



The Town of Barnstable

Comprehensive Financial Advisory Committee (CFAC)

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Email: cfac@town.barnstable.ma.us

CFAC Committee:

Chair:

Lillian Woo

Members:

Vice Chair, Ralph Krau
Clerk, Hector Guenther
John Schoenherr
Melanie Powers
Tracey Brochu
Wendy Solomon
Chuck McKenzie
Adam Carter

Staff Liaison:

Mark Milne
Nathan Empey

Councilor Liaison:

Paula Schnepf

MEETING MINUTES

4.12.21

6:00 PM

Zoom Meeting : <https://zoom.us/j/93790697783>

Meeting ID: 937 9069 7783

Roll Call:

Lillian W. called the CFAC Zoom meeting to order at 6:00 PM. Hector G. called the roll call.

- CFAC Members Present: Lillian Woo, Tracey Brochu, Wendy Solomon, Hector Guenther, Melanie Powers, Ralph Krau, and Chuck McKenzie
- CFAC Members Absent: Adam Carter and John Schoenherr
- Councilors Present: Paul Neary and Paula Schnepf
- Staff Present: Mark Milne; Finance Director, Nathan Empey; Finance/Budget Analyst; Meg-Mayo Brown, School Superintendent; Gareth Markwell, Deputy Finance Director
- Other Present: None

Act on Minutes:

The following minutes were approved by unanimous vote:

03.22.2021

Public Comments:

None

Correspondence:

Paula S. noted this Thursday Town Council meeting will be introducing the revised sewer assessment ordinance; it has gone through significant definitional changes.

Lillian W. noted we have three committee member terms expiring on June 30, 2021: Hector, John, and Adam. They each should have received notification to renew by May 3rd.

Old Business:

None

New Business:

Meg-Mayo B. introduced the FY 2022 School Budget presentation that was provided at the school public hearings. Meg-Mayo B. noted the School Committee adopted the school budget on April 7th.

Meg-Mayo B. noted our budget priorities are about moving from the pandemic by providing emotional and academic support to our students. In FY 2022 Meg-Mayo B. noted we anticipate the need to enhance those services due to a learning gap from interrupted schooling. Meg-Mayo B. noted we're going to continue to reduce our equity gaps in achievement opportunities and experiences. Meg-Mayo B. noted on average our Barnstable Public Schools are pretty consistent with the State average, but students with disabilities, students of color, and English language learners are not performing as well as students at the average level.

Meg-Mayo B. noted our FY 2022 budget calls for a full return to school as we've been in a hybrid model for students in grade 4 through 12. Meg-Mayo B. noted we'd like to continue some online learning for our students as some parents have noted their students are thriving with the online environment.

Gareth M. noted in the FY 2021 approved budget in June of last year used roughly \$2.8 million in special revenue funds. Gareth M. noted special revenues include Circuit Breaker reimbursement from the State for extraordinary costs for special education, transportation fees for our large bus transportation, and school choice for receiving students. Gareth M. noted when we started the budget with the goal of returning kids safely to school within the guidelines of CDC, local and state boards of health. There was no way of doing this without additional resources, so in FY 2021 we had to revise our budget by increasing the General Fund budget by \$450,000 and the offset to the increase was the Circuit Breaker revenue. Gareth M. noted annually we collect Circuit Breaker revenue from the State, and we plan to budget what we collect in the fiscal year for next year.

Gareth M. noted the FY 2022 operating budget is increasing 2.96%, which we will be level funding the school savings account contribution. Because we accelerated the use of the Circuit Breaker revenues in the current fiscal year, we plan to dial back the use of those funds, or 40% less than FY 2021. Gareth M. noted we anticipate using 11% less in transportation fees as the School Committee voted to decrease the fee for one year. We're dial back School Choice to \$600,000. Gareth M. noted our total funding for FY 2022 is \$75,657,251 or overall increase of 1.4%.

Gareth M. noted the salary & wages are increasing 0.80% in the FY 2022 budget, minimal changes in supplies, and other operating costs are increasing 3.34%.

Chuck M. asked with business dealing with COVID by readapting, did COVID have a huge impact and change the fundamental way we deliver educating kids? Meg-Mayo B. responded it had a huge impact on our delivery model. The State required districts to offer the opportunity for students to learn completely online. Also, due to CDC requirements of six feet of social distancing, we couldn't fit all of our students at one site. Meg-Mayo B. noted we had to pivot to a hybrid model to bring in half of our enrollment while the other half learned remotely. Meg-Mayo B. noted it has been a massive restructuring on the way we deliver educational services. Chuck M. asked how much of the changes will you be carrying into the future? Meg-Mayo B. noted at the high school level parents have appreciated the online opportunity as some students have in person school anxiety. Lillian W. asked have you been able to assess the level of the academic gap? Meg-Mayo B. responded we are increasing the amount of money we are spending on STAR assessment, so we are measuring the degree where students may have a learning gap. Meg-Mayo B. noted we give this assessment on a quarterly basis. Ralph K. asked what is the State doing for relief on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) for the high school? Meg-Mayo B. noted last year's 10th graders are now 11th graders, so they didn't take it in grade 10 as a graduation requirement. Meg-Mayo B. noted the April 12th Board of Education meeting is recommending this year's 11th graders don't take it. Meg-Mayo B. noted as superintendents, we are advocating for no MCAS this year given the limited amount of time we have with our students for learning. Melanie P. asked in relations to the workforce in the summer, how does the increase in substitutes compared to other years? Gareth M. responded that substitutes are hard to predict, but we brought more substitutes into the buildings so that schools were guaranteed to have someone in the buildings due to staff illness or quarantines. Melanie P. asked in relation to the learning gaps what the discrepancies and what are the tools needed? Meg-Mayo B. noted with the high school students it was a one-to-one with the hardware, but once we got the Chrome Books out there, we started to see some difficulty with internet access and trying to get them connected, we bought over 400 hotspots. Meg-Mayo B. also noted there are challenges to try and keep students engaged while learning from home. Hector G. asked if there was excessive transmission of the virus at the high school? Meg-Mayo B. noted she wouldn't say there was excessive transmission at the high school due to in school transmission, but that they were notified of 70 cases. Meg-Mayo B. noted at any given day the high school has 700 to 900 students depending on attendance; normally it is a school of 1,800 students. Meg-Mayo B. noted it is a big school, so naturally they are going to have more cases, but perhaps given the age level these students tend to socialize a bit more. Tracey B. commented that it is really commendable with the technology to make students adaptable for the future. Tracey B. asked are you anticipating any increases in more people relocating to the Cape for enrollment. Meg-Mayo B. responded that there has been a movement to the Cape, but don't know if they have young kids, but we have seen a loss of enrollment due to kids moving to home school or private. Meg-Mayo B. noted we saw a huge increase to homeschooling.

Mark M. noted the sewer assessment ordinance will be going on the Town Council agenda for the next meeting. Mark M. noted there were significant changes made to the ordinance. Mark M. noted a clearer definition of what equals a dwelling unit. Mark M. noted we are using the uniform unit method for this proposed assessment. There are two methods we could use: 1) the uniform fixed rate that allocates sewer construction based on frontage or 2) the uniform unit method that is based on unit dwellings. Mark M. noted we modified part of this ordinance to say that a residential dwelling of less than two bedrooms would receive half a sewer assessment as opposed to a full assessment. Mark M. noted this change was based on community feedback from our forums. Mark M. noted another change is to allow property owners to defer having to pay their sewer assessment until the time of transfer of their property. Mark M. noted a low income personal could qualify to defer not having to pay the sewer assessment. Mark M. noted we also include an abatement procedure as homeowners can challenge their assessment. Mark M. noted we included a compensatory fee as we dropped the system development charge because there is language in there for potential development of vacant properties; we are not going to assess them immediately. Because they have the ability to develop the property, we would assess them at the time they develop the property that is currently undeveloped or if they change the way it is used. Mark M. noted these are the major changes to the sewer assessment ordinance.

Mark M. noted on April 29th we scheduled a meeting with Town Council to get feedback on any changes to the proposed sewer assessment ordinance. It is going to take some time to get to a point where we can find the fairest way to spread the cost out.

Lillian W. noted the changes made to the sewer assessment ordinance has been clearly written and outlines the sewer assessment extremely well. Ralph K. asked is the Town Council workshop closed or open to the public? Mark M. responded he believes it will be publicized, but not open to public comment. Wendy S. asked when changing the percentage rate, will you be doing extensive research on how it will affect homeowners? Mark M. responded yes. Hector G. asked on page 6 sewer assessment, the interest of 2% is above the borrowing cost on the town loan; would there be one particular loan for that street? Mark M. responded every project will be a part of a bonding package; every project will be financed with its own bond issue. Mark M. noted typically in the past for these types of projects it has been 5% on the homeowners. Wendy S. asked if one sewer assessment interest could be different than another whole area? Mark M. yes, and that interest rate is up to 2% above the borrowing rate, if someone wanted to propose a change in the rate, it can be modified. Hector G. asked who would make the request to modify the margin to something less? Mark M. responded anyone from Town Council. Tracey B. asked with Biden's infrastructure bill coming, could we request some of those funds to reduce some of the road cost? Mark M. responded it is possible, but there are no details at that level yet. Mark M. noted he heard there is about \$300 million in the bill for sewer and water infrastructure. Tracey B. asked any updates on replacing the existing septic systems? Mark M. noted that is part of the connection costs to remove or replace the septic tank. Lillian W. asked Paul N. for comment on the sewer assessment. Paul N. noted some of the new suggestions to the sewer assessment; this is about generating revenue to pay for this thing. Paul N. noted there really needs to be a complete view as this program settles out, but always cautious from a financial standpoint.

Matters not reasonably anticipated by the chair:

None

Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

List of documents handed out

1. 04.12.21 draft minutes