

Budget Workshop (Via Zoom) – Approved Minutes
Wednesday, March 9, 2022 7:00 p.m.
Central Services

Present Board Members: Kristina Gilton, Monica Logan, Donna Nolan, David Peling, Whitney Sanzo, Sarah Thrall, and Rosemarie Weber.

Absent Board Members: None

Sarah Thrall called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

I. FY23 Administrative Budget

The Board continued to discuss the FY23 Administrative Budget. Sarah Thrall thanked everyone for joining the meeting virtually and stated at last week's regular education meeting the FY23 Administrative Budget Book was provided as well as an overview of the budget. Ms. Thrall stated Dr. Grossman will answer any questions that Board members may have and Board of Finance (BOF) members may also ask questions if they have any. Dr. Grossman shared the Vision of the Graduate with everyone and stated this document is for all students PK-12. He reviewed some of the administrative priorities, such as, the budget is in alignment with the Strategic Plan and is responsive to the needs of the district as a result of the pandemic. Dr. Grossman stated this budget is in line and within the BOF recommended guideline. He reminded everyone the Plus One Budget came in at 4.26% and this Administrative Budget is 3.69% which is below the BOF guideline of 3.85%. Health insurance was initially at 20% and is now at 16% which is a \$125K savings along with retirement savings of \$123K and transportation and software savings of approximately \$30K. Dr. Grossman stated just to roll over the current budget the budget would be a 1.74% increase; after special education costs are added it brings the number up to a 2.65%; after net reductions and additions it is a 4.06%; and, finally 4.26%. Dr. Grossman reviewed some highlights and notables of the budget, such as, maintaining Granby BOE class size guidelines; maintaining core instructional and student intervention programs; continuing the strings program to Grade 6; adding one additional classroom teacher at Wells Road to meet the needs of current class size, a K-2 Literacy Specialist at Kelly Lane, an Illustrative Math Program at Kelly Lane and Wells Road; and, new course offerings at the high school.

Dr. Grossman entertained questions from the Board of Education. Rosemarie Weber inquired about Grade 6 strings and if those students were the first students to receive strings in Kindergarten. Dr. Grossman stated, yes, that is true. Ms. Weber thanked Dr. Grossman for his work on the budget and stated it is a very responsible budget and she was pleased that the budget reflects the Board's priorities especially in the areas of math (Illustrative Math as well as the Integrated Algebra class at the middle school) in order that students have a chance to be successful in math as well as the additional teacher at Wells Road. She stated all of these things support children in the classroom.

Kristina Gilton inquired if the new Broadcasting Course at the high school is linked into the news studio. Dr. Grossman stated yes, it is. And Ms. Jennifer Parsons, Assistant Superintendent, stated it is actually an existing course which is being revised and updated to meet the needs of the news studio. Ms. Thrall stated the middle school also has a position in the budget which will help to support the vertical alignment of this program.

Whitney Sanzo inquired if the benefits package at 20% was a projected number. Anna Robbins, Business Manager, stated Granby Public Schools is self-insured and the increase is a projection on industry standards as well as meetings with consultants and the town to ensure we meet expenses based on the market. She stated that although it is an estimate, there is a good, strong plan behind it.

Monica Logan inquired with regard to the adjustment in the line item for substitute teachers, if there was any reduction in coverage for teachers. Dr. Grossman stated, no, there is no reduction. Donna Nolan stated during the pandemic substitute costs rose significantly and inquired if there was any anticipation in substitute costs going down. Dr. Grossman stated it has been difficult to find substitutes so the district will actually be in alignment this year but should be right on target next year. Last year, grant funds were received so that if funding was needed, ESSER funds could be used for substitutes. Dr. Grossman stated

the district is in good shape this year and he foresees the same for next year. Ms. Thrall inquired if Dr. Grossman could speak about the vision of the town technology position in the budget. Dr. Grossman stated when he first arrived in Granby one of the first meetings he was involved with was IBAC and looking into how the town and BOE can work together. In that first year, there was a focus on technology. The town is very short-handed in technology and communication and this will be part of their vision. The Board is short-handed with only one technology technician for the district and more assistance can be used in that area. This position could assist both the town and BOE with these needs. Right now it is in the budget for a part-time position with perhaps 10 hours/week with the town and 10 hours working with the schools. Mr. Lambert, Director of Technology, would take a lead in managing this position but the direction of this position will come from the Town Manager and Superintendent.

Ms. Thrall inquired if the BOF had any questions. Jenny Emery inquired about the "policy" to have a reserve in the Quality and Diversity Fund. Dr. Grossman stated he does not recall having a reserve in the last two years. Anna Robbins stated a fund balance is run in the Q&D for five years so that magnet school students can get educated. The balance dips a little but the years going forward builds that balance back up again. Ms. Emery inquired how the Board judges on the balance of the number of administrators in the district. Dr. Grossman stated Granby is pretty much aligned with other towns but stated there has actually been a cut of administrators in the Granby Public Schools. A principal was cut when Kearns was closed as well as the elimination of Central Office administrators (Director of Teaching & Talent Development and a K-12 Language Arts Supervisor). Ms. Emery also inquired about one of Dr. Grossman's passion of a unified sports program and she was curious if this was being done. Dr. Grossman stated this is being done as well as the Best Buddies Program which is alive and well and is in the budget this year. Unified sports has been running since he arrived in Granby and the Athletic Director and a coach are volunteering their time to run this program. Dr. Grossman stated he would love to see this program at all of the schools K-12. In conclusion, Ms. Emery stated she hopes the district starts to look at the bus fleet and the opportunity to begin converting to electric in the future. Dr. Grossman stated this is very expensive and has had the conversation with our bus contractor. Ms. Emery stated the budget looks great and she appreciates all of the work.

James Tsaptsinos inquired about the role of the campus supervisors. Dr. Grossman stated they are current staff members who are just being moved to a new line item and that these positions are currently contracted services. Dr. Grossman stated by bringing these positions in-house, the district will be able to oversee them.

Kevin Hobson thanked the Board for putting together the budget and presentation and inquired regarding nursing services and the drive behind the 3.5% increase. Dr. Grossman stated that it is the going rate right now and Granby is very lucky to be able to keep the increase at just 3.5%. Mr. Hobson also inquired about the addition to the strings program and what the measure of success is for the program. Jennifer Parsons stated the strings program was initially brought to the schools by the GEF. The BOE and administrative team at that time committed to have full class exposure K-2 to the strings program moving towards a Grades 3-5 lesson-based approach next year. In Grade 3, they will have choice to stay with the program and to rent an instrument. Violins, cello and bass will be added going forward at Wells Road and the middle school. Mr. Hobson inquired if they are seeing an increase in lessons in Grades 3-5 and Ms. Parsons stated yes. Additionally, Mr. Hobson inquired regarding fuel costs and if the BOE thinks there needs to be any padding for next year. Anna Robbins stated an extravagant number of \$3.59/gallon was put into the budget and she continues to attend different consortium groups and every school district is in the same boat. School districts look to buy cooperatively with other groups and right now no one is looking to buy anything. Ms. Robbins also shared that diesel fuel for buses was projected at a decent number as well; however, it is very hard to predict the future. Mr. Hobson inquired if there is anything in the budget addressing competitive salaries for teachers. Dr. Grossman stated it is not the Superintendent's call as salaries and increases are negotiated as part of the teachers' contract. The district tries to negotiate what is the best contract for the town but also what is fair to the respective bargaining group. He stated Granby's teachers are one of the lowest paid in the valley and the contract that the Board just signed gets them up a little but it will take some time. He stated he cannot put in an extra \$10K for a teacher; however, these positions are bound by a contract and this will have to be looked at a year from now when negotiations begin again for teachers and evaluate what is fair market value at that time. Lastly, Mr. Hobson inquired about annuities and who those are for and Dr. Grossman stated they are for some contractual positions and are similar to a 401K.

Ms. Thrall gave a last call for questions from either the BOE or BOF and asked Dr. Grossman if he wanted to summarize anything. Dr. Grossman stated when building this budget, he was in close contact with Mike Guarco and attended BOF meetings with Anna Robbins to really understand the financial aspects of where the town of Granby is now and needs to be in the future. It is important to be as transparent as possible with this budget which will definitely move the district forward in the future especially with the *Moving Forward Together Strategic Plan*. Dr. Grossman stated he appreciates everyone's support and questions this evening and he looks forward to meeting next week when hopefully the Board will accept the 3.69% budget as their own budget. Ms. Thrall stated she loves the way the Strategic Plan and the budget works well together and she thanked Dr. Grossman for his leadership.

Bill Kennedy extended his appreciation to everyone involved in putting this budget together and bringing a budget in at this point is really a shining star to this community and it is only because of the people in this town who work for us and who can get it done.

Ms. Thrall concluded stating the next step is at next week's BOE meeting the Board will hopefully move this budget forward as the Board of Education Budget. It will thereafter be brought forward to the BOF at their March 29th meeting. Ms. Thrall informed the Board to please contact Dr. Grossman if they have any other questions and she looks forward to the vote next week.

A motion was made by Donna Nolan and seconded by Rosemarie Weber to adjourn the meeting. This motion passed unanimously at 7:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Nolan
Board Secretary