**Town of Paris**

**Ad Hoc Committee -Investigating MSAD17 Budgetary Practices**

**Purpose**

The purpose of this Ad Hoc Committee is to review and analyze the budgetary practices of the Maine School Administrative District 17 (MSAD17) to ensure transparency, fiscal responsibility, and alignment with the educational and financial needs of the community.

**Objectives**

The Committee's key objectives are as follows:

1. **Review of Bidding Processes**
   * Assess the current procurement and bidding procedures utilized by MSAD17.
   * Ensure compliance with applicable state laws and best practices.
   * Evaluate the fairness, transparency, and effectiveness of the bidding process.
   * Identify any inconsistencies or areas for improvement in vendor selection and contract awarding.
2. **Deferred Maintenance Analysis**
   * Investigate the current status of deferred maintenance on MSAD17 facilities.
   * Determine the extent and impact of maintenance delays on infrastructure, safety, and educational quality.
   * Review budget allocations for maintenance and identify potential gaps in funding.
   * Recommend strategies for addressing deferred maintenance efficiently and proactively.
3. **Budget Spending Review**
   * Analyze recent MSAD17 budgets to identify spending trends and allocation priorities.
   * Evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of budget expenditures in supporting educational outcomes.
   * Examine any significant budget variances and determine their causes.
   * Ensure transparency and accountability in the budget development and approval process.

**Deliverables**

The Committee will provide the following deliverables:

* **Interim Report:** A progress report outlining initial findings and areas requiring further investigation.
* **Final Report:** A comprehensive report detailing the Committee’s findings, conclusions, and recommendations for improvements in bidding practices, maintenance management, and budget spending.
* **Presentation:** A formal presentation of the final report to the Town of Paris Select Board and the public.

**Timeline**

* **Formation Date:** December 23, 2024
* **Completion Date:** December 23, 2025

**Membership**

* The Committee shall consist of 5 members appointed by the Town of Paris Select Board, including individuals with experience in finance, education, procurement, and facilities management.

**Reporting and Oversight**

The Committee shall report to the Town of Paris Select Board, providing periodic updates on its progress and findings.

**Authority**

The Committee shall have the authority to request relevant documents, data, and testimony from MSAD17 officials and stakeholders to fulfill its scope of work.

**Potential Concerns of the Ad Hoc Committee**

**1. Bidding Process Concerns**

* **Compliance:** The bidding process is compliant with state regulations and generally follows best practices.
* **Transparency Issues:** There are gaps in transparency regarding the communication of bidding opportunities and selection criteria, which could lead to a lack of public trust.
* **Favoritism Concerns:** Evidence of preferential treatment toward certain vendors may indicate a need for stronger oversight and impartial review processes.
* **Inefficiencies Identified:** The current process may be unnecessarily lengthy or cumbersome, hindering the district's ability to complete projects in a timely manner.
* **Recommendations for Improvement:** The district should adopt clearer guidelines, public notifications, and documentation to ensure transparency and competition.

**2. Deferred Maintenance Concerns**

* **Significant Backlog:** There is a notable backlog of deferred maintenance projects affecting school facilities, which could jeopardize student safety, health, and the quality of education.
* **Budget Constraints:** Deferred maintenance is a consequence of budget limitations and the prioritization of other expenditures over infrastructure repairs.
* **Cost Escalation Risks:** Delaying maintenance is leading to higher long-term repair costs due to worsening facility conditions.
* **Planning Deficiencies:** A lack of a strategic maintenance plan has contributed to the accumulation of deferred maintenance.
* **Recommendations for Improvement:** The district should develop a proactive, multi-year maintenance plan with dedicated funding to address facility needs and avoid further backlogs.

**3. Budget Spending Concerns**

* **Misaligned Priorities:** Spending allocations may not be fully aligned with the district's mission or community expectations, with certain areas (e.g., administrative costs) receiving disproportionately high funding.
* **Lack of Transparency:** The budget documentation and approval process lack clarity, making it difficult for stakeholders to understand how funds are allocated and spent.
* **Ineffective Oversight:** Current oversight mechanisms may not be robust enough to identify and correct inefficiencies in spending.
* **Sufficient Funding Needs:** The district may require additional funding to meet educational and infrastructure needs, but better financial management is necessary to justify requests for more resources.
* **Recommendations for Improvement:** Implement more transparent budget reporting, conduct regular audits, and ensure that spending priorities reflect educational goals and community expectations.

**4. Overall Governance and Accountability**

* **Need for Greater Oversight:** The committee may conclude that MSAD17 needs improved governance practices and more rigorous oversight to ensure accountability.
* **Stakeholder Engagement:** There is a need for more meaningful engagement with the community, including regular updates and opportunities for public input on budget and maintenance decisions.
* **Ethical Concerns:** If any unethical or questionable practices are identified, the committee may call for further investigation or corrective actions.