

Greenfield School Committee
Budget & Finance Sub-Committee
Meeting Minutes
September 24, 2024

1. Roll Call/Call to Order

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

Also present: Karin Patenaude, Superintendent of Schools (KP), Andy Paquette, Business Manager (AP)

The meeting was called to order at 12:00 p.m.

2. Public Comment

Stephanie Duclos, 166 Chapman Street, Greenfield informed the members of her need to log into this meeting via the GPS website because the meeting link on the City website did not correspond with the meeting link on the GPS website.

3. Approval of Minutes:

- May 1, 2024
- September 10, 2024

On a motion by ED, 2nd by AC, the sub-committee unanimously approved the meeting minutes as presented.

4. Dissemination of annual budget calendar

KM facilitated discussion regarding avenues for which to disseminate the GPS Annual Budget Calendar recently approved by the GPS School Committee. Members noted KP has increased usage of available social media outlets and suggested this information also be included on those platforms. KP agreed to include the information in her written *Superintendent's Updates* as well as on our GPS approved social media accounts.

5. Implementation of School Committee Policy DBD: Budget Planning

KM reviewed School Committee policy DBD and existing means of implementing section 1 regarding public engagement, followed by facilitating discussion of whether additional means should be added. ED asserted it is the committee's responsibility to proactively offer opportunities for engagement; AC and KM concurred. ED suggested ensuring subcommittee meetings are announced on GPS social media outlets (with double-checked links). KM reviewed suggestions including member representation at parent-affiliated meetings (school councils, PTOs, SEPAC, ELPAC), scheduling office hours, and an invitation from the committee in Superintendent's parent updates for public comment/email for November SC meeting (ahead of discussion of budget priorities for FY26 at December meeting). ED added suggestion of sending this invitation to the Recorder's Greenfield Notes section. ED agreed to post dates of upcoming parent affiliated group meetings on SC calendar for members to select from. AC agreed to gather dates of PTO meetings and forward to ED for the same. KP agreed to gather school council dates and forward to ED for same.

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The final proposal was to post the sub-committee meetings on approved GPS social medial groups (double checking the links for utilization); send a warm invitation from the School Committee for community input (via email and/or public comment) at the November meeting, include the information in the October and November *Superintendent's Updates*, submit information for inclusion in the "Greenfield Notes" section of the *Greenfield Recorder*; and commit each Budget & Finance sub-committee member to attend at least one of the upcoming affiliated parent group meetings to share the information.

On a motion by AC, 2nd by ED, the sub-committee approved this proposal be brought forward to the entire GPS School Committee at their November meeting. The vote was unanimous.

6. Capital Improvement Needs

KP noted she recently met with our facilities director and business manager to discuss the projects that are upon completion from our FY25 request, prioritize needs for FY26, and consider the projects that could be put off until FY27 or beyond. The following projects were discussed:

- ADA compliance issues at DSFC:
 1. Widen door to nursing office
 2. Egress in 4th grade hallwayThere is an unresolved ADA complaint about these issues and a need to move forward with quotes in capital requests for FY26 to resolve these issues.
- GMS fire alarm panel (The system is outdated and parts no longer exist to fix it.)
- Boiler issue at GHS (The Mayor is looking into the potential to repurpose high school building funds still sitting in capital.)

Next to be addressed would be the following:

- Driveway issue at FSS (repave driveway/parking lot)
- Driveway and gutter repair at AEL
- Lock replacement at FSS
- Lighting control system at GHS
- Carpet replacement at FSS

It was noted that the bid to get the north tower elevator at FSS up and running is being finalized.

On a motion by KM, 2nd by ED, members voted unanimously to support forwarding the capital improvements for ADA compliance at DSFC and the GMS fire panel for approval by the School Committee.

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On a motion by KM, 2nd by AC, the sub-committee voted unanimously to recommend authorization for the School Committee legislative representative to establish communication with our legislators relative to earmarking funds for our remaining capital requests (as identified by the superintendent).

7. FY24 End-of-Year Review

AP explained the norms of the year-end closeout process, which include:

- Year-end journal entries and reclassifying expenses to fully expend the local budgeted funds first.
- Cooperation with the city finance department (e.g. the city finance director historically advises the school department when funds remain from the local budget as they are closing the year, with suggestions to zero out the local).
- Superintendent reviews all open purchase orders, any year-end expenditures, and any consumables that may be purchased to offset future years.

This intent of the process is to appropriately and wisely act as good custodians of taxpayer dollars by conserving one-time funds such as ESSER. City administration has previously requested GPS reserve funds to address reasonable contingencies such as contract negotiations items and district reorganization. This flexibility for school districts, created through ed reform in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), helps the city because the city itself does not have such flexibility. GPS has used ESSER funds as intended, to address learning loss and pandemic-related social-emotional issues, and made targeted use of these limited funds for one-time or non-regular expenses to avoid any major layoffs or program cuts when they are exhausted. As of FY25, we successfully avoided such cuts, unlike some other districts.

KP added that one of the investments GPS made was in high-quality instructional materials (HQIM):

- HQIM has now been adopted for math, ELA, history, and science.
- The negotiated price was lower with investment over a course of years than with one-year contracts, which would have been exponentially higher.
- Students will have access to this for years to come.
- This aligns with the prioritization plan we are under with DESE and our SSOS team (Statewide System of Support – provides assistance to districts with one or more schools categorized as requiring focused or targeted assistance).

Curriculum & instructional supplies cost was temporarily significantly higher than in the past because we had not invested in this for many years. Students are now receiving grade-level HQIM and we are already seeing improvements in math achievement, which was the first adoption, and we are moving forward with ELA and literacy focus this year.

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KM opened discussion by the subcommittee. KM summarized for non-regular attendees/viewers, that HQIM has been a frequent topic of discussion with the school committee, e.g. the need to update 20-year-old science textbooks and also the need to support our new K-7 ELA resource (CKLA/Amplify) not just once but to provide the ongoing consumable materials for students; students are showing benefits but we have a long way to go in improving student outcomes in both literacy and numeracy. KM reflected on AP's description of GPS's approach to ESSER funds by sharing observations of other districts going through painful cuts this past budget cycle; this supports the need to use such funds as GPS has done, not for ongoing, permanently expected expenses, but for one-time or short investments that will have the biggest impact. In contrast to some other districts, we were able to not only avoid cuts in FY25, but actually add back some positions, which in part enabled us to revive our elementary band program.

KP and AP then reviewed questions from the Mayor relative to our close-out process. (See attached exhibit A.) AP noted he has always reported any necessary changes to use all funds in the most effective and efficient way possible to the School Committee.

On a motion by KM, 2nd by AC, the meeting adjourned at 1:14 p.m. The vote was unanimous.

Approved: December 9, 2024

Exhibit A

Budget Questions from Mayor (9/19/24)

Q: What is the meaning of curriculum instruction, and instructional supplies, in the budget lines?

A. The DESE definition for reporting purposes: “Instructional activities involving the teaching of students, supervising of staff, developing and utilizing curriculum materials and related services. Instructional services directly attributable to schools must be reported on a school basis, while district-wide services, such as supervisory may be reported on a district-wide basis.”

Q: Why was there a new line item for instructional supplies (13294290 5200) in July?

A. This account is not a new instructional supply line item. It is staff-development districtwide line and has existed as far back as FY14.

Q: Are supplies purchased in a fiscal year used the next fiscal year?

A. The answer is yes and no. Some consumables by their nature would be used relatively quickly (e.g. art supplies) but some can be used over multiple years (copy paper, textbooks, etc.).

Q: Was curriculum over budget by \$233,304 in FY24, and if so what was/were the cause/s?

A. The overall cost center was over by \$233,344.76. As the Business Manager has reported out to SC, we have made changes to use all of our funds most efficiently and effectively. The primary expense was the purchase of textbooks that were originally going to be from ESSER III and were transferred to the local, where funds were available. The purchase allowed for more flexibility in spending plan for FY25 and beyond.

Q: Of the \$458,037 budgeted for transportation (13354200 5200), what was the remainder used for outside of the \$183,329 encumbered for new vans?

A. The remainder is the Kuzmeskus contract. The vehicles were coded to that account because it was the most accurate to charge the vans to, but they will be coded in the end-of-year expense report for DESE, they will be categorized accordingly as special education related expenses.

Q: Why were the two vans purchased not requested through capital improvements?

A. DPW decommissioned the vans and we needed replacement vehicles. We did not wait for capital because a) it would have been about a year-long wait and the vans were needed now; and b) we did not need to expend city capital funds when the district was able to purchase them currently. Not doing so would have resulted in having to contract out those transportation services while waiting approximately a year for the capital process, which would have been exponentially more expensive. This also resulted in more funds available for the city to use for other capital expenses.

GPS was both filling a need and being good stewards of taxpayer dollars.