

Finance Committee Meeting  
Tuesday, March 3, 2015  
Minutes

Chairman John F. Doherty called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Members present were Theresa M. Manganello, Richard K. Hayden, Robert P. Palmer, Jonathan R. Eaton, William Wallace Excused: Bernard P. Nally Jr.,

Also Present: Mary DeLai, Superintendent of Schools, Neil Ellis, Technology Coordinator, Margaret Kane, Chairman, Virginia Bonish, Vice Chairman, Manny Mulas, Member, Kathleen Carroll, Member, Mary Jane Byrnes, Member, Julie Broussard, Member, Stephen Bjork, Member

Wilmington Public Schools:

PRESENT IN INTERST: Mary DeLai. Superintendent of Schools

Ms. DeLai - Distributed corrected hand out. Reads mission statement for Wilmington Public Schools. Commitment to education with having universal access to early education, 100% of students attend publicly funded full day kindergarten. Children come to school, 80% of children are absent fewer than 10 days per year. Children stay in school, 98% of students are enrolled in school all year. Last year 6 students dropped out of school compared to 15, two years ago. With a strong graduation rate, graduation average 91.2% compared to a state average of 85%. Strong SAT scores, are consistently higher than the state average. Strong performance and participation in advance placement exams, with 30% more test takers on AP Exams than the state average. 88% of students graduate and go on to pursue post-secondary education as compared to the state average of 75%.

Ms. DeLai - Would like to highlight that we do have room for improvement. One thing being focused on is proficiency gap: 70% students in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade are scoring proficient or advanced on English language arts on MCAS. Only 36% of our high needs students are scoring proficient or advanced. Explained the definition of high needs student. Students scoring proficient or advanced on 4<sup>th</sup> grade math, only 22% of high needs students score proficient or advance. Similar for 8<sup>th</sup> grade MCAS, 65% of students score proficient or advance but only 24% of our high needs students. Trends continue through a number of different assessment data.

Mr. Doherty – Asked if you think this will change by going to PARCC? The PARCC is more complex, we could see a dip in assessment scores. Remains to be seen if the Board of Education will pursue PARCC come October 2015. If we compare ourselves demographically to similar communities, compared to other districts we are close to or at bottom in terms of percent on scoring proficient or advance, compared to other communities. Explains the demographic that is looked at. Ten year enrollment history and 5 year enrollment projections; Currently a decline in enrollment over the last 10 years, at 3,876 in 04-05 school year, little over 3,500, projection is to remain close to that, always dips and increases for enrollment based on census data. Not projecting a significant decline in students. Middle school was more pronounced, had 950 students, down to 850.

Mr. Wallace – Asked if the Schools have done any studies on space capacity. We have significant capacity, new high school is for 960 students, that number was chosen by MSBA requirements. As of now, thinks the schools have significant capacity, fortunate as of now to have excess capacity. Ms. DeLai - Offering next year due to space at early intervention, full day intergraded pre-school.

This is a trend most school districts are going to. Both schools will have ½ day pre-school, and one full day. Demand is still high. Woburn and Shawsheen have significant capacity, some maybe a little high, but still within guidelines.

Mr. Wallace – Asked if there is a space capacity issue for Administration. Ideally would like administration in one location, Current Administrative building is approximately 1,600 square feet. To get everyone under one roof and properly handicap accessible, about will need about 4,000 square feet.

Mr. Wallace – Asked how many current administration personnel there are. There are approximately 20 people.

Ms. DeLai - Reviewed page 5 of hand out for Demographic trends. 2013-2014, 1 in 4 students were high needs, 60 current students out of district. Explains students with disabilities. Ten year budget history followed a steady trend, about 3 to 3-1/2 percent increase per year. Increase of 2-1/2% from FY12 forward. FY16 requested budget is 4% increase. Would like to point out in terms of non-salary, a lot of increase comes from special education due to students out of district.

Ms. DeLai - Explained page 7 breakdown by cost center, central office, special education and athletics. Budget drivers for 4% increase, translates into \$1.392M. The largest budget driver is contractual salary increases which amount to a little over \$1M. Negotiations with Nurses this year. Last year negotiated with teachers. Next largest budget driver is special education tuition and transportation, some are for students placed since FY2015 budget was adopted, some are for students that moved this year. Explained laws.

Ms. DeLai - Next budget driver is new positions to address compliance with student's IEP's. There are projected enrollment increases or significant needs and gaps in our instructional program. Also includes funding for curriculum resources and professional development to address significant needs that have been identified. Increase in electricity consumption; High School is a bigger building by 40,000 square feet. Higher efficient equipment but more equipment, motors fans etc.

Ms. DeLai - Regular education and homeless transportation, contract with Reading Transportation is up in June. Currently in the process of rebidding, projecting increase of 2-1/2%. Budget priorities, includes providing strong foundation for early childhood education, expanding access to early childhood education, strengthening early childhood education particularly literacy skill development, providing strong inclusive learning environment for all students. Continue work on aligning curriculum to the new curriculum framework, particularly in literacy and provide curriculum resources that support high quality instruction, particularly in reading fluency and writing. Looking to provide intensive instructional support at elementary level to develop and deliver high-quality differentiated instruction that allows for strong interventions for struggling learners and simultaneously challenging experiences for higher achieving students.

Ms. DeLai - Implement Pre K-5 curriculum resources that support high quality math instruction that is aligned to the new Massachusetts Curriculum Framework, you see that in our capital plan request \$177,000 for new math called Envision. Aligning our 6-8 grade math curriculum to the new Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and identifying and implementing curriculum resources that support high quality instruction in mathematics. To close persistent and growing proficiency gap between our high needs and non-high needs students, particularly between those students with disabilities and those without. We are also focusing on providing a rigorous,

challenging academic experience for all students – both high achieving and struggling learners and addressing behavioral needs for all students providing rich social emotion learning experience where children learn a common language and strategies to deal with emotions, development resilience, handle challenges and conflicts with peers, and cultivate empathy. Brief discussion on the new Core math and parents had concerns.

Mr. Wallace – For new curriculum requirements, asked if it will require more teaching. Teaching will be the same, time block generally approx 1 hour math block in elementary schools. Pilot teachers were quite pleased on how well the students did. Struggling learners were part of the pilot program. Hoping to see results as early as next year. . Largely the parents were quite pleased, children come home excited that they could do math.

Ms. DeLai - Another priority is providing high-quality professional development for teachers to support professional growth, improving formative assessment practices, assessments that are giving throughout the year, to help monitor the progress of students.

Mr. Doherty – Asked how many professional development days there are. Ms. DeLai – There are one full day and four half days. Brief discussion on surrounding Towns having ½ days each week and ½ days count as a full day for students. Another area for professional development is use of data to inform instruction, differentiating instruction for all types of learners, integrating technology in meaningful and engaging ways. Fortunate to have the technology. Brief discussion on professional development, identify the struggles of a student, how to engage the student and how do deal with the students. Brief discussion on high school classes being 84 minutes blocks, as of September 2014. Students and parents are positive on this change. Brief discussion on longer school days.

Ms. DeLai - Largest budget driver for \$1.3M increase is contractual salary increases, were able to offset some special education increases from circuit breaker grant. Originally in preliminary budget requesting staffing increases. Was looking for additional kindergarten teacher, through Town Census 2015 additional students next year, distributed throughout Boutwell and Wildwood. There is an increase in need for teaching staff to address enrollment increases, also each full day kindergarten assistant to support that program. Initially asked for 3 additional special education assistants to deal with grade level transitions, increase service needs, calls for more support from staff. Requesting 1.0 pre K-5 literacy instructional specialist, to address those gaps in elementary level, significant gap in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade from high and non-high need students. Looking for 1.0, 6-8 Math Instructional Specialist. If you look at our assessment score for math at middle school level, as of now don't have a strong percentage, with respects to students scoring in math. Hopes this individual can provide leadership as well. Some of these positions not necessarily indented to be long term solutions in the budget that continues year after year, high needs area, have targeted intervention and coaching, as we see we addressed that gap in efficiency perhaps we can employ that staff to other areas as needed. Looking to add 1.5 reading specialist, employed ½ time person at North Intermediate, at West Intermediate, ¼ at Boutwell and ¼ at Wildwood. We have 3 reading specialists at primary reading level, need for more reading support at 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> grade reading level. 0.6 FTE High Schools Technologist to be combined with the 0.4 FTE added in FY 15, to support integration of technology in the new technology rich high school.

Mr. Doherty – Asked if the teachers get instruction in the technology in the new high school prior to opening. Each was given a laptop ahead of time and was given instructional videos. Mr. Ellis and staff will be spending a lot of time with teachers teaching them the technology in their classes.

Teachers are excited to have the same level of technology, some are nervous because it's new to them. Mr. Ellis – Explained that two teachers stopped by and thanked them for how well things were working on day one.

Ms. DeLai - Added 1.4 FTE mini van drivers, due to enrollment shifts. Included 2.8 special education assistants hired this year, due to shifting needs. Initially we off-set with labor savings, able to take back staffing request of \$408,000 to bring down to \$207,000.

Ms. DeLai - Non-staffing requests include Foundations Phonemic Awareness/Phonics program to help students in early grades. The school does not have a program in place as of now. Purchase would be \$37,700. Increase to curriculum and professional development of \$52,000. Last year implemented FOSS science kits for grades K, 3 and 5 included funding to roll out to grades 1, 2 and 4 too. Mentioned earlier the electricity consumption due to increases square footage, \$10,000, combined total \$62,000, \$52,000 for transportation.

Ms. DeLai - Original at 5.49% which is \$1.9M increase. In conversations with the Town Manager, Town Accountant, we were asked to reduce our budget increase from 5.5% down to 4%, which equates to \$517,455. Removed 3 Special Education Assistants, added 12 Special Education Assistants in the last 3 to 4 year, asked administrator of special education to take a hard look at staffing levels, to meet all the needs without adding staff. Look to cut 1.6 existing position, can't tell you exactly where these positions will be, until have a better sense of what our enrollment will be next year. May increase class sizes but hoping to stay within guidelines. For Foundations Program agreed to shift over to capital budget, due to one-time expenditure, meets the definition of capital. Also moved some requests for FY16 to FY17. Reduced increase curriculum and professional development. Instead of increasing by \$52,000, now increasing by \$25,000. reduces \$27,000 initially assumed transportation contract to increase 5% reduce the assumption to 2.5% and hope for the best. Eliminated FOSS science kits for grades 1, 2 & 4, whatever science supplies and materials are needed, will do our best to use from existing resources, Brief discussion on FOSS kit one time expenditure, moving to capital, but would have to take something else out, FOSS kit is science kits for particular topic complete with everything you would need to do a lab experiment with a class size of 20 to 25. Reduced Textbook Expense \$25,000, reducing instructional technology by \$52,500,

Mr. Hayden – Asked how they would do this. Old High School has a lot of computers, projectors, hoping to redeploy some of those resources to address all of our needs, won't be investing as much, we do have a lot of technology. Minor cut for supplies and equipment, increased circuit breaker offset by \$160,000. Conservative about what we feel the State may or may not fund for circuit breaker. Explains that a circuit breaker is a reimbursement program (grant) that is provided to municipalities to help offset the cost of Special Education Expense. Establish a threshold, threshold is set at 3 times the state per pupil rate. Every dollar spent in excess of \$40,000 the State reimburses; traditionally reimbursement rate has been 75%. Reimbursement rate has shifted overtime, in tough economic times as been as low as 42%, last couple of years, have been fortunate at 72-75%.

Mr. Doherty – Asked where the reimbursement goes. Back to school, in a revolving account, fund can be carried forward for one year. This figured on a per student every student we spend \$40,000 including out of district students. Requests that were not funded all had strong justifications

Some items like to keep on radar are unfunded Federal and State Mandates. Educator Evaluation a large one, requires a significant amount of time, found goal setting process has helped Educator evolution, MCAS testing or PARCC, McKinney-Vento support for homeless students, additional requirements for English language learner/SEI endorsement, document translation services required to translate to any parent, new gun law passed this year requires us to provide suicide prevention to our staff and a new student discipline and student attendance law, implemented this year the new fingerprint law which is paid for by staff members, pre-school requirements from early education and care, reporting to the state for student information, for educator personnel data reported multiple times to the state. This year had to implement Massachusetts kindergarten entry assessment to receive kindergarten quality grant from State. There are new restraint regulations, new bullying prevention regulation, continuing our work to revise curriculum frameworks.

Mr. Doherty – Are there workshops for teachers on restraint. Training is required for teacher and staff members. Also de-escalation strategies. Brief discussion on restraint of a student.

Ms. DeLai - Reviewed FY16 Capital requests. New math curriculum, Middle Schools need clocks and intercom upgrades, replace van #6, Foundations phonics programs.

Mr. Wallace – Asked if we are trying to reduce the number for attendance. Attendance is something we are spending more time to track, it's a indicator to us for at risk students, hoping to focus on behavioral health and hopes to increase attendance.

Mr. Hayden – Asked what the rule is on handheld devices. At the High School they can use mobile devices if teacher allows it as a resource, other than that they're not suppose to have them.

Mr. Doherty – Inquired if the teachers encourage students do homework on-line. There are teachers who are moving towards that, in various ways, some teachers experimenting with a flip classroom, where they are videotaping there lecture and having students access at home. Teachers using Edmodo and Google classroom.

Mr. Wallace – In the budget two positions show high increases. The North principal salary went from \$90,000 to \$111,000. Ms. DeLai – For that position principal that was at the school, who left not on a full-time schedule, increase is for full year salary not part-year salary.

Mr. Wallace – Athletic Director went up 14.2%. At the end of last year a survey was done, discovered the salary for that position was far below surrounding communities. These salary changes were made last year, current budget is reflecting this.

Mr. Doherty – Asked what the technology plans for the future are. One to one is not sustainable, difficult to sustain that level of funding. Districts have been successful in doing the one to one and BYOD, some districts have purchased and parents pay over time and own the device at the end. I think with Wilmington, BYOD is probably the most sustainable option. Google APS and Google Chrome books, find to be very affordable. We as a district need to start to work on, what that looks like and be able to empower kids to start to use these devices. First we have to make sure teachers are extremely comfortable with technology.

Mr. Wallace - With all the snow days, asked if we making the call the night prior. Parents are getting a call in plenty of time to make arrangements. Praises the DPW and Town on how quickly schools were up in running after storms.

Mr. Eaton – Impressed on how she handled the needs of special education in her interview. Good job on your first almost 1<sup>st</sup> year.

Mr. Nally – Asked what we have for security at the High School. Have a lot of cameras and working out any blind spots. May add cameras, nice security feature is the vestibule area you can get in the first set of doors but not through the second, folks have to have license scanned and background check to get in, emergency alerts, licenses get scanned and checked. School Resource Office at the entry, card readers throughout district, building in lock position, scanned to be unlocked. CARES have cards with certain time programmed.

Mr. Nally – Asked if she can know if a door is blocked open or if someone sticks something to hold door. Unfortunately not, but expect staff to check.

Other business: None

There being no further business, a motion was made by Jonathan Eaton, seconded by William Wallace. Approved unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30p.m.

The next meeting of the Finance Committee is scheduled for Thursday, March 5, 2015.

Respectfully submitted,

Recording secretary