

Finance Committee Meeting Thursday, March 2, 2017

Chairman Theresa M. Manganelli called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Members present were John F. Doherty, Marianne Gallezzo, Michele Kincaid, Robert P. Palmer, Bernard P. Nally, Jonathan R. Eaton, Leigh Martinson, Kevin Stokes. Excused: None

School Department:

Present in Interest: Paul Ruggiero, Director of Administration and Finance, and several School Committee members. Joanne Benton, Interim Superintendent, was not present due to illness.

Mr. Ruggiero presented the Department's mission statement. He stated the core values include respect, inclusiveness, responsibility and integrity. He then read the strategic mission, guiding principles, major priorities, class size, programs, direct services to students, and continuation of full-day kindergarten. Mr. Ruggiero stated the major factors driving the FY 2018 budget are contractual obligations, an increased use of technology in the classrooms, more complex special education Individual Education Programs (IEPs), and increased utility costs (High School challenges utility cost). FY 2018 will enable the School Department to address and maintain current staffing levels, reinstate a part-time library media specialist and full-time library media specialist, reinstate professional development funds to support staff, schedule appropriate professional development opportunities, ensure all legal mandates are funded (special education, homeless transportation, English Language Learners (ELL) (approximately 35-40% will be taking courses to support ELL). He reported that contractual requirements included funding more supplies at the Middle School. Mr. Ruggiero stated the High School graduation rate is about 93%, which is up a bit from last year. Mr. Ruggiero then read the FY 18 proposed budget. He stated there was a reduction in the number of teachers due to resignations and the department has not laid off any staff. Mr. Ruggiero reported that a Librarian position was reinstated at the Middle school. He explained there was a salary increase of \$943,816, or 3.18% and Title 1 and 2A may be reduced. Mr. Ruggiero stated there were non-salary changes which increased by \$279,662, or 3.52%, due to the electricity increase at the High School. He reported that the transportation budget has increased, though the reason is unknown. Mr. Ruggiero stated the Professional Development budget increased to help teachers with Chromebook implementation, which will take place over approximately 4-6 professional development days.

There was a brief discussion on collaboration between teachers, UMass, Salem State, and other districts.

Mr. Ruggiero reported on other line items including; maintenance and repairs, new carpet, and intercoms. He stated there was a reduction in the text book line item and the District is paring back some contracts.

There was a brief discussion on the school supplies students have to purchase for Middle School.

Mr. Ruggiero stated that the Electricity budget in for FY 16 for the High school increased, due to the need to have A/C running, and the proposed FY 18 budget increase is 3.25%. He reviewed the FY 18 school capital requests on page 13 of the budget book. Mr. Ruggiero explained that, at some point, all testing will be online, however, currently there are not enough Chromebooks. He stated the current lab is the same as when the school was built, therefore, it cannot use a lot of the current technology and is in need of update. Mr. Ruggiero is proposing one van be replaced this year, for a total of six (6) vans used around Town. Mr. Ruggiero concluded by thanking the Finance Committee and the Town Manager for support.

Questions:

Ms. Manganelli read a letter from Joanne Benton, Interim Superintendent, in support of all-day kindergarten.

Mr. Ruggiero stated the recommended average class size is: up to 20 for Pre-K to Grade 3; up to 25 for grades 4 – 8; and up to 20 for grades 9 -12. He reported for out of Town placements: four (4) Wilmington students attend Mystic Valley and one (1) attends Lowell. He stated that anyone can sign up for a charter school because it is a lottery. Mr. Ruggiero stated there are no students currently at Innovation.

There was a brief discussion on students attending other technical schools, whether permission of the Superintendent is needed, and how students are admitted into out-of-district technical schools. Mr. Ruggiero explained that if a technical school offers a program that is not offered in this District, the Town needs to provide transportation.

Mr. Ruggiero reported revolving funds are not spent down each year. He estimated that grants are down approximately \$200,000 from last year, which is factored into this budget.

He stated the High School was built for 960 students.

Mr. Ruggiero reported that the Department is continuing to look for new a Superintendent. He stated there have been two (2) or three (3) applicants, who are filtered through the School's HR Director. Mr. Ruggiero reported the deadline for applications is Tuesday, March 7th. He stated if there are not enough applicants, an outside firm will be hired to help search for qualified individuals. Mr. Ruggiero stated in the meantime, the Schools will consider an Interim Superintendent if the quality of the applications received is not sufficient.

There was a brief discussion of enrollment.

Mr. Ruggiero reported there was a drop in enrollment in grades eight (8) and (9) due to students opting to attend private school or be home schooled.

He reported the employment contract for teachers and the separate employment contract for cafeteria workers is up for negotiations this fiscal year.

There was a brief discussion on turnover in the central office.

Mr. Ruggiero reported the need for a Behavioral Health Coordinator has increased.

He reported the severance pay package of the former Superintendent is coming out of the School Department budget. The Interim Superintendent works 80% of the time and does not receive a full salary. He stated the Director of HR is not a new position and a few positions were restructured last year.

Other business:

Next meeting, March 21st: Finance and Planning Board will review Warrant Articles.

Jeff Hull contacted Chief Begonis to obtain more information regarding Tasers with the questions that arose at a prior meeting. Mr. Hull will distribute the findings to the Committee. He stated if questions remain unanswered, he will schedule another meeting or distribute a memo for follow-up questions.

The Committee requested the Personnel book for Shawsheen Technical High School, which will be distributed electronically.

The Committee requested a tour of the Wildwood Street School, due to the Facilities Master Plan study findings.

There was a brief discussion on departments, personnel and technology, how they function, the future and their budgets.

There being no further business, a motion was made by John Doherty, seconded by Jonathan Eaton and by the affirmative vote of all, the Finance Committee meeting was adjourned.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m. The next meeting of the Finance Committee is scheduled for Tuesday March 21, 2017.

Respectfully submitted,

Recording secretary