

CHELMSFORD FINANCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES

8:30 AM

TOWN OF CHELMSFORD

March 11, 2021

PATRICIA E. DZURIS

TOWN CLERK



MEETING: A virtual meeting was held on Thursday, March 11, 2021 at 6:30 PM using Zoom Video Communications software.

PRESENT: J. Clancy, D. Goselin, E. Chambers, K. Duffett, V. Parks, A. Langford, and A. Tanini

ALSO PRESENT: P. Cohen, J. Sousa, P. Pedulla, S. Rosa, G. Persichetti, S. Jahnle, K. Canavan, D. Pigeon, M. Shepard, J. Lang, J. Johnson-Collins, D. King, C. Jeannotte, S. Poulton, J. Doherty, L. MacDonald, and V. Crocker-Timmins

HANDOUTS: Sent via email: FY2022 Health Department Budget Request, FY2022 DPW Budget Request for all divisions, Stormwater PowerPoint presentation, FY2022 PEG Access/Cable Budget Request, CPS Superintendents FY2022 Recommended Budget

The meeting was called to order at 6:38 PM.

J. Clancy read the following statement regarding the virtual meeting:

“Pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor’s March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Town of Chelmsford Finance Committee will be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. Specific information and the general guidelines for remote participation by members of the public and/or parties with a right and/or requirement to attend this meeting can be found on the Town’s website, at www.chelmsfordma.gov For this meeting, members of the public who wish to watch the meeting may do so by accessing the Chelmsford Telemedia website www.chelmsfordtv.org.

No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings in real time, via technological means. In the event that we are unable to do so, despite best efforts, we will post on the Town’s website an audio or video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting.”

Approval of Minutes:

February 25, 2021:

K. Duffett made a motion to accept the minutes of February 25, 2021 as written. E. Chambers seconded the motion. All voted in favor of the motion. The motion passed. The minutes were approved as written.

FY2022 PEG Access/Cable Budget:

P. Pedulla stated that the income for PEG Access/Cable continued to mirror what was happening in the market. He said that the trend of seeing a slight decline in income continued this year at the rate of about a 4% decrease. He commented that they were fine for now and they would continue to monitor market changes and see how things went. P. Pedulla reported that his budget was a level-funded budget. He said that wages were level-funded with the total personnel line item being \$403,187 for FY2022 up from \$402,885 for FY2021. He pointed out that there had been a resignation in the fall and due to the pandemic they had taken their time in hiring a replacement. He said that they were just now ready to post the job position.

P. Pedulla pointed out that under expenses the equipment maintenance line item had decreased by over 90% from \$37,000 to \$3,500. He said that he had entered a one-year service deal for the maintenance and had to pay extra last year. He explained that the company was a newer company and they had been concerned with the potential longevity of the company. He said that they were now more comfortable with the vendor and had signed a four year contract which was more economical.

P. Pedulla reported that the contracted services line item was increased by \$5,000 for FY2022. He explained that during the pandemic they had been using a lot of contracted services. He added that he had also increased dues and subscriptions by \$1,500. He explained that he had decreased this line item last year and found that they had to put some funding back.

P. Pedulla reported that outlay was budgeted at \$90,000 and capital projects were budgeted at \$0 as they would work with what they had. He commented that the department was doing well though they would be glad when the pandemic was over. He said that he would be happy to answer any questions.

FY2022 Health Department Budget:

S. Rosa thanked the Finance Committee for having her in. She said that the last year had been an incredibly challenging year for the department. She directed the Finance Committee members to review the budget narrative which she had provided which highlighted the budget changes. She said that under personnel she had received a merit increase halfway through FY2021 which was not in the FY2021 budget. She reported that the health inspector had resigned in February of 2021 and the department assistant had assumed that role, so they were now interviewing for a new department assistant. She explained that when they hire someone the department assistant salary may change. She reported that the public health nurse remained, and the health educator continued to be split with the schools with the board of health funding half of the salary. She added that longevity for her position and the environmental health inspector were included in the FY2022 budget.

S. Rosa reported that expenses for the health department remained basically the same as last year. She stated that contract services increased slightly from \$3,600 to \$4,000 with the pandemic. She explained that printing costs and supplies had increased. She added that the mosquito control line item had increased by \$500 due to the increased cost of product and spraying.

A. Tanini stated that she would like to thank S. Rosa and her team for all of the work they had done this past year with the pandemic. She said that S. Rosa and her team had gone above and beyond in their efforts including vaccination clinics for seniors and first responders and COVID-19 tracking. She added that she thought it was unfortunate that the governor had pulled away vaccine distribution from local communities as this was a convenient way for many to be vaccinated. D. Goselin reported that being over 75 he had the privilege of being vaccinated at one of the vaccination clinics and it was a well-run, first-class event. He added his thanks to S. Rosa and her team. S. Rosa commented that she too was disappointed that the state had taken away doing vaccinations locally as it had worked well, and they had just perfected the process.

Warrant Article 20 – Onsite Sewage Facility Revolving Fund:

S. Rosa reported that Article 20 was requesting that an onsite sewage facility revolving fund be established. She explained that with the moratorium on new homes and development not being able to tie into the town sewer there would be the need to install onsite septic systems. She explained that they had contracted with Mill River Consulting to perform tasks like onsite soil testing, plan review, and inspection. She said that she did not know how many new installations would be coming to town but noted that E. Belansky had indicated that it may be an average of about 25 per year. She said that with this number it would not make sense for the Board of Health to be involved from beginning to end or to add an onsite sewage line item to her budget. She said that a revolving fund to handle these instances made more sense. She explained that the developer would complete an application with the Board of Health and pay permitting fees which would go into the revolving fund. She said that Mill River would then complete the required work. She stated that funds needed to be in the account in order to start. J. Clancy asked if the funds would handle Title 5 inspections and certifications. S. Rosa replied in the affirmative. J. Clancy asked if they expected that the fees that were collected would cover all expenses. S. Rosa replied that they would. K. Duffett said that once the fund was started it would be fed from the applications, but she questioned what the source of the \$75,000 to start the fund would be. P. Cohen replied that there were no appropriations for this article. He explained that the article just sets the fund limit for the year, but all fees are collected up-front from the developer. He explained that the fund would never be in a deficit and reiterated that there was no need for an appropriation from the town.

FY2022 DPW Budget:

G. Persichetti thanked the Finance Committee for allowing him to present the DPW budget. He reported that the budgets were level-funded with few changes. He stated that under Administration and Engineering salaries were level-funded at what was put forward and expenses were \$110 less than last year. He said that there were minor line item differences, but no huge changes.

G. Persichetti reported that the Public Trees division was level-funded at the same rate as the prior year at \$70,000. He said that with this amount they barely got by, but they made it work.

He stated that in order to remain a tree city they may need to look at increasing this budget in the future. He explained that \$1 per household or person in town was required so they may need to increase the budget by \$5,000 or so to remain a tree city.

G. Persichetti reported that in the Highway division the expenses had decreased slightly to \$662,700. He added that there were a few small changes in funding of line items. He reported that the snow and ice budget was level-funded at \$1,000,000. J. Clancy asked how the snow and ice budget was tracking this year. G. Persichetti replied that \$129,000 remained in the budget with two outstanding bills to be paid to sub-contractors. He added that it was in good shape and hopefully bad weather was done for the season.

G. Persichetti reported that there was little change in the Parks division. He pointed out that grounds' maintenance had increased from \$10,000 to \$15,000 because they had taken full control of town areas such as the area in front of the town halls, the center common, and the traffic islands.

G. Persichetti reported that under Public Buildings salaries were funded at what was put forward. He said that there was a \$2,000 increase in the electricity line item and a \$13,000 increase in the custodial services contract line item. He explained that this was due to the extra cleaning for the town halls and town offices.

G. Persichetti reported that the Buildings (old/north/auxiliary) division was level-funded at \$30,000. He explained that this covered building maintenance such as fire alarm and elevator inspections.

G. Persichetti reported that the Street Lighting budget remained level-funded at \$70,000. He pointed out that prior to the LED lighting this line budget had been about \$200,000.

E. Chambers commented that G. Persichetti had mentioned that there was a three-year deal for contracted services. He asked what year we were in. G. Persichetti replied that this was year two of the contract.

G. Persichetti reported that under the Sewer division the salaries were budgeted as what was put forward. He reported that under expenses equipment repair increased by \$25,000. He said that they were doing more work which resulted in more repairs. He added that he was able to take the \$25,000 out of the grinder pumps line item to cover this. He stated that the contracted services line item was budgeted at \$240,000 up from \$160,000. He pointed out that this was a hard line item to budget as it was a moving target and had been \$982,000 in FY2020. He stated that OPEB of \$22,000 and the debt service of \$141,785 were preset budgeted items provided by J. Sousa.

S. Jahnle reported that this was the third year since the formation of the stormwater division which was done to comply with EPA regulations. He stated that this year brings the division to the original proposal level presented at the 2017 Town Meeting which had been amended down by 50% on the floor. He added that litigation had then delayed moving forward until the fall of 2018 when a 6 month budget had been approved. He reported that startup work had then begun in April of 2019 with outfall inspections and easement maintenance.

S. Jahnle reported that work done to date by the stormwater division included the repair or replacement of 68 structures, inspection and maintenance of detention ponds of which there are 50 in town, replacing 10 culverts, sweeping streets twice a year, outfall inspections and sampling, catch basin inspections, system mapping, and easement maintenance permitting. He added that the stormwater division had purchased a truck last year which allowed them to do the inspection of catch basins in-house. He said that they were filling in the gaps in the system mapping. He reported that they used to do easement permitting under a blanket permit, but now were required to do each permit independently.

S. Jahnle reported that in 2020 the stormwater master plan was completed. He stated that this was done by a 12 member committee comprised of 3 members of the DPW and 9 residents including K. Duffett from the Finance Committee. He reported that they had assessed 240 culverts in town, formulated best management practices, and developed a capital improvement plan covering 20 years.

S. Jahnle reiterated that the FY2022 budget would bring the division to the original plan presented in 2017. He pointed out that staffing would increase by 2 to total of 11 instead of the original anticipated 12. He explained that they found that they would be able to move forward with one less person than originally thought.

S. Jahnle pointed out that he had included a photo of dumping of paint and motor oil into a storm drain in the presentation as they have had this issue in several neighborhoods. He said that in these situations they would do neighborhood mailings to educate the public regarding dumping.

S. Jahnle stated that the FY2022 budget included funding to fully implement the capital plan, continue twice yearly sweeping, catch basin cleaning, and inspections. He said that it would allow for the transfer of data to Asset Management and GIS whereby inspectors could use a tablet in the field with the GIS. He stated that the IDDE bylaw was already in place and the budget would allow for making sure there was compliance.

S. Jahnle reported that the stormwater salary line item increase was mainly due to the two new laborer positions. He stated that under expenses, computer maintenance was increasing to \$20,000 due to the Asset Management subscription. He stated that they had been lucky in being able to borrow the GPS unit from NCOG. He stated that these will be harder to get in the future with the number of communities now involved. S. Jahnle pointed out that contracted services had decreased by \$20,000 to \$100,000 due to the sweeping and catch basin cleaning being brought in-house. He said that this number would come down further and they would be able to use the savings for larger projects and additional maintenance. He stated that the debt service was increasing to \$339,950.

E. Chambers commented that the major projects line item went from \$70,000 in FY2021 to \$200,000 for FY2022. He asked if S. Jahnle expected this number to go down. S. Jahnle replied that projects this year included headwall replacements, culvert cleaning, and retrofitting drainage at the high school. He said that he expected to maintain the budget around that number each year. E. Chambers asked about work that could be done in the winter. S. Jahnle replied that in the last six weeks with a lot of snow they were able to work on mapping and do what they could

do. He added that often catch basin replacement could be done during the winter. He stated that if the weather held they would be able to start street sweeping in the coming weeks. He added that they were able to do quite a bit of work over the winter. V. Parks thanked S. Jahnle for providing the Finance Committee with the comprehensive overview and presentation.

G. Persichetti reported that everyone was well aware of what was happening with the solid waste budget. He stated that there were no additional transfer stations being added which resulted in slow operations and increased costs. He stated that the tipping fees increased to \$90 per ton. He stated that with the pandemic many were working from home which increased the amount of trash remaining in town by 20 to 25%. G. Persichetti stated that Chelmsford was part of a consortium, but the consortium had very little bargaining power these days. He explained that if a driver was in line at a transfer station for 57 minutes all would be backed up going forward. He reported that under personnel services overtime was increasing to \$11,000. He explained that this was due to the addition of another shredding and hazardous waste collection. He stated that the expense numbers in the waste budget were solid figures.

G. Persichetti reported that the Facilities budget was level-funded. He pointed out that equipment repair had increased from \$350,000 to \$375,000, but this was balanced by decreases in other areas. He said that while the budget was level-funded; if money was no object the facilities budget could easily use another million dollars. He said that the town did not have a lot of new infrastructure with the school ages ranging from 1972 for the high school to 1999 for the Center school. He said that the facilities budget was a good budget where they worked with what they had.

Warrant Article 9 – CPS HVAC Repairs and Upgrades:

G. Persichetti reported that with COVID-19 the big push with every school system has been on the HVAC system focusing on if people could safely work and if there was correct air exchange. He reported that Chelmsford hired companies to help them address these issues. He said that they hired three contractors: an engineer, a controls contractor, and a tab contractor for testing and balancing. He turned the meeting over to K. Canavan to provide further details. K. Canavan thanked the Finance Committee for the opportunity to review this article. She said that she had been tasked with hiring professionals to oversee the HVAC assessment. She said the project was broken out into three phases. She said that in phase one they increased the daily presence in the schools to assure that if any equipment failure occurred they would be able to quickly react and repair it. She explained that to accomplish this they had a mechanical contractor on site daily and a controls contractor on site weekly.

She reported that the second phase of the assessment was to clean, document, and repair every piece of equipment. She noted that there were more than 500 pieces of equipment in the schools and the mechanical contractor produced a deficiency report for each piece of equipment. She added that this turned out to be a great opportunity for the schools to know where they were at in terms of assessment and repairs so that they could provide assurance that things were in good shape. She reported that the second part of the assessment was the controls assessment. She said that both assessments allowed them to do short-term repairs as well as long-term capital planning. K. Canavan reported that the final part of phase two was a testing and balancing contractor who verified proper ventilation in every educational space. She said that this process

was about 50% completed. She added that they may have the need to deal with thermal comfort issues during this phase since so much air was being passed through the classrooms.

K. Canavan stated that the last phase of the assessment was capital planning. She reiterated that this was an extraordinary opportunity to assess where they were at in terms of HVAC equipment and to plan for financing into the future. She commented that COVID-19 had pushed them into this bad situation, but the end result would be very positive.

P. Cohen commented that Finance Committee members may have an interest in how much money was required for this project and how it would be paid for. K. Canavan replied that to date they had spent a little more than a half of a million dollars and the high estimate for the entire project was about \$1.2 million dollars. She said that she should have more solid numbers in about two to four weeks. P. Cohen reported that the town may not need to take action on this article with the passage of the Biden Covid-19 relief act. He said that Chelmsford and other communities would be receiving significant funding from the federal government to address issues such as HVAC repairs in school buildings. P. Cohen assured the Finance Committee and the community that there was no financial risk from this article given the estimates he has seen. He added that Chelmsford was ahead of the game with the steps that they have already taken. He noted that funds were expected to come within 90 days which would be before the end of the fiscal year. P. Cohen reported that the governor has mandated that students return to school next month and the students, parents, educators, and the community can be assured that the schools are a healthy environment. He said that they had been proactive in moving on this project, but it had to be done as the Chelmsford schools had been constructed between 1959 and 1972. He said that they were in good shape which the test results showed, and they would be well prepared for when the students returned. He reiterated that the costs of this project would be borne by the federal funds that would be coming. He said that 50% of the relief funds would arrive in 90 days with the remainder coming a year from now. He added that communities would have until 2024 to expend these monies. P. Cohen commended K. Canavan, G. Persichetti, J. Lang and everyone involved in this project adding that it had been a team effort.

Warrant Article 10 – PFAS in Groundwater Monitoring Wells – 54 Richardson Road:

S. Jahnle reported that the first phase of this project had been done over the winter and they were about to begin the second phase. He stated that the levels of PFAS in the water at 54 Richardson Road were elevated above the state limits. He said that the first step was to file a plan with the DEP for the waste site cleanup and they received final approval of the plan this week. He said that next week they would be drilling 15 monitoring wells for additional sampling and ground water analysis. He noted that the North Chelmsford water district had wells across the street from the Richardson Road site which had some level of PFAS, but not above the state limits. He explained that they were trying to identify the source of the PFAS in the water. He said that the monitoring phase would run until October when they would then hopefully be able to move onto the next phase. He said that they had a contract with RLSP for the work during this phase.

E. Chambers asked what the cost of the first phase would be. S. Jahnle replied that the first phase of the investigation and filing paperwork was a little under \$16,000. He said that the phase with the drilling and sampling which would begin next Monday had a cost of a little over \$96,000. He added that costs after that would depend on their findings.

Warrant Article 12 – Sewer Vacuum Truck:

S. Jahnle reported that the sewer vacuum truck was originally scheduled for next fiscal year, but in the fall they decided to move it up a year. He said that in order to do this they “flipped” a couple of pump station improvements out a year. He explained that this would give them the time to catch-up with current pump station improvement projects. He said that they were working on two pump stations now and there was another one in the queue. He said that the truck they have now is a 2010 which they would put into reserve status with the purchase of the new truck. He said that currently they used an on-call contractor as backup and this would eliminate much of that need and associated cost. J. Clancy asked what the expected cost of the truck was. S. Jahnle replied that it would cost about \$485,000. J. Clancy asked what the expected life of the truck would be. S. Jahnle replied that it would have a useful life of 17 to 18 years. V. Parks asked what the average yearly contractor cost was for vacuum truck work. S. Jahnle replied that minus Southwell and Katrina the average costs was \$80,000 per year which the addition of this truck would significantly reduce.

Warrant Article 13 – Sewer Utility Truck:

G. Persichetti reported that the new sewer utility truck would replace a 2011 truck with 164,000 miles on it. He said that this truck needed some serious work including front-end work. He said that the trucks plowed during the winter months and had “hard mileage”. He said that this vehicle had body rot and was next in line to be replaced. J. Clancy asked what the anticipated cost for this vehicle was. G. Persichetti replied that it would be \$60,000 including the required tools.

Warrant Article 15 – Dunshire Drive Culverts:

S. Jahnle reported that the Dunshire Drive culverts had already been permitted and put through the state MVP program. He said that they had applied for the first round of funding which was about \$96,000. He said that this would be for survey design and environmental permitting. He said that the state personnel reviewed the project and said it was a wonderful project for the program and approved the design plan funding of \$96,000. He reported that when they went in for the construction round of funding the project was not funded by the state. He added that the total funding for the project was a little over \$800,000. He reported that they did an emergency order and repair last fall because they were at the point of having to close the road. He said that the town engineer and sustainability manager had a call this week with MVP attempting to resubmit the project for funding. S. Jahnle stated that Article 15 was a little bit of a scaled back project which they would do if there was no funding from the state. He added that some work would be done in-house. He said that it would not cover the full project but would fund the replacement of the culverts which was necessary. K. Duffett asked what the amount needed for the article was. S. Jahnle replied that it was \$500,000. K. Duffett asked what the source of the funds would be. S. Jahnle replied that it would be borrowing which would go onto the debt service of the stormwater budget.

Warrant Article 16 – Stormwater Vacuum Truck:

S. Jahnle reported that the vacuum truck was the last piece of equipment to purchase from the stormwater master plan. He said that the vacuum truck was a “tool of need” for the Stormwater Enterprise. He said it would be used for things like cleaning culverts, cleaning catch basins that the regular clamshell can’t, and the annual of cleaning oil separators. He said that this truck would be a “clean” truck and was totally different from the sewer vacuum truck. J. Clancy asked

what the cost of the truck was. S. Jahnle replied that it would cost \$435,000. J. Clancy asked if it had the same shelf life as the other vacuum truck. S. Jahnle replied in the affirmative. J. Clancy asked if it also showed in the debt service of the stormwater budget. S. Jahnle replied that it did.

Warrant Article 31 – General Bylaw Amendment – Stormwater Management:

S. Jahnle reported that the town engineer would be making presentations to other boards and the Finance Committee may wish to invite her to a meeting to review the bylaw. He stated that the bylaw would be a single stormwater bylaw covering permitting and all requirements in one spot. He explained that currently parts were in zoning bylaws or general bylaws and this would bring the requirements together into one bylaw. S. Jahnle stated that the engineer would be happy to come in to review the article with the Finance Committee.

Warrant Article 35 – Turnpike Road Sidewalk Easements:

S. Jahnle stated that this article was somewhat connected to the Kinloch Apartments built near the Turnpike Road and Warren Avenue intersection. He reported that E. Belansky had secured a \$225,000 housing choice grant. He stated that they were using a lot of these funds for the design of the sidewalk which ran from the apartments to the traffic light at Billerica Road and Golden Cove Road. He stated that based on the design a few easements would be needed. He said that the design was ongoing at the moment but should be done shortly. He added that they would then move on to conservation permitting and hoped to start construction this summer. J. Clancy asked if this article was just for the authority to acquire the easements. S. Jahnle replied that this was correct.

Warrant Article 36 – Ledge Road and Dunstable Road Intersection Easement:

S. Jahnle reported that this article was a place holder as they were not sure if the project would move forward. He said that the reason for this article was the significant amount of truck traffic in the area coming from the quarry operations. He said that if they could realign the road to allow for a left-turn it would alleviate some of the truck traffic. He said that the plan would take a little less than one-third of the property on the corner and the road would have to be realigned almost right up to the house. He stated that further presentation needed to be done to the Select Board to see how the town wanted to proceed.

Warrant Article 42 – Street Acceptances:

S. Jahnle stated that they had taken last year off from putting through street acceptances, but Article 42 continued the ongoing cleanup process of the roads inventory. He explained that they submitted the roads to the state which helped to maintain the town's slice of the Chapter 90 pie. J. Clancy asked how much road mileage was covered under this article. S. Jahnle replied that combined the streets in this article were a little over one mile. He explained that they had done the larger roads in the past and now were left with smaller roads. J. Clancy asked how many roads or miles were left. S. Jahnle replied that there were under 20 roads left and they were all small. He added that some of the remaining roads may need betterment programs before they could submit them. He added that they were picking off the easier ones first and would leave the harder ones for last.

FY2022 Nashoba Valley Technical School District Budget:

D. Pigeon thanked the Finance Committee for inviting Nashoba to the Finance Committee meeting. She said that Nashoba had reopened in September with the hybrid model and they had repurposed space such as the cafeteria, library, and gymnasium to accommodate their technical programs. She explained that they wanted to make sure students had in-person learning during their technical week. She thanked their two public health nurses including a new LPN they brought on board this year. She thanked S. Rosa saying she has been a fabulous support to Nashoba during the pandemic. She reported that the dental health renovation project has been completed and they were currently working on a server virtualization project. She said that other capital projects included lighting system upgrades, fire suppression system repairs, curbing repairs, and modifications for the building reopening.

D. Pigeon reported that enrollment at Nashoba had increased by 13 students overall this year and students from Chelmsford had increased by 12. She said that the percentage of students from Chelmsford was at 32%. She pointed out that there were 2 post-graduate students this year whereas there had been 4 last year.

D. Pigeon stated that Nashoba had a 14 member school committee and three Chelmsford representatives were serving on the Budget and Finance Committee for Nashoba and were very instrumental in helping to prepare the presented budget. (D. Ayer, C. Jeannotte, and L. MacDonald)

D. Pigeon reported that the FY2022 budget was done with a plan for a regular reopening for the 2021-2022 year with reduced COVID-19 restrictions. She added that they would leverage COVID-19 state and federal funds to support the full reopening. D. Pigeon pointed out that the budget reflected cost savings due to a staff-wide agreement among the teacher's union and all other units to have a 0% annual increase in 2020-2021 to support what they knew would be challenging times with the budget. She reported that staffing changes included the additional full-time nurse which she had mentioned as well as increasing both the part-time social worker and part-time business manager to full-time positions. She stated that the capital plan was level-funded, and they were working on the same projects they have been working on for the last few years. D. Pigeon stated that the FY2022 budget does not fund stabilization, which is at the current goal, but the budget did continue to fund OPEB with a proposed contribution of \$200,000.

D. Pigeon reported that the overall increase in expenses for the FY2022 budget was \$377,957 or a 2.42% increase over FY2021. She reported that funding from the state for Nashoba was increasing by only \$390,000 this year and they were anticipating slightly less in transportation reimbursement. She pointed out that they budgeted 100% of their certified excess & deficiency even though they were not required to do so. She said that with state revenues declining more funding was required from the member towns. D. Pigeon reported that Chelmsford's minimum contribution for FY2022 was \$3,103,106 with 31.78% of the students. She said that this was driven by the state funding formula and was an increase of \$253,378 over FY2021. She said that total Chelmsford assessment for FY2022 was \$3,721,402 which was an increase of \$276,207 over last year.

D. Pigeon thanked the cooperative placement business partners which were located in Chelmsford and nearby towns and have been hiring Nashoba students all along through the

pandemic. She said that they were very instrumental in the education which they provide at Nashoba Tech.

K. Duffett asked if the \$640,000 of the excess & deficiency zeroed out that account. D. Pigeon replied that it did as it used all of the funds in the account. K. Duffett asked if there was a summary chart comparing the budget to actual numbers similar to what was sent in the past. D. Pigeon replied that this comparison was available on their web page under documents. She said that the comparison was under documents, budget, proposed documents for public hearing. K. Duffett thanked D. Pigeon as she appreciated the effort involved in producing such a comparison.

K. Duffett asked what the reason was for certain communities to increase or decrease in enrollment. She asked if there was any understanding or analysis regarding these changes. D. Pigeon replied that there had been a sharp decline in a few towns such as Pepperrell, but she thought it was an anomaly. She explained that the applications had already doubled this year for the incoming class in Pepperrell and she expected their enrollment to spike back up next year. She said that she thinks enrollment changes vary from town to town and they did their best to make sure that every student had an awareness of Nashoba as their other public high school. P. Cohen pointed out that for whatever reason there was a small eight grade class in Chelmsford this year. He said that he would expect the enrollment both at the high school and Nashoba Tech to decrease significantly next year. He added that the changes may just be these anomalies which happen in communities. J. Clancy thanked the Nashoba members for attending the meeting and said that he would make them aware of the date that the Finance Committee would be making their recommendations. He added that we appreciated all the work they do and especially have done this year during a difficult pandemic season.

FY2022 Chelmsford Public Schools Budget:

J. Lang thanked the Finance Committee for inviting him to the meeting and he stated that he had reviewed the budget with the Finance Committee liaisons. He suggested that the Finance Committee members direct their attention to the budget overview highlights. He reported that the FY2022 school budget was a level services budget. He said that they had added significant programming and staff over the last few years and there were no proposed increases in staff for FY2022. He stated that the current year has been crazy with first going fully remote and now offering a hybrid and remote option. He added that the state was now requiring the schools to have full in-person learning in the elementary and middle schools in April and the expectation was that fall would bring a more normal school year.

J. Lang stated that the FY2022 school budget was a \$65 million budget which was an increase of \$3.3 million over last year. He pointed out that all school contracts had been settled and all step and lane changes have been incorporated into the FY2022 budget. He noted that they expected about 15 or 16 retirements which they budgeted at \$62,872 which was step 3 on a master's degree salary schedule.

J. Lang stated that the FY2022 budget included funds for tutoring at the elementary and middle school levels. He explained that in the fall they expected some students to have a learning loss and require educational assistance or tutoring. He said that including this in the budget would allow them to increase direct instruction to struggling students.

J. Lang reported that the FY2022 budget included funding for the continuation of the 1:1 computer initiative. He said that this would fund another 5th and 9th grade class with Chromebooks which the students would keep for four years. He added that this program continued to be funded from the School Choice revolving fund. He said that this coming year all students in grades 5 through 12 would have an individual device and almost all classrooms in the younger grades would have a cart of devices.

J. Lang stated that the budget reflected a reduction in the student activity and club fee at the high school from \$100 per year to \$50 per year. He added that this would bring the club fees in line with the \$50 charged per year at the middle schools. He said that they thought it was important to have some “buy-in” on the part of the student and they thought the \$50 rate was reasonable.

J. Lang pointed out that the FY2022 budget continued to include Circuit Breaker, School Choice, and the CHIPs revolving fund as revenue offsets. He commented that the FY2022 budget was a basic, level-services budget year over year and he would entertain any questions from the Finance Committee.

E. Chambers commented that J. Lang used \$62,000 as an average for the teachers that they were onboarding, and he asked what the average was of the teachers who were retiring. J. Lang replied that anyone retiring was usually on the top step of the salary scale. He said he uses the delta of the top number and the master’s step 3 and assumes the lower number for budgeting purposes.

A. Langford commented that a survey asking about COVID-19 pool testing had gone out and she asked what percentage had signed up to be in pool testing when the students returned to school. J. Lang replied that voluntary COVID-19 pool testing of teachers and students would be offered and the response to the Google form thus far showed about 1,000 had signed up to be included. A. Langford asked what the cost would be. J. Lang replied that the state would pickup the costs of the testing for the first six weeks at least. He explained that there would be a company hired to help with the collection and marking of specimens and the courier service to Cambridge, MA. He estimated that with about 1,000 participants per week the cost would be between \$10,000 and \$12,000 per week. He said that he would estimate the cost between now and the end of the year to be under \$100,000. He said that it was a DESC allowable expense so if the state did not pick up the entire expense they would fund through a DESC grant. He added that with the additional relief package he suspected that the state would end up picking up the costs through the end of the school year. He added that the pool testing was another strategy to keep staff and students healthy and in school. He noted that they would have to see what the costs for this would be come next fall.

A. Langford asked what the expected costs would be associated with the need to reopen elementary and middle schools within the next month. She said, for example, that she had heard that desks would need to be purchased. J. Lang replied that they were prepared for getting students back in a staggered fashion, so the requirement of having all students in elementary and middle schools back in a month was a little earlier than they had wanted. He said that they planned to petition to have grades K through 4 back on April 4th and grade 5 along with the middle school to go back on April 28th. He added that they would not be able to accommodate 6

feet of social distancing but would be able to be at the minimum of 3 feet apart or more. He reported that the K – 2 grades had a lot of tables which they would need to replace with desks. He added that they were purchasing adjustable desks which could serve a number of grade levels so any desks and chairs would not go to waste. He explained that when the pandemic was over the desks would be used to cycle out some of the older desks. He said that the cost for the new desks and chairs was about \$150,000. J. Lang reported that they were also renting tents for outdoor areas for lunch and breaks. He pointed out that the only lost cost of the opening would be the cost for the rental of the tents which was estimated at about \$20,000. A. Langford asked where the \$150,000 was coming from. J. Lang replied that they would use the ESSER funds. He said that currently there was excess funding for FY2021 so they may end up moving the funds out of the ESSER account as FY2022 and FY2023 had uncertainly and he would like to have some “wobble room” in the upcoming budgets to be able to respond to some of the needs that may come up once they are back at school in person.

A. Langford commented that it was her understanding that there would be a new report card system in the fall. She questioned if there would be any cost to implement the system. J. Lang replied that there was no additional cost within the budget. He said that they had built in funds to pay the company to do modifications for tweaking of the report card or other reporting, so the money was already included in the budget. He said that the curriculum itself was not changing. He said that they were looking at a couple of options currently and added that they would be giving an update next week to the school committee if people were interested in more information.

V. Parks asked if there would be any additional costs for buses with the return to in-person learning. J. Lang replied that he did not foresee that for this year as it would not be feasible to add any additional buses for the last 8 to 10 weeks of the year. He added that they had the full complement of 29 buses, which were not currently at capacity. He noted that the regulations had been loosened over the last couple of weeks and they were reviewing them. He said that they had chosen to forego fees for riding the bus this year. He said that with the existing capacity they could accommodate more students from kindergarten through 8th grade, but for the remainder of the year they did not have the capacity to add additional bus routes or capacity. He added that he also did not think that he had the capacity to allow those who live under one mile of the school to ride the bus if they purchase a ticket as is normally allowed. V. Parks asked if there were any accommodations for the high school students. J. Lang replied that the high school buses did not travel through neighborhoods as they have in the past but there were a number of shuttle-stops set up such that high school students could get on at any of the shuttle run stops. He added that they would have more traditional bus runs in the fall.

K. Duffett commented that earlier it was said that in the fall the schools may be offering programs for students who had experienced learning loss. She asked if any consideration was being given to having summer classes. J. Lang replied that a group was convening to discuss this. He added that it had been a difficult, long year for staff so he did not know if there would be the staffing capacity to support summer classes. K. Duffett gave kudos to the entire staff for taking such great care of the students during what she is sure has been a grueling year.

K. Duffett commented that teachers could now get vaccinated against COVID-19. She asked if there was data as to what percentage had been vaccinated. J. Lang replied that 310 of the staff

have received the first dose and were scheduled for the second dose. He said that in the survey they had done, 700 educators had indicated that they would like to receive the vaccine so a little less than half have been vaccinated. He reported that 263 of the staff had signed up for the COVID-19 pool testing and 783 students had signed up. He added that they could choose to add themselves each week. K. Duffett thanked the schools for all of their hard work this year. V. Parks added that all have been doing an amazing job. J. Clancy stated that as he had said to Nashoba, he would let J. Lang know when the Finance Committee would be making their recommendations.

Budget Hearing and Spring Town Meeting Warrant Schedule:

J. Clancy reported that next week the Finance Department and Veterans Services would be attending the meeting. He added that the citizen's petition on climate change, four zoning articles, and a general bylaw would also be discussed. He said that the Planning Board had not voted yet and he would reach out to them to possibly come back in on the 25th. K. Duffett stated that the Library would also be having their budget hearing on the 18th. J. Clancy said that the Police Department and the Fire Department would be in on the 25th and the other citizen's petition would also be discussed. He said that recommendations would be made either on the 25th or early in April. J. Clancy said that it was likely that Town Meeting would be delayed. A. Langford asked when the decision would be made as to when Town Meeting would take place. P. Cohen replied that he imagined that the Finance Committee would hear from J. Kurland by the end of the month.

Public Comment:

None.

K. Duffett made a motion to adjourn. E. Chambers seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 8.58 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela A. Morrison