

Chariho School Committee Special Virtual Meeting/ Budget Workshop
January 21, 2021

Committee Members Present: Chair Linda Lyall, Vice Chair Catherine Giusti, George Abbott, Donna Chambers, William Day, Sheila Grover, Gary Liguori (joined at 6:28 PM – issues with link), Craig Louzon, Lisa Macaruso, Linda McAllister and David Stall. Absent: Ryan Callahan.

Administrators/Others in Attendance: Superintendent Gina Picard, Assistant Superintendent Jane Daly, Director of Administration and Finance Ned Draper, Charlestown Town Council President Deb Carney, NEA ESP President Thomas Pirnie, NEA ESP Vice President Chris Caldarone, Hopkinton resident Ron Bryant and School Committee Clerk Donna Sieczkiewicz.

I. Meeting Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance/Silent Meditation

Chair Linda Lyall called the meeting of the Chariho School Committee, which was held virtually, to order at 6:00 PM. The Pledge of Allegiance was followed by a moment of silent meditation.

II. Potential Award of Contract for Commissioning Agent

Ned provided the following update. He spoke with Jason Sullivan about the Hope Valley Fire Panel. The Fire Marshal sent the District a letter stating that the work was not needed (Hope Valley Voice Activated Fire Alarm and Dry Sprinkler system). They had a vendor look at the fire panel and we will go through this with the Fire Marshal but it looks like the work that does need to be done will be in the \$5,000 range. Jason did a review of OSHA and plumbing requirements for the eye wash stations and mixing valve. It appears that the mixing valve repairs will be in the \$5,000 to \$7,000 range. He (Ned) and the Superintendent spoke with Colliers and shared two copies of the capital budget with them. Based on questions/comments received, they would like to tighten up pricing and seek additional time from RIDE to get plans submitted. The request to RIDE is the same across the state. Ryan has scheduled town meetings on February 1, February 2 and February 8 to discuss the newer/fewer concept and the three options that were presented. Gina added that she will have a survey going out to families and will put a link to the survey on the website. Bill noted that Colliers was the Commissioning Agent when they did the CALA project and they did an excellent job. Gina noted that Colliers is on the MPA (Master Price Agreement) list so we don't need to go out to bid. We do not want to miss out on any bonuses we can get from the State.

William Day made a motion, seconded by Craig Louzon and it was

VOTED: To hire Colliers as the District's Commissioning Agent. In favor: Chambers, Day, Giusti, Grover, Louzon, Lyall, Macaruso, McAllister and Stall. Abstaining: Abbott. The motion carried by a vote of 9 in favor with 1 abstention (Liguori was not in attendance for the vote).

III. Budget Workshop

Chair Lyall commented on all the work that has been done by Gina, Ned and their team. She asked if anyone had any cuts or recommendations they wanted to share. Lisa noted that the Racism Task Force is gathering recommendations for School Committee review and will probably be looking for resources. What area would these funds come from or would they be handled within existing budget lines? Gina responded that at the last Racism Task Force meeting they felt they were not yet ready to make any recommendations as they are meeting with subcommittees and haven't gathered all the information yet. They hope to have an update to the School Committee in April as they want to be cautious. Lisa wondered, if resources are requested, where would the funding come from to which Ned replied that they have asked principals and directors to look for any expenses in the \$5,000 to \$10,000 range that they can do without so the District can save up to around \$100,000 (i.e. field trips, supplies, etc.). The Superintendent can authorize funding in the district wide level; he can get back to her with

specifics. Lisa responded that this was a good start; she just wanted a better understanding of where the funding would come from. Jane noted that sometimes there are opportunities for federal grants to which Ned added that Katie Kirakosian is already looking into something along these lines. Lisa praised Katie; she is always looking into something. Chair Lyall asked if there would be any action taken tonight to which Ned responded that he did not anticipate any. He stated that he will share the update that was provided as a result of action taken at the last workshop. He reviewed both documents and noted the items in the capital plan that can be reallocated to a newer/fewer assignment (items such as Charlestown paving, eye wash and mixing stations, etc.). He will know more once they meet with Colliers. He has removed funding for the CTC kitchen, Hope Valley Fire Alarm, Ashaway elevator and Richmond paving/fencing as well. George asked if Ned anticipated all three options being on the ballot. Ned replied that he assumes they will get to a place where a consensus is reached and the Committee will determine which one to put on the ballot. Bill again noted his concern with the price attached to the eye wash stations. He has looked at the ones at Charlestown and the Middle School. He has a serious problem designating \$7,000 for this. He wants to see, before the budget is presented to the voters, hard fast number. It is his feeling they are looking at over \$15,000 extra. Ned commented that he understands and that is why they acted quickly to bring Colliers in. Donna wondered if they could include the cost for the purchase of land in the newer/fewer proposal. Ned responded that the big number would include land. As to availability of the land that was noted on the options, they have not done due diligence to determine if this is the right place. We have time to decide what the will of the people might be. George wondered if the Building Committee would have the ultimate decision as to what is on the ballot. Ned explained that they do not even know at this point which option will be selected. He added that the District Clerk gave him information on how it works and what goes on the Warrant for the voters. He would also like to run things by Jon as RIDE's steps may have changed. Catherine explained that the Necessity of School Construction Committee has not had all of these conversations as they want to give the community a voice and then narrow it down. They will have a robust discussion on all three options before they get to that point. She asked what would happen if it is decided not to move forward with any of the options and the District is left to maintain the buildings as they do now. Ned replied that one option does include continued maintenance of the current buildings which is required by RIDE. One strategy discussed with Colliers is to get more time with RIDE. George asked if the District would have any obligations to those buildings if we abandon them. Ned noted that, of course, this is an issue with the towns. We lease the buildings for \$1.00 per year per building from each town. He had experience with this in Newport and they repurposed their buildings into things like condos, community centers, businesses. There are alternative uses for the buildings. George asked if there was any obligations to correct existing deficiencies. Ned explained that relative to what RIDE gives us, they want all the money to go to education; it has to be for student use. Chariho, as a school district, could not support that because of how disbursements work. Bill added that when the District agreed to work with the towns to take over the buildings, they were in bad shape. The District spent over \$1 million for Hope Valley School because if winds exceeded 40 mph, the building had to be evacuated. Hopkinton, Richmond and Charlestown taxpayers paid for that. These buildings are in better shape than when they were given to the District to maintain. It has been a burden to other towns when the buildings weren't in good shape. Bill noted that he had a question about the Ashaway boiler that "needs replacing as it has met its life expectancy" (as noted on the report from RGB). Ned replied that they reviewed this and there are two gas-fired units at Ashaway. The 1992 unit they are referring to seems to be OK. We have replaced sections and it is our opinion that it should be good for five years; it looks like it has some life left. Bill stated that if individuals are comfortable that we can nurse it along, he has no other questions about RGBs fairy book they sent us. Chair Lyall asked for any other recommendations to the school budget. She noted that she received an email from Ryan Callahan who was unable to attend so he asked her to share it. From Ryan: *Had I attended tonight I would have opened by stating that I have no further interest in changing the budget at this time. We have the tri-town meeting, the Town Council "Newer and Fewer" meeting, and the foreign language discussion coming up and maybe after those there will be changes I support, but for now I think*

the budget looks really good. Sheila stated she agreed with Ryan; everybody has done their best at this point. A lot of work got done the other day thanks to Ned, Gina and all who helped. Chair Lyall and Craig both shared the sentiments of others. Craig added his thanks to all who working on it because it made it easier for those who work with the budget to tweak it instead of us just cutting it. He noted that they actually got to close or in some instances exceeded what was asked for at the Omnibus Meeting. He would like to hear if there were any comments from the towns as every year they hear complaints. He wanted to remind everyone that Charlestown will be paying \$16,204 per student, Richmond will pay \$13,382 per student and Hopkinton \$12,984 per student; the equalizer is State Aid. Take it into context when you hear complaints as he has heard them for years. Ron Bryant stated that this was his third year attending budget meetings and this was the best, smoothest budget to date. He concurs with all. It would be an exercise in futility to do any more until after the Town Councils and community members review newer/fewer and a decision is made. He thanked all. Deb Carney, the only Council Member in attendance, complimented all on the good job. Charlestown has had no comments to make. It is a good budget and she agreed with Ron that it was one of the smoothest. Catherine added that the comments are like a breath of fresh air; an air of congeniality with the process. Town Councils will look at it but she does not expect big cuts or big asks from Hopkinton as we have accommodated their requests. David echoed the comments. This is his second budget cycle and it is still a learning curve for him. He appreciated the way this budget was put together. When you have turnover in key positions, there is usually a learning curve. He is super impressed with Gina and Ned. He hasn't seen that very often. We have hired good people. Ned responded that both he and Gina feel the same way. They came into a great team. They were very helpful in making the process appear smooth and he thanked Sue and Jane for their help. Gina added that the minutes taken by the Clerk allowed her to follow what has occurred over the years. It is important to know where you have been to know where you are going. The Central Office team is very supportive. She thanked all for their kind comments and collaboration.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Catherine Giusti and it was
VOTED: To adjourn at 6:53 PM. In favor: Unanimous.

Donna J. Sieczkiewicz, Clerk