

TOWN COUNCIL
Town of Trumbull
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TOWN HALL
Trumbull

TELEPHONE
(203) 452-5000



EDUCATION COMMITTEE
MINUTES
APRIL 26, 2021

CALL TO ORDER: The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:39 p.m. All present joined in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL: The clerk called the roll and recorded it as follows:
PRESENT: Thomas Whitmoyer, Chairman, Joanne Glasser-Orenstein, Vice Chairman, Lisa Valenti, Kevin Shively, Lori Rosasco-Schwartz, Michael Miller

ABSENT: Donna Seidell

ALSO
PRESENT: First Selectman Vicki A. Tesoro, Chief Administrative Officer Cynthia Katske, Town Council Chairman Dawn Cantafio, Town Council members, Ashley Gaudiano, Kevin Shively, Thomas Whitmoyer, Tony Scinto, Nicole Satin, Eric Paulson, Jason Marsh, Town Attorney Daniels Schopick, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Martin Semmel, BOE, BOE Business Manager Paul Hendrickson BOE Finance Committee member Scott Kerr

Discussion – Follow up to BOE Audit

The Chair explained this committee met with the BOE on January 25, 2021 and had an update of the possible fifty-six (56) recommendations discovered by the operational review done. Thirty-seven (37) of the recommendations had been completed and/or addressed at that time. Two (2) were items the town had to do. Sixteen (16) recommendations were in progress at that time. There was one recommendation the BOE chose not to address because it was adverse to the process they were trying to correct. Dr. Semmel stated this has been an important topic and believes they have done excellent work managing the recommendations.

Mr. Hendrickson forwarded the March 18 recommendations' update progress to the Chair. The BOE is given this update at the beginning of every month. It is also available on the Trumbull schools' website, under BOE, then under "Budgets" you will find it at the bottom of the list. It lays out each of the sixty-eight (68) recommendations and lists the status, description, type of recommendation, with the number copied directly from the operational review. There is a column with the last update date, if the item has been completed, items currently in progress, an estimated completion date, and at the far right is the person or persons responsible for work being done on the recommendation.

- Two (2) of the recommendations are town related
- Forty (40) recommendations have been completed
- Twenty-two (22) are currently in progress
- Four (4) have not been addressed, because they cannot be addressed until the start of the fiscal year
- Currently working on the implementation of the Novatime system with position control as it relates to MUNIS.

The Novatime system was one of the larger items noted in the operational review. They are in the process of meeting every Wednesday for an hour with Novatme going through programing for work rules and pay schedules for each of the different bargaining units. At the end of this fiscal year they will be ready to go with custodians and by the start of the school year with para-professionals. These are the two (2) key bargaining units because they currently use handwritten timesheets. This system will convert over to electronic timesheets, which will make for more efficient payroll processing, reduce the time, and stress on the payroll department.

They already have Position Control that is associated with MUNIS but have not been utilizing. It enables them to track each individual in the school system and sets a limit of the number of people they hire. Dr. Semmel and/or he would have approval rights to hire someone new. It also allows them to break down the FTE's that are fulltime equivalent by school, by type of job or by grade level. The HR and Payroll departments are working on programming that. They will have a full day work session on May 17 to test the system, have training and to see what modifications have to be made.

- They are currently looking at the MUNIS transition (who will go on the system), it's currently managed by their benefits person. This will transition to the IT department. The IT person is well on their way to learning how to do the job so there will be a smooth transition by the start of the next fiscal year.
- Eventually all employees will be on Novatime but it's most important to start with the groups who use paper timesheets. The only other group that uses paper timesheets are a summer of curriculum writing for teachers. There are 150-160 paraprofessionals and approximately 80 custodians and security guards. It's key to getting them on is because they are paid weekly whereas the remainder of the groups get paid bi-weekly but are currently in negotiations to go bi-weekly.
- Budget transfers and Purchasing - They had a meeting with the Town Purchasing Agent, the Superintendent and himself and all personnel in the Business Department so they

could better understand the Town Purchasing process. They will more readily adhere to it.

- Transfers have been initiated. In his previous position he didn't do transfers until this time of the year because he liked to see how the budget was running. If he continued to transfer throughout the year he didn't get a true sense of what was happening in the account.

Mr. Kerr added the transfers recommended by Mr. Hendrickson are coming before the BOE Finance Committee for approval first, and then move on to the full board for approval. They are looked at in detail twice. They don't want to transfer to and from accounts until they have relative certainty they will not move anymore before the end of the year.

- The recommendation that won't be implemented until July are reduction of custodian and security guard accounts, currently there are nine (9) accounts and are going to reduce them to six (6).
- The employee self-service module also associated with MUNIS will come on towards the end of the year.

The Chair stated he knew there were sixty-eight (68) recommendations in total but at the time he looked he could only find fifty-six (56), which is why his numbers at the beginning of this meeting were different from Mr. Hendrickson's.

Mr. Hendrickson confirmed 40 recommendations have been completed and twenty-two (22) are in progress. There are four (4) remaining, which are predominantly in payroll and will be implemented in the start of the fiscal year. One is for him to check the payroll register and another is to transfer the unemployment processing from the Business Department to HR. This would additionally reduce the workload on the payroll person.

Ms. Rosasco-Schwartz extended her gratitude and noted there was tremendous progress. Mr. Hendrickson explained the only one recommendation that would be implemented later than July 1 is the employee self-service piece. Most of this can be accomplished through Novatime. Employee self-service is a nice to have not a control function. Some of the recommendations were relatively easy to complete. The remainder are time consuming.

Mr. Hendrickson explained for Ms. Glasser-Orenstein, the lunch program has many moving parts. 4-5 years ago it was profitable and was allocated an additional expense of \$280,000 on successive years \$80,000 and then ran a deficit. Due to COVID it has continued to run a deficit. The good news is in the month of March they ran a profit of \$78,807. They have reached an inflection point and hopefully has turned around. In addition, the Summer Seamless Option, which provides free lunch for all students, has been extended to the next school year. Hopefully they will continue to run a profit.

At their last meeting, they approved a transfer of \$500,000 from the lunch cash account to the town to reduce their due-to account from the town. They are projecting a surplus of at \$2 million and a good part of that will go towards paying down the deficit and based on the way the lunch program is tracking it will be profitable next year.

Mr. Hendrickson explained to the Chair that there are twenty-five (25) to thirty (30) special revenue accounts. That is a large number. There are two (2) primary accounts causing deficits on their own. It is his understanding each one should stand alone, the fact that the aggregate sum may be profitable is unsatisfactory. At tomorrow night's meeting, they are proposing an increase in their TECEC tuition to be in line with the town and surrounding preschools. With the proposed school enrollment next year, they could break even and will discuss increasing fees for elementary strings and band and/or including that as a line item in the budget. They have included money in their next year's budget \$200,000 for lunch and \$230,000 to cover deficits in TECEC and elementary strings and band. Most of the other programs are profitable or very close to profitable. They should not be borrowing from special revenue funds to augment the operating budget. The Chair agreed. Dr. Semmel added when it comes to the string and band account it is not possible to think it will be self-sustainable because as teachers' salaries go up they either have to raise fees or they have to increase what they are requesting in the budget to cover the delta. They have to keep an eye on each of the funds so the delta isn't created. He agrees they should not be borrowing from one account to pay the other.

Mr. Kerr noted the special revenue accounts are not program accounts. The strings & band line is not a program account. It is an account to capture revenues from parents because they charge a participation fee. Prior administrations maybe with good intent believed all of the expenses for the program should be charged to that account instead of only the portion that could be supported by the program fees. That is how the account went into the rears. Mr. Hendrickson noted in the last few finance committee meetings they have been reviewing a couple of accounts each meeting to show the committee what revenue they are taking in and what is being charged as an expense in those accounts. This familiarizes them with the accounts and how they work.

On behalf of the committee the Chair extended his gratitude and congratulated Dr. Semmel, Mr. Hendrickson and Mr. Kerr for not only doing their best for rectifying this in a much more expedient timeframe than anticipated. The Chair was also is pleased with the communication between Long Hill and the BOE. It seems all are willing to fix this and that has been incredibly refreshing and hopes it continues. There were other questions and concerns forwarded but they will be held to a future meeting because they do not deal directly with the operational review.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business to discuss and upon motion made by Shively, seconded by Rosasco-Schwartz the Education Committee adjourned by unanimous consent at 8:09 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Margaret D. Mastroni, Town Council Clerk