

TOWN OF STRATTON SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
Tuesday, May 5, 2020 at 6:00 PM
(by video conference)

APPROVED

Present:

Board:

Thomas Montemagni (Chair)
Allison Young (Vice Chair)
Lorraine Weeks-Newell (Secretary)
John Nault
Helen Nault
Jessica Marullo
Candie Bernard
Betsy LaHue

Jessica Baron
Andrea Fornier
Peter Ahlfeld
Holly Wendell
Abbe Haber
Kristine Koeppel
Cricket Mikheev
Nancy Ferrucci

Administration:

Bill Anton (Superintendent)

Members of the Public:

Peter Barus (Recorder)

Appendix:

April Snapshot
April Spending Summary

May Snapshot
May Spending Summary
EF Outlook - FY2019-FY2021 - May 4th[1268]

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6

Vote on outsourcing monthly minute preparation for future Stratton School Board meetings.

Moved and seconded, all in favor.

Consider modifications to Agenda

(None)

Approve School Board minutes for March 12, 2020.

Mr. Montemagni moved to approve the minutes for March 12, 2020. Seconded, all in favor.

Communication from the Treasurer

April and May Snapshot and Spending Summary documents on Revenue, Payments and Balances were discussed (see Appendix 2).

Approve Orders

Ms. Young noted that the WCSU Fourth Quarter Assessment and the Triple-E assessment, in the amount of \$14,112.74 had been signed.

It was moved and seconded that the Pay Orders be approved. All in Favor.

Any other items

(None)

Address any correspondence brought before the Board.

Correspondence received:

- A copy of a lease from a resident
- An informational inquiry.

Update on legal issues and impact on town taxes resulting from the Weighting Study.

Following up on the March Board request for research into new information regarding the Weighting Study, Mr. Montemagni reported on a news article about two districts contemplating action in the courts.

Mr. Anton discussed a lawsuit about the funding formula itself, by two citizens of Whitingham, in which the Weighting Study recommendations may be seen as a remedy; and noted that there is no plan at present to engage with the Weighting Study issue, at the legislative level.

Mr. Anton will update the Board as he receives new information.

Address any other business that may legally come before the Board:

Mr. Anton discussed the Education Fund for FY2020, noting that:

- it is expected to run short by about \$60,000,000;
- normally this would require use of General Fund money, but in this case the state will use \$12.9 million from the Stabilization Fund, and \$39 million from the Reserve Fund, and will find the money to cover the remaining shortfall.

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- for FY 2021, 90% of budgets total \$1.9 billion (anticipated collection July through June next year);
- the \$1.7 billion in voted budgets, plus the 10% not yet voted, is \$153 million short according to projections.
- it could be more; that of the money voted and committed, 80% is contracts, making it difficult to find \$153 million in operational funds, so the legislature has been meeting;
- the House Ways & Means Committee is going to find out if any funds can come from the Federal CARES Act, and craft a way to make up that shortfall, noting that the \$1.25 billion came with strings, and can't be used to backfill lost tax revenues;
- ideas being considered include
 - giving taxpayers grants and then overtaxing them \$0.25 above the current expected Tax Rate;
 - or, tax as-is and take the hit;
 - or, borrow, keep \$250 million in reserve, and pay it off in five years, raising taxes 6-8%;
- more information is expected Thursday afternoon;
- the goal of the Legislature is to get this done by end of May;
- for Stratton, with no school or employees, nothing to cut in the budget, there is nothing to do but wait and see what happens;
- the Legislature does not want to raise taxes, and is looking for solutions that allow filling that \$150 million this year and encouraging smaller budgets for 2021-22.
- on May 8, when the Secretary of Education has to report on graduation ceremonies, some guidance is expected on what is possible, whether virtual, hybrid, waiting til August, boards will hear something.
- the Secretary of Education, on conference call yesterday, hinted that the Fall will not look like last year, could be staggered days, for example.

There was discussion; that students will not be called back for summer; that Fall might bring small groups with high safety protocols, especially in August and September; that private, independent and public schools are all under the Governor's orders, and all awaiting guidance.

The Board asked for a mid-month report from the Superintendent; it was noted that the Board can warn a meeting any time, that some other boards are meeting weekly; that it is up to the board; and that he can report.

There was consensus that Mr. Anton update the Board biweekly.

It was noted that the Education Fund issues discussed may be shared freely with the public.

There was discussion of sending a student to seventh grade at SMS in the fall, and Town policy. It was explained that if applications exceed 15 students, the Town will assume the responsibility; related process and procedures were discussed.

The Board will await further news/guidance and plan Warn a meeting for Tuesday, May 19, 2020, at 6:00 PM. Mr. Anton will communicate by Monday, May 18, if there is information to report.

Ms. Mikheev, following up on an email sent earlier this year, reported that Maple Street is under the cap, but sees a definite trend in increasing applications from second-home owners.

There was consensus that the Board will Warn a meeting for May 19, 2020, at 6:00 PM.

Adjournment

By unanimous consent, the meeting was Adjourned at 6:58 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Peter Barus, Recorder, May 6, 2020