

**City of Rome**  
**FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**May 18, 2022**

**PRESENT:**

Committee Chairman Mark Cochran  
City Commissioner Bill Collins  
City Commissioner Randy Quick  
City Manager Sammy Rich  
Assistant City Manager Meredith Ulmer  
Finance Director Toni Rhinehart  
Assistant Finance Director Kraig Ingalsbe  
Recording Secretary Vicki Blair

Guests: Mayor Sundai Stevenson  
Kelley Parker, Administrative Assistant to City Manager  
Lou Byars, Rome City Schools Superintendent  
Dawn Williams, Rome City Schools Associate Superintendent  
Star Smith, Finance Director  
Jill Fisher, Rome Board of Education  
Alvin Jackson, Rome Board of Education  
Doug Walker, Public Relations

Chairman Cochran called the meeting to order and stated the first thing on the agenda was the Rome Board of Education presentation of the 2022-2023 budget. Chairman Cochran then turned the meeting over to Mr. Byars who is within two weeks of retiring. He expressed his gratitude towards the City during the last six years. He then turned the meeting over to Dr. Williams, who has been named Interim Superintendent and will be taking over on June 1<sup>st</sup>. He stated that this was her budget plan so it would be fitting for her to present it.

**Presentation of Proposed 2022-2023 Rome Board of Education Budget:**

Going through the budget handout, Dr. Williams began with the Board's Proposed Strategic Plan that includes goals in various strategic areas during the next 5 years. She moved on to the Annual Austerity Reduction Summary and expressed her pleasure that austerity is back at 0. Moving on to the City Appropriation History, she stated this is proposed to be kept the same as last year which means there should not be an increase in the millage. She then began going through the Budget Proposal, which has gone through 1<sup>st</sup> Reading with the Board, and offered her appreciation of collaboration and support throughout this process. There are extra expenditures in this budget from prior year. The projected beginning balance shows a big change from what was budgeted. They plan to be ahead by almost \$5M from what was originally budgeted. The budgeted ending balance for 21-22 was \$10,302,671 but they project to be at \$15,161,209 to start the 22-23 school year. The decision was made to use the fund balance gain to cover the increase in expenditures that are planned for the 22-23 school year. There is an increase in almost every area except staff development where there are no salaries and media services where one of the expenditures was moved from one category to another. However, in every other area there is an increase mainly due to salary adjustments. The increase in the fund balance that is expected is due to some mid-year adjustments that were made. There has been much growth and without the austerity this will allow the millage rate to stay the same. The employer portion for the Teacher Retirement System (TRS) will increase from its current rate of 19.81% for 21-22 to the new rate of 19.98% for 22-23. The Board chose to increase all salaries

at least \$2,000 annually based on experience. There are an additional 30 positions being added throughout the district, some of them being teachers and others being support staff. Salary step extensions increased from 21+ years to 31+ to assist in retaining current teachers. The local supplement was increased from 6% to 8.25%. There are also big expenditures including supplies for the transportation department including better radios and cameras for the buses along with hourly tracking for bus drivers. Technology is important and there are proposed firewall and antivirus protections also being added. Finally, there is a need for a new replacement vehicle for the technology department due to travel from school to school. Dr. Williams included a graph which shows that approximately 70% of funds are earmarked for instruction and then the next largest area would be for maintenance which includes technology, safety and security and other various operational expenses.

Chairman Cochran wanted to confirm that this proposed budget is based on the assumption that the base rate of the amount of taxes being collected does not increase from last year. Dr. Williams stated that they are assuming that what they will receive will be the same but if there is an increase it will be added in.

Commissioner Collins asked if there is something that prohibits the board from developing their own safety department at the schools. Dr. Williams stated this has been discussed, research has been performed and there will be more conversation regarding this in the future. Collins stated he did not see the City being in a position to provide more security in the schools with being 12 officers short currently in the Rome Police Department. Mr. Byars stated there are school systems close by that have their own police force, but the upfront costs are very high due to the need to purchase vehicles and uniforms and to staff a new department. Commissioner Quick asked what level of training is required. Byars responded that there is a level of certification with SROs that is different than what is required for patrol officers. Discussion continued as to the pros and cons of having their own security and the expectation of more conversation to follow concerning possible future options.

Commissioner Collins began conversation regarding the upcoming E-SPLOST vote and Mr. Byars explained the benefits and importance of this vote. Several commissioners asked questions regarding the projects and although the Board cannot campaign, they did provide information in reference to the purpose of the funds.

With no other questions, the school board staff and members were excused from the meeting.

**Other:**

Ms. Rhinehart requested the next meeting to be June 8<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 am to discuss the mid-year budget revisions for the 2021 budget required for state budgetary compliance. This budget revision would need to be presented and voted on at the next City Commission meeting on Monday, June 13<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Rhinehart stated that she has received some preliminary tax numbers and, since the assessments have seemingly increased mainly due to rising real estate costs, there appears to be a 3% growth in assessed values for the City and over a 5% increase for the schools. This is of course before appeals.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted

Vicki Blair