

To: Jennifer Clark, Chair Region 4 Board of Education

FROM: Virginia Carmany, Chair Chester Board of Finance

Cc: Members, Region 4 Board of Education, Chester Board of Selectmen, Chester Board of Finance, Superintendent of R4

REF: Region 4 Board of Education Meeting: June 6, 2019

Agenda Item: Possible VOTE to approve action(s) regarding the 2017-18 financial audit report

On behalf of the Board of Finance and Board of Selectmen, I would like to thank the Region 4 Board of Education for reviewing the 2017/18 capital fund/ 'construction account' in conjunction with the Audited Capital Fund and for engaging an outside consultant to assist in such review before authorizing the use of Region 4's FY19 general fund operating surplus to fund the audit cited capital deficit. This action will be useful in building transparency and accountability of Region 4's financial operations.

The Chester Board of Finance is looking forward to working with our new Superintendent, Brian White, and the Region 4 Board of Education to develop a productive working relationship to assure transparency and accountability of Region 4's financial operations.

Please consider the following observations and suggestions in reference to the Board's June 6, 2019 meeting.

1. **Process for retiring Region 4 deficits:** Opportunities for Public Comment during Region 4 Board meetings can be useful for receiving input, questions, and concerns from the public. However, a joint meeting for official town governing bodies - Boards of Finance and Boards of Selectmen to discuss issues and to resolve concerns relative to their respective responsibilities is needed. This is the case with regard to the current deficits in multiple Region 4 funds possibly spanning multiple fiscal years, but specifically for 2017/18 of Capital (\$199k), Cafeteria (\$94k) and Grants (\$85k). We have a concern that the timing of the deficits from 2017/18 were created with one ADM methodology and if covered by 2018/19 surplus would be covered via a different ADM allocation methodology. Therefore, it might be prudent to recognize the deficits as additional appropriations from 2017/18, requiring approval by the towns. I look forward to discussing arranging for a joint meeting with you at your convenience.
2. **The Vote on the Motion to transfer General Fund Surplus to cover the Capital Fund ("Construction Account") deficit.** A public comment suggested that the Board reconsider its vote on returning the FY18 General Fund Surplus of \$36k+ to the towns; and instead apply the surplus to offset the Cafeteria Fund deficit from the same year. In reply, a Board member stated that an adopted motion could not be reconsidered. The point in bringing this up is with regard to Board process. Please note that Roberts Rules of Order prescribes options for a Board to consider changes to adopted motions. Link: <https://robertsrules.org/robertsrules.pdf> - See Table of Contents Article 6:
#36: Reconsider
#37: Rescind
In fact, it would be beneficial to utilize the 'surplus' in the same year as any deficit, rather than returning this portion to the Towns.
3. **Public Comment:** While the Joint Board Meeting included two opportunities for Public Comment, the Region 4 meeting did not include any agenda items for Public Comment. This resulted in the public needing to address Region 4 specific items in the prior Joint Board vs. only the Region 4 Board. While not necessarily problematic, this resulted in comments made on Region 4 agenda items to be considered later, but not heard by all Region 4 Board seated members since Region 4 did not have a quorum for the Joint Board Meeting, with one member arriving only for the Region 4 "only" meeting.

The decision to permit Public Comment during the Region 4 "only" Board Meeting was appreciated. However, not having Public Comment formally added to the agenda created confusion. It was not a Special Meeting and adding this item to the agenda would have been permitted. To summarize, during debate on a motion on the floor, the Chair provided an opportunity for public comment. During public comment, a Board member called for a vote on the motion, cutting off an in-process comment that I was

making. The action to allow public comment essentially put aside Board debate on the motion until a closing public comment request – and the public comment period should have been allowed to continue with “Calling the Question” on the motion overruled by the Chair.

Suggestion: For a Region 4 “only” Board meeting conducted at the end of a Joint Board Meeting add an official Public Comment opportunity to the R4 “only Board Meeting agenda - at the beginning and end of the agenda – as is current practice.