

Ashland School Committee  
Tri-Board Meeting Minutes  
May 18, 2020

**Location:** Per Governor Baker’s order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. C. 30A sec. 20, the meeting was held via an online Zoom Conference as posted on Agenda. **Zoom Link:** <https://zoom.us/j/88076143457>

Mr. Steve Mitchell opened the meeting at 6:00 P.M. by reading the following:

*Pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 order suspending certain provisions of the open meeting law, we are utilizing the Zoom conferencing platform to conduct our meeting and all board committee members are participating remotely. The goal is to maintain the spirit of the open meeting law, providing access and transparency to all proceedings. When appropriate, efforts will be made to allow for public participation through the Zoom platform. Your patience with any technical difficulties is appreciated as we conduct meetings in this new way.*

**AGENDA REVIEW AND ADOPTION**

He announced that the meeting is being broadcast live, live streaming on Facebook, and recorded by WACA-TV.

Mr. Mitchell reviewed the agenda and received consensus from the Boards and Committee.

Mr. Mitchell took attendance.

Mrs. Tosti took attendance.

Mr. Warnetski took attendance

**Select Board Roll Call Attendance:** **School Committee Roll Call Attendance:** **FinCom Roll Call Attendance:**

**Mr. Robert Scherer- Here**

**Mr. Kendall- Here**

**Mr. Scott Warnetski- Here**

**Mr. Joseph Magnani- Here**

**Mr. Terry- Here**

**Mr. Ryan Turncliff- Here**

**Ms. Brandi Kinsman- Here**

**Mrs. Bates- Here**

**Ms. Jennifer Cooney- Here**

**Mrs. Yolanda Greaves- Here**

**Mrs. Tosti- Here**

**Mr. Jack Walsh- Here**

**Mr. Steve Mitchell- Here**

**Mr. Jonathan Moore- Here**

**Mr. Edward Hart- Here**

**FISCAL YEAR 2021 REVISED BUDGET**

Mr. Michael Herbert, Ashland Town Manager, gave a presentation on the Fiscal Year 2021-revised budget in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. With the closure of towns for the past few months and the foreseeable months ahead, it is necessary to look at the budget. It is looking bleak, with a 4-6 billion dollar reduction anticipated. With anticipating worst-case scenario for planning purposes, the town is choosing to model the response to the budget based off the great recession of 2008-09. Even with using that model, there are a few key differences. He shared a comparison document of the 2008-09 Great Recession and the 2020 COVID-19.

Key differences highlighted:

-Peak Unemployment rate: In 2008-09 it was 8.3%, 2020 is currently 25%

-Estimated vs. Actual Revenue: In 2008-09 it was -\$4.14 Billion Dollars (over 2 years) or -10.1%, 2020 is -\$4.2 Billion Dollars (in one year) or -15.2%

-Economy- In 2008-09 it slowed down, 2020 is shut down

With an analysis of 2008-09 loss of state aid, loss of new growth, and loss of local receipts, the estimated losses for 2021 is a \$2.4 Million dollar deficit.

Mr. Herbert reviewed the Stabilization fund, how it was built up between 2013-present, and the initiatives that helped build it up. It was 2.2 Million in 2013 and is currently \$6.6 Million. In order to close the \$2.4 Million dollar deficit, 1.4 Million will be taken from the Stabilization Fund, reduction of \$700,000 from Ashland Public Schools, and a \$300,000 reduction from the Municipal Department. He stressed the fact that making these reductions should eliminate the need for any layoffs or reductions in wages. \$1.4 Million dollars will be withdrawn again in FY22 and FY23 from the Stabilization Fund. This will still leave 3.5% in the Stabilization fund for FY24. Now is the time to use the Stabilization Fund, this is what it is meant for. There are still many unanswered questions about Local Aid, Federal COVID-19 funds, and future expenses.

Mr. Adams explained the struggles regarding school bus transportation and remote learning if there is the need for Social Distancing. There is very little relief coming from the state and federal level. In the initial budget, there was a number of positions added for Special Education to help supplement the in-house Special Education programs the district has built.

If there is free cash at the end of the year, it will be used to replenish the Stabilization Fund and Mr. Herbert reasons they would continue to follow the financial guidelines and split between the town and the school system. If the town receives more aid than is planned for they will split the difference and not take as much from the Stabilization Fund.

Mill Pond and the Downtown project monies have already been appropriated and the projects are moving forward. The two big projects, Mindess School project and Public Safety Building project both have debt exclusion, which requires a ballot vote at Town Meeting. He feels it is critical to continue to with the design and engineering of these projects because an infrastructure stimulus package may be coming later in the year and the projects would need to be “shovel ready” in order to be considered for stimulus funds. The members appreciated the well-balanced approach to the budget, using the Stabilization Fund going forward.

Next steps: the board would need to vote on a bottom line number on the appropriated expenses, School Committee would need to vote on their figure as well. FinCom will have a discussion on this separate from the Tri Board meeting to maintain their independence. They will then make a recommendation on what the Select Board has decided.

Mr. Herbert read the line item reductions as follows:

- Legal by \$50,000
- Human Resources, Wellness, and Training by \$7,000
- Central Purchasing by \$10,000
- IT Equipment by \$75,000
- Accounting/Contracted Services by \$7,000
- Planning for Invasive Management at Waushakum Pond by \$14,000
- DPW Contracted Services by \$1,500
- Efficiency Fund by \$25,000
- Adjusting FY21 wage increases to save \$178,000

The School Committee needs to discuss and vote on their budget at their May 27<sup>th</sup> meeting. The Select Board will have a meeting on May 28<sup>th</sup> to vote the budget.

**Motion to adjourn the Select Board at 7:17 p.m. made by Mr. Magnani, seconded Mrs. Greaves.**

**Roll Call Vote:**

**Mrs. Greaves- Aye  
Mr. Magnani- Aye  
Mr. Scherer- Aye  
Mrs. Kinsman- Aye  
Mr. Mitchell- Aye**

**Motion to adjourn the School Committee at 7:17 p.m. made by Mr. Terry, seconded Mrs. Bates.**

**Roll Call Vote:**

**Mrs. Bates- Aye  
Mr. Kendall- Aye  
Mr. Terry- Aye  
Mrs. Tosti- Aye**

**Motion to adjourn the Finance Committee at 7:18 p.m. made by Mr. Turncliff, seconded by Mr. Hart.**

**Roll Call Vote:**

**Mr. Warnetski- Aye  
Mr. Moore- Aye  
Mrs. Cooney- Aye  
Mr. Turncliff- Aye  
Mr. Hart- Aye  
Mr. Walsh- Aye**

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Bates  
School Committee Secretary

Documents used at the meeting  
Adjusted FY21 Budget Sheet