

BOARD OF FINANCE BUDGET HEARINGS –
PROPOSED BUDGET FY2024-2025
FEBRUARY 28, 2024

The Board of Finance held a virtual budget deliberations session on Wednesday, February 28, 2024 in Conference B, Parsons Government Complex, 70 West River Street. Chairman Lema announced called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

Board Members Present

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

Also Present

Mayor Anthony S. Giannattasio
Peter Erodici, Finance Director

Mr. Moulton and Ms. Ranges made and seconded a motion to reconvene budget deliberations. Motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Lema welcomed everyone and stated 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 stated budget post-pandemic continues to be a challenge. Faced with effects of inflation, mandates and the needs of students and staff. Ms. Glennon stated the budget reflects student voice and choice. She discussed infrastructure reconstruction and maintenance. She stated the budget provides for the best success for all students.

Anna Cutaia, Superintendent Milford Public Schools, provided an overview of the proposed budget. She stated the budget builds on a long legacy of excellence, progress and achievement. Dr. Cutaia discussed commonalities in goals and achievements for young people over the past 10 years. She stated the themes continue in this budget, the long legacy of great opportunities for young people. Dr. Cutaia discussed the zero-based budget approach based on student and staff needs. She discussed budget decisions based on vision of the learner, high quality learning, developmental relationships framework and equity framework. Dr. Cutaia stated the areas of priorities are instruction, wellness and development, professional learning, continued talent management. She discussed budget assumptions. Dr. Cutaia stated ESER funds are coming to close. She stated the number of students is anticipated to remain for the next few years and inflations is impacting wages and health insurance costs are increasing. Dr. Cutaia discussed transportation costs and fuel prices impact to the budget. She discussed mandates and safety security measures. Dr. Cutaia discussed implementation of new kindergarten start date. She provided performance and progress information for academic year 2022/2023. Dr. Cutaia discussed school facilities and the scope of responsibilities for those facilities. She stated the

budget request is \$111,285,770 representing a 4.7% increase. Dr. Cutaia discussed the drivers contributing to the budget proposal. She stated 77% of the budget is committed to salary and benefits. She stated there is a net increase of 2.0 certified and 6.3 non-certified positions. Dr. Cutaia discussed moving school counselors from ARPA to the general fund. She stated 2.9% of the 4.7% increase is due to salaries and benefits. Dr. Cutaia discussed the addition of a behavioral support program at the elementary level. She stated this would support students that need additional instruction outside of the normal classroom. This includes a specialized support program, the addition of a behavior support specialist and clinical therapists through partnership with Bridges to serve students at West Shore and Law. Dr. Cutaia discussed primary drivers affecting the budget. She stated those drivers are tuition and contracted services, transportation, CIAC changes and school facilities. Dr. Cutaia discussed summer training, conditioning and training. She stated school facilities and ground maintenance have been put on hold. Dr. Cutaia stated since there is zero-based budgeting there is no longer a surplus to go to grounds and buildings. She discussed system improvements, experiences and investing in young people. Dr. Cutaia discussed identifying efficiencies resulting in savings. Dr. Cutaia stated the budget process and decision making is based on the 4 cornerstones – vision of the learner, high quality instruction developmental relationships network and equity framework.

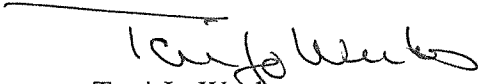
Chairman Lema asked about deferred capital and maintenance projects. Sean Brennan, Deputy Operations Director, discussed ground projects and identifying priority projects. Chairman Lema asked if that has been the program for years. Mr. Brennan stated the list is ongoing. He stated some of the projects are now being placed in the budget. Mr. Brennan stated the total budget is \$8,000,000 and projects are prioritized based on needs. Chairman Lema noted the budget request is approximately 10% of the total project budget. Dr. Cutaia discussed security cameras and computer servers being placed on hold. Dr. Cutaia discussed trying to extend the usual life of infrastructure. Mr. Moulton asked how much each attributed to each school, for instance Harborside. Mr. Brennan stated the list is not structured by school but would suggest approximate \$450,00 is attributed to Harborside. Mr. Moulton noted a decline in security services. Mr. Brennan stated that entails not only security services but also contracted services. Dr. Cutaia noted that the decrease is due to one-time purchases that have come off. Mr. Arnold asked why a bond would not be requested for the \$8 million. Mr. Brennan explained the bonding process and that it must be for a specific project that is usually much larger. Chairman Lema commented that most bonded projects are eligible for state reimbursement. Dr. Cutaia reviewed types of projects that would not be included in bonding. Chairman Lema asked if vehicles are included in the \$8 million. Mr. Brennan stated vehicles are included in capital equipment. Mr. Arnold asked how many classrooms will be painted for \$100,000. Mr. Brennan discussed painting larger spaces and utilization of a contractor. Mr. Arnold asked the difference between the \$7,000 and \$1,500 cameras. Mr. Brennan stated the cost is not the camera but the installation as the line runs to the location from the main box. Mr. Moulton asked about the mandated HVAC and the use of Covid funds. Mr. Brennan discussed going out to bid, selecting a contractor and that some ARPA funds may be used. He discussed additional items that will also need to be reviewed and addressed. Mr. Moulton asked how much ARPA is left for this project. Mr. Brennan stated the portion carved out HVAC is under \$300,000 and is not

accounted for in the budget request. Chairman Lema asked if this is the last year counselors from the granted to FTE. Dr. Cutaia confirmed this is the last year. Chairman Lema asked if there are similar situations with other employees that will be moved to the budget next year. Dr. Cutaia stated there are not at this time. Chairman Lema asked if it is anticipated the grant through Bridges will continue on an ongoing basis. Dr. Cutaia stated it will most likely be a growing need. She stated the counselors are not employees but rather are contracted through Bridges. Chairman Lema asked for an explanation of the asterisk under enrollment projections. Dr. Cutaia stated the number is projection on students that would enter if there are no changes to the kindergarten age. She discussed the assessment waiver process. Dr. Cutaia discussed opening preschool seats for students who do not receive a waiver or have not applied. Ms. Moulton asked how to address declining enrollment and increasing budgets. Ms. Glennon discussed the facilities studies and the next piece to be addressed by the Board and coming up with a long-term plan. She stated buildings are utilized very differently than they were 10 years ago. Dr. Cutaia discussed future programming and what will the facilities look like. Dr. Cutaia discussed specialized programming. Mr. Arnold asked for an explanation of Milford Measures. Mr. discussed assessing in a holistic manner, engagement of students, instruction, professional learning and the building of a measurement tool to collect data. Mr. Arnold asked if it is still being developed or being used. Mr. stated it is being used and is always being looked at as to how to build upon the program. Chairman Lema noted one additional staff member in central administration. Dr. Cutaia stated it shifts Chief Operations Officer to Assistant Superintendent. Mr. Moulton asked where coaches would be in the budget. Dr. Cutaia stated they are in the teacher line. Mr. Moulton asked how many coaches in each school. Dr. Cutaia stated there are 4 in each high school. Dr. Cutaia stated they switched to a coaching model 3 years ago with no impact on the budget. Mr. Arnold asked if the teachers in residence are part of the coaching model. Dr. Cutaia stated they will be student teachers and will be teachers of color to help diversify the teaching staff. Chairman Lema asked is driving the increase in the non-instructional supplies. Mr. Brennan stated it is the new band uniforms. Chairman Lema asked how student computers are handled. Dr. Cutaia stated each student has a Chromebook. She stated there is a refresh cycle every 4 years. Chairman Lema asked if new playgrounds was bonded. Dr. Cutaia stated it was bonded. Mr. Brennan stated it is a combination of both bonding and operational budget. Chairman Lema asked what projects may be coming before the Board for future bonding. Dr. Cutaia discussed professional kitchens for both high schools and tech ed spaces. Discussion ensued regarding partnering with Platt Tech.

Mr. Moulton and Ms. Ranges made and seconded a motion to recess until Tuesday, March 5th at 5:30 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Lema stated the Board would stand in recess until March 5, 2024, at 5:30 p.m. The Board recessed at 7:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Toni Jo Weeks", written over a horizontal line.

Toni Jo Weeks
Recording Secretary