

Town of Brookline
Advisory Committee Minutes

June 11, 2020

Present Remotely: Vice-Chair Carla Benka, Ben Birnbaum, Harry Bohrs, Clifford Brown, John Doggett, Dennis Doughty, Harry Friedman, Janet Gelbart, David-Marc Goldstein, Neil Gordon, Susan Granoff, Amy Hummel, Alisa Jonas, Janice Kahn, Steve Kanes, Bobbie Knable, David Lescohier, Carol Levin, Fred Levitan, Pam Lodish, Donelle O’Neal, Carlos Ridruejo, Chair Michael Sandman, Lee Selwyn, Kim Smith, Claire Stampfer, Paul Warren, Christine Westphal, Neil Wishinsky

Also present: Ann Braga, Susan Wolf Ditkoff, Joe de Foleschampe, Kathy Defaut and possibly other members of the public.

Absent: Charles Swartz

Announcements: Pursuant to this Board’s Authority under 940 CMR 29.10 (8), all Advisory Committee Members will be participating remotely via telephone or video conferencing due to emergency regulations regarding the Corona virus.

The Chair has reviewed the requirements of the regulations. There is a quorum physically present and all votes taken will be recorded by roll call so all above listed Advisory Committee members will be allowed to vote.

AGENDA

- 1. Further discussion and possible vote on WA 8, including Conditions of Appropriations (FY 21 Operating budget and Special Appropriations/CIP)**

Questions about the School Budget

Q: Intending to cancel any programs not considered active to see some savings? A: Yes we are evaluating all programs but not related to bringing teachers back.

Q: Fill \$500,000 gap and reduce reserves if necessary to do so according to Raul Fernandez. We heard that the School Committee can handle that \$500K – A: The theory and the plan are two different things. Since it doesn’t include COVID-related expenses, not confident about that number.

Q: We are looking at a two part budget – one is the best guess FY21 and the other completely unknown budget based on state guidelines on what needs to be done to open schools. There will be costs and demands on our schools to satisfy educational needs. Looking at this until there is a vaccine – 12-24 months. How will the School Committee address the unknowns of educational delivery and who is taking over from Ben Lummis who is leaving in 3 weeks?

A: These are longer term questions better suited to the School Committee Chair. The person replacing Ben is Interim Superintendent is Dr. James Marini. Dr. Marini comes to Brookline with a wealth of experience in all facets of education. His experience - as a teacher, principal, administrator, superintendent and mentor to new superintendents and principals - makes him uniquely qualified to join the Public Schools of Brookline and lead our school district during these unprecedented times. Dr. Marini’s experience includes five years as Superintendent of Schools in Winchester. He spent a total of twenty-eight years in the Newton Public Schools as Interim Superintendent (one year), Assistant Superintendent for High Schools and Operations (three years), Principal of Newton North High School (nine years), Assistant Principal of Day Junior High School (seven years), and Math Teacher at Day Junior High School (eight years). Dr. Marini also served as Interim Superintendent in

North Andover for two years and as a middle school principal and associate principal in Concord, Massachusetts for five years. After retiring, Dr. Marini was a mentor to new superintendents enrolled in the DESE/Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents' induction program, and since 2012 he has been a coach to school leaders and school-based leadership teams through Teachers 21. Dr. Marini earned his Ph.D. at Boston College and his M.Ed. at Antioch Graduate School of Education.

Q: How do we get to \$6.5 M in classroom capacity in Capital Budget and \$2.5M?

A: Part of FY 21 CIP Capital Subcommittee recommendations. Original request was for leases for next year and then about 68% for those facilities for the next several years. Would like to reduce the \$6.5 to \$1.41 which would cover the leases in FY 21, assuming discussions with landlords are successful. Redistribute \$500k of those funds to the temporary replacement for Davis Path Footbridge by putting them in the FY 21 Street Rehab special account since there is currently no special Footbridge Replacement account.

Q: BEEP Plan for next year and any financial implications?

A: There still engaged in this conversation so missing the answers but can get back to you.

Q: The Schools do depend on Davis Path Bridge to get to Lincoln and the field – what are the plans and how to pay for alternative access to get to Lincoln?

A: This is a real problem and students will be using Cypress/Boylston intersection and narrow sidewalk on Rte. 9. We may or may not be back in full numbers after Labor Day but is a real problem. Everyone is still thinking about it and working on it.

Q: No lunch or no recess with split sessions?

A: Nothing has been completely decided yet. We will have more information when we get guidance from the state. Custodial costs would be prohibitive – but one week on, one week off schedule cleaning would be less difficult. What is the right thing in terms of public health, public education, budget and economic burden that is put on everyone when kids are not in school.

Suggest Reserve Motions be taken after the CIP discussion.

Taking funds from Classroom Capacity with the hope that negotiations with landlords will prove favorable and some rents lowered. Put funds in to Street Rehab including Davis Path Footbridge. Some ideas were about using police details so kids can safely cross Rte 9 on their way to Old Lincoln and where would that money come from?

The Advisory Committee has not yet discussed or voted the Capital Subcommittee recommendations.

Street Rehab from \$2,649,916 to \$3,149,916

Classroom Capacity from \$6,575,751 to \$1,410,000

If we don't get something into the budget now we won't see the Footbridge until 2022. Need to do this for neighborhood and the school community.

Bids for demolition came in higher than they hoped – it will total \$850K if they spend all of it.

Need to make a statement and vote a budget so people will get a degree of comfort and help them move forward with planning.

We need to make clear our priorities and one is the infrastructure of this Town. The Classroom Capacity number is still under negotiation and is different than investing in our infrastructure. Need to state a commitment to improving the infrastructure and comfortable with the classroom capacity but after the period of time is over we will not commit further.

It makes sense to put a budget out in front of Town Meeting with the caveat the numbers may change slightly at Town Meeting.

Energy Conservation and Energy Management figures zeroed out. Need to explain that someone in the Green Caucus so that the reasoning is clear. Not doing roof repair would cause more inefficiencies and dangers.

Guiding principles used by the Capital Subcommittee when scrutinizing the CIP-

- Would delaying this year incur greater costs in future years?
- If we didn't do it all is there some impact on public safety?
- If we didn't do it would we miss an opportunity for leveraging outside funding?

Q: Making deep cuts and freeing up budget capacity – do we need to free up this amount of budget capacity given we have other ways to go? Should we be digging so deep?

A: We used the criteria and applied it to each request – not looking for a specific dollar amount in savings. Trying to be consistent in our evaluation of each project.

We identified possible projects that could be delayed a year and free up cash for other needs. Subcommittee needs direction. What is the dollar amount? What is the goal?

Do the “difference” columns on the spreadsheet reflect cash or long term impact? Need to figure out the language we are speaking, cash or project costs? What is available of project costs that can be redeployed, then you are talking cash.

Is our goal to make cash available?

This needs to come back to the Advisory Committee as a recommendation and using the guiding principles to find cash that can go back to operations. Mel's numbers are not cash. We need Melissa to come to the meeting so we are talking the same language.

Funds saved in the CIP would go to Stabilization or Reserve or onetime costs and not to operating.

Hold onto money for bicycle fund because more people would be using bikes due to COVID. Need people to feel safe.

This budget process is a tentative process and we don't know what is going to happen in the summer and adjustments will be made in November. Move this recommendation so we can have a budget with the CIP in it and let's have something finished tonight. None of this is going to be carved in stone.

A **MOTION** was made and seconded to approve Carla's budget recommendation.

A **MOTION** was made and seconded to **AMEND** Carla's recommendation raising Bicycle Access Improvements \$125K, Sidewalk Repair \$336K, Energy Conservation \$190K and Energy Management \$125k (\$13,751,916).

By a roll-call **VOTE** of 21 -4 -3 of the Advisory Committee, the motion passes.

Presentation of Neil Wishinsky’s proposal regarding the Reserve Fund (See Graphic at the end of these minutes)

1. The Town Administrator is recommending that the original \$2 million be appropriated as follows:

Stabilization Fund	\$1,000,000
Reserve Fund	<u>\$1,000,000</u>
	\$2,000,000

I am proposing that we accept the Town Administrator’s recommendation.

2. For OPEB’s the Town Administrator is recommending \$4,181,979.

Proposed revision:

Retiree Group Health	\$2,181,979 (Amount to be included in chart)
Reserve Fund	<u>\$2,000,000</u>
	\$4,181,929

Total Reserve Fund Appropriation:		
Town Administrator Recommendation:	3,798,904	(Includes reallocated Stabilization \$1m)
OPEB Reallocation:	<u>2,000,000</u>	
Total Reserve Fund Appropriation	\$5,798,904	(Amount to be included in chart)

This additional appropriation to the Reserve Fund can be allocated in November as more information becomes available.

Discussion

Q: Where did the figure of \$2M come from? A: Originally \$3M but Deputy Town Administrator thought it was too much.

We are talking about redirecting funds without having clear parameters on when and how to use them. One could manipulate lots of scenarios into what could go in here.

This goes into the fund the Advisory Committee uses for unanticipated expenses.

We are doing a lot of talking about expense side of the equation – but we’re guessing on the revenue side – we have to keep our eye on that and the estimate could be way off. The more we can put into the Reserve, the better – we will need it and if not, we can put it back.

Disappointed by conversations and willingness of people to essentially toss away and violate policies that we all say we are here to adhere to and follow. Stabilization Fund has guidelines. OPEBs and pensions ok on a different schedule but have experts work with us about our obligations to come up with a plan. Hard to call ourselves a

finance committee based on some of these comments and actions. Use the Stabilization Fund money based on the guidelines in place and for how it is meant to be used.

We need to maintain as much financial flexibility that we can especially before we go into flu season. These are unprecedented times and there are no experts who can guide us.

We don't know what is going to happen. No one has a clue. Don't see the harm in taking CIP funds – not on a schedule – we want to fund OPEBs but we want the Town to have sufficient funds for issues that will come up unexpectedly. Take School lease money and put that into reserves. We can always refund items if November comes and the pandemic ends.

State will not make up our revenue shortfalls. This is a proactive and protective measure. Put a stake in the ground and go from there.

Uncomfortable about touching the OPEBs – why take it from OPEBs, why not more from Stabilization? Stabilization Fund has policies to maintain flexibility with some oversight. Once you put money into OPEBs you can't get it out. Problem with both OPEBs and Stabilization and suggest that this be replaced with funds from CIP and Classroom Capacity and we could get about \$3M. Maybe we need an ad hoc committee to look at this.

I would rather not appropriate the money in this go round than put it in the OPEBS. Need to maintain flexibility. If folks prefer to move funds from Capital into Reserve Fund then take OPEB and put into reserve. Locking the money up in OPEBs given the time and what we don't know, not a good idea; we need more flexibility.

Appreciate the thought behind this and the need to maintain flexibility. But when you set up a structure and have a plan, when times get tough that is when you have to have discipline, you need to stick to the plan. How long will we keep making exceptions to the rules and what trouble might that get us into?

If you can't hold back when times are tough, when times are good how can we say to anyone, "Sorry, we have rules, you can't do it."

Also opposed to this, a "Chicken Little" tendency and the thinking this may be a multi-year situation so use this time to assess and regroup when a decision can be made in November.

Suggest propose to table this till a meeting of the Capital Subcommittee with additional members, to hash out agreement around this.

Fund everything Neil wants, and the Davis Path Footbridge so what more can the subcommittee do?

The changes to the CIP - from \$4M to \$1.4, all cash.

Go back to Mel to get numbers reconciled. Have a small group understand the numbers and make a cogent presentation to the Advisory Committee before Monday.

Move Neil's motion and then make corrections afterward? Not the best move.

The Chair suggests Neil, Amy, Cliff, Janet, John meet with Mel and discuss how to beef up the Reserve Fund beyond the number there now so we have flexibility in a prudent way.

2. Other business

Resolution School Budget – Harry Bohrs – Similar Language from Paul Warren

A **MOTION** was made and seconded for FAVORABLE ACTION on the appropriation of \$118,998,998 for the School Department's FY21 Budget, expressing its commitment to the purpose for which these funds are to be appropriated: the delivery of a full-time inclusive high-quality education of children.

Further, the Advisory Committee recognizes that collaboration among our key stakeholders: the Brookline Educators Union, the Remote Learning Task Force, the School Department, the School Committee, teachers and parents (including expertise from the community from multiple disciplines), is essential to ensure that the appropriated funds are effective in providing full-time, synchronous education to all children in the Brookline Public Schools during the 2020-2021 school year, whether that education is online, in person, or hybrid.

By a unanimous roll call **VOTE** 26-0-0, the Advisory Committee recommends favorable action on School Budget appropriation as described above.

Paul commented and noted that what this does set the bar for is an expectation that along with the 119M we encourage Brookline Public Schools and others to work together to educate our kids.

I think it is urgent that this be done. The experience with remote learning varied by teacher, school, and there seem to be no quality assurance across the district.

Trash Collection Fees – Fred Levitan

A **MOTION** was made and seconded that

The Advisory Committee encourages the Select Board to implement the proposed trash fee rate increase so as to be effective 8/1/20, instead of the planned start date of 1/1/21, with a future goal of implementing appropriate fees to effect a 100% cost recovery for the start of FY22.

By a roll call **VOTE** of 14-13-2 the motion carries.

Explanation:

The trash fee increases, presently contemplated for FY21, are not scheduled to begin until 1/1/21. By moving up this date to 8/1/20, the Town will realize an additional \$311,000, which could then be appropriated within the Town's budget. The resolution also contains a future goal for FY22 to achieve a 100% cost recovery based on usage. This is an aspirational statement to remove any taxpayer subsidy to the trash program going forward in FY22.

Suggest increasing this to 100%.

Support philosophy behind this. May be looking to voters to pass a debt exclusion in the future and we may want to think about the impact of raising this to 100%.

A **MOTION** was to **AMEND** and eliminate everything in the motion written after the date 1/1/21. By a roll call **VOTE** of 11-12-6 the Amendment fails.

Discussion

We are not a fee for service basis because we come together as a community and identify what is important to us. Only after Prop 2.5 they went to the change. Also a matter of health and welfare, if you increase trash fees, some people may put their trash in their basement until everyone can put out at one time.

I think this will hurt with voters and I am not sure what we will gain. We may lose something more important.

Important from a sustainability point of view for people to see how much it costs to throw your trash away or recycle and this is one way of doing it. Not many people know that it is subsidized and if you make it be 100% people will realize this.

I think the point about perception at this moment in time – many families are feeling a pinch – asking them to vote on overrides and then we are increasing fees.

I am in favor of removing the future goal of cost recovery. Include information on the bill and reinforce that they are getting some value for their tax money. Sympathize need to increase revenue but there is a better way for people to know costs and people will be sensitive to this.

Support the amendment and there are built in inequities in current system. Costs don't reflect actual trash produced. People who produce less trash still have to pay the minimum amount.

Water and sewer are user fee based and there is a component of conservation - those who use more and pay more. Rates should be built on the principle that if you produce more trash you pay more. The more you throw out, the cheaper it is, based on the cost of the barrels.

Ok with removing the last sentence if that is what the Committee wants.

What influences override voters – raise parking meter fees every time we contemplate an override, we have raised fees for years and haven't heard it raised in an override campaign once.

Communication issue – poor communication when water rates were adjusted, messaging had not gotten out there. Changing this in August doesn't provide enough time to inform and communicate what's happening. How we do things and how we communicate what we do matters.

A **MOTION** to adjourn was made, seconded and voted unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 9:25 pm.

Documents Presented/Reviewed:

- Proposed Motion by Harry Bohrs on School Budget
- Proposed Resolution by Fred Levitan regarding Trash Fees
- Proposed Motion by Neil Wishinsky regarding the Reserve Fund Budget and Graphic Illustration of Same
- CIP Subcommittee Worksheet Compared to Town Administrator Budget

VOTES

	Attendance	Vote 1	Vote 2	Vote 3	Vote 4
# Votes Yes	29	21	26	11	14
# Votes No		4	0	12	13
# Votes Abstain		3	0	6	2
Vote Description:		CIP Amended	School Budget Resolution	Trash Fees Amended	Trash Fees Main Motion
	<i>Enter P for Present</i>	<i>Enter Y, N or A</i>	<i>Enter Y, N or A</i>	<i>Enter Y, N or A</i>	<i>Enter Y, N or A</i>
Carla Benka	P	Y	Y	Y	N
Ben Birnbaum	P	Y	Y	Y	N
Harry Bohrs	P	Y	Y	Y	N
Cliff Brown	P	Y	Y	A	N
John Doggett	P	A	Y	Y	N
Dennis Doughty	P	Y		N	Y
Harry Friedman	P	N	Y	Y	N
Janet Gelbart	P	Y	Y	A	A
David-Marc Goldstein	P	N	Y	Y	N
Neil Gordon	P	Y	Y	N	Y
Susan Granoff	P	N	Y	Y	N
Amy Hummel	P	A	Y	Y	N
Alisa Jonas	P	Y	Y	Y	A
Janice Kahn	P	Y	Y	A	N
Steve Kanes	P	Y	Y	N	Y
Bobbie Knable	P	Y	Y	N	N
David Lescohier	P	Y	Y	Y	Y
Carol Levin	P	Y	Y	A	N
Fred Levitan	P	Y	Y	N	Y
Pam Lodish	P	A		A	Y
Donelle O'Neal	P	Y	Y	A	Y
Carlos Ridruejo	P	Y	Y	N	Y
Lee Selwyn	P	N	Y	N	Y
Kim Smith	P	Y	Y	N	Y
Claire Stampfer	P	Y	Y	N	Y
Charles Swartz					
Paul Warren	P	Y	Y	N	Y
Christine Westphal	P	Y	Y	Y	N
Neil Wishinsky	P	Y	Y	N	Y
Mike Sandman	P			N	Y

PROPOSED RESERVE FUND ALLOCATION

OPEB CONTRIBUTION

\$4.2 M Initial OPEB Contribution

– \$2.0 M Transfer to Reserve Fund

\$2.2 M Final OPEB Contribution

STABILIZATION FUND CONTRIBUTION

\$2.0 M Initial Stab. Fund Contribution

– \$1.0 M Transfer to Reserve Fund

\$1.0 M Final Stab. Fund Contribution

RESERVE FUND

\$2.8 M Initial Budget Contribution

+ \$2.0 M OPEB Contribution

+ \$1.0 M Stab. Fund Contribution

\$5.8 M Final Budget Contribution

This additional appropriation to the Reserve Fund can be re-allocated in November as more information becomes available.

Colleagues:

With all due respect to Paul Warren, I plan to offer the below language as a formalized vote tonight in place of a stand-alone Advisory Committee authored resolution.

Respectfully,
Harry Bohrs

RECOMMENDATION

By a vote of XX-XX-XX, the Advisory Committee recommends FAVORABLE ACTION on the appropriation of \$118,998,998 for the School Department's FY21 Budget, expressing its commitment to the purpose for which these funds are to be appropriated: the delivery of a full-time inclusive high-quality education of children.

Further, the Advisory Committee recognizes that collaboration among our key stakeholders: the Brookline Educators Union, the Remote Learning Task Force, the School Department, the School Committee, teachers and parents (including expertise from the community from multiple disciplines), is essential to ensure that the appropriated funds are effective in providing full-time, synchronous education to all children in the Brookline Public Schools during the 2020-2021 school year, whether that education is online, in person, or hybrid.

Potential Motion from Neil Wishinsky

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Lisa Portscher

Subject: FW: Request to rehire laid off Brookline educators

From: Halim, Nafisa [<mailto:nhalim@bu.edu>]

Sent: Thursday, June 11, 2020 5:43 PM

To: Lisa Portscher

Subject: Request to rehire laid off Brookline educators

Respected Advisory Committee Members:

I write this email with a heavy heart knowing that our most committed teachers are being laid off. My child, my hundred others, is a product of a pool of committed, creative, and hardworking Brookline School educators. In addition, my child has special needs. Teachers like Mr. Andrew Mellon and his team are transforming him every day with innovative teaching methods targeting his unique strengths to make him an avid learner showing all the promises to exceed expectations and produce real results. I am heartbroken and perplexed to see such educators with such innovative and brilliant minds are being laid off.

In trying times like this, evidence historically from the US and across the globe, has consistently shown that the most effective way to mitigate losses is by investing into building the next generation workforce. The evidence also shows that the worker future performance can be traced to the quality of education received in school-age years.

I trust the Brookline leadership will reconsider their decision to align it with the true priorities of the current time.

Best wishes,

Nafisa Halim (mother of Allende Halim Mozumder, 1st Grader, Lincoln School)

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10



Refuse Fee Increase

FY21 SANITATION COST RECOVERY SCENARIOS								
PROPERTY TAX SUBSIDY	1,945,986	1,438,796	1,198,997	959,197	719,398	479,599	239,799	0
REFUSE FEE/BAG REVENUE	2,850,000	3,357,190	3,596,990	3,836,789	4,076,588	4,316,388	4,556,187	4,795,986
% SUBSIDIZED BY PROPERTY TAX	40.58%	30.00%	25.00%	20.00%	15.00%	10.00%	5.00%	0.00%
% RECOVERED BY USER FEE	59.42%	70.00%	75.00%	80.00%	85.00%	90.00%	95.00%	100.00%

Cart Pricing

Cart Size	Actual # of Units	FY20 Current Rates		FY21 Proposed Rates	
		Total Annual Cost	Actual Revenue	Total Annual Cost	Estimated Revenue
Gal 35	5,923	190	1,125,370	230	1,362,763
65	4,540	252	1,144,080	304	1,380,633
95	2,243	312	699,816	376	843,841
Bags Only	57	156	8,892	192	11,417
	12,763		2,978,158		3,598,654

Overflow Bag Pricing

	Disposal Cost	Bag Cost	Collection Cost	Total Cost	Recommended Retail Cost
30 Gallon Bag	1.25	0.30	2.15	\$3.70	\$18.50 per roll (5 bags per roll)

Cart Swap Service Charge

- Currently 320 Cart Swaps per year
- Restrict cart swaps to once per year at a fee of \$40 to cover cleaning, disinfection & repair costs
- "Cart swaps shall be permitted once per year during June for active accounts at the established fee. New property owners may swap carts initially at no charge."