GREENFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SPECIAL MEETING
SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MINUTES: March 25, 2026

Jon Zon Community Center, 35 Pleasant St. Greenfield, MA 01301

I. Call to order: 6:25pm

II. Roll Call of Members:

Present: Stacey Sexton (SS); Ann Childs (AC); Melissa Mckenzie Webb (MW); Mayor Ginny DeSorgher (GD); Elizabeth de Neeve (ED); Melodie Goodwin (MG).

Attending Remote: Jeffrey Diteman (JD)

III. Public Comment:

Michael Mastrototaro: Comparisons: Population of Maryland (MD) is about 6.27million. Population of Massachusetts (MA) is about 7.15 million. MDs K12 public schools are approximately $890,000. MA $900,000. MD school districts are 24 for 23 counties and Baltimore has its own school district. MA has 396 school districts for 14 counties. Smith Academy 7-12 has 134 students. I give them three to four years before they fold. Stoneleigh-Burnham, private school, nevertheless, they have 130-150 students 7-12. DA went co-ed in 1990 'cause they saw the writing on the wall. Gill Montague school at Pioneer and Waller are voting in September to regionalize. Folks this has nothing to do with school choice, although if you're running at the bottom percent of the state you are going to lose children. Families are averaging 1.6 children per family. The young population is dropping. Greenfield needs to join the party. I've said this for three years. I was on Ways and Means and I'm going to say it again tonight. You have to regionalize. You can't count on Jo Comerford. She is kowtowing to superintendents and administrators. If we get any money from her it's not going to students. We are on a downhill slide. We cannot afford to do this on our own. Join the party. Regionalize. It is the only way out. If somebody is dead, they don't know they're dead. Everybody around them knows they're dead, but they don't. The same goes for stupid. Let's not be stupid. It's not working folks. Join the party. Regionalize. They are voting in September.

Mike Teranso: We have money. Spend it. It's a rainy day. I've said this for the last couple years. Everyone comes back to me every budget season when I was on city council and I said spend your money. They said, "We don't want to spend our money because we have to save it for a rainy day." Well it's f*****g pouring right now. In my opinion that guy sitting over there is a G*d d*** criminal.
RJ: We do not allow personal attacks at all.
SS: No.
MT: It doesn't matter. It's criminal what has been happening with our schools and our budgets right now. You have been hoarding money that was supposed to be turned over to the city. That's illegal. No one has actually put anyone under the gun for that. Spend the money you have before

you ask for any other money from the tax payers. Bottom line. You have a rainy day fund. So does the city. Don't ask the city to spend their rainy day fund on the school if you're not going to spend your own rainy day fund first. First and foremost.

Also, I got chastised in f*****g [*intelligible*]for saying a 19th century word about being a kiss-a** when I said bootlicker. Yet we have another person sitting on the school committee currently who dropped f-bombs on her own sign...[*intelligible shouting*]

SS: No. That is unrelated to the schools. You are dropping the f-bombs right now. I am going to have to respectfully ask you to refrain from your comments.

MT: You cannot sit on a committee and be respected and not be chastised by your own committee you should have taken issue with this. When they're dropping f-bombs on their signs, their sandwich board signs, sorry Ginny you should have done something about it too.

SS: I am not in the habit of policing.

MT: When every child can walk by that and can spell a four letter word that starts with f.

SS: And they can hear it when they listen to this recording.

MT: Kids are listening to this. Kids are listening to the meetings that are held at night. That's why these are held at night. For adults to consider but when they are presenting in the public on the sidewalk as they walk by.

SS: Your time is up sir.

MT: That's great. I love it. Of course you would ...[*intelligible*]

SS: I will reiterate that the scope of this body is related to the functioning and the governance of our schools not the policing of people's individual language on their own time in their own business. I will also not

MT: [*Intelligible shouting*]

SS: Your time is done. I will also not allow personal attacks on the people that we employ. That is not acceptable here.

MT: [*Intelligible*]

SS: That's not my feeling, it is a norm of behavior.

IV. Vote to present the to the mayor, for fiscal year 2027 the school department budget.

SS moves to forward the budget as presented. ED seconds.

MG: I don't agree with putting forward $2.5 million increase. I think we have enough places that we can cut. I don't think that that amount is respectful to the taxpayers. We are the third highest taxed citizens in MA. We are the lowest for bringing in business funds. We are struggling. The people raising the money are human beings, not businesses. I cannot in good conscience go forward with a 7.4. I have been watching what other districts are doing around us. I don't think it is reasonable or respectful to go forward with that. I can easily see where cuts can be made that will not reach our students or classrooms. Not going to change our daily lives in our schools. I'm comfortable with a $500K increase but not 2.5 million.

GD: I think we should look at one thing at a time. I have suggestions. We are in a tough spot. We are going to have to remove things to balance the budget. I believe as a group we have to do better than this. I think 1.7 million is the increase?

RJ: It is.

AC: Budget and Finance Subcommittee received questions about the revolving funds. Covid funds from ESR; we were wise with how we spent. We built up reserves that we have currently spent down at the rate that we could be in trouble next year with reserves. We are at a point where we will need to make dramatic changes in the very near future. The budget as written and presented tonight is basically what we have now -status quo- this is what it would cost. It adds a little, one more ELL teacher. It's not a true complete, just level service. I think everyone in this room knows that the schools are not getting a $1.7 million increase. This budget as presented and explained to me is this is our starting point for negotiations. We give this to the mayor, and the mayor comes back to us with what is more realistic for what Greenfield can pay for. Then the superintendent and the administration find ways to make what we can pay for work for our students.

ED: Ann you are right, that is the process. Tonight is when we just do what our superintendent has told us is appropriate, educationally. We all know what comes next, that's the hard part. Tonight is just what we wish, dream, and hope for. It seems modest, in line with other budgets, not excessive, and we know we are not going to get that. I am thankful that you [RJ] did it, that it's modest, succinct, transparent. I appreciate that. I'm glad that we all understand the process and that you [AC] stated the process for those at home can understand also. When you are continuously under funded, every year you're not getting what you need. That's just how it is until we change Chapter 7 to refunding and get more aid from the state. I hope that we can all be on that project together as we move forward.

MW: I feel everyone in this room. I feel like we are sending a really hefty number over where we probably could have made some adjustments a level service "fluffed" budget over. I also understand that it is a process. There are steps involved. Hopefully we can move the process along even though we have strong feelings. We want to get funded. We know we are not going to get funded. We don't want taxes going up either.

SS: None of us are expecting to get what we are asking for. I do think we would be doing a disservice to the community not to say "This is what it costs to get this kind of education that we are having." Less is less. I want to be really clear that when I hear you say "extra positions" to be clear these are positions that we would be putting back from the prior year's cuts that we've already had. These are not new positions. These are positions we had and would like to have again. My position tonight is that I don't want us to make cuts now and have to go back and make more cuts later. We make cuts now and get down to a number that seems like it should work, is more reasonable, then learn that is not reasonable, then we are putting ourselves in a position to have to cut even deeper than we really can without compromising the education that our students would receive. I hear folks saying that there are things that we could cut that wouldn't reach the students. I might be inclined to believe that is true, in that we have had positions that we have been unable to fill. Again, not that we don't need them, but we have limped along without them enough that we think can continue limping for a little longer until the state does the right thing and funds education. I don't want to put us in the position of trimming before we even know what the target is. This is not our last opportunity to look at the budget.

JD: I want to point out that in the superintendents messaging, the primary drivers for the increase are contractual salary obligations and Special Education. Both of these expenses strike me as inflexible. 51% is coming from contractual salary obligations, 35% of the increase is coming from new special education students that have moved to the district. There are services that we are legally obligated to provide and there are contractual obligations that are decisions that have been made. When we are talking about what can be cut, it is important to be realistic about where they could come from. It appears that 85% of the increase is unavoidable. Superintendent Joyal, can you confirm that?

RJ: Yes you are correct.

JD: I am also concerned about the 7.46% that seems high. It seems very hard for our community to continue to fund our schools. We are in a very difficult situation. I would like some clarity on what a realistic increase would look like other than 7%. It looks likely that we would go to a prop 2.5 vote. Does anyone think that that can be avoided?

SS: We can't comment on that in this particular meeting.

GD: We can talk about anything in a public meeting.

SS: I don't have the knowledge whether we can avoid or not.

GD: I'm not relying on an override. I don't think that would pass. I feel like we put something forward last year without looking at things one at a time. That is part of our job. I would take the $525K from Pre-K revolving and use that. I would also take $200K from transportation because I don't believe that we are going to be up to the predicted levels. The encumbrances are larger than what we have already spent. We have four out of ten payments to Kuzmeskus remaining. On the city side, I'm going to have to take some things to make it whole. I will be wiping some things out. There are some positions that we haven't filled. We should talk more about those. We may have to sustain some vacancies in the city and here also. We received a 19.4% ($2 million) increase from insurance; with retirement we are already over if you did nothing. I cannot balance the budget with that. There may be $250K that can come from IT [sustained vacancies.]. These are initial, rough notes. It would be helpful to see the FTE side by side this year and last year. You could see the similarities.

ED: $600k that we haven't hired. You [GD] are thinking to use that in other areas?

GD: Not all from one department or another but if we could spread it out. These are initial thoughts.

ED: Andy do you have a breakdown we could see? We have not had an override. Counselor Brown has worked out the math to approximately $4 per household increase. Did Budget and Finance meet with Ways and Means?

AC: Not yet.

MW: Mayor, is the IT money you are thinking about coming from personnel or left over in their budgets?

MG: Declining enrollment: We were at 1900 and now we are at 1200. Every space costs money. We need to look at regionalizing and using our buildings in an efficient way. Greenfield has not discussed declining enrollments with neighboring districts. Franklin County Tech works well with 600 students. Regionalizing just makes sense. We have to look for other ways to do our job, which is to educate kids.

AC: We need put in a lot of work to address these long term problems. Next year will be really bad. The current plan reduces the revolving account by roughly 31%. We will have remaining missing data after April 1, 2026. Circuit Breaker is eligible to cover new move in students. This means that we don't know what the actual costs are going to be for next year yet. I plan on voting to move forward with this budget, not because I believe the school will get $1.7 or cannot do it without it, but because we have to start somewhere in order to find out how much Greenfield can afford reasonably and what we can do to maintain our legal obligations to our students and give them a really good experience and education on what we have available.

SS: Some of the things that are being discussed like closing schools or regonalization are not happening for this coming academic year. That would be irresponsible of us. It is a very long process. Those discussions can happen, but in a more planned, intentional way, knowing that is the best path forward for ourselves, our students, and our community. We need to thoroughly explore the long term impacts of these decisions.

MG: There are people who have been working on regionalizing for over 10 years. Greenfield has not shown interest in being a part of those conversations. We can invite those people to talk to us about what those conversations have been about.

SS: In my own comment I got a little astray. We are here to vote on a budget.

GD: I can't vote for it as is because it is more than we are legally able to do. We need to look more closely at what was not spent last year.

ED: I am defending this budget because our superintendent informed us with what it will cost to educate our students. Their job is to tell us what we need to educate our students to keep up with standards. This is totally normal and on trend.

MW: We very much know we wont get this. I think we need a number before we start cutting things.

GD: As a school committee, our role is to offer a few suggestions to balance the budget.

MG: The process has changed over the years. The school committee is now going to the mayor with a number that it needs to educate our students. The mayor has a city to run. The school committee has schools to oversee. The superintendent is hired to manage the money. The mayor has a bigger picture than we do. They have to give us a number that we have work within. That number should be between the mayor and the superintendent. If there are things that need to be cut, we have a voice in that. The process needs to be clarified. I feel like we are butting into a process that is between the two of them.

AC: The process is partially codified on the budget calendar, such as the budget hearing date, publishing date etc. After the budget season, it would be reasonable to send the budget calendar and process to the subcommittee to do a deep dive review to make a procedure that makes sense. When I vote to advance this, by no means am I saying this is a polished budget. I'm saying lets start these negotiations and discussions. We had to bring something to the table to start negotiating from. What we brought to the table was status quo, level service with restoring some prior cuts. We know we are not going to be granted this first draft as is. We are moving it forward for a return number to move towards.

ED: Call the question.
SS: The question has been called.

Vote: Yes: SS, AC, ED, No: MW, GD, MG Abstain: JD
Motion hangs.
JD: I will vote No.

SS: We need a new motion on the table. We have to forward something to the mayor by April 1, 2026. We can continue with this meeting or try to schedule something before then. I would like to get this done today. I am looking for a number or percentage to work with.
AC: Are we coming up with a number than asking the superintendent to redo the budget to show that and very quickly get a vote before april 1st or do we vote on that number and trust?
AP: Using the Preschool revolving $500K to offset the budget will bring it down to a 5.35% increase to $1,267,480. We could split $250 from each PreK revolving and transportation.
JD: I would be comfortable with that.

AC moves to approve to send the revised budget with the 5.35% increase. SS seconds.
SS: In terms of process, one of the big things that is ours to do is the budget. I am not comfortable with a process that is between the mayor and the superintendent only. The process has to come through us. The mayor has a role in the way that our charter is set up. I am not comfortable with a singular person who is responsible for the entire city budget telling the schools 'This is what you have to work with.' I am not comfortable with that. Past precedent does not dictate future action.
ED: We are going to get less than what we move forward tonight. It is neither here nor there where it comes from. What happens if we take the $500K away from PreK? How does that effect us? What will that effect? That is an answer we should know.
AP: I would say we would have to use another funding source to offset that. It exhausts that account. Some accounts regenerate slowly; tuitions.
ED: We know we are going to get less than this. There is no solving principal to make this vote go through because we are not going to get the 5.3%.
Vote: Yes, SS, MW, AC, ED, JD. Abstain: GD, MG. Motion passes with 5 yes and 2 abstentions.

V. Vote to enter into Executive Session: Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, § 21 (a) (3) To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares, (7) To comply with, or act under the authority of, any general or special law or federal grant-in-aid requirements; and, (8) To consider or interview applicants for employment or appointment by a preliminary screening committee if the chair declares that an open meeting will have a detrimental effect in obtaining qualified applicants; provided, however, that this clause shall not apply to any meeting, including meetings of a preliminary screening committee,

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to consider and interview applicants who have passed a prior preliminary screening. The committee WILL return to Open Session.
ED moves. AC seconds.
Vote: Yes: SS, ED, AC, ED, GD, JD, MG. Motion passes unanimously.
Move into Executive Session at 7:31 p.m.

Vote to resume public session: Yes: SS, MW, GD, MG, AC, ED, JD.
Resume Open Session at 7:52 p.m.

MG moves to instruct the chair to sign the Memorandum of Agreement from the Greenfield Education Association. AC seconds.
Vote: Yes: SS, GD, MG, MW, AC, ED, JD. Motion passes unanimously

Adjournment
AC moves to adjourn. ED seconds. Motion passes unanimously by roll call.
Meeting adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Nan Sibley
Administrative Assistant