

# Town of Marlborough

## Board of Finance Members

Michael Nastri, Chairman  
Karen Pakulis Paul, Vice Chairman  
Jeffrey Plourde, Secretary  
John (Jack) H Fidler  
Will Guzman



## Board of Finance Alternate Members

Christopher Barella  
Sal Senna  
Baird Welch-Collins

## Board of Finance Regular Meeting Agenda

Thursday, February 15, 2024

7:00 PM

### Marlborough Elementary School Media Center and Zoom

*All minutes are considered 'DRAFT MINUTES' until approved at the next meeting.*

#### 1. Call to Order, Alternate Appointment

Present at the meeting were Michael Nastri, Karen Pakulis Paul, Jeffrey Plourde, Jack Fidler, Sal Senna for Will Guzman.

Michael Nastri called the meeting to order at 7:02PM.

#### 2. Public Comment

Dave Porteous, 15 Edstrom Rd, Read the following statement:

*Since two months after we moved here when I became a member of the Marlborough Elementary school board in 1978 I have been involved with overseeing the quality of this school system. I always look at the big picture such as economic and social forces globally and nationally as well as the research on the pressure facing children and their families. There's a lot of good research out there if you look for it.*

*The school's reputation is not what it was 46 years ago when I moved here, nor is it what it was in the year 2000. Nor is the learning environment here what it was in 2000. This country's families have been squeezed to advance quarterly profit margins. Now there's an obvious white drug problem. It wasn't as obvious in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as it has been in this century. It's about painkillers as you all know. It's economic pain that has been spun by select politicians away from the pressures on families trying to raise children. There's a lot of concrete evidence showing elementary school kids with mental health issues and suicide rates among the older children rising to record levels. It's a different, harder world for families today than it was 20 years ago, and that shows up in the schools.*

*Our special education programs have been highly regarded for the last 50 years. They are part of the reason why families move here. The other reason has been our high reputation for educating these children. Our MES reputation on both fronts have taken a huge hit in the last 20 years. It's not for lack of effort on the part of all of our staff.*

*It's because we've had boards of finance cut, cut, cut the budget from the little bit of extras that we had to make it an excellent learning environment to none of those extras. I know of many families today who aren't getting what their children need due to these cuts.*

*Now we have an excellent superintendent, who carefully with minimal cost is trying to right size this school so all the children learn and are cared for.*

*I, as always, proceed with evidence based analyses. This country's school and ours in Marlborough are under huge social pressures demanding more attention from the teachers and the school systems as these pressures land on the kids.*

*Please support this proposed budget. When I was on the board we were always aiming to have the lowest administrative costs per student and the highest learning opportunities so these children could enter a complex, difficult world with knowledge and skills they needed to navigate it.*

*Realize this school more than any single factor helps to maintain your home's value. If you don't maintain the school, then the value of all of our homes will drop as less people want to move here.*

*Please listen carefully to the superintendent's presentation of this budget she's one of the best superintendents I've seen in my 46 years here. We need a superintendent who sees the issues and addresses them. Her budget is doing this.*

### **3. Additions to Agenda**

None.

### **4. New Business**

#### **a. BOE Budget Presentation**

- Sue Stolfi, VP of the Board of Education introduced Superintendent Dr. Holly Hageman, who is in her 3<sup>rd</sup> year as MES's superintendent.
- Dr. Holly Hageman presented on the proposed MES budget.
- The Superintendent proposed budget can be found on school website, under the Budget tab.
- Board's proposed operating budget: \$8,664,081; salaries and benefits make up 83.9% of the budget, when contractual obligations are included, makes up 90% of the budget. 2.72% increased from previous year's proposed budget.
- A majority of other superintendent proposed budgets around the state are significantly higher than the 2.72% increase proposed.
- Marlborough has the second lowest DRG for per pupil expenditure.
- Cost-Containment measures: Region 8 insurance consortium – the placeholder for the renewal for medical benefits is an unusually high number – 16.5% increase.
  - Cost of buses and fuel with RHAM (5-year contract)
  - Lunch program funds to invest in cafeteria equipment and other food program expenses without pressing upon the operating budget.
- Grant support – Entitlement grants are applied for to offset operating expenses.
- Adding one in-house Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Program, with a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) and Registered Behavior Technician (RBT) staffing (Grant supported)
- Proposed Capital Request Summary: Repointing/Waterproofing Brick Exterior, Replace 4 External Doors/Frames, and Sidewalk Concrete Repair – all totaling \$75,000.
- Architectural study of facility – currently underway.
- Line item budget is also posted on the school website.

The BOF noted that no cuts were made to the school budget last year and Marlborough cares about the school budget: 76% of town budget is spent on schools/education. The town's population is changing – senior projects and costs to seniors is 0.65% now. Projections show that by 2030, 20% will be both age groups 0-19 and 65+.

The Town's tax base is no longer what it used to be. The medical facility is no longer taxed, causing less tax dollars coming in.

The BOF inquired whether the roofing and heating reserve referred to during the presentation is sufficient to repair the patchwork needed. Dr. Hageman explained it is, the patchwork is done through the MECCA reserve fund. The amount in the reserve would help if there is a part/section failure. There is an adequate reserve amount for the condition that the roof is in.

In the budget, there is a 9% jump in non-certified personnel salaries. This would be part of the investment in the Finance Office to be competitive in salary requirements. This would fund a one-person finance office and fund the Director of Operations position. In order to retain and, if needed, replace finance personnel, there is a need to be more competitive. Salary associated with staffing the finance office increased budgetarily. Increased personnel from part-time to full-time.

## 5. Reports

### a. Financial Reports

- Inquired about a line in the financial report about Communications Right to Use 554180.
  - SRO related, Michael Nastri will email David Porter.
- Resident State Trooper - \$0.00 spent.
  - Timing issue, reflecting \$0.00 due to the way they are billed.

### b. Liaison Reports (RHAM, Local BOE)

- RHAM
  - Jeffrey Plourde – RHAM BOE, went through their budget at last meeting.
- Overall 2.64% increase
- Increased costs – insurance, special education, transportation, software, utilities, instructional supplies
- Principal Dan White and Vice Principal Kim Kelley will be retiring.

## 6. Approval of Minutes

### a. January 18, 2024 Regular Meeting

- Removal of the February 14, 2024 Board of Finance meeting from the planned meetings.

Michael Nastri motioned to approve the minutes with the one amendment. Jeffrey Plourde seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

## 7. Correspondence

None.

## 8. Public Comment

Deb Bordeau, 174 N. Main St.

- Made a clarification – The Finance person that helped the town came out of town budget, not out of the Education budget.
- The BOE presentation had a different PowerPoint than the BOF meeting.
- The second meeting last week, BOS looked at the presentation and questions were emailed in. Discussion revolved around \$2,500 Special Ed Director.
- Two full-time principals in the proposed budget.
- Expressed concern for a top-heavy budget. Children are not lacking for anything. Cuts have not been heavily made to the education budget.

- Reminder to the Board – a presentation is a presentation. Do a deep dive into the background information. Extremely important to see the backstory. The town is not in great shape financially, major costs coming up. This will be a difficult year. Scrutinize all budgets and make sure what we need and not necessarily want.

Betty O'Brien, 176 N Main

- Expressed agreement with Deb Bordeau. Being on the Board of Education for 16 years, and having 660 students to now 450 students, amount of staff has not changed. Expressed care about the older population as well. Board of Ed: look and compare the staff that was there with 660; same staff with fewer students.
- Noticed that the classroom size is now below 20, would like to see statistically the low class numbers are making a difference. But it is also about money that should be distributed to everyone.

BOF inquired how the BOE can justify hiring two Principals.

- Dr. Hageman explained that there have been two full-time administrators for a long time. There is no longer a full-time superintendent. MES is looking to continue having two full-time administrators. Principal and Vice Principal Dan White and Kim Kelley were operating as co-administrators, not as Principal and VP. They are tasked with many duties' principals should not be doing, beyond their scope. There are numerous administrative duties that keep them outside of classrooms. Two principals would be an \$8,000 budget increase.
- Hiring a part-time employee to take the administrative duties away from the administrators to put them back in classrooms.

David Porteous, 15 Edstrom

Advised the Board of Finance to look at 2 facts:

- Pressures today in schools that weren't there 10, 20, 30 years ago – over the last 14 years, the East Hampton schools have gotten rid of 19 teachers because of shrinking class sizes.
  - Keep looking at "we're really great" in this country, but PISA – (Program for International Student Assessment) that has been looking at the organization of economic development in developed nations in the world. The U.S. is about 27<sup>th</sup> in the world coming to tests that are more complete than what we do here. Encouraged Board to look this information up.

Dr. Hageman brought up how it is important for BOF members to know in the administrative structure context that the district reduced the superintendent to part-time. So, principals/administrators wear many hats. Compensation to superintendent saves the district money.

The BOF asked if any surrounding towns have two administrators? Dr. Hagman responded that yes, some do depending on the school and district structure. Additional supervisors/other staff are often present in schools, where MES does not. Similar structures in how they operate being a one-school district across the state.

## 9. Adjournment

Michael Nastri adjourned the meeting at 8:45PM.