



CARVER FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 28, 2022, MEETING

Present: Chairman Alan Germain, Vice-Chairman Adam Holmes: Bill Cullum, Ron Clarke, Walter Cole, Tony Macrina, Patrick Meagher, and Elizabeth Sulger.

Also Present: Bob Fennessy, Sue Moquin and Recording Secretary Ashley Swartz.

Mr. Germain opened the meeting at 7:01 P.M. with the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Germain then asked if there were any public comments and heard none.

Meeting will be recorded by Area 58

School Budget Discussion: Scott Knief and Ron Griffin

FY '23 Projected Operating Cost for the School Department

Priorities for the School Department, Educational Blueprint – attract families and keep them in Carver (and in the school system). Cutting edge learning experiences. Reminder that the numbers reflect the students and the staff.

The “thousand” series – negotiations with unions have led to an increase in legal fees. Three buckets of technology in Carver Schools. Large majority of technology costs come from software (including security, addresses, etc.) – Bucket two being special education and third is general instructional software (Adobe, Google, etc.) The town covers the operation and management staff.

Two thousand series – level services, expanding the summer school programs (tutoring and bringing student back up to grade level), bringing programs to the schools to help get students on track because of Covid. Off-set by federal government funds which will end at the end of FY '23. He took a second to acknowledge and thank the Special Education dollars. Additional materials for Culinary Pathway programs and instructional software are also included in this series.

Three Thousand Series - Analysis of school departments in MA and looked at their transportation budgets. Transportation is a large majority of the cost – commuting kids to and from school, athletics transportation, and special transportation.

Ron discussed that the service is better and cheaper by not contracting out the bus drivers. Mr. Germain thanked him for the analysis saying light was shed on the situation. Also did a drill down analysis of the athletic department.

Four Thousand Series is the operational series – reduced staffing cost (due to retirement).

Five Thousand Series – fixed costs, insurance, retirement, etc. The model reflects MA best practices (shared cost model for health insurance). Advantages using this model, but a disadvantage is difficult to account for fluctuations.

Nine Thousand Series – out of district for educational services. Reduction in overall cost for FY '23. Must account for kids moving into the district, special education needs being addressed – those costs must be covered.

Grants, offsets, etc. remain unchanged.

Mr. Holmes appreciated the level of transparency. He asked if there is an offset in the town budget to make up for the health care costs. These line items fall under a shared cost – or from the top of a revenue is split. Mr. Germain noted that this would change the percentage split (school and all other departments). Mr. Holmes asked if to take out this shared cost was a recent decision. It is new

Mr. Meagher said the idea of changing where the health insurance is even if the benefits aren't in the school budget, they will get accounted for at the end of the year. Mr. Clarke added that this has been a conversation for years – using a shared costs approach.

Scott said he has tried to improve the relationship between the town and the school and says the relationship is better

Mr. Germain asked if the insurance was covered by the same provider for the whole town – so if the increases were consistent across departments. It was clarified by multiple people that this was true – that all insurance is through the same provider for the town departments. Mr. Germain asked if there was any idea what the split would be – Sue said it would be 67.5% School and 32.5% other departments. Ron explained that the budget gets assigned, they draw a line in the sand, and if additional money is needed it goes into the reserve (all a transparent process). Mr. Macrina asked about the transportation insurance budget and if that was just insurance. It is – includes health, dental and not workman's comp (liability is separate).

Ms. Sulger asked how the split was for employees – it is 25% School and 75% town. This could only be changed through the collective bargaining process.

A conversation about workman's compensation took place.

Ms. Sulger asked since the numbers reflected 2020 – were all the numbers accurate since it was only half a school year. Mr. Germain asked if they could see the 2019 numbers since 2020 may not be an accurate depiction.

Mr. Holmes asked about the athletic funding – asked how this compared to other districts on a per pupil cost. Ron said they should be similar – high-cost sports are right on. Scott noted the user fee is one of the lowest in the area. Mr. Holmes said looking at the total costs for athletics it seems low, considering \$100,000 of that is administration salaries and another part is for coaches' salaries. He wanted to make sure that athletics got adequate funding considering the budget. He said there used to be an enormous amount of pride for Carver Athletics and feel as though we have lost that. He thinks some of that is due to the funding – he was curious if this was a budget issue or a priority issue. He asked if they felt this was something that needed to be improved. Ron said, from his experience, the budget is comparable but even in more affluent communities the budget wasn't that much higher. Often districts increase their fees to get more stuff – but the costs are low to get more kids involved. Ron said the budget has been structured to cover athletics rather than the booster

Scott said he doesn't think it's as much of a financial issue as it is a priority issue. He said facilities would be capital expenditures – and that what Mr. Holmes was saying would be a larger community discussion (the youth programs). Plymouth public schools has a marketing

team to market the schools – which would be a budgetary issue. Mr. Macrina agreed with Mr. Holmes and said there was a bigger sense of pride – maybe it was kids getting pulled to different schools. He said he thinks it's more of a moral issue than a budget issue. Mr. Holmes said he is asking the question because of conversations he has had – he wants to understand if it is actually a budget issue.

Ms. Sulger asked why a concessions stand was not built – Scott said once a building was built it changed the type of project it was. He said because of how much money was put into it, a building added to the property would require costs like a project manager which would have significantly increased the costs. The decision was made based on a benefit cost analysis. Mr. Holmes added what else had to be considered if a building was added. Scott added that the stands are portable to avoid having to have additional facilities (like a restroom).

Mr. Holmes asked about the IT budget – “technical services department” part of the budget but not included in the school technology budget. Sue said there use to be three budgets – but the town side didn't budget for the town wide expenses.

Scott said the technology salaries are on the school budget side but it's not all managed by the school overall. Not all operating and maintenance is on the town side, just like not all IT is on the school side. Scott suggested a top line item of shared services/costs and it should be built in before the split is determined. Mr. Germain said it got confused because of the cross-over of services. He said this can cause misinformation and would like to see a shared cost for technology. Sue noted the workman's comp also should be an “above the line” because of this issue of being a shared cost. Mr. Germain equated this to the “other professional services” line item in each department.

Ms. Sulger asked if putting items “above the line” would impact their end of year budget and allocations. She wanted to make sure there was no underselling of the spending.

Mr. Holmes asked about technology acquired through covid funds and if any of that can be repurposed moving forward to eliminate the need for additional capital funds. Ron said over \$300,000 has been taken off the requests for the next three years because of “Covid Money”. They have a lifespan of about 6 years. Mr. Germain thanked Ron and Sue for the work they have done.

Ms. Sulger made a motion to recommend the total computer operating cost, seconded by Mr. Clarke, approved unanimously 8-0-0.

There was a discussion about the meeting place for the joint meeting with the Select Board being at the Police Station meeting room.

Next Meetings: March 7th @ 7PM and March 8th @ 6PM.

Additional comments

Mr. Holmes asked if the financial management policy had to be voted on because it has been revised. It would have to be voted on by the Select Board.

Motion to adjourn Mr. Clarke, seconded by Mr. Meagher, unanimously approved 8-0-0.
Adjourned 8:32 PM

Minutes submitted by Ashley Swartz.