

**Town of West Boylston
Finance/CIB Committee
Meeting of April 8, 2021**

A Zoom meeting of Fincom and CIB was convened at 6:30 pm online. Chair Ray Bricault read the Emergency Waiver and public access statement. Attending Fincom and CIB members were Chris Berglund, Ray Bricault, Paul Bohanson, Bill Fay, Mary Foley, Jim Marinelli, and Pete Murphy. Austin Cyganiewicz and Paul Redmond were absent.

The minutes for the meeting on April 6, 2021 were approved 7-0 as moved by Chris Berglund and Bill Fay.

Anna Shaw, the Library Director joined the meeting to discuss the Library budget.

- The Library plans a strategic vision meeting for April 22. Chris Berglund will represent Fincom.
- The Library operating budget is level funded. The only increases, 3.8%, are in salaries which have to be increased due to required step and cola increases. The operating budget will meet the state minimum and no waiver application is needed.
- The Library capital needs projections remain the same. The major near term items are the replacement of the natural gas boilers and the rubber roof. The roof is planned for FY23.
 - The replacement of the boilers was extensively discussed in light of the state 2050 Energy Roadmap which will require all building heating systems to become electricity based. Conversion to a heat pump system is possible, and will include an energy cost saving, but will also take at least one year to design, fund, and award. The boilers can continue to operate, but have been experiencing gas leaks with \$4000 in required maintenance this past year. All agreed, including the Library Director, that it would be best to try to meet the state green energy goals. The Library Director will work with Jon Fitch of the Municipal Light and Rise Engineering to try to redirect this project.

Representatives of the Schools joined the meeting: Richard Meagher, Superintendent; Roger Pontbriand, Business Administrator; Jim Pedone, School Committee; and Jason Ponticelli, School Committee.

- The school operating expense budget presented increases FY22 expenditures by 2.9% for regular education and 3.5% for special education. Regular education is 68% of the budget and special education is 32%. Salary increases in this budget were held below 2% due to retirements of higher salaried staff.
- Special education student numbers are expected to increase by 25. The numbers and cost of special education is expected to continue to increase.

- The income budget forecast for the town appropriation is an increase of 2.99%. This is different than the Town Administrator budget of 1.99%. This difference is in negotiation and both the income and expense budgets could change to resolve this difference. As a result, the School Committee has not yet approved the FY22 budget. Also, some pandemic related grants, not currently in the budget, may become available.
- Revenue from school choice will increase 8.8% in FY22 for 120 students (of 900 total). The school choice revenue is used to pay the vocational education expense, and will trend down along with the vocational numbers. There are 28 vocational students (11 freshmen) at Leominster and 1 at Assabet. The Leominster program is getting good reviews from parents.
- The schools will support the cost of a new town facilities manager. Roger Pontbriand is currently acting in this role.
- Near term capital needs for the schools:
 - The road in front of the MHS must be replaced. Resurface repair is not adequate due to the bus traffic. The schools are working with the town chapter 90 contractor. Fincom requested a review by the DPW Director of the proposed work.
 - The MHS Univent pneumatic heating controls must be replaced with digital controls due to age, leaks, and parts problems. A cost estimate is not yet available.
 - Variable Frequency Drives (VFDs) are needed for heating system fans and pumps. A Green Communities grant is likely for these replacements due to a payback savings.
- Long term capital needs: A new school was discussed. A new MHS building (\$57 million guesstimate) with the elementary school moving to the current MHS building is the current thinking. The town has to get on the state list for financing. This list opens for new “Statements of Interest” on April 20. Probably at least 5 years to get to the top of the list for approval and begin the funding and design process. There are “model standard school designs” that could be adopted to reduce cost and expedite construction, and this is a possibility.

The Fire House generator was discussed. The Chief reported that the cost estimate was no longer valid due to code changes. The priority for the Chief is the forestry truck. It is likely the generator estimate will not be ready for FY22.

Fire regionalization was discussed. Apparently telephone calls are exchanged at all levels suggesting it, but no one has taken the lead to initiate a planning process. This topic will be included in the Fincom report at town meeting.

The next meeting will be the April 13 with the DPW and police .

The Zoom meeting adjourned at 8:10 pm as moved by Chris Berglund and Mary Foley.

Pete Murphy
Secretary, Fincom and CIB