

## **BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE / SELECTMEN'S VIRTUAL MEETING**

**April 8, 2020 – Via Zoom**

**PRESENT:** Roger Manzolini, Chair Select-board; Neal Pilson, Selectman; Alan Hanson, Selectman; Danielle Fillio, Town Administrator; Angela Garrity, Town Accountant; Pat Callahan, Budget Advisory Cte.; John Mason, Budget Advisory Cte.; Bob Gniadek, Budget Advisory Cte.; Bob Youdelman, Budget Advisory Cte., Peter Dillion, School Superintendent, Sharon Harrison, Dewey Wyatt, School Cte.; Rachel Kanz, Joy Mullen, Rick Bell, Clarence Fanto

Bob Gniadek opened the meeting Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §20, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Richmond Budget Advisory Committee is being conducted via remote participation. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings as provided for in the Order. A reminder that persons who would like to [listen to/view] this meeting while in progress may do so by going to the town website [richmondma.org](http://richmondma.org) under minutes & agendas and click the video link.

Peter Dillon started the school presentation by stating that they did the best they could to get to the percentage the committee was looking for and was able to reduce the school budget to 3.9% increase.

Sharon Harrison did the rest of the presentation by stating that after significant review of the insurance line in the budget, there was not room for any savings. With that she presented answers to questions raised at the prior meeting and the way they got to the 3.9% budget. A complete detail is attached to the minutes.

Roger thanked the School for their hard work in revising the school budget to reflect a smaller increase. He also stated his concerns of the possibility of not being able to hold a town meeting before June 30<sup>th</sup>.

Dewey asked that the committee continue to look at details in the budget as education is our biggest priority. If we lose the educational excellence we have, how long will it take to recover. If the school must lose teachers at the end of the school year and extra money then becomes available in December, it may not be possible to replace them. The goal should be to keep staff within this budget. There was a discussion of the feasibility of presenting a budget with a 4% increase for the school to the Town and the difficulty in finding anything further to cut short of losing teachers.

Neal asked what effect the 3.92% increase in the school budget would have on the total Town Budget and the tax rate. Danielle said the new school figure and the Town's total budget would raise the tax rate by 3.8%.

It was noted that the Town Meeting is scheduled for June 17<sup>th</sup>, which may have to be postponed further. If the Town Meeting can be held on June 17<sup>th</sup>, the budget will be approved.

If not, the Town will be stuck with a limit of 1/12 spending and may need to make a mid-course adjustment to the budget.

When asked the deadline for the approved school budget Danielle noted that April 17<sup>th</sup> was the deadline for sending the Town Report to the printer in order to have the completed reports in time for the May Town Meeting so she thought the beginning of May would still have enough time.

Some discussion continued to try to find ways to reduce the school budget without losing excellent teachers the Town may not be able to replace. Neal pointed out that the 4.4% increase the school has requested was reduced from their original request of an 8% increase and that represents a 2.1 FTE reduction in staff. It was suggested that the school get creative on how they can lower the budget as asked without losing great teachers.

Roger summed up the conversation by saying that the budget has been examined carefully, the final budget showed an increase of 4.4%, not the 8.8% originally requested, nor the 3% the Committee wanted, but probably a good compromise.

Conversation went on to the potential of requesting the school to come in even lower to keep the tax increase low. Danielle noted that before they have that full discussion, she asked to review the budget again as she was able to go through and found some ways to lower the Town budget so the school wouldn't have to reduce more.

#### **Line-by-Line Review of the Town Budget:**

Town Clerk can be reduced to \$8,670

Administrative Assistant – Increase salary by half of intended amount remainder would be in following years

Animal Control Officer – Reduce to \$4,000

Library – Given 11% increase although they only requested 7.4% increase. Reduce that item back to the original 7.4% increase requested.

Group Insurance – Reduce by \$20,000 as Danielle found an excess of funds in the prior 2 years

Insurance and Bonding –reduced to \$100,000

Town Report – reduced to \$4,000

Conversations regarding Town Beach lifeguards, Boat monitors, rubbish removal were discussed and it was noted that those items will only be reduced or discussed further as a last resort.

Danielle's cuts to the budget represent a reduction to 1.3 % increase or \$30,208 instead of the original 2.7% proposed increase. The total budget, including the new school increase of 4.4% now creates a tax increase of 2.6% as opposed to the original 3.8%.

Danielle noted that Stabilization and Free Cash funds have been protected in the new budget.

**Articles:** The Board again reviewed the changes to the special articles from the last meeting and it was decided to keep as is.

A question was raised concerning the security of virtual meetings and Danielle explained that from now on the Zoom Meeting will have an ID and Password for attendees to enter. The direct link will no longer appear on the website and agendas will now include the direction to go to Zoom and use the accompanying meeting I.D. and password.

There being no further business before the Committee, a motion was made to adjourn. The motion was seconded and adopted by unanimous consent.

Signed:

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Bob Gniadek, Chair-Budget Advisory Cte.

Information submitted by the School for the budget presentation.

1. Teacher Salary Increases

- a. The Spanish teacher has not been included in the teacher salary budget and has been paid through the substitute account. That is to be remedied for FY21. However, for the purposes of this analysis that cost will be removed from the total.
- b. In order to compare appropriately between years, we also need to reduce the Computer Education teacher back to a .8 position, for the recommended 1.0 position for FY21.
- c. The calculation is slightly skewed, because there were a number of staff changes between the end of FY19 and the beginning of FY20. However, we will need to use the 2018 - 2019 salary costs to compare the two years.
- d. With all of the above reviewed and understood, the resulting difference between FY19 and FY21 divided by 2 (for FY20 increases and FY21 increases) the result is a 2.05% increase between each of the two years.

2. FTE by Department

| Richmond School FTEs   |             |             |
|------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Category               | FY20        | FY21        |
| Principal              | 1           | 1           |
| Admin Asst -School     | 1           | 1           |
| Nurse                  | 1           | 1           |
| LIBRARIAN              | 0.2         | 0           |
| Dir Food Services      | 1           | 1           |
| Head Custodian         | 1           | 1           |
| Night Custodian        | 1           | 1           |
| Regular Educ. Teachers | 18.2        | 18          |
| Special Educ. Teachers | 4.4         | 3.9         |
| Regular Educ. Paras    | 4           | 4           |
| Special Educ. Paras    | <u>4</u>    | <u>4</u>    |
|                        | <b>36.8</b> | <b>35.9</b> |

3. Health Insurance – any possibility to reduce the FY21 budgeted amount?

- a. After extensive work with the Town Administrator and Town accountant, it became evident that the amount budgeted for FY21 is the correct amount.
- b. Further explanation will be provided by the Administrator or Accountant.

4. The Lenox tuition could be, and was, reduced by two students.

5. Hancock Tuition-In revenue to be provided by the Town Accountant.

**Reductions to meet 3%.**

- 1. .5 Special education position. The original budget included an increase of a half-time special education teacher to meet the student needs that are now presenting at the school. Like all

schools in the area, special education students and their needs are increasing and we will need to meet these needs as a legal as well as moral requirement. There is a concern that reducing this position for FY21 will leave us in the same position we are in now, where we are not meeting student needs as fully as needed. The risk in not meeting their needs now could result in either a greater need in the future or the need for compensatory services, both of which would increase costs in a future budget.

2. Reduce one classroom teacher and move the curriculum/professional development teacher to that position.
3. Reduce another classroom teacher and replace with the current teacher who teaches social studies across grade levels. This teacher also provides Response to Intervention (RTI) services, which both does professional development with teachers to help them be able to differentiate to meet students learning abilities, as well as works with students to provide support particularly in reading and math to ensure they achieve educational gains. RTI is a three-tier system, where students in Level II receive these services in order to maintain and increase educational proficiencies. Without someone to support these students, they often drop to Level III, which is the need for special education services. And, this would compound the concern articulated in item #1.
4. Maintain the Spanish teacher at .6 position, rather than increasing to a .8, which would have increased student opportunities.
5. Maintain the Computer teacher at .8, rather than increase to a full-time position. The intent with the increase was to provide professional learning opportunities to help teachers integrate technology better into their classrooms.
6. Eliminate librarian, which we discussed last time. This staff member was in one day per week.

Other reductions were discussed in the last meeting. With all of the cuts, we were able to reduce the budget increase to 3.92%. While we have complied with your request to reduce the school budget., you should be aware that the impact of these costs will dramatically impact the quality of our school program.