



May 10, 2023

Good evening,

Last Friday, I had the pleasure of talking with a group of 30-40 students working on their Civics projects at Greenfield High School. Many students had chosen to work on projects related to the budget process. I received emails from students and we also had a class of students log on to the most recent budget subcommittee meeting. I was able to answer questions from the students for approximately 35-40 minutes. It is clear that these students and teachers having been doing research and had fantastic questions about the process. I greatly appreciate the opportunity for meeting with them.

Monday morning, I attended a meeting with Massachusetts Secretary of Education Dr. Patrick Tutwiler. Dr. Tutwiler was the invited guest at a meeting with Superintendents from Hampshire and Franklin Counties to hear about the issues uniquely impacting us. I had the pleasure of being invited to share remarks regarding the staffing shortage on behalf of the group. Michael Morris from Amherst-Pelham, Sherly Stanton from Mohawk Trail and Kristen Smidy from Gateway Regional. Many thanks to Todd Gazda, Executive Director from the Collaborative for Educational Services and his staff for arranging this very important opportunity for us.

Staffing

Several months ago, we officially hired Merrill Miceli as our Director of Early Childhood beginning July 1, 2023. She was able to start with us on April 24th to allow a transition with Nancy Putnam, Principal of AEL. We are very fortunate to have both experienced educators with us and to allow for Nancy to orient Merrill to the programs and processes involved at AEL.

We are pleased to welcome David Messing as our newly appointed Director of Pupil Services. David will join the district on July 1, 2023. Dr. Dickinson will be enjoying her hard-earned retirement, effective June 30, 2023.

We have posted all positions that we know will be needed for next year as of May. We posted the positions of all staff on licensure waivers or those on emergency licenses that had not been extended as of the date of posting. We have also reposted any positions that are currently filled with private agency staff or contracted providers, such as school psychologists. Early posting allows our staff who may have positions reduced to identify other positions in the district for which they may be qualified. It also allows our administrators to interview and have staff in place as soon as possible so we start next year in a great place for staffing.

Strategic Planning Update

The staff from TMS met with administrators to begin drafting goals and next steps using the data compiled throughout the full Strategic Planning process. A date for a full Strategic Planning subcommittee meeting is being scheduled so the draft plan can be reviewed by that group prior to being presented to the full School Committee. The intention is to have the Strategic Plan shared with this Committee at your meeting in June.

Re-envisioning our School Facilities Update

I was asked to follow up on a few items in previous Committee meetings.

Green River: I had a meeting with Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) staff. It does not appear that the documentation that needed to be filed when Green River was closed for student use was ever filed. I have the documentation and will begin that process as soon as possible.



Superintendent's Report Greenfield School Committee Meeting

Option 2B: Jake Waldsmith, Karin Patenaude, Michael Browning and I met to review feasibility of Option 2B – realigning school boundaries and moving grade 5 into the elementary.

We looked at aligning the school boundaries which would reassign students from Leyden Woods to Four Corners, students at Oak Courts would attend Federal Street School and students living in Greenfield Gardens would attend Newton School.

We then looked at current enrollments using the new boundaries and considered the numbers of classes that would be needed for each grade in each building and determined if each building would have sufficient classrooms.

We are gathering a bit more data regarding transportation.

We also will need to consider the issue of intradistrict choice. When we consider the numbers of students who seem to be attending a school that would not be their neighborhood school under Option 2B, the enrollment of Four Corners could change by up to 35 students and subsequently, the enrollment at both Newton and Federal increase with approximately even numbers going to each of those schools.

We would need to do one of the following:

- 1) stop new intradistrict choice for the September 2023 and allow students currently attending a school of choice until they “age out” of that school
- 2) allow intradistrict choice for those with siblings attending the school of choice for September 2023 and all students will be assigned to their newly identified neighborhood school effective September 2024

I will create and send a survey for our staff to provide feedback on the Option 1 and Option 2B and provide that feedback to the subcommittee. We will also continue to look at classrooms and other spaces, such as offices and small group instructional spaces and provide that information to the subcommittee as well.

Construction: I had previously shared information that MSBA commented that a district should assume a feasibility study could cost between \$1 million and \$2 million to complete. Feasibility studies approximately \$1 million for each of the three districts I contacted at the suggestion of MSBA. I was also informed that should Greenfield ever wish to consider construction; the City would need to have the funding plan for the entire project ready prior to me submitting the Statement of Interest.

Budget Update

I provided information regarding the FY23 budget as provided by Andy Paquette.

I would like to again, reiterate information that I have shared numerous times in the recent past – we are currently planning to use \$2 million of ESSER (nonrecurring) funds for the FY24 budget. We are facing a substantial issue for FY25 with the “funding cliff” if we do not consider options, especially if additional funds are allocated to the schools prior to the finalization of this budget cycle.

Sincerely,

Christine DeBarge, Ed.D
Superintendent