

GREENFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SPECIAL MEETING of the SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MINUTES: Thursday, March 7, 2019
John Zon Community Center, 35 Pleasant Street, Greenfield MA
Approved 03.13.19

Present: Don Alexander (DA); Katie Caron (KC); Susan Eckstrom (SE); Jordana Harper, Superintendent (JH); Susan Hollins (SH); William Martin (WM); Adrienne Nunez (AN); Cameron Ward (CW)

Also present: Sarah Ahearn Bellemare, parent; Matthew Barrett, parent; Pete Brown, parent; Julie Kimball, GEA; Stephen Nembirkow, GPS Business Manager; Karin Patenaude, GHS Principal; Joseph Ruggeri, parent; Michael Sustick, teacher and parent; Crystal Zimmer, parent; other school staff and citizens.

I. Call to Order

With a quorum present (DA, KC, SE, SH, WM, AN, CW), Chair Nunez opened the meeting at 6:05 p.m.

II. Public Comment

Crystal Zimmer, parent, spoke in favor of funding for additional 4th grade teacher at Four Corners and early care program.

Pete Brown, parent, urged Committee to invest in public schools and town's growth rather than cutting budget.

Julie Kimball, representing GEA, spoke about schools' challenges, including special education, high-need, ELL, economically disadvantaged students; and need for reduced class sizes, better pay for instructional assistants, lower caseloads for specialists, reliable budget.

Matthew Barrett, parent, Federal Street, noted that Four Corners has part-time librarian and other elementary schools have none; asked for funds to address disparity.

Joseph Ruggeri, parent, noted additional funding needs in town, spoke in support of increased Kindergarten class as way to bring in funds.

Sarah Ahearn Bellemare, parent, spoke in support of additional 4th grade teacher and Kindergarten class at Four Corners.

Michael Sustick, Four Corners teacher and parent, spoke of need to support large number of students dealing with trauma; support for 3 Kindergarten classes at Four Corners and maintaining bus routes.

Karin Patenaude, GHS Principal, spoke to students' increasing needs met by schools, including meals, clothing, mental health services; urged investment in education for educational, social, emotional needs.

III. FY20 Budget Vote

AN outlined process: Vote tonight on bottom-line budget; budget then goes to Mayor, then Council vote; if changes needed, back to School Committee for revised vote.

Steve Nembirkow reviewed document "FY2020 Budget Statistics."

- Budget increase FY20 (cf. FY19)

- Revolving accounts
- Additions to FY20 budget
- Requests not included; decreases; not funded
- School choice \$ in and out
- Class size
- Per pupil expenditures
- Greenfield's community wealth
- Economically disadvantaged and high need students
- Funding above Foundation
- Cost Centers
- General/Special Education expenses
- Salary/Expenses
- Cost classification
- New positions
- Major expenses by category
- Supplemental appropriations
- Level service budget detail

Discussion:

ELT = grant \$, not included in budget.

Budget Subcommittee brings no recommendation, did not reach consensus.

AN moved to approve a FY20 Budget with a total local budget of \$19,970,347. SE 2nd.

Discussion:

AN: Supports continuing early morning care, perhaps sliding-scale fees; supports 4th grade teacher to keep 3 Kindergarten classes at Four Corners.

SE: Supports adding items to budget, but unclear where \$ would come from.

SH: \$500K increase = intractable costs. City's education costs increasing – e.g., health insurance, retirement; supports splitting Chapter 70 \$. Supports before-school care. Need to bring back students going out of district. Customary to pre-pay summer tuition.

KC: Supports early care, teacher position at Four Corners, bus route. Use \$200K from revolving funds.

Nembirkow: \$1.1million Chapter 70 increase likely to continue in coming years.

WM detailed City's costs, including health insurance, life insurance, retirement, workers comp, property liability insurance. Intent to share Chapter 70 increase. Revolving funds stabilized at \$2.4million. Discrepancies in beginning balances. Questioned comparisons to other districts.

Nembirkow: 5-community RFP for transportation resulted in economy-of-scale savings. New contract \$95K increase. IDEA grant to be spent, potentially small surplus.

SH: School Committee states priorities; doesn't decide details.

CW: Public's comments heard. Support for Supt's budget plus bus route, 4th grade teacher, Kindergarten.

KC: Required to keep \$2million in revolving funds. Use \$200K revolving \$ to add to budget.

WM and KC offered friendly amendments; rejected by AN.

Revolving funds not applicable to this motion re: local budget.

Budget relies on \$150K from City's Special Education Stabilization fund. District special ed costs increasing \$200+K.

Roll call: Yes: AN, KC, DA, CW, SE, SH. No: WM. Motion passed 6-1.

WM made a motion to instruct the Superintendent to provide funding for 2 bussing routes indicated to be eliminated via any revolving account. KC 2nd. Motion passed 6-1. (No: SH) KC moved that the Superintendent fund the third Kindergarten classroom at Four Corners using grants, revolving funds, or surpluses in other areas. CW 2nd.

Motion intends to include additional 4th grade teacher at Four Corners.

Motion passed unanimously.

WM moved to instruct Superintendent to provide before-care programs at all schools using funds from grants, revolving funds or any other funding source.

Motion's intent is to continue existing elementary programs. Could include sliding-scale fees.

Motion passed unanimously.

AN moved to request that the Mayor present to Council a request for utilizing \$150,000 of Special Education Stabilization funding to partially address projected increases in Out of District Tuition for FY20. KC 2nd.

Motion passed 5-1-1. (No: WM; abstain: SH)

SH: Concern that of 3 elementary schools, only 1 has librarian.

AN moved to utilize the full amount of state aid for education in the form of Chapter 70 funding, currently projected increase at \$1.1 million, to fund the schools' operational budget. KC 2nd.

Discussion:

Debt servicing, retirees' health care costs not eligible to be paid with Chapter 70 \$. Included in City's education expenses.

Motion is advisory. School Cte cannot direct City's Chapter 70 \$.

Desire for increased communication between School and City finance staff.

Motion failed 2-3-2.

DA left the meeting at 8:45.

IV. Open Meeting Law Complaint

AN filed complaint as individual, not Chair, that Subcommittee deliberated on topics not in posted agenda.

Subcommittee reviewed, discussed complaint at meeting earlier today.

Consensus for AN to stay for discussion (not recuse). Ethics Commission says AN can participate if unbiased, suggested filing 23B form with Clerk.

WM read Subcommittee's draft response, disagreeing or refuting all claims in complaint. Concern re: intimidation, motives behind complaint.

JH: Subcommittee's response to 2 claims had been Agreed. Changed all to Disagree? Urged caution re: public statements about staff's job performance. Two sets of minutes: one at time of complaint filing; revised minutes appeared later.

AN summarized: There is a draft response to OML complaint. Most of us are hearing this for the first time. Draft was sent via email to Budget Subcommittee members earlier today; Budget Subcommittee hasn't deliberated on draft response. Is Subcommittee asking for any action from full Committee?

CW: No action requested. Subcommittee to review response, submit to Attorney General. Upset at process, lack of direct communication.

CW, WM left the meeting at 9:12 pm.

SH: Awkward situation. Feels Subcommittee members are treated differently.

AN: Stayed for discussion at behest of members. Added to tonight's agenda at Mayor's request. Acknowledged awkwardness.

VI. Adjournment

KC moved to adjourn. SH 2nd. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 9:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Farber
Recording Secretary

Meeting Documents

1. Agenda March 7, 2019
2. FY20 Published Budget 2/14/19
3. FY2020 Greenfield Schools – Budget Statistics
4. Open Meeting Law Complaint Form