

RUTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS
RUTLAND CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS – FINANCE/PLANNING COMMITTEE SPECIAL MEETING
September 21, 2021 – Amended 9/28/2021.

Committee Members Present:

Charlene Seward, Chair

Ann Dages

Dena Goldberg

Alison Notte

Tricia O’Connor

Also Present: Cathy Solsaa

Also Present:

Superintendent Bill Olsen

Assistant Superintendent Rob Bliss

Director of Finance Ted Plemenos

Abby Brodowski, Recovery Coordinator

Greg Schillinger, RHS Principal

The meeting was called to order at 5:38 pm. It was noted that all Committee Members are in attendance.

CALL TO ORDER

Approval of the Agenda – The agenda was approved as written.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Public Input – None.

PUBLIC COMMENT

ESSER Grant Funding – Abby Brodowski, Recovery Coordinator, introduced herself and reviewed the three different rounds of ESSER Funding (each for specific uses and time frames.) The total ESSER award for RCPS is \$17,403,183. All of ESSER I has been expended, part of ESSER II has been expended and none of ESSER III has been expended. Ms. Brodowski reviewed the process for approval of ESSER Funds. ESSER requires us to spend funds that prevent, prepare for, and respond to current and future pandemics and also require that costs are allowable, reasonable and necessary. Goals and strategies include: Social/Emotional Learning and Mental Health, Engagement and Truancy, Academic Achievement and Safe and Healthy Schools. Ms. Brodowski noted looking through a lens of student need and meaningful engagement with the community. Links to additional information and the Community Engagement Survey were provided. Discussion revolved around what ESSER Funds can and cannot be used for, lists of allowables (Government mandated – not open to interpretation) and HVAC/air quality under ESSER.

ESSER GRANT FUNDING

Ted Plemenos reviewed the three separate rounds of ESSER Funds and noted that 1.1 million dollars has been approved and expended under ESSER I and ESSER II is midway along (there is still time to apply for more funds.) He advised that the AOE is about to release updated guidelines. Several new staff have been hired (interventionists, special educators and counselors) and work is being done with Glenn Scott, Director of Buildings, Grounds and Transportation, to identify eligible, possible upgrades. He noted ESSER III Funds must be tracked separately (at least 20% must address learning loss as defined) and spoke to the “fiscal cliff” and avoiding building in costs that may not be sustainable when funding ends. He advised that there is a wide range of activities, which are all very specific.

Discussion revolved around considerations for HVAC/air quality and purchasing filters (and frequency of replacing,) how funds are drawn (quarterly,) budgeting by November 1st and amending as often as needed (not losing opportunity for funding,) boosting remote learning for students with disabilities (in case we need to go back to that model,) enhancing connectivity, cyber defense and impact on FY 23 budget.

BUDGET TIME-LINE

FY 23 Budget Timeline – Key meeting dates were noted:

- October 19, 2021 – Preliminary Outlook
- November 16, 2021 – More Detailed Estimates
- December 7, 2021 – Proposed Budget
- December 14, 2021 – Initial Board Review of Proposed Budget

Mr. Plemenos advised that he may bring a proposal to the Committee to use the Vermont Bond Bank for potentially several thousand dollars in savings.

The Committee agreed to the proposed schedule and virtual meetings beginning at 5:45 pm. Mr. Plemenos will provide opportunity for in-person meetings as required.

Mr. Plemenos noted uncertainties related to labor negotiation outcomes, benefit costs and Act 173. He discussed concerns regarding Power School and plan moving forward (task force is reviewing and this is on hold until at least January 1, 2022.) Impact from the Weighting Study will be no sooner than 2024.

The audit will be completed by the end of the month. Mr. Plemenos advised that Jim Reynolds has indicated that they may not be interested in renewing the contract. Mr. Plemenos may bring a proposal for consideration of a different auditor (R.H. Smith.)

Strategic Plan – Mr. Plemenos and Superintendent Olsen spoke to concerns about readiness and potential for deferring action. The feeling is that people are stretched thin, facing more uncertainties, and a degree of burnout. The Weighting Study Report and further guidance on ESSER could also be game changers. Moving forward with pre-COVID plans (curriculum and social emotional focuses) is solid, but taking on an additional project at this time would be extremely challenging.

**STRATEGIC
PLAN**

The Committee agreed to table Strategic Plan and review in the spring.

Motion by Dages/Goldberg at 6:47 pm that the Rutland City Board of School Commissioners Finance/Planning Committee enter into an executive session with CFO Ted Plemenos, Superintendent Olsen, Assistant Superintendent Bliss and Commissioners, O'Connor and Solsaa for the purposes of discussing contract negotiations, general public knowledge of which would clearly place the Board at substantial disadvantage.

**EXECUTIVE
SESSION**

The Committee came out of executive session at 7:03 pm, having taken no action while in session.

**OUT OF
EXECUTIVE
SESSION**

The Committee adjourned at 7:04 pm.

ADJOURN

Respectfully submitted,
Betty A. Kapitan, Recording Secretary