

Greenfield School Committee
Budget & Finance Sub-Committee
Meeting Minutes
May 1, 2024

1. Roll Call/Call to Order

Present: Kathryn Martini (KM) (Sub-Committee Chair), Ann Childs (AC)

Also present: Dr. Christine DeBarge, Superintendent (CD), Karin Patenaude, Assistant Superintendent (KP), Andy Paquette, Business Manager (AP)

Absent: Elizabeth DeNeeve (ED)

The meeting was called to order at 3:04 p.m.

2. Update on FY25 Budget

CD noted her attendance at the recent Ways & Means meeting relative to the operating budget.

Topics of discussion included:

- Staff changes
- Line item fluctuations
- Church parking lot rental (next to GMS)
- Public comment on the priorities for the music program
- Streamlining accounts
- Possibility of connecting FTEs to budget lines – Challenges

CD noted the following:

- Mayor recommended a 4% budget increase instead of the 5.86% voted by the School Committee
- A billing issue with the bus company resulted in a credit with the company that we will take next year to offset some of the difference between the School Committee budget and the Mayor's budget
- We will also utilize some of the special education revolving account to fund some of the special education tuitions
- As of now, we will be able to address the Mayor's budget amount without an impact on staff, but any further reductions could certainly affect staff
- There are a few staff reductions due to enrollment, not due to budget
- Now we wait for the conclusion of the Ways & Means Committee meetings before the budget goes to the City Council
- Ways & Means did fund the money requested for elevator repair
- We hired 2 music teachers and an elementary library media specialist

AP confirmed the amount of the credit with the bus company is \$130,838.40, and the amount of the special education revolving balance is \$163,934. We are using about half of what we normally project for this account, so that gives us flexibility for unanticipated special education expenses for next year.

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CD shared that we still could have unanticipated special education expenses through the end of the school year.

Last year there was a lot of discussion about needing to address the \$2 million in ESSER funds being used to fund staff and the “cliff” it would create. While we did have staffing changes following last year’s budget, we are actually adding positions back in the FY25 budget.

She stated that neighboring districts are in a situation to cut numerous positions. Our decision worked exactly as intended and reduced any impact on staff this year after taking the hit last year. We will continue to use our revenue sources, i.e. grants, School Choice funds, ESSER funds, etc. effectively. We are well positioned at this point.

KM asked about preparedness to add positions in the future for planned expansion to full-year science and social studies at the middle school as well as the potential restoration of previously cut foreign language instruction.

CD shared that when the redistricting takes place in SY25, the actual student numbers and staff needs will need to be reevaluated as by that time it will be almost three years since the planning discussion started.

Relative to kindergarten enrollment status:

Four Corners is still floating one section of kindergarten instead of two. Kindergarten tends to explode at the other 2 buildings. Newton numbers are looking high so there may be the need for a third section of kindergarten there. We won’t have a firm number at Newton and Federal until summer.

3. Annual Budget Calendar discussion & development

There was discussion relative to development of a GPS budget calendar (themes/guidelines) as well as review of sample budget calendars from other school districts.

CD noted for the record that it is fantastic for Greenfield for asking for a budget that represents the needs.

She also suggested talking about roles as they get into the next budget cycle:

- Role of the Superintendent
- Role of the School Committee
- Role of the City Council

KM will draw up a preliminary draft for review.

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4. Adjournment

On a motion by KM, 2nd by AC, the meeting was adjourned at 3:54 p.m.

Approved: 9/24/24