

# Cape Schools Open Minds and Open Doors

Community • Academics • Passion • Ethics

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FY22 School Budget Update #5  
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### CESD School Board Budget Goals

The FY22 Budget will:

1. Move CESD forward with our strategic plan goals.
2. Empower students with the academic, personal, and social knowledge and skills to build balanced and purposeful lives.
3. Ensure equity and access to opportunities for all Cape students.
4. Prioritize the return to full time, in-person learning and support post-pandemic academic and social-emotional needs of all students.
5. Will reflect a careful examination of line items and consideration of the success and effectiveness of the expenditures in order to provide a fiscally responsible budget.

The CESD School Board held a budget workshop on March 23, 2021 via Zoom. After a review of the budget goals (see above) there was a time for citizen comment. There were no comments from community members.

I was able to share the exciting news that earlier in the day we had received the much-anticipated report from Maine Benefits Trust regarding the state ceiling for health insurance increases. We had included an anticipated 10% increase in health insurance costs in the FY 22 budget and the newly announced state ceiling amount will be 4.2%. This represents the maximum increase that we might experience and allows us to reduce the expenditure amount by 5.8%, a savings of approximately \$180,000.

Other news was not so positive and puts into question the amount of COVID Relief funding that we were anticipating. We had hoped to move the proposed student support positions out of the FY22 School Budget and into the anticipated relief funds, however without a firm amount from the state, this would be taking a chance with these important positions. The Board agreed that for the present, we will keep these positions in the local budget.

Principals then presented enrollment and staffing numbers in relation to the ED279, the state subsidy report which outlines minimum student to teacher ratios for schools to meet acceptable expectations of performance. Presentations revealed that we had lower ratios than state expectations, however, our ratios are in line with our neighboring high performing districts, and are necessary to ensure our continued high performance.

A conversation regarding the use of the auditor's reported \$1,141,397 fund balance continued from the last School Budget Workshop where we had discussed moving \$300,000 into our FY22 budget to cover the cost of the Concept Design by the architects and \$300,000 to pay off the food service deficit. By moving an additional \$140,000 from the unassigned fund balance we could also fund the student support positions that we had hoped

would be covered with COVID Relief Funds. This would result in a budgeted \$740,000 use of fund balance money and would reduce the impact on the taxpayer.

Next, the issue of preparing for 100% student return to class during the 2021-2022 school year was addressed. Principals Manjourides and Eastman discussed the need for approximately 4 portables and 1-4 new staff members in order to meet the state and federal CDC guidelines for 3 ft. social distancing in classrooms and 6 ft. distancing for eating. This would add an increase of approximately \$280,000 to the budget for 4 portables, and approximately \$320,000 for new staffing. In addition, furniture would need to be purchased. An estimate for this cost can be determined after the furniture in storage is removed and inventoried.

We returned to the fund balance issue and determined that if funds were reallocated, we could address the needs regarding student return to school with the \$740,000 we had discussed earlier. Recently CESD Business Manager, Marcia Weeks, met with the Town's bond council representatives, and the Town Finance Director, to discuss other methods of paying for the concept design that would reduce the amount needed to \$5,000, and finance the remaining. This would be subject to Town Council approval. In addition, we discussed partial payment of the nutrition deficit in order to fund the requested student support positions in the budget, as well as the portables and additional staff. These possible solutions would result in an impact of a 4.11% increase to the taxpayer, a 5.43% increase in expenditures.

We are hoping to get better news regarding our COVID relief funding, as well as our actual increase in health insurance which could result in a further reduction of the FY22 budget. We continue to work on the FY22 budget in order to reduce the cost to our community members as much as possible, while still providing an excellent educational experience for our students. I encourage community members to attend the Budget Workshops via Zoom, the next meeting is scheduled on April 6, 2021 at 6:30 pm. There is an opportunity for citizen comments during each workshop.

Sincerely,

Donna H. Wolfrom