

APPROVED

December 10, 2019

SCHOOL COMMITTEE/FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING

The December 10, 2019 School Committee (SC) joint meeting with the Finance Committee (FC) meeting was called to order by Brett Argall at 7:02 PM.

School Committee Members present: Brett Argall (Chair), Lisa Brown (Secretary), Kelli Grady (Vice Chair)

School Committee Members Absent: Becky Charniak, Julie Moulder

Non-Voting: Business & Operations Manager Cortney Keegan, Superintendent Kevin Maines

Finance Committee Members present: Howard D'Amico (Chair), Sandy Kuipers, Phil Landry, Heather Morin, Dick Vanden Berg

Finance Committee Members absent: Michael Hutnak (Vice Chair), Carol Gogolinski, Lynne Mussulli

Non-Voting: Matthew Wojcik (Town Administrator)

Meeting with Finance Committee regarding School Budget Requests

Mr. Argall explained that it is very early in the School budget process, and the information available today may not be as detailed as the FC would like it to be. All projections presented tonight are based on assumptions. The projected increase in the Staffing budget is \$371,000, assuming a 1.5% COLA and steps. The projected increase of 1.8% for the Town's appropriation would be \$244,000. The School is just starting negotiations on their next contract, so it is not known what the COLA will be.

Mr. Wojcik cannot project at this time what the Town's appropriation will be. The Town is expecting an "astronomical" increase in Property & Casualty Insurance premium due to a large claim last year. Mr. Wojcik has built in a 12%-14% increase. MIA typically does not give the Town its budget until after Town Meeting. The preliminary indication is that the Town will face three years of penalty.

The Worcester County Pension Plan Annual Required Contribution is usually 9.95% each year. This year they project a larger percentage. These variables will affect the Town's appropriation to the schools.

Mr. Wojcik is optimistic about the new self-insured health insurance. Right now, the Town's loss ratio is at 45%, which is very low.

The Town's Personnel Budget is complete.

Ms. Keegan explained that it is very early to be talking about exact budget numbers. All the focus is on the expenditure part of the budget.

Superintendent Maines presented the following programs/staff that were brought in this year: a middle school STEM teacher and adjustment counselors.

Superintendent Maines feels that adding the following items would add the most benefit to keep the district moving forward, should funding be available: a Science teacher to introduce Animal and Plant Science, a 1.0 elementary STEM teacher, a middle school Special Education teacher, and adding an engineering class.

The cost to send one student to Norfolk Agricultural is \$22,000-\$23,000, which does not include the cost of transportation.

School Choice-In has increased and School Choice-Out has decreased.

The next time the School comes before the FC, Mr. D'Amico would like to see a level-funded budget and a budget that includes funding for the district's "wish list".

Superintendent Maines spoke about the Blackstone Valley Superintendent's Consortium. Douglas hopes to offer an online microeconomics class for that Consortium. Project Lead the Way at WPI offers grants to purchase materials and supplies.

A brief discussion was held regarding the information technology needs at the high school.

APPROVED

December 10, 2019 Joint School Committee/Finance Committee Meeting

Ms. Grady and Ms. Brown spoke in favor of the district not sliding backwards. Ms. Keegan spoke about building stability into the budget.

A discussion was held regarding Special Education, including budgets and out-of-district placements, programming, and School Choice.

A discussion was held regarding the benefits of having an athletic trainer. MIIA may mandate that schools provide an athletic trainer.

It was decided that the SC will come before the FC again on 2/25/19.

Ms. Grady made a motion at 8:14 PM to adjourn the School Committee meeting. Ms. Brown seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-3.

Adjournment

-Ms. Grady made a motion at 8:14 PM to adjourn the School Committee meeting. Ms. Brown seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-3.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Wright
Recording Secretary