

Approved Minutes
TOWN OF STRATTON SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
Tuesday, December 15, 2020 at 6:00 PM

Present

Board:

Thomas Montemagni
Lorraine Weeks-Newell
Allison Young
Melissa Walker
Kellie D'Elia-Laskin

Administration:

Bill Anton (Superintendent)
Laurie Garland (Business Manager)

Members of the Public:

Alyson Peterson
Candie Bernard
John Nault

Helen Nault
Abbe Haber
Peter Barus (Recorder)

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM.

Budget

Ms. Garland discussed the *FY2022 Proposed budget* document (displayed on screen), noting little change, down by about one percent; and explained that the bus service would have to be put out for bids, as BRSU costs were increasing beyond the growth limit, Dir. Operations would conduct the process in spring, no bids expected; that Stratton students accounted for 30% of the passengers, but 30% of the bus cost would be too much; placeholder set at \$25,000; the Transportation grant from AoE is about 46%, not a full \$5,000 increase, more like \$2,300, split between elementary and secondary as in the past; and noted no other big changes to revenues, in FY2020 the state paid both FY2019 and 2020; FY2021 budget is typical for Stratton transportation aid. Regarding tuitions, Ms. Garland noted an anticipated increase in prek tuition; special education assessment, ECSE (3- and 4-year-olds) decreased, comes through the SU.

Ms. Peterson discussed tuitions, elementary similar, anticipated tuitions showing part of the transportation increase with prek; public school tuitions at Dover, Wardsboro, Twin Valleys; elementary and secondary tuitions, returning students to BBA, Long Trail, Maple Street, SMS, Vt Academy; no non-Vermont students anticipated, and the cap at SMS at 20.

There was discussion of anticipated surplus at about \$175,000 for this year. Ms. Garland noted: special education assessment decrease; board expense up a bit, increased travel; slight rise in SU assessment, \$5,593; no bond this year, some money in the bank.

Displaying year-over-year school choice, a bar graph, Ms. Garland explained the tax rate, using current equalized pupil count, should be out by statute, but not yet; that "hold harmless" means ADM will not drop more than what was counted in 2020; that equalized spending per pupil was under threshold; that the yield on December 1 was down from last year; and pandemic impacts on education spending.

Ms. Garland noted that CLA would impact the tax rate depending on home sales, most closing above assessment, dropping the CLA; CLA letters anticipated January 1; and the tax was estimated at \$1.659 for FY2022.

Regarding the Weighting Study, Mr. Anton explained that the outcome could not be predicted, the issue would be introduced in January, not a foregone conclusion, and there would be implementation challenges; that the odds of implementation in one year were low; that a three-year rollout, as with Act 60, seemed likely; that Stratton would be looking at 26 cents, and maybe a ten cent difference over three years; that every other district would benefit from implementation; and recommended budgeting for what there was and going with the flow at the state level; that it would not have been decided by Town Meeting Day; that if Town Meeting were conducted in person it might be amended from the floor, but would be locked in after the budget vote.

There was discussion of the general fund, the tuition & reserve fund; YTD; current students; \$174,595 projected surplus; reserve funds named "tuition reserve" based on auditors' recommendation. Ms. Garland advised vetting by the auditors before moving funds.

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There were no questions.

Ms. Peterson confirmed 53 returning students, 2 prek phantom, 15 secondary, total 70; and noted transportation costs of \$1,400 per student.

Mr. Anton discussed procedures for directing the administration to changes to budget items. It was decided to increase riders to 4, and put transportation on the agenda for the January meeting. There was discussion of parent access to transportation information and policy when choosing schools for their children. It was noted that the WCSU operations director would be a resource in coordination of contract bus services to the different schools.

Approve minutes from the December 1, 2020 School Board Meeting

Ms. Weeks-Newell moved to approve the minutes for December 1, 2020. Second by Mr. Montemagni. All in favor.

Address any other business that may legally come before the Board.

The Payroll Warrant was signed.

Transportation was added to the January agenda.

Ms. Young reported that the WCSU board had voted to approve a letter on behalf of the board, in support of implementing the recommendations in the Weighting Study. Mr. Anton explained that there could be a motion to support such a letter on behalf of the full WCSU board, as a body. Ms. Young explained that the vote had not been unanimous; that the letter had been drafted, to be brought before the board at the upcoming WCSU meeting; that Stratton's voting representative on the WCSU board would vote against the WCSU sending the letter as a body. Mr. Anton noted that the WCSU board understood Stratton's position. Ms. Young noted that while it would impact Stratton negatively, implementation would put money back into schools attended by Stratton students.

The board thanked Ms. Garland and Ms. Peterson.

Adjournment

Ms. Weeks-Newell moved to Adjourn. Second by Ms. Walker. All in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:06PM

Respectfully submitted, Peter Barus, Recorder, December 21, 2020