote, to enter Executive Session pursuant to Chapter 30A, Section 21(a)(3) to discuss strategy for collective bargaining, personal services contract, and a potential legal matter as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the legal position of the School Committee as declared by the chair after which no further business will be conducted.

Voting Yes: Michael Tropeano, David Boyle, Susie Scholl, James Agnew and Lance Kennedy
Voting No: none
Abstaining: none
Absent: none

APPROVED: August 17, 2021

MOTIONS

VOTE: On a motion made by David Boyle and seconded by Lance Kennedy, it was unanimously voted to approve the subcommittees as presented.

Voting Yes: Michael Tropeano, David Boyle, Susie Scholl, James Agnew and Lance Kennedy
Voting No: none
Abstaining: none
Absent: none

VOTE: On a motion made by David Boyle and seconded by Susie Scholl, it was unanimously voted to return to the Town \$400,192.10 of which \$376,257.30 is from unspent monies in FY21 and \$23,934.80 is for unexpended purchase orders for FY20 also to encumber \$3,064,469.24 for FY21 invoices to be paid in FY22.

Voting Yes: Michael Tropeano, David Boyle, Susie Scholl, James Agnew and Lance Kennedy

Voting No: none
Abstaining: none
Absent: none

VOTE: On a motion made by Lance Kennedy and seconded by Susie Scholl, it was unanimously voted to authorize the superintendent to submit up to three articles for the fall town meeting the first is to establish a special education stabilization fund, the second is to transfer \$150,000 to the special education stabilization fund and the third is to purchase up to two HVAC units at the cost of \$213,254.

Voting Yes: Michael Tropeano, David Boyle, Susie Scholl, James Agnew and Lance Kennedy
Voting No: none
Abstaining: none
Absent: none

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Voting Yes: Michael Tropeano, David Boyle, Susie Scholl, James Agnew and Lance Kennedy
Voting No: none
Abstaining: none
Absent: none