

**Board of Selectmen
Open Meeting of September 20, 2023
Seekonk High School Library/Media Center
261 Arcade Avenue, Seekonk, MA 02771**

Members Present: Justin Sullivan, Pam Pozzi, Chris Zorra, Michelle A. Hines, Michael P. Healy
Town Administrator: Shawn E. Cadime

Chairman Healy opened the quad-board meeting at **6:00 p.m.**

Roll Call Vote: Michelle Hines-Aye; Justin Sullivan-Aye; Chris Zorra-Aye; Pam Pozzi-Aye; Michael Healy-Aye

School Committee Chairperson Meaghan Mahoney called the School Committee meeting to order
Roll Call Vote: Noah Escaler-Aye; Emily Field-Aye; Kim Sluter-Aye; Kyle Juckett-Aye; Meaghan Mahoney-Aye

Chair Matthew Salisbury called the Finance Committee meeting to order
Roll Call Vote: Phillip Yan-Aye; Michael Bradley-Aye; Joanna L'Heureux -Aye; Michael Brady-Aye; Matthew Salisbury-Aye

Capital Improvement Committee: No one was present

Also present: Rebecca Kidwell, School Superintendent, Dr. Ryan McGee, School Business Administrator, George Kelleher, Director of Student Services, Jim Roy, Supervisor of Building and Grounds

NEW BUSINESS

A. General Discussion and update of FY 24 budget

Town Administrator, Shawn Cadime, stated since the first quarter hasn't ended, this discussion will be postponed.

B. General Discussion and planning of FY 25 budget

S. Cadime summarized the FY24 budget timeline:

- October 27th – Capital Improvement Plan submitted to CIC, Finance Committee and BOS;
- December 1st – Department Heads submit budgets & fee recommendations to TA;
- January 12th – TA to submit draft budget to BOS and Finance Committee
- January 15th – CIC (if they have a quorum) will submit recommendations to BOS & TA;
- January 26th – Governor releases budget;
- March 13th – Budget Hearings with the BOS;
- March 27th – Public Hearing on Departmental Fees

Building Infrastructure Projects: \$50M plus for anticipated building projects

- 1) 540 Arcade Avenue - \$1.7M (nearing completion)

- 2) DPW Facility – estimated project costs \$20M
 - \$1.5M awarded by Town Meeting for OPM and Design Services
 - OPM and Designer Services procured
 - Anticipated construction documents/prequalification and cost estimates – May 2024 through August 2024
 - Contractor bidding-august 2024 through October 2024
 - Town meeting vote – November 2024
- 3) South End Fire Station – Estimate project costs \$8 (excludes apparatus/staffing)
 - Currently out to bid
 - Targeting Fall Town Meeting vote for construction funding
- 4) Library – feasibility and cost estimate for renovation of existing building
- 5) Medeiros Farm/Anthony J. Medeiros, Jr. Fields
- 6) School Building Projects – cost to be determined
- 7) Tri-County School Building Project (October 24, 2023 vote 12:00p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Seekonk High School
 - Estimate to be \$1.1M per year for 30 years (\$33M)

Stabilization Fund: \$5,498,260; Municipal Capital Stabilization Fund: \$1,188,920; Public Building and Infrastructure Stabilization Fund: \$1,193,494; Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) Trust Fund: \$4,436,229.

Free Cash: \$4,948,202

- DLS Certification receive on September 13th
- Opioid Settlement (\$147,030) and Marijuana Sales Tax (\$290,876)
- 60% stabilization fund capital improvement fund building infrastructure fun and OPEB (\$2.7M)
- 30% available for capital or other on-time expenses (\$1.4M)
- 10% of Free Cash to remain unspent from FY to FY (\$451K)
 - To ensure following year’s free cash calculation will begin with a positive balance
- Outstanding Debt: \$44,337,958 (\$40.6M debt exclusion)
 - FY24: \$2.7M
 - FY25: \$2.5M
 - FY26: \$2.1M
 - FY27: \$2.1M
 - FY28: \$1.8M

Revenue:

- 2.5% Tax Increase (generate on average \$1.2M of new revenue yearly)
- New Growth: average estimate of \$400k in new revenue yearly
- Debt exclusion: generate yearly revenue for principal & interest payments on debt excluded projects
- Local receipts: generates roughly 2% - 5% increase year-over-year

Department Priorities: Town budget – DPW, Police, and Fire Department staffing needs.

M. Hines asked Mr. Cadime to clarify the new Tri-County building is anticipated to be approximately \$1.1M per year for 30 years and not just \$1.1M over 30 years.

Mr. Cadime stated yes, it is \$1.1M per year for thirty years for approximately \$33M.

J. L'Heureux asked if the \$1.1M will be added to FY25.

S. Cadime said they expect the first debt payment for FY28, but there will be some short-term borrowing.

M. Salisbury asked what happens if the number of students increase or decrease.

S. Cadime said as the number increases or decreases, it will affect the amount the Town pays.

Chair Healy asked Mr. Cadime if he recommends staying at the 2.5% levy. He also asked if he could explain what could happen if we don't go to the 2.5%.

S. Cadime said yes he would recommend 2.5%. Due to the fixed cost such as healthcare and collective bargaining agreements, the sustainability is based on the assumption we go to the levy.

Chair Healy asked for the revenue sources.

S. Cadime said taxes, local receipts, fees, motor vehicle excise, etc. The only way to generate revenue is through local aid, grants. The school side has their own grant funding as well.

K. Sluter asked Mr. Cadime to explain the Tri County vote.

S. Cadime explained the way legislation was written, the vote will be taken within an 8-hr. period. That is why it is only from 12-8 pm on October 24th and it is solely for the project. If it passes the BOS, School Committee, and Finance Committee will need to discuss how the Town will fund it.

Rebecca Kidwell, Superintendent of Schools, said the school administration is committed to careful examination of how money is being spent and agrees as a Town, this needs to be managed and no one wants layoffs.

C. Seekonk Public Schools Facilities Conditions Assessment Feasibility Study presentation

Present: Derek Osterman, Project Manager for Colliers Engineering

Derrick Osterman provided an overview of the assessment process overview: 1) assessment of existing conditions; 2) space utilization/how spaces are being used; 3) are they are at capacity; 4) how to plan for the future; and 5) how will it impact operations. The information Mr. Osterman provided was based on the 2022-2023 school year.

- Assessment completed Summer 2022
 - Identified \$42.3M
 - Priority need is \$14.6M within the next 3-years
- Enrollment projections were completed in March 2023
 - Growth projected to be 10%-27% (probable 19%) district wide over the next 10 years
 - Elementary population to grow 8%, middle school 28%, high school 32%

Aitken Elementary Facility Needs Summary (\$3.4M):

- New roof “B-wing”
- Replace gym floor
- Replace “A-wing” corridor doors

Enrollment space:

- Max capacity-575/21.3 students per classroom
- 2022-2023 enrollment: 525/21.0 students per classroom
- Projected maximum 2025-2026: 566/21.8 students per classroom

Space Deficiencies:

- Converted classrooms and shared spaces

Martin Elementary Facility Needs Summary (\$6.0M):

- Repave parking lots/roadways
- Replace casework in classrooms for storage
- Roof replacement
- Long-term HVAC upgrades

Enrollment space:

- Max capacity-550/21.3 students per classroom
- 2022-2023 enrollment: 456/20.7 students per classroom
- Projected 2025-2026: 491/20.8 students per classroom
- Projected maximum 2029-2030: 519/21.6 students per classroom

Space Deficiencies:

- Modular classrooms, converted classrooms, lacks classrooms and office space

Hurley Middle School Facility Needs Summary (\$15M):

- Replace and upgrade the building HVAC system
- Replace the membrane roof
- Aged science classrooms
- Repair and repoint exterior masonry
- Replace parking lots
- Future emergency shelter location

Enrollment space:

- Max capacity-600/21.3 students per classroom
- 2022-2023 enrollment: 490/20.4 students per classroom
- Projected maximum 2032-2033: 630/21.0 students per classroom

Space Deficiencies:

- Converted classrooms, lacks classrooms and storage space, shared special ed and support services space

Michael Brady asked if it would make more sense to repair/replace the entire roof at the same time, instead of continuously repairing only portions of the building at a time.

Mr. Osterman agreed and said it would also be better for insurability/warranty.

Seekonk High School Facility Needs Summary (\$17.9M):

- Replace roof
- Renovate locker rooms
- Upgrade HVAC system
- Upgrade toilet rooms
- Refinish/replace gym floor
- Cosmetic improvements

Enrollment space:

- Max capacity-950/21.3 students per classroom
- 2022-2023 enrollment: 533/17.8 students per classroom
- Projected maximum 2032-2033: 703/18.5 students per classroom

Space Deficiencies:

- Converted classrooms, lacks flex and office space

Option Development:

1. Maintain existing grade configuration
2. Modify existing grade configurations (primary/intermediate schools)
3. Modify existing grade configurations (move grade 5 to middle school)
4. Construct new intermediate school
5. Construct new middle school (grades 5-8)
6. Construct new middle school & convert Hurly to Intermediate school
7. Construct addition to Hurley Middle School

Mr. Brady asked what Metrix of data was used for enrollment. He said there is a decrease in births and population, yet the presentation showed up to a 27% increase in enrollment. He heard a lot of might, could, and probable but residents may not want to spend \$140M on might, could, or probable.

Mr. Osterman said he was surprised with the numbers, and most, if not all, districts are facing stagnant or declining enrollment. Slang Collaborative, a third party, looked at the demographics (birthrate, survival, cohorts, and housing/real estate/developments) to project the type of families moving in.

Mr. Brady said a similar study was done approximately 10-12 years ago and did not come near these projections. He asked if they looked at the previous study to see how those trends played out.

Mr. Ostermann said he was not sure if he was made aware of that data.

Chair Mahoney explained they asked for the trend for past five years. The increase has been at the elementary schools but they lose students at high school.

Mr. Brady asked why in this study did the middle and high schools have the largest increase.

K. Sluter said in looking at the previous projections, the elementary levels were more accurate than those projected at the middle and high school levels.

K. Juckett said according to the 2021 census, the population rate in Mass has come to a halt. The most recent data shows new to district students for this year is 38 and there were 87 for last year. They would all like to recapture more high school students, but he doesn't think they will they recapture 200 students.

N. Escaler said he wanted to note that the MSBA is not a fully funded program. It is a reimbursement of 40%-50%.

P. Yan asked if they considered moving the 8th grade students to the High School which would allow more room.

Mr. Osterman said that was not one of the options considered.

Superintendent Kidwell said part of it is programmatic questions of being able to provide a high school experience which offers career options, pathways, technology, etc. Ms. Kidwell presented the enrollment and space usage data from 2016-2024, how they use space, and how things developed. In the elementary schools, they have gotten creative with using spaces, such as small group or related services rooms; specialized program rooms; PreK classrooms; and general ed classrooms. Both NESDEC and SLAM projections show an increase of students at the elementary level. Less students transfer from the middle school to the high school due to vocational, technical, and private schools. They would like to keep up with Tri County and address long-term goals. The next step is the MSBA Process. First, a statement of interest needs to be completed. This would not commit the Town to funding. If a statement of interest is not done, they will have to wait another year for the opportunity to do so. Both the Board of Selectmen and School Committee would have to vote to move forward with the statement of interest.

P. Yan asked how specific would the statement of interest need to be.

Ms. Kidwell said it would only have to state that a need has been identified (middle school) but they would not have to state a new building is needed at this stage.

K. Juckett asked if MSBA supported the project, what would their maximum support be.

Ms. Kidwell answered the minimum is 30% with a maximum of 70-80% (for a higher need community). They do award bonus based on socioeconomic needs, green building, energy efficiency, etc. She anticipates Seekonk receiving between 40-50% reimbursement rate.

J. L'Heureux asked for the timeline to apply.

Ms. Kidwell said the deadline for the statement of interest is February.

Chair Mahoney asked how dire is the need at Hurley Middle School.

Jim Roy said the heating system is in poor condition. They have a steam system and it has rotted, the pipes let go. The building is not designed to put in new ductwork.

N. Escaler asked if the estimate (\$10M) provided by Collier is reasonable.

Mr. Roy said he thinks it will cost more than the estimate.

J. L'Heureux said during the tours of the schools today, it was mentioned that how classrooms were designed previously was not meant for teaching in classrooms today. She asked how they anticipate

classrooms looking 10-15 years from now, and if are they are anticipating how teaching will be taught in the future especially with technology and many other things changing so rapidly.

Mr. Osterman said it is about flexibility and usability of space. To use moveable furniture and partitions. Make hallways larger, have natural light, and to have specialty spaces and equity for all students.

Chair Healy asked if the Board if they agreed to a 2.5% across the board increase for all departments as much as we possibly can.

J. Sullivan and C. Zorra agreed with the 2.5% levy.

Chair Mahoney said they are going into contract negotiations and asked if the 2.5% includes Chapter 70 funding.

S. Cadime said it will be the same practice, the total of what we appropriated 2.5% above that from a funding appropriation standpoint.

K. Sluter made a motion to adjourn the quad board meeting; it was seconded by N. Escaler, and unanimously approved.

Vote: 5-0 all in favor

Roll Call Vote: N. Escaler-Aye; E. Field-Aye; K. Sluter-Aye; K. Juckett-Aye; M. Mahoney-Aye

J. L'Heureux made a motion to close the Finance Committee meeting; P. Yan seconded, and unanimously approved.

Vote: 4-0 all in favor

P. Yan-Aye; M. Bradley-Aye; J. L'Heureux-Aye; M. Brady-Aye; M. Salisbury-Aye

Adjournment

M. Hines made a motion to adjourn open session and enter into executive session at 8:38 p.m. to A) conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel Fire Chief per MGL c 30A § 21(a) (2) as having the discussion in open session would be detrimental to the litigation or bargaining position of the town; it was seconded by J. Sullivan, and it was unanimously approved.

Roll Call Vote: 5-0 all in favor

Pam Pozzi-Aye; Chris Zorra-Aye; Justin Sullivan-Aye; Michelle Hines-Aye; Michael Healy-Aye

Respectfully submitted,
Michelle A. Hines, Clerk

Prepared by:
Kristen L'Heureux

Items Distributed at the September 20, 2023 Board of Selectmen Meeting

- FY25 Budget presentation
- School Assessment presentation
- School Enrollment and space usage date presentation
- MSBA Core Program Process Overview