

BOARD OF FINANCE BUDGET HEARINGS –
PROPOSED BUDGET FY2022-2023
MARCH 2, 2022

The Board of Finance held a virtual budget deliberations session on Wednesday, March 2, 2022 via Zoom. Chairman Lema announced the Board was out of recess and reconvened the budget deliberations meeting in public session at 5:30 p.m.

Board Members Present

Brian Lema, Chairman
Scott Moulton
Lauren Ranges
Ray Arnold
Meghan Smith

Also Present

Mayor Benjamin G. Blake
Peter Erodici, Finance Director

Chairman Lema welcomed everyone and stated tonight the Board of Education would be presenting their budget. Chairman Lema provided a brief explanation as to how the Board of Education budget would be reviewed.

Susan Glennon, Chairman Board of Education, read from a prepared statement. She discussed anticipated effects from the Covid pandemic. Ms. Glennon stated increases are due to contractual and non-negotiable costs. She stated the budget contains supporting documents that will provide clarity to the requested budget.

Anna Cutaia, Superintendent, provided an overview of the requested budget. She stated the budget represents an increase for response to social and emotional needs, together with other drivers mentioned by Chairman Glennon. Dr. Cutaia provided information on the budget priorities, vision of the learner, relationships framework and model for high quality instruction. She reviewed Board of Education commitments and goals and budget priorities and assumptions for the 2022-23 school year. Dr. Cutaia reviewed accomplishments and progress made in the 2021-22 school year. She stated 461 students graduated in-person and 167 of the graduates were AP scholars. Dr. Cutaia provided an update on science labs in elementary schools. She discussed infrastructure projects completed. Dr. Cutaia stated the requested budget is \$102,008,319 representing a 2.28% increase. She discussed 7 key impact drivers – salaries, salaries related to Covid, benefits, utilities, contracted maintenance, transportation and cyber insurance –and the difficulties each presents to the budget. Dr. Cutaia discussed system improvements and curriculum enhancements that will be introduced. Dr. Cutaia stated the Board looked for efficiencies and areas of savings. She stated that over 70% of the budget is due to salaries and benefits.

Chairman Lema asked if the 11 positions moved off the ESSR grant is due to grant reduction or reallocation to another purposed under the grant. Dr. Cutaia state 4.3 FTE's will be moved from

the grant to the school budget. James Richetelli, Chief Operating Officer, stated 11 positions were added last year and it was decided to bring the positions over to the next 3 budgets – 4, 4 and 3. Chairman Lema asked if there will be additional funds in the grant to be used for other purposes by moving positions to the budget. Mr. Richetelli stated the position phase-in to the general fund budget was planned in the ESSR budget.

Mr. Arnold asked if 11 positions would have been budgeted had there not been the ESSR grant. Dr. Cutaia stated strategies would have been changed to hire with a similar phase-in. Mr. Arnold asked if there is a ratio of students to counselors. Dr. Cutaia stated there is a target number and believes those are being achieved.

Mr. Moulton asked of the ESSR funds how much is accounted for and what is left. Mr. Richetelli stated ESSR 1 is completely spent to meet the needs of the pandemic and allow for safe return to school in the last school year. He stated ESSR 2 is just beginning, and ARP not yet used. Mr. Moulton asked when ARP expires. Mr. Richetelli stated it will expire in 2024. Dr. Cutaia discussed use of funding and categories for spending.

Mr. Arnold asked for an explanation of secretarial increases. Mr. Richetelli stated there are no new secretaries. He explained the positions were previously non-unionized and they petitioned the state to join the union, so they have moved from non-union to secretarial. Mr. Arnold asked for an explanation of 3 FTE's to 5 in supervisors. Mr. Richetelli explained the position movement and stated there are no increases.

Chairman Lema commented on enrollment appears to be approximately 300 less than looking at the 2018-19 year and staffing is level. He asked the long-term plan concerning staffing. Dr. Cutaia stated there are many factors that impact staffing and therefore enrollment does not equal staffing. She provided a brief explanation on enrollment and maintenance of staffing. Chairman Lema stated his concern is over the long-term, if enrollment continues to decline decisions will need to be made in regard to staffing. Dr. Cutaia stated should enrollment continue to decline decisions would need to be made and it could have a direct impact on what courses are offered to students. Ms. Glennon stated she agrees enrollment must be watched and decisions may be required. She discussed the difficulties in making such decisions. Discussion ensued considering possible future enrollment trends and impacts.

Mr. Moulton asked about expected retirements and why a higher number is expected to retire. Dr. Cutaia stated there is a direct correlation to the pandemic and there is thought there will be teacher shortage in the near future.

Mr. Arnold asked why property insurance escalated on page IX. Mr. Richetelli explained current insurer no longer provided cyber liability, so it was purchased separately.

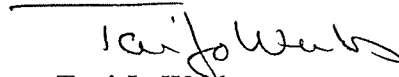
Chairman Lema asked about facility projects planned for the coming summer. Mr. Richetelli two schools will receive the secured vestibules bringing the project to completion and the

Pumpkin Delight project will begin. He also mentioned athletic field project and Orchard Hills traffic improvements.

Mr. Moulton and Mr. Arnold made and seconded motion to recess until Thursday, March 10 at 5:30 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Lema stated the Board would stand in recess until March 10, 2022 at 6:48 p.m. The Board recessed at p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Toni Jo Weeks
Recording Secretary