

**Preston Board of Finance
Special Meeting
Thursday, April 29, 2021 at 7:30 P.M.
Teleconference Call**

Call to Order – John Moulson called the meeting to order at 7:32 P.M.

1. Roll Call

Members

John Moulson – Chairman
Bob Congdon - Vice Chairman
Stacey Becker - Clerk
Andy Depta
Denise Beale - absent
Zachary Maurice

Alternates

Vacancy
Vacancy

Also Present

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier – First Selectwoman
Ken Zachem – Selectman
John Spang – Financial Director
Sean Nugent – BoE Chairman
Dr. Seitsinger – Superintendent of Schools
10 other members of the public

2. Public Comment - none

3. Approve payment of King, King, & Associates invoice for auditing services dated 03/29/21.

Zach Maurice motioned to approve Board of Finance portion \$8,000 of the King, King, & Association. Andy Depta seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Andy Depta asked where this money was coming from and Sandra Allyn-Gauthier confirm that there were sufficient funds in the Board of Finance's budget in the audit line number to cover the \$8,000 payment. The funds would come from Line item #10.5.71.4800.4190.5332.

4. Discuss and approve a timeline and process for BoF FY 21-22 budget adoption

Bob Congdon suggested have tonight's meeting and another and then figure out the schedule. Sandra Allyn-Gauthier shared that on May 19th the Governor's Executive orders will be lifted. She suggested that the Public Hearing could be held May 20th, with a Town Meeting on June 3rd, and then the referendum could be held between June 10-17th. You need to post the legal ad 5 days before the Public Hearing (ex. May 20) so that would mean posting by May 15th.

Andy Depta motioned that a Special Meeting May 5, 2021 at 7:30 P.M. to discuss Board of Education proposed FY21-22 budget, Board of Selectmen proposed FY21-22 budget, Revenues, and schedule a Public Hearing. Bob Congdon seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Review and approve proposed BoE FY21-22 Operating Budget

Dr. Roy Seitsinger explained that the budget is based on 2021-2022 school year being a 5-day a week, face to face in-person learning. It is anticipated that there will be between 405-410 students in Pre-K to 8th grade in the two school, with additional students at various high schools bring the total to approximately 660 students. Of that number 16% of our students are of color, and 32% of our students are Free & Reduced Lunch. We just received information just this week that all students will receive lunches for the entire year free of charge.

The cornerstone of any school organizations including Preston is substitutes: teachers, para, bus drivers, custodial staff, and cafeteria staff. The cornerstone has been decimated this year, but through it all the staff and the community have pulled together to ensure that we can stay open for our students. As we move forward, we hope to normalize our school days as much as possible, realizing we'll not be able to return to school as we knew it before the pandemic.

The budget that is proposed has a 2.95% increase. The main priority is physical and mental well-being due to the increase in anxiety, stress, depression, and even suicide issue that are occurring in students. The second priority is technology, which is a must for education to move forward. We have integrated the federal and state funds and grants into the budget to help cover some of the costs of the proposed programs for next year.

Many of the increases are due contractual obligations, however there are four areas that have decrease. Those areas are: Special Education tuition, secondary education tuition, transportation, and instructional technology. These reductions are due to bring out sourced students being brought back into the district; even though NFA's tuition increased the outgoing class was much larger than the incoming class, so there was a reduction there; transportation has fewer repairs with the newer buses; and instructional technology.

The three areas that drive the budget increases are:

- Salaries - up 4.8% with a \$267,586 increase
- Health insurance - up 9.1% with a \$129,604 increase
- Special education and secondary tuitions - down 6.4% with a \$116,551 reduction
- Utilizes/supplies – up 9.0% with a \$25,354 increase – to continue through cleanings
- Plant operations – up 14.9% with a \$22,007 increase – to improve air circulation
- Transportation – down 1.4% with a \$3,342 reduction
- Administration – up 5.8% with a \$33,615 increase
- Operational support – up 4.6% with a \$9,881 increase
- Instructional technology – down 3.2% with a \$7,415 reduction

Dr. Seitsinger also explained how a total of \$296,514 in ESSER I, ESSER II, and Title I federal assistance funds would be spent. He explained that these funds have to be use to supplement and enhance established district programs, not to bring down the cost to the taxpayer. There are plans to spend \$71,032 on Unfinished Learning (summer program) that will be offered to all students. It will begin on July 12th and be a 5-week program, that will meet 5-days a week, with every Wednesday students spending their day at Mystic Seaport. From Title I, \$20,000 will be spent on a Learning "GAP" Teacher. Another \$133,500 will be spent on technology; \$27,476 will be spent on social emotional learning (0.4 SSW); and finally, \$44, 506 will be spent on cleaning and PPE.

Finally, it was clarified that the operational budget of \$12,892,788 is the total funds that are projected to be spent by the Board of Education, which includes all the anticipated grants, and both federal and state funding. However, the board of Education is asking the taxpayers to pay \$12,602,057. Dr. Seitsinger reminded all that the ESSER funds will be given over the next 3 years and that they must be used to supplement and enhance not lower the tax burden.

Andy Depta asked why there was a significant increase in the Stipends from \$49,182 to \$74,390. John Spang explained that with Infinite Vision accounting that 3 areas were collapsed into one. Those areas were: Unaffiliated salary, Stipends, and Principal designee. While they are contractual the increase is largely due to a change in accounting that collapsed 3 areas into 1.

Stacey Becker asked about the Administration increase.
Roy Seitsinger explained that it was due to FICA/Medicare increases.

Bob Congdon suggested to wait to hear the Board of Selectmen's budget on May 5th ; and requested that John Spang have the Financial Reports for the Board of Education and Board of Selectmen; and have the Grand List.

6. Review and approve proposed BoS FY21-22 Operating Budget – tabled

7. Public Comment - none

8. Adjournment

Andy Depta motioned to adjourn at 8:51 P.M... Stacey Becker seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kimberly Lang

Recording Secretary

Zach Maurice motioned to approve the Board of Finance's portion of the King, King, & Association invoice, which is \$8,000. It will be paid from Line item #10.5.71.4800.4190.5332. Andy Depta seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

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