

# OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

106 Hancock Road  
Peterborough, New Hampshire

## CONTOOCOOK VALLEY SCHOOL BOARD

### Selectmen's Advisory Committee

Thursday, April 22, 2021  
7:00 p.m.

**Physical Location: None**

**Virtual Location:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85600803138?pwd=THRDa2dQUtByU1dwMzgyRms5L2dTUT09>

Passcode: 42T0AH

Telephone: 1 301 715 8592

ID: 856 0080 3138

Passcode: 374912

### Minutes

**Present:** John Robertson, Ed Juengst, Bob Marshall, Carole Monroe, Jeff Brown, Kate Fuller, Tim Theberge, Stephen Ullman, Janine Lesser, Dr. Kimberly Saunders

#### 1. Call to Order

John Robertson called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

#### 2. Approve Minutes of March 25, 2021

Jeff Brown moved to accept the minutes of March 25, 2021. Ed Juengst second. Unanimous.

#### 3. Budget & Property Committee Report Out

Dr. Kimberly Saunders reported closing in on the solar energy project.

The district is constantly prepping the budget, looking toward what the unreserved fund balance might be. How much will go back to the towns is not yet known.

The other piece is the \$780K previously designated toward a K-8 Remote Learning Program. The board has decided not to fund that program.

ESSER funding are for COVID related expenses. \$1.4M from round one and \$3.0M from the next round which will be used for learning recovery.

John Robertson said that it is his understanding that the \$780K could not be used until 2022/2023. Confirmed.

Dr. Saunders said that the towns voted to raise and appropriate the dollars. What could happen is if there is a savings at the end, we can push those dollars back to the town. It would be July 2022.

Kate Fuller asked about setting the tax rate last year. The audit was late. Ms. Fuller asked if that was anticipated again this year.

Kimberly Saunders said that she anticipates knowing earlier this year than last. Dr. Saunders further said that she needs to double check the schedule with them. It was noted that the auditing firm are the only auditors to do this work.

Carole Monroe asked how what was just voted affects this year and next.

Tim Theberge said that there will be no impact this year. The 2023 year will be the impact year.

Fund Balance Policy, DIA, will lay out the rules in which we deal with this. We are authorized to retain up to 5% however, ConVal policy will limit it to “up to 2.5%” retention. Restraints will be in place. Kimberly Saunders said that the reason that it came up this year was because we recognize, had we voted on this in 2012, we would not be in the situation of making difficult decisions. Tim Theberge said that our Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is being worked on. Once projects are identified in a given year, assuring that it will happen in that year will be part of the plan. Ed Juengst asked if the district has a plan that schedules out roofs and all of the costs in detail. Tim Grossi confirmed that we do for all eleven buildings by year, by cost. Janine Lesser asked if the CIP could be shared. The committee confirmed that they would be interested in seeing ConVal’s CIP. Kimberly Saunders reported that the CIP is on our website. Janine Lesser said that the ability to retain some of the fund balance will help with the CIP. John Robertson said that the ability to retain some funding will help eliminate the spikes in proposed budgets. It allows a level of protection for the unexpected. Tim Theberge spoke about the privilege of having Tim Grossi as Facilities Director. His knowledge and expertise is top shelf. Jeff Brown said that a fund balance is key in balancing a budget. Tim Theberge said that the retention of a fund balance will not go into effect until 2023. Carole Monroe reminded people that as we budget we are in fact over budgeting in order to put money into those accounts. Kimberly Saunders said that is not how it works. The only time money goes into those trust funds is if there is money left over. They are funded in the order that they appear on the warrant. If there was enough money for only one, that trust would be the only one funded. Carole Monroe said that in addition to unfunded trusts we also have the new warrant article allowing the retention of funds. Kimberly Saunders said that we don’t over budget for that purpose. She agreed to share information so that those present can view the history. Carole said that there is real value in capital reserve accounts. In towns, they are funded by taxation. It is counted on so that it gets funded. We need to have those accounts in case the roof falls in. Kimberly Saunders said that we could put a warrant article on the ballot designating the funding of a capital reserve account. We have not done that in the past. Janine Lesser said that the Selectmen’s Advisory Committee has requested that we budget so that there is less unreserved fund balance so that tax bills are lower up front. We have all of the same problems meeting emergencies as the towns. Tim Theberge said that Jim Fredrickson’s document lays out the transfers to the trust funds back several years. It informs us of the history of the trusts. Ed Juengst spoke about the school district’s inability to retain funds and the requirement to return it to the towns unlike the towns who can retain funds. Tim Theberge said that the Special Education Trust is a good investment. The money in this fund could go very quickly. Stephen Ullman said that the severity of the disability of an incoming student is unknown and could have a significant impact. Tim Theberge said that the status of trust funds, unreserved return over the past several years that funded reserve accounts, and CIP Plan are the action items from this agenda item.

#### **4. Strategic Plan Committee Report Out**

Tim Theberge reported that a Strategic Plan kickoff meeting is scheduled for May 11<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. Location TBD. A decent response from community invites was received. Additional people have agreed to sit on committees as a result of direct invites. Staff will be assigned to subcommittees. A board member will sit on each of these committees as well. The timeline had to move as a result of everything that has occurred. The district is looking at learning recovery that is happening now. We want a robust strategic plan cycle that includes community input. The process will likely take a year to complete the plan.

Kimberly Saunders said that she is looking forward to May 11<sup>th</sup> to begin this work. Our current plan expires June 30<sup>th</sup> of this year. The plan is online. This is done on a five year cycle.

Jeff Brown asked how the district did looking back at the last plan.

Kimberly Saunders said that the last plan was extremely ambitious. In most areas, milestones were achieved. We were in the process of starting the new Strategic Plan.

Present Strategic Planning efforts are behind. We achieved 80% or more of the goals set out in the last plan.

Stephen Ullman said that he believed that specific measures and concrete indicators will be in place. It has to be measurable.

Kimberly Saunders spoke about ConValnews.com. There is a tab for communication surveys. She asked Select Board members to consider placing this on town websites. We need more input from community members. We want to know what they think about communication and what the best way to get information to them is. The link will be sent out to each member with the hope it will be placed on town websites.

Ed Juengst said that towns need to work more closely on things such as this.

It is news about the schools. Three to four big communications are pushed out each week.

John Robertson asked how many towns have a communication piece that gets sent out on a regular basis. Hancock, Antrim, Greenfield, Dublin and Peterborough have regular communication releases.

## **5. School Board Report Out**

Tim Theberge said that other districts are actively joining our lawsuit on education funding.

An attempt to hold quarterly moderated sessions where the board is available for question and answer sessions is in the planning stages. At board meetings, public comment sessions are on the agenda but they are not back and forth opportunities for discussion. These forums will allow an exchange.

Quarterly sessions will address questions that people have with dialogue. If the board has not taken a position on a topic it is difficult to discuss completely.

The sense of the board is that the first attempt will be Tim Theberge, as School Board Chair, moderating.

A presentation on Learning Recovery has recently been shared with the public.

Legislation was touched upon and related concerns associated with it.

The district took a position on HB130 and SB13 and whether it makes it into the budget.

Tim Theberge urged advocating against them.

Kimberly Saunders said that HB20 and SB130 do not have enough support to pass the Senate and the House on their own. SB130 is believed to be placed right into the budget. Kimberly has asked the Commissioner to put together a Commission to look into further. New Hampshire could study this and make this work for us.

Dr. Saunders offered to share more about what it would mean to the ConVal District.

## **6. Other**

Jeff Brown asked if we are going back to tents and outside classrooms.

Kimberly Saunders said that we will be using some tents. Not to the extent that they were used in the fall. We have done significant HVAC work that allows the air handling to exchange air.

We have to make sure meal time is safe and allow that to take place outdoors. Some outdoor learning will take place.

Jeff Brown shared the winds today as a concern with tents. Jeff asked if there can be some hope that the \$780K will be returned to the taxpayers rather than look for ways to spend it.

Kimberly Saunders said that there is no plan to look at ways to spend it. If you look at the unreserved fund balance, it will be apparent that we have given money back every year. It comes with careful fiscal oversight. She said that she would anticipate seeing in that ballpark returned.

Tim Theberge said that it is fair to say that whatever the appropriate portion of the \$780K is to return is the plan. Tim said that the only issue is learning recovery and that would be worth every cent.

Stephen Ullman said that we anticipate federal dollars to cover learning recovery. Students have suffered.

Janine Lesser said that the district has always worked hard to make sure that the dollars are accounted for and well spent. If possible to send money back, it will be sent back. We expect, but we don't know. She said that this is dangerous talk.

Tim Theberge said that the budget passed. From that perspective, the board decided not to do that particular item. There is public resistance to the proposal for a remote school. Some board members are adamant that we won't do that program. There is the board's ability to be responsive to what happens down the road.

Carole Monroe said that there is some damage control that needs to be done. There is the feeling that this was hidden in the budget. Many people felt blind-sided. It was going to add an additional element to the education process and people did not understand it. She said that the count was really close and it should be paid attention to.

Kimberly said that she understands. The information on the remote school was out there. A group of people who had a bad experience with remote learning were opposed to remote learning. We may be obligated to provide a remote option in the fall. We wanted to make sure that what we offered children was of high quality and would not continue to result in learning loss. It was not intended to be a long-term remote school. We have children who cannot come back to school for various reasons.

Stephen Ullman agreed the proposal was obscure. At the same time, a lot of thought went into creating a multi-grade competency based program.

**Jeff Brown motioned to adjourn at 8:21 p.m. Carole Monroe second. Unanimous.**

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Marschok