

**BOLTON BOARD OF FINANCE  
REGULAR MEETING  
THURSDAY, MARCH 18, 2021– 7:15 pm  
VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM WEBSITE PLATFORM  
Minutes**

**Board of Finance Members Present:** Chairman Emily Bradley, Vice-Chair Robert Munroe, Ross Lally, Charles Danna Jr., Kristen Gourley, Robert DePietro, and Richard Tuthill

**Board of Selectmen Present:** First Selectman Sandra Pierog and Selectman Robert DePietro

**Board of Education Members Present:** Superintendent of Schools Kristin Heckt, Christopher Davey, Anne Decker, Rhea Klein, Scott Rich, Susan Pike, and Director of Business and Finance Kusal Huynh

**Staff Present:** Administrative Officer Joshua Steele Kelly, Chief Financial Officer Jill Collins, and Board Clerk Linda McDonald

**Others Present:** Nick Lavigne CVC

1. Call to Order: E. Bradley called the meeting to order at 7:17 p.m.
2. Public Participation: S. Pierog reported a total 238 total cases of coronavirus in Bolton, an increase of 6 cases in the last two weeks. She said about 1 million or more people in the state have received first doses of vaccine, and 500,000 who are considered completely vaccinated. Eighty percent of those over 75 are fully vaccinated. She noted the governor's executive powers expire April 20 and the governor's office is meeting tomorrow with Democratic legislative leaders and then with all legislative leaders next Monday to work through the need for quick legislation on future meetings, whether towns can continue to do them in a hybrid manner or all electronically, Per the governor's office, after March 19<sup>th</sup>, there will be no restrictions on in-person meetings but capped at 50 people in attendance and socially distant. S. Pierog said she would keep the board up to date on meetings. She said many local leaders, mayors, who are concerned that the only facility they have large enough in their community to hold a socially distant meeting is an education institution and then adding stress on the education environment and that is the case in Bolton.

Superintendent Heckt added that the school does not even let visitors into the school buildings and the idea that there could be many people in the building, many of whom may not be vaccinated or could be carriers of the virus, is a great stressor.

Superintendent Heckt reported, through the Eastern Highlands Health District (EHHD), a closed COVID 19 vaccine clinic was on March 10, 2021. A clinic to administer the second dose of the vaccine for participants is scheduled for April 7<sup>th</sup>. She said a large portion of staff took advantage of the vaccine clinic. She said, this week, the 6-12th graders returned to 4 days a week in the classroom and Wednesday is still a distance learning day for all students. She said the food service staff have been amazing, working through out summer as well as during the school year. They are still handing out meals twice a week.

3. Approval of Minutes:
  - 3.1 Approval of February 18, 2021 Meeting Minutes: Approval of minutes was tabled to next regular meeting.
4. New Business:

a. Presentation and Discussion of Board of Education 's FY 2022 Budget:

The BOE power point FY 2022 budget recommendation presentation can be viewed on the town's website [www.town.boltonct.org](http://www.town.boltonct.org) on the Board of Finance page, in the March 18, 2021 meeting packet.

Superintendent Heckt explained the FY 2022 budget is totally driven by the Bolton Public School 2020-2025 strategic plan. The BOE has a new mission statement and a new vision statement. The budget represents a 2.6% increase over this year's budget, an increase of \$388,108. She explained employee benefits are driving this year's increase.

Projected grant awards total \$641,885.

Capital improvements total \$190,000. There are some additional capital proposals for potential referendum items.

Columbia student enrollment numbers are anticipated to decrease.

2020-2021 accomplishments include quality education for all students during COVID-19, one to one chrome book devices for all students, ViewSonic interactive boards in all classrooms, integration of interactive online services, and advanced BPS technology plan, expanded coding instruction, embedded PD on blended learning and equity, and employment of new learning management systems.

Budget highlights include a shared service partnership with EastCONN, a shared service partnership with the town of Bolton, a new three-year contract with BEA, a new three-year contract with custodians, a new five-year contract with M&J bus company, and online services that support access for all students.

The future focus of the BOE budget includes implementation of the Bolton Public Schools (BPS) 2020-2025 Strategic Plan to respond to post-pandemic schooling, to guide the work of teaching and learning, and maintain BPS as a high performing district. Other focus will be on the return to the integration of transferrable skills at all grade levels, to support teacher leadership and curriculum development, and provide job-embedded professional learning.

Discussion on employee health insurance followed. Superintendent Heckt said the increase from CIGNA had gone from 17% to 23%, because one of the entities had officially left CT CHIP. Other entities have since pulled out of CT CHIP, so CT CHIP will now be defunct. The BOE was now need of seeking its own health insurance quotes which they have done.

S. Pierog said the town has been working with their insurance consultant and went out to bid as a stand-alone unit and also explored the State Partnership Plan (SPP). She has had concern with the SPP's ability to sustain the benefits it is offering at the price that it does so. However, if Bolton joins the SPP, the town will see an overall decrease in costs this year for both the town and BOE employees across the board, while continuing to offer similar benefits. The town is still in the process of negotiating with the unions because it is a union benefit that says the town must offer CIGNA or a better plan. CIGNA was a high deductible plan, so, with multiple unions having competing interests, there have been all sorts of issues. To this point, there have been

three meetings with union leadership. A meeting is scheduled for next week with the general union population, inviting any town or BOE staff that are not members of the union to get their questions answered. S. Pierog explained, if the town fails to move to the SPP, the costs will be an increase of 17% to the Town of Bolton. She said the FY 2022 budgets of both the town and BOE reflect a 17% increase for health insurance. It is the hope of the town that the unions will accept the transfer to the SPP, after which, the town will realize a significant savings in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. Town and BOE staff continue to work on these numbers and the goal is to reach the best deal possible for all.

Superintendent Heckt said one piece not budgeted for is, if in fact town moves to SPP, it is possible that additional education staff will come on to the insurance. She said she will have to wait until open enrollment to determine the number of employees who opt for the insurance plan.

S. Pierog said the town can leave the SPP after three years, or sooner, if premiums change. Health insurance independently with CIGNA is a one-year plan.

R. Munroe complimented staff on their work and continued attention to this matter on this volatile component of the budget.

E. Bradley commented that Choice student enrollment may drop as well, as Coventry and Tolland are now accepting Choice students.

In response to questions from the BOF, Superintendent Heckt said the federal stimulus grant monies total \$76,019. Some of the grant has to go to addressing learning loss due to pandemic over the summer, technology, PPE and safety, and HVAC and ventilation. She also responded, based on Title I funding, Bolton will get a lot less because the town does not have a lot of Title I students.

Superintendent Heckt said this has been a struggle for kids and is concerned about the students' emotional needs. She noted that, since returning to four days of in-person learning, 17% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders are doing remote learning, down from 33%.

E. Bradley thanked the BOE members for the presentation and the work put into it.

## 5. Elected Official and Town Staff Reports

### a) BOE Update

Superintendent Heckt reported, as of February 28, 2021, the BOE budget is 56% expended for FY 2021. The BOE has committed \$275,000 towards the FY 2022 budget. The revised under expenditure is \$106,593 after this commitment. She said she anticipates additional savings but at this moment, the BOE is comfortable with this figure of \$275,000. She noted the chrome books ordered last July for the students have finally arrived. She explained there is a projected decrease of \$105,000 in expenditures for salaries, wages, and employee benefits from vacancies the BOE was unable to fill. Some of the federal funds the district will receive will have to go to replace teachers' desktops in order to maintain school in the home and school in the classroom.

She said more PPE will have to be purchased as kids return and temporary AC units will need to be rented for spring and summer learning.

R. Tuthill suggested, in order to save time, to only hit the highlights when reviewing the BOE revenue and expenditure reports. Everything else in the reports would be considered in accordance with expectations, similar to how the town reports are provided to the board.

b) Tax Collection Summary: J. Collins reported, as of February 28, 2021, the current tax levy collected was at 100.43%. The current motor vehicle levy collected was at 96.48%, supplemental motor vehicle levy collected was at 86.72%. The Governor's Executive Order has extended the time to pay supplemental motor vehicle levy to 4/1/2021. She said the town is doing very well in tax collection.

c) Town Update: Administrative Officer Joshua Steele Kelly reported the town is 52.70% expended as of January 31, 2021. The Land Use Department line item is 68% expended and over-expended compared to all three prior fiscal years. He said this is not of real concern and has been addressed. He noted, some requests for larger purchases are coming in as the town gets closer to the end of the fiscal year, including some equipment items.

d) Other: No other discussion.

6. Ongoing Business:

a. Charter Revision Discussion:

E. Bradley reported the Charter Revision Committee presented their draft charter revision recommendations to the Board of Selectmen on March 2, 2021.

S. Pierog said the BOS will hold a public hearing on the charter revision recommendations next Tuesday, March 23, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. via zoom.

E. Bradley asked how the members feel now that the Charter Revision Committee proposal is on the table. Members expressed their personal views on the proposed changes to the charter revisions regarding changes to the Board of Finance. E. Bradley asked the board members what they want her to do to move forward.

After considerable discussion, consensus of the board was to individually email their questions for the public hearing next week to Chairman Bradley, who will compile them and ask the questions at the public hearing. All board members were encouraged to attend the public hearing.

b. Consider and Possibly Act on Fund Balance Policy Changes: Discussion was tabled to the regular meeting on April 15, 2021. J. Kelly will annotate a copy of the proposed policy changes to the members.

c. Discussion of FY 2021 and FY 2022 Revenues: J. Collins had nothing new to report.

d. FY 2022 Budget Calendar: No changes were made to the budget calendar. S. Pierog said no budget referendum date has been set as the town is waiting for an answer from the state on allowing in-person budget referendums.

7. Adjournment: E. Bradley adjourned the regular meeting at 9:26 p.m.

Next Regular Meeting: April 15, 2021 Regular Meeting - 7:15 p.m.

Upcoming Special Meetings: March 25, 2021, March 30, 2021, April 1, 2021 – 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Linda H. McDonald, Board Clerk

*Linda H. McDonald.*

PLEASE SEE THE MINUTES OF SUBSEQUENT MEETINGS FOR THE APPROVAL OF THESE MINUTES AND ANY CORRECTIONS HERETO.