

**Richmond Consolidated School - School Committee**  
**Meeting MINUTES**  
April 28, 2020 6:00 PM

Approved 5/12/2020

Present: Dewey Wyatt, Adeline Ellis, Susan Benner, Peter Dillon, Jill Pompei, Jenevra Stock

Guests: Anna Smith, Beth Smith, Cindy Bartlett, Cristina Lenfest, Doug Bruce, Bob Gniadek, Doug Wentworth, Erin Weeden Gill Romano, Jeanne Jones, Joy Mullen, Julia Curletti, Katie Bovard, Keith \_\_, Kim Kuster, Kimmie Lecco, Lauren Broussal, "MacAdmin", Mary Shook, Megan Babich, Melissa Roller, Michael Jezak, Michelle Smith, Rachel Kanz, "RCS", Roger Kohler, Sandra Wojtkowski, Sharon Harrison, Shawn Schaffer, Sharon Renfrew, Tracy Fancher, 4133299028, 4138225625, 4138227172, 4138229508

1. Call to order:

Per MGL Chapter 30 section 20f, DW stated that the meeting is recorded.

Due to Covid-19, the meeting is held remotely, according to the revised Open Meeting Law requirements.

*Meeting to be held by conference call due to the COVID-19 restrictions.*

An Executive Order from the Governor of Massachusetts relieves public bodies from the requirement in the Open Meeting Law that meetings be conducted in a public place that is open and physically accessible to the public, provided that the public body makes provision to ensure public access to the deliberations through telephone, internet, or satellite enabled audio or video conferencing or any other technology that enables the public to clearly follow the proceedings of the public body in real time.

In addition, all members of a public body may participate in a meeting remotely; the Open Meeting Law's requirement that a quorum of the body and the chair be physically present at the meeting location is suspended.

All other provisions of the Open Meeting Law, such as the requirements regarding posting notice of meetings and creating and maintaining accurate meeting minutes, as well as the limited, enumerated purposes for holding an executive session, remain in

Meeting Connection: <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/517186877>, (408) 650-3123 Access Code: 517-186-877

2. FY 2020-2021 Budget Hearing

DW made some introductory comments. Dr Dillon went over the overview presentation that Sharon Harrison prepared which highlights key points (slides attached).

Adeline: Ellis: Thanks to Peter, Sharon, Jill and others for the budget work done. Concerned with cutting Student Adjustment Councilor (SAC) knowing student needs will likely need more attention. How much is the reduction? (Sharon H: ~\$17,600). This needs to be a priority if more funds become available.

Sharon Harrison: Richmond is not receiving Title 1 so not sure how this will factor in how the State \$215M funding will be given out.

Peter Dillon: We won't get much if any f state Title 1 but there is another opportunity. Federal Dept Education announced open round of grants which Admin will apply for.

Dr Dillon: we will need to work to understand what re-entry looks like and how to prepare for it.

Public Input:

Sharon Renfrew: concerns with the effect of losing 20% of Music and SAC. Says the reduction will impact programs for 4-5 years. Suggested there may be other smart cuts such as the \$300 allocations for suppliers to make money available (ask families to help with supplies).

Lauren Broussal: Has seen how valuable the music program has been and is concerned about the impact of reductions.

Cristina Lenfest: Would the early Retirement offer .... [inaudible]. Concerned about the effects the pandemic will have on the student body. Would advocate that any extra money that would come go towards mental health, but will go with whatever decisions are made to support students.

Natalie Gingras: Asked if the SPED Dir position is a hard number, and asked what the hiring status is.

Dr Dillon reported they are close to hiring but not ready for any announcement yet. Yes, that is a hard number without flexibility there.

Sharon Renfrew: Did we reinstate a first year para though the proposed budget iterations at the expense of music and councilor? Also would like to know if Title 1 money is there could the music and councilor time be reinstated?

Dr Dillon: Initial budget recommendation was several cuts which included a para. Rethinking and working with Jill, decided to keep the para to better meet the needs of students. Folks could disagree with the Superintendent and Principal decisions, but we feel we are doing our jobs looking at how best to meet the needs. Relative to Title 1, it is hard to know what would be available and when. Hard to guess at timing (State responding to timing questions with "stays tuned"). Dr Dillon doesn't want to commit to say that any money will go to music and councilors. Much to learn.

Adeline: Agree with points made about music and agrees with what the music program has offered. Any money back from the bus contract? Initially may

Dr Dillon: Just starting on that, guidance from state is to negotiate individually. Likely will compensate them for most of contract but will look to retract for such elements as gasoline. Need to work on specifics.

Kimmie Lecco: If there is money, their family values the councilor position for the kids that need it is of utmost importance. Connections can make the world of difference in a day of learning.

Dr Dillon: We are making impossible choices. There was a strong reaction to a previous proposal where there was to be layoffs, so this is where we are. This is the dilemma in working within relatively fix resources. There has been no response to the early retirement offer that was due today. The SC may decide to extend the time for consideration. Understand this is tough on individuals, very sympathetic, but the school is still going to provide rich educations with where we are.

Kimmie L: So thrilled the two classroom teachers will remain. View is to best to balance.

Dr Dillon: The letter provided by class parents was really impactful on think as far as providing continuity and stability.

Laruen: Agrees both positions should remain in tack, not one or another. Wouldn't be bad to go back to BAC with a higher amount, say 4%, which is still far better than were it was earlier. Doesn't feel there would be concern with it inching up a bit, especially after hearing from folks in a previous meeting.

Dr Dillon: Not sure if BAC would support an higher value or not. Reluctant to make that recommendation but will follow direction of the SC.

Adeline: They can say no, so why not just give it a try?

Dr Dillon: risk is they will say no which could kick it back several steps.

Sharon H: A word of caution. Next year is going to be very difficult as well. Need to think in terms of two years, not one year issue. Adding to it this year might cause more difficulty next year.

Natalie G: How is Title 1 distribution determined, it's it by economic factors (free and reduced assessment), and not something to apply for? She wanted to clarify and be sure some don't have false hopes.

Dr Dillon: We don't get Title 1 as Richmond is seen as a relative wealthy community. We don't have enough students that meet the standards for Title 1. The likelihood of seeing Title 1 funds of any significance is low.

Sharon H: Based on economic disadvantage, or economic condition for the community. This isn't tied to free and reduced numbers.

Beth Smith: Agrees with so much that has been said about music and SAC. We are also reducing CAP, which is difficult for a school community that values the arts.

Dr Dillon: this is not something I feel good about. If not these, then what else do we look at cutting? No other options will be satisfactory. We are stuck having to reduce something, so working on the least painful. Hopefully we can backfill funding of CAP by other ways as folks have reached out to Dr Dillon about doing that.

Joy Mullen: Thanks to those who have spoken behalf of the music department. She said when she started 22 years ago the music programs was basically nonexistent and started various music programs, CAP, won state awards based on how much of the arts it covered. Working as hard as possible to teach music to all the students. Doing what she can for the students. This will affect her retirement calculations, and also the money currently making. At a recent meeting Mr Bruce's commented that we needed to take care of employees we hire. She fought for keeping the two teachers. How does my situation differ for others who have been here for one or two years? Where is the Town responsibility to her? If we are supporting our new teachers, why are we not supporting experienced teachers that have dedicated their lives to the school? What is the School Community at large getting for 0.4 position reductions? She believes she and the SAC have earned what they have. Where is the love and compassion for the senior employees?

Dr Dillon: Ask Jill if she could speak to the thinking behind this.

Jill: Agreed 110% the music and CAP is part of what is special with our School. Also wanted also agree to the comments about the importance of the SAC to to our school. I am hopeful the context for the decision.. This is an imperfect budget and had to look at the student needs and where and how best to serve students. We heard loud and clear the classroom teachers were very important. We expect to rely on some fundraising to support the CAP.

Cindy Bartlett: As a Richmond taxpayer, asked what % increase to the budget would that be.

Dr Dillon: Roughly another \$40K, the town would need to recalculate impact on taxrate.

Sharon H: 4.7% of operating budget, and 4.5% to the Appropriation Request. So, +1.2% over the 3.39%). Again, she is concerned about how the school needs to focus on more than one year.

Cindy: If we started at 13%, the BAC asked for 3%, would it be a big hit to taxes to go up 1.2% on the school budget?

Unknown: It is \$40,000.....

Joy: Thinks the 0.4 amount would be closer to \$36K.

Cindy: Is there any wiggle room working with the BAC?

Dewey: At best what they can do is to not endorse the figure the SC votes for. We can proceed to the town vote without the endorsement, but that will not be a good day. It is a not a good strategy to go forth with the largest dollar figure warrant item that would include the message that the Finance Committee does not endorse the figure.

Dewey is somewhat comforted by knowing there are some willing to step up and contribute funds to give flexibility and to allow the garden and CAP programs to continue.

Tonight's objective for the SC hear input form the community and to vote on a bottom line number to bring for town vote. With this there are no stipulations or constraints on how the school department uses it.

I am very apprehensive adding to the 3.39% figure. Yes, one could say it is only ~\$40K but this is no insignificant amount. We need to be financially creative to find ways to support what we feel is important

Melissa Roller: Appreciate what everyone has done to try and make this budget work. The increase is negligible to put back the music and SAC time. We need to remember there are going to be students needs next year where that extra will help.

Peter Dillon: Sharon ran the math and confirmed it would be \$36K for the 0.4 reductions. Also, it is worth asking in tonight's meeting to consider extending the early retirement offer due date.

1:24:40

Rachel Kanz: If we extend the deadline, what does that look like?

Dr Dillon: It gives eligible people one more week to consider and to submit their interest.

Roger Kohler: Echo's the importance of a strong music program. What is going on with Covid-19 is going to effect the kids so cutting bad on the SAC is not a good idea. Understand the difficult situation but wishes we would consider not cutting making not cuts any whatsoever. Thinking \$36K s only \$3K/month, but does not what increase that would be to taxes. Thanks for the hard work on the difficult task, he wishes we could find the money.

1:28 Lisa Callahan: Echoed comments about music program and its important in students' lives. It helps them in holding their heads high, especially important with students that struggle in their classes . Wish we would go back and say we support these two positions and negotiate more.

Dr Dillon: We already have been back and forth serval times, there has been a lot of discussion. If there is more input from others, that may help, but don't know if the BAC is amenable with all the discussions so far.

Lauren: We won't know useless we try. We can hear from the BAC tomorrow night in their meeting.

Rachel: Is there meeting for another chance for them to hear form the community?

Lauren: Yes the BAC is meeting once again to review the school budget. There is a zoom link for the meeting.

Lauren: Dewey can you explain that the BAC has nothing to do with line items on the budget.

Dewey: Yes. The focus is on the bottom line number for the Town to vote on. With this there are no requirements, bounds on how the money is spent. It is at the digression of the school department [MGL c71 s34]

Looking for compromise, about adding back \$20K to bridge at least some of needs.

Dr Dillon: With only \$20K this is putting the admin in a difficult position of making one position whole and not the other. If there was extra money, we may decide this is to be applied to SPED. We'll update the budget again to do whatever you want us to do.

The School Committee needs decide whether an increase should be brought back to BAC.

Dewey: We do know the Town has turned every stone, looked for areas to provide more financially leeway.

I want to add \$20K to bring it to \$3,638,244 for a Town Appropriation request, which is a which is 3.96% over FY20. This is to give a little more leeway for the Principal to work with to meet the needs of the students.

Sandy Wojtkowski: Mental health of the students is very important. The SAC position is important.

Susan Benner: Agreed with proposed. This is very difficult decision. Pittsfield is talking about cutting 28 people. Going up to 4% s OK, but need to be careful going up to much higher.

Moved to increase budget to add \$20K to \$3,638,244 which is a 3.96% Town Appropriation request.

Adeline: not in agreement, wants to increase by \$36K.

Dewey: Thinks this will be difficult given the discussions to date. Going up to 4.4% or so will bring high objections.

Adeline: Can we go higher? I don't think they'll object to \$20K. The BAC needs to hear more about the importance of music and SAC.

Dr Dillon: Clarified procedural aspects. A motion was made, need a second for discussion.

Dewey: Seconded Susan's motion.

Susan: Question if we approached them to negotiations with more and if they say no to go back to the +20K.

DW: Feels the BAC members will agree with all that is said, but will say go find ways to cover it.

Lauren: Reviewing notes and does not see anything in the 4.5% range.

Dr Dillon/Sharon H: there was another BAC meeting where 4.59% was reviewed and they were uncomfortable.

Adeline: Asked if Lauren has ever seen a situation where the BAC did to endorse the SC request.

Lauren B: There were years they wanted school to come in low but eventually end up at a good point through discussion and compromise.

Vote: The motion was made by SB for FY21 Town Appropriation Request of \$3,638,244 for the Richmond Education budget, which is a 3.96% increase over FY20. Seconded by DW. Vote: DW yes, SB Yes, AE no (passed 2-1).

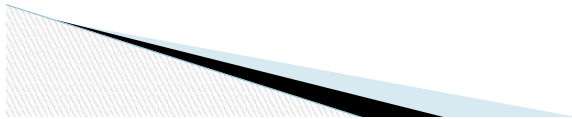
3. Any unforeseen items: Extension of early retirement offer ending today (Apr28) to May5 to allow for more time for consideration. SB motioned to extend offer to May5, AE 2<sup>nd</sup>, All in favor.
4. Adjournment: Motion SB, AE 2<sup>nd</sup>, all in favor 7:56pm

Submitted: DW

# Town Appropriation

## The “Bottom Line”

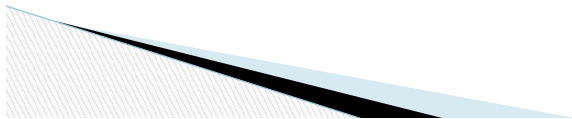
	School Budget Article
FY 2020 Town Appropriation	\$3,499,554
<b>FY2021</b> Town Appropriation	<b>\$3,618,244</b>
Difference *	\$118,690 (3.39%)



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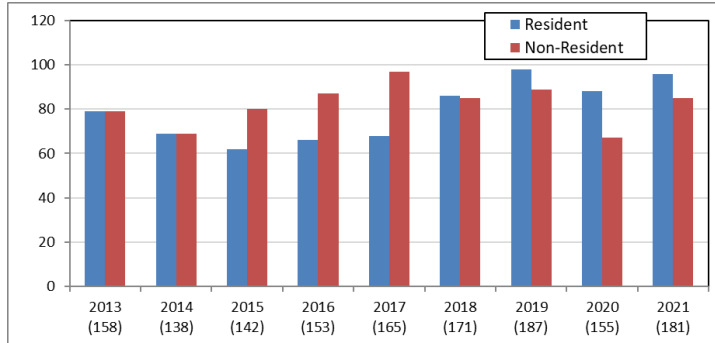
## General ‘State of the School’ Update

- RCS will continue the shared-services agreement with Berkshire Hills Regional School District for FY21. FY21 will also be a year of continued exploration of educational options for Richmond to determine the best aligned relationships with other districts.
- The educational challenges in Berkshires County related to declining student population and increasing costs continue. However, in Richmond we are pleased the positive trends are continuing. New families are moving into Richmond, resulting in school choice numbers dropping towards a more balanced level.
- RCS continues to be recognized as a top performing school. The commitment to providing a valuable educational experience to its students, being a good partner in the community, and being responsible to the Richmond taxpayers, remains high.



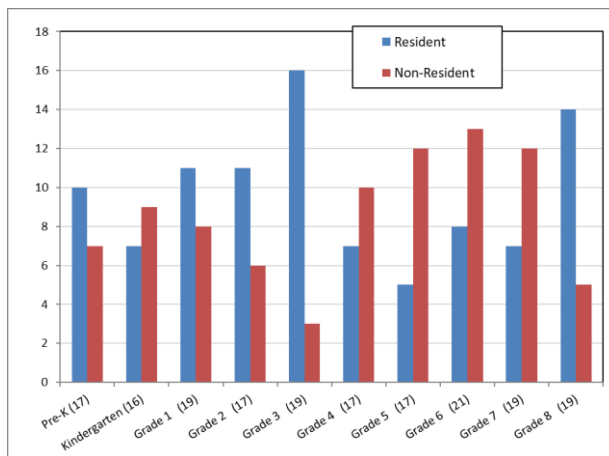
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# Student Population Trends



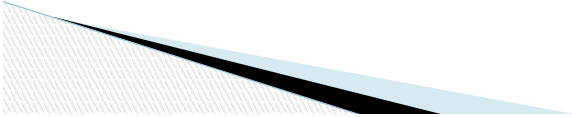
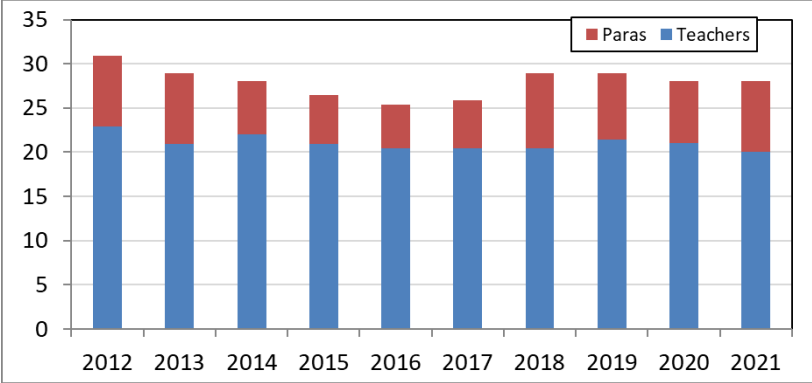
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# Projected Enrollment (PK-8: 181 Students)



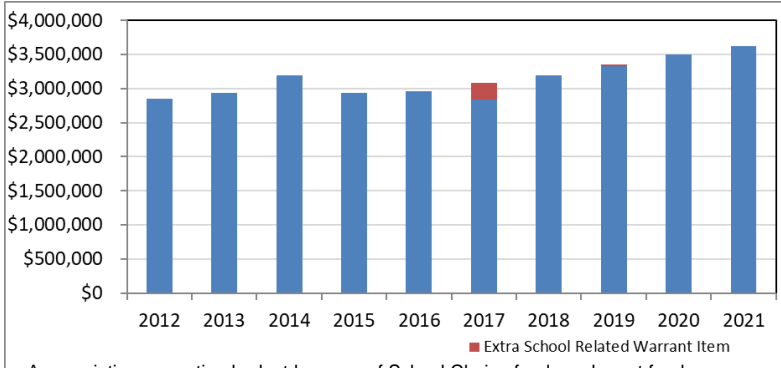
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# Richmond Staffing (FTE)

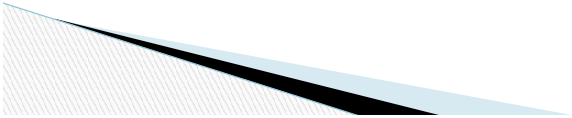


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# Budget History\*



\* Town Appropriation; operating budget less use of School Choice funds and grant funds.

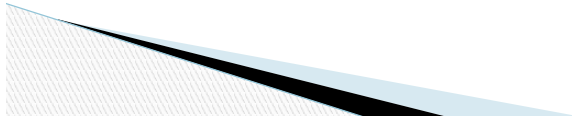


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## Main Points:

- Operating budget increase FY20->FY21: 3.68%.
  - Contractual Salary Increases and adjustments
  - Health Insurance increase
  - Transportation contractual Increases
  - Tuition increase
  - Utilities up slightly
  
- Choice fund use increased by \$25,000, or 8.1%
  
- Town Appropriations Request Increase 3.39%



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## Operating Budget Changes

	<u>Total</u>	<u>% of</u>
	<u>Change</u>	<u>Change</u>
Salary	\$119,987.00	83.50%
Custodial & Maint.	\$6,049.00	4.21%
Administration	\$576.00	0.40%
Prof. Development	\$7,967.00	5.54%
Prof. Services & Fees	-\$25,000.00	-17.40%
School Committee	\$3,560.00	2.48%
Technology	\$4,274.00	2.97%
Texts & Supplies	-\$1,862.00	-1.30%
Transportation	\$20,764.00	14.45%
Tuition	-\$237.00	-0.16%
Utilities	\$2,000.00	1.39%
Emp. Insurance	\$5,612.00	3.91%
<b>Net Operating Budget Change</b>	<b>\$143,690.00</b>	<b>100.00%</b>



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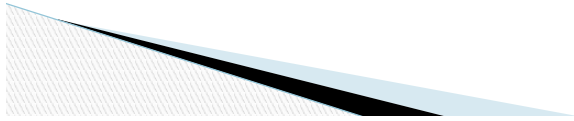
# Anticipated Revenue

	<b>FY 2019</b>	<b>FY 2020</b>	<b>FY 2021</b>
School Choice revenue *	\$337,330	\$305,000	\$330,000
Grants	\$69,000	\$95,000	\$95,000
	<b>\$406,330</b>	<b>\$400,000</b>	<b>\$425,000</b>

\* Anticipated School Choice Reserve balance as of 6/30/2020: \$129,328.

- ❖ FY21 Choice revenue projected to be \$332,106.
- ❖ Projection goal: leave balance to even out changes in revenue from Choice.

\*\* Preschool revenue not consistent year to year and not included.



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# Anticipated Town Revenue

- ❖ The Governor's budget, released in January, 2020, included \$368,399 in Chapter 70 funding.
- ❖ Chapter 70 is the state's education funding.
- ❖ Typically, this amount increases after the House and Senate Conference budget. However, given the current economic condition there is no certainty regarding funding for FY21.



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