

**Preston Board of Finance
Regular Meeting
Wednesday August 18, 2021
Cafeteria - Preston Plains Middle School**

Call to Order - John Moulson called the meeting to order at 7:33 P.M.

1. Roll Call

Members

John Moulson - Chairman
Robert Congdon - Vice Chairman - excused
Stacey Becker - Clerk = excused
Denise Beale = absent
Andy Depta
Zachary Maurice

Alternates

Andrew Sawyer - seated
Vacancy

Also Present

John Spang - Financial Director
Jerry Grabarek - Selectman
Sue Nysten Treasurer

2. Public Comment - None

3. Correspondence

- August 3, 2021 - John Spang - July 2021 Financial Report
- August 12, 2021 - Rosemary Roram - email: concerning unspent funds from completed Capital Projects
- August 17, 2021 - Roy Seitsinger - letter: regarding Pre-K and K status at the school and that with enrollment increases they will be hiring another Kindergarten and Pre-K teachers and a paraeducator. ESSER funds will be used to pay for the Kindergarten position and the Pre-K positions will be covered by adjusting the existing budget. No action is needed at this time from the Board of Finance.

4. Approval of Minutes

a. BoF Special Meeting of May 12, 2021

Andy Depta motion to approve the Revised Special Meeting Minutes of May 12, 2021. Zach Maurice seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

b. BoF Regular Meeting of July 21, 2021

Andrew Sawyer motioned to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of July 18, 2021. Andy Depta seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

5. Candidates for Alternate (if available) - none were available

6. Town Revenue and Status Report -

John Spang stated that there were no changes since last month's report. He did mention that citizens are paying their taxes like before the pandemic with lines at the Tax Collector's office and that it seems to be back to normal in that regard.

7. Board of Education Report

John Spang reported that the June expenditures of payroll and obligations were paid in July and that the few outstanding bills are encumbered so the Board of Education is looking to return \$117,795 to the Town by November or December. He also stated when looking at the operating budget for the past two years it looks like little has changed, but that is due to the previous year's hybrid start, with extensive remote instruction. This year will see a return to the traditional PK - 8 instruction.

He stated that the Pre-K and K enrollments have had unexpected increases and that they are going to hire a Kindergarten teacher for \$62,233 and Pre-K and paraeducator for \$88,233. They will cover the added expense of these positions with ESSER funds and existing budget funds at this point.

Andy Depta stated his concern that when the ESSER funds are no longer available that the funds would come from taxpayers.

John Spang pointed out that the ESSER monies are available for the next several years, and while class size of 24 in Kindergarten and Pre-K are frowned upon and in some cases detrimental; that in 3rd or 4th grade (when the ESSER funds will expire) they are typical, acceptable numbers.

John Moulson requested a report on the student population by next month.

Andrew Sawyer asked if the cost of the Pre-K program could be increased.

John Spang explained the process used to charge families for the Pre-K program as either free or reduced or full payment. The reduction is on a sliding scale. He didn't see that as an option at this point with other avenues available.

a. BoE Liaison Report

Zach Maurice stated he was unable to attend the meeting, but did read the Minutes and they're preparing for the upcoming school year.

8. Board of Selectmen Financial Report

John Spang reported that there are no issues thus far. He mentioned that the Summer Parks & Rec program went well. And that it feels like a normal start of a fiscal year.

9. Old Business

a. Plan of Action - Audit Findings - John Spang

John Spang reported concerning the Asset Inventory that 3 companies were looked into and that they seem cost prohibitive. They have reached out to Rosemary Romh and asked her to resume her old inventory duties. She has agreed. This will be a significant savings to the town rather than hiring someone from the outside. She will be paid \$2,500.

There was a brief discussion as to the minimum cost of items placed on the inventory. It was stated that Accounting standards are \$500. Many felt that was too low, and that it should be raised.

John Spang stated that an inventory should be as thorough as possible because it's guarding the town's assets.

He also reported that banking account procedures have been started and they are continuing to work on writing out policies and step by step procedures.

John Spang updated the Board of the process and time table to replace Sue Nysten, Town Treasurer, who is leaving Nov. 12th. He stated that it is hoped that an advertisement for the position will be posted by the end of the month. Applications would be due in the middle of September. A panel will interview applicants at the end of September, and it's hoped that an offer can be made by the 1st of October. This will give the new hire about 3-4 weeks to work with Sue before she leaves.

John Moulson reiterated that the phrase "timely manner" in the documents needs to be more specific or should be defined anywhere the phrase is used.

b. Status of 2005-18 Bond Packages - John Spang & Sue Nysten

John Spang and Sue Nysten shared a spreadsheet with the Board showing the accounts for the 2013 Capital Projects Bond. They explained that even though several areas were more expensive than anticipated, funds were moved within the Bond, but the funds were always moved properly through Town Meetings. John Spang stated that the 2013 Capital Projects Bond is completed and closed, and that the 2018 Bond is finishing up and should be done soon.

c. Annual Report FY20 Update - No update

d. Adopted Budgets for FY21 and FY22 - Word documents need to be created for each and posted on the website.

John Spang feels he has a solution and will take care of the issue.

10. New Business -

a. FY20-21 Additional Funding for interim statistical reval - Vision

Andrew Sawyer motioned to approve the signing of the contract with Visions for the interim statistical reval. Andy Depta seconded the motion. After discussion, both Andrew Sawyer and Andy Depta withdrew their motion.

John Spang reminded the Board that they already had at a previous meeting appropriated approximately \$19,000 for the \$45,000 contract, but it was not enough to cover the whole contract and that it wasn't good business practice to sign a contract agreement with the funds still pending. Jerry Grabarek suggested that a Town Meeting be held to secure the full amount.

Andy Depta motioned to request that the Board of Selectmen hold a Town Meeting to secure \$26,000 to cover the remaining cost of the Visions contract. Andrew Sawyer seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

b. Position description for appointed Town Treasurer

John Spang shared that a draft of the Town Treasurer job description has been done. It was requested by several Board of Finance members that they be allowed to see the draft and make comments. It was decided that they could be done and they can share their comments with Sandra Allyn-Gauthier.

c. Coronavirus Relief Fund Grant (\$149,000)

John Spang reported that \$149,000 reimbursement for expenses that were incurred as a result of the pandemic came after the year closed. He shared that most of the Board of Education expenses were technology based such as upgrades for remote learning and chromebooks for students without access.

He shared that Roy Seitsinger and Sandra Allyn-Gauthier have decided to split the funds 50/50 between the Board of Education and the Board of Selectmen. The funds need to be spent on pandemic related areas; Sandra Allyn-Gauthier would like to the town's share to cover the safety category and add per diem firefighters to cover more hours until the new Fire Chief is hired. Once the new Fire Chief is hired that person can hire the budgeted new personnel.

It was also stated that Uncas Health has requested that all participating towns contribute 10% of their CRF to help cover the added cost that they have incurred during the pandemic. John Spang pointed out that Bozrah and Preston are the only two towns that have not complied with the request at this time.

d. Invoice from King, King, & Associates (\$6,500)

Members questioned if there were funds available to cover the invoice presented. It was decided that there was.

Andrew Sawyer motioned to approve paying the Board of Finance's portion of the King, King, & Associates invoice for the amount of \$4,000 from Line item # 10.5.71.4800.4190.5332. Andy Depta seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

11. Public Comment - There was none.

12. Adjournment

Andrew Sawyer motioned to adjourn at 8:54 P.M. Zach Maurice seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kimberly Lang

Recording Secretary



PRESTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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August 17, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

As part of our ongoing partnership, the Board of Education remains committed to communicating about important budget matters even when no immediate action is required from the BoF. We offer the following update.

Over two meetings (Monday, August 9, and August 16, 2021), the Preston Board of Education reviewed options regarding how to respond to an increase in students and large class sizes at the Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten grade level. After review and debate, the Board voted 5 to 1 to support adding a teaching position at both the Kindergarten and Pre-Kindergarten positions. A required paraeducator was also added at the Pre-K level.

These positions will generate costs. In part, these costs will be addressed by adjusting our existing approved budget funding coupled with additional funding support drawn from the results of our approved ARP: ESSER federal funding request. Specifically:

- The Kindergarten position (\$63,233) will be funded through approved ARP: ESSER funds.
- The Board approved the funding of the PreK position and paraeducator at a combined cost of approximately \$88,233 within the FY22 approved budget.

The Board committed to reviewing the existing district budget through the BoE Finance Committee process to address the staffing costs for the PreK levels by managing the district budget through the fiscal year.

The Town of Preston and Preston Public Schools have always maintained a high-quality learning environment, including appropriate class sizes for our students and families. Maintaining that level of quality is always a foundation of our strategic thinking. The Connecticut State Department of Education has established *five goals* driving the necessary innovations for all schools. The five goals are: (1) Learning Acceleration, Academic Renewal, and Student Enrichment, (2) Family and Community Connections, (3) Social, Emotional, and Mental Health of students and our school staff, (4) Strategic use of Technology, Staff Development, and the Digital Divide, and (5) Building Safe and Healthy School. To fully respond to the first three goals, maintaining lower class sizes and complying with professional standards are both necessary and in line with hiring the two teaching positions and the paraeducator position.

As noted above, we are not making any immediate request of the Board of Finance, but we do want to make you aware of the pressures placed on our budget management process. If other issues or concerns occur will keep you informed.

Thank you for your thoughtfulness and continued support.

Be well.

Sean Nugent, Chair

Roy Seitsinger, Superintendent

John Spang, Director of Finance

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PRESTON, CT

8/24/2021 @ 11:55A M

Primo White
PRESTON TOWN CLERK

ASST