

WOBURN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

REGULAR MEETING

April 22, 2019

A Regular Meeting of the Woburn School Committee was held on April 22, 2019 at the Joyce Middle School Conference Room, 55 Locust Street, Woburn, MA beginning at 7:00pm.

ROLL CALL

Ms. Chisholm-Present, Ms. Crowley-Present, Mr. Demers-Present, Mr. Kisiel-Present, Mr. Metters-Present, Dr. Wells-Present, Chairman Mulrenan-Present.

APPROVAL OF RECORDS

Approval of 3.27.19 SC Minutes

A motion was made to approve the minutes of 3.27.19.

Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

Mr. Ryan Qualey was not present.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Andrew Lipsett, Arlington Road.

Mr. Lipsett was here to talk about the budget and commented he was shocked to learn the budget faces a 3 million shortfall.

He was here tonight to call on the Mayor and the City Council to provide the school department with the funds needed. Mr. Lipsett is here to call on the Mayor to close this gap.

Elissa Milto, Charles Street; SEPAC President and Jenie Thistle Balot, Lake Ave.; SEPAC Secretary were here to talk about the budget.

Ms. Milto read a letter on behalf of the SEPAC.

She hopes that this budget shortfall can be used as a learning opportunity and that the school district remains committed to furthering the district's strategic plan.

CITY COUNCIL LIAISON

Mr. Concannon was present; no formal report tonight.

In the interest of keeping the lines of communication open he wanted the committee to know he has had conversations with the council on the budget shortfall.

They are taking a wait and see approach until seeing what the Mayor has to say regarding the budget

Dr. Wells made a motion to take the agenda out of order to have FY-20 budget addressed first. Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

REPORTS/PRESENTATION OF SUPERINTENDENT & STAFF

FY-20 Budget

Superintendent Crowley provided an update on FY-20 by reading a prepared statement.

Before he began he wanted to point out that we are not in a deficit for our current budget. We are properly funded for this year. As we look at FY-20, Dr. Crowley shared a timeline.

In November, early December of 2018 it was brought to his attention the out of district tuition and transportation costs were exceeding our budget. Superintendent Crowley directed Dr. Baldassarre and Mr. Elia to conduct a review.

Dr. Baldassarre and Mr. Elia discovered multiple issues that contributed to our near financial crisis. Among these is a dramatic increase in the number of students in out of district placements due to having multiple students moving into the district after the budget was already passed.

Settlement agreements to resolve disputes between parents in the district. Woburn students who require more intensive educational services than the district can provide; and also some LEA assignments; students moving in from another town we assume some of the costs.

Multiple students moving into the district after the budget was passed.

There is also an increase in our out of district transportation due to the increase in our number of students placed in our out of district programs. We had an unfortunate miscalculation submitted to Mr. Elia with regards to our out of district SpEd funding. Upon further review they also found out the SpEd budget has not increased in the last two years. We were able to cover all of our FY-19 expenses using funding that was in our circuit breaker and other accounts. In planning for the FY-20 budget Dr. Crowley wanted to ensure to the committee that the figures submitted to Mr. Elia by our SpEd department would be 100 % accurate. Much to the Superintendent's dismay, the amount originally submitted to Mr. Elia increased by nearly \$700,000 in the course of a single day; three weeks ago. We are confident now that we have the correct information. As you can see this has placed us in an unchallenging situation for the FY-20 budget. Mr. Elia, Ms. Sprague and Dr. Baldassarre have all been hard at work trying to get an understanding of how this happened. Now that we know where we are, the following steps have been taken. Dr. Crowley deviated slightly to say we are committed to moving the strategic plan forward; we are committed to all kids in the city of Woburn. He never, ever wants to pit one group against the other. These are all of our kids. He feels we are making great progress and that was the intent heading into the FY-20 budget.

Over the last few weeks, including last week which was a vacation week, administration has been meeting with principals and directors to see if there are any reallocations that could occur. A key project moving forward assigned to Dr. Baldassarre will be the development of programs in district to reduce our reliance on out of district providers. The intent is with excellent programs in place we will be able to return some of our students back to Woburn. Also, as a

result of our out of district expense, we are projecting increases to our circuit breaker minimally for next year but hopefully in FY20-21. So at the same time the circuit breaker increases we will be having better in district programming to serve all of our students.

Mechanisms that we put in place here internally have included weekly meetings between the special education department and the finance office. We have been looking at the roles of all of our staff including secretaries, custodians, paraprofessionals, interventionists and teachers. We are looking to budget at a step 3 rather than a step 5 for hiring. This will reduce the cost of hiring. We are looking to centralize our funding, particularly as it relates to afterschool programming. Schools at the elementary level that run after school programs; we are looking to centralize that so we can get a better handle on the after school funding. One of the projects last week was a line by line analysis of the budget book. An example of one of the things we decided for was the cafeteria repairs would fall under the cafeteria line item and not a separate line item. We are trying to align what is in the book with what the expenses really will be. We are looking at retirements and vacancies as far as the need to fill. Dr. Crowley has met repeatedly with Mayor Galvin over the past few weeks and they have had fruitful discussions, it is an ongoing dialogue. Traditionally we have turned in our budget on May 1st and the Mayor has given us until May 8th. Initially, at our meeting on April 10th, we were projecting a budget percent increase of 8% and we have reduced it to 6.9%.

This topic was opened up for discussion at this point in the meeting.

Dr. Wells wanted to understand the timeline a bit better.

He asked if the Superintendent said he had his first concerns in November and December.

Dr. Baldassarre commented it was around November the invoices start coming in for out of district costs and that is when he went to Mr. Elia saying this can't be right. At this point this is when the work began to get us to this point. Dr. Wells said he first became aware of an issue was a month ago. He understands they did not have all of the information, but this reflects communication within the subcommittee meetings. During the subcommittee meeting they always asked -is there a problem? How is the budget going? He said there was never any highlighting there is a real problem. He said until a month ago at the most, he had no idea there was any concern at the administration level about the budget. The message of we are all set for this year but we have a problem for next year was never conveyed to the finance subcommittee. Superintendent Crowley responded there were issues in November and December that they worked to address. Which is why in putting together the FY-20 budget, he wanted to be as accurate as possible.

Mr. Demers clarified; the action that was put in place in the fall and the winter was based on making sure that our numbers worked for fiscal year 2019. The major issue we are facing here is the fiscal year 2020.

Ms. Chisholm stated that being on finance last year, special education was always discussed. It was a number we always watched. She was never given the heads up that circuit breaker was being used to the extent that it was. There was no communication. She knows they have to do

what they have to do to make this work. We have to take care of every student in our buildings, equal across the board. She said she doesn't want to micromanage; that is not our job. This situation has brought new light to many aspects we need to address.

Ms. Crowley commented that in 2018-2019 she saw the greatest progress in this district since she has been on this committee. We now realize that we cannot run a public school system in Woburn on a 3.5% increase every year. We have been underfunded for multiple years. She was excited to see this district moving forward. We need the city council and the mayor to fund this. We will provide the Mayor with any oversight that he needs to have faith in us that the money is going to the right place. She pointed out that we level funded special education last year and she takes responsibility for not saying we should add something in that.

Mr. Metters said there are two areas of focus. One is immediate and one is 2019-2020. We are going to provide the level best services we can for every child as they need them and we will do that, that's automatic. Children who move into the district; this is a cost we can't control. The portion of the unanticipated dollars from this year's budget that were not put into the budget; that is something in due course and in due time we need to look at. The financial forensics behind it to figure out how did that happen, how to we prevent that from happening again. That is just due diligence, the oversight that everyone expects from us and what we expect from ourselves. We will not lose sight of the fact we need to look into this at some point. He asked Me. Elia looking forward what does this current budget do or not do.

Mr. Elia said there are retiree positions that are projected not to be filled; which may or may not affect class sizes. Some of our staff salaries can be charged to revolving accounts because some of their work is done for those revolving accounts. The principal at the high school has some things that might not be necessary at the high school next year. Some of those things have been taken into consideration. There are still things they are looking at that have not been determined at this point. They are looking at additional grants.

Mr. Metters commented you are looking at where dollars can be cut. You could say this is a level serviced budget. It takes into account the raises we provided to our educators, and that there is a little plus, because of the way the contract was structured there will be more art and music as well.

Mr. Mulrenan ended the discussion by saying this is not an easy task. Administration is getting creative along with the Mayor. He appreciates the city council members being in attendance for tonight's meeting. He thanked the Mayor for allowing the committee to get the budget to him on May 8th.

A motion was made to return to regular order of business.

Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

Data Analytics Presentation

Ms. Courtney Young, Elementary Curriculum Coordinator and Ms. Abby Gillis, 6-12 ELA Curriculum Coordinator presented to the committee.

Last fall they started to look at what they have been collecting for data at the elementary and high school level for the past few years and this is when they realized they needed a better system. It was at this time they were introduced to an out of district data analyst person who helped them use Google to better utilize what they had in their Google suite and how they could better manage what they were doing.

They spoke about where they were two years ago and where they are today and what projects they are working towards for the future. They spoke about moving district assessments to Google forms and creating dashboards, using Google sheets and looking at how to better get the data to the teachers and how to push out data to the teachers in a faster way.

Year two everyone has their own dashboard, they are able to get anything they need immediately. They are able to get things to everybody much faster.

We are moving the data from elementary to the middle schools. The middle school teachers were so happy to know their students in June before they were coming in September.

The other part was to make the MCAS information easier to read and present to staff and administration. We are now able to create dashboards very quickly and also for different groups of teachers.

At the end of this school year all grades 3-8 students will be taking a quick Google form quiz that will cover all of the standards of the school year.

Dashboards are being built for non-academics ways to look at adjustment counselor support; we are building student profiles so all of that data is in one place.

Ms. Gillis spoke of taking what Ms. Young has learned in this process and taking that for ELA at the secondary level.

We started 7-12 writing benchmarks. It is a trial year for us. This is the first time to be able to look at all of the ninth graders to see how they are doing with their writing instead of just MCAS. ELA is in the beginning stages of this. We are hoping next year, we can use this with teachers for discussion. Ms. Gillis wants to do growth targets. This is her next step she wants to work with the data analyst on.

Dr. Wells asked how they input the data.

Ms. Young responded they pull a few days before school starts which generates a spreadsheet which gets pushed out through Gmail. It is pushed out 4 times per year. Teachers are entering data through the drop down.

Dr. Wells asked if they are following up with the data that is given to the teachers.

Ms. Young said yes, they are forming subgroups.

Ms. Young said classroom teachers talk about this, what is the next level of assessment.

Dr. Wells needs at a committee level, something they can look at all of the schools to see this school may need something. Extra-curricular; Dr. Wells sees this as how the student is fitting in, this might have some promise on how to intervene.

Ms. Gillis - for students in grades 7-10 they are doing paired writing, for grades 11-12 they are doing rhetorical writing. This is something MCAS is asking for.

Mr. Demers commented about the data coming to the teachers a lot earlier; this would give them more time to craft a lesson plan. This is better equipping our teachers to better serve their students. He thanked them for the growth piece during this presentation. He appreciates this data.

SY19-20 Calendar

Ms. Sprague presented a draft of the 2019-2020 calendar.

We do know the first day for Teachers is September 3, 2019 and for students will be September 5, 2019. Ms. Sprague is waiting for MCAS testing dates.

Mr. Demers asked if we can get this out to parents, as some want to make vacation plans. If we could possibly get this out stating this is subject to change.

Dr. Wells asked for the school start date to be put on the agenda for 2020-2021 school year.

He also asked for school start time, the longer we put it off, the longer we aren't going to implement it.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance Subcommittee

Dr. Wells said they met last Wednesday morning.

Balance of Accounts

Dr. Wells said they met and reviewed the balance of accounts.

A motion was made to approve the balance of accounts.

Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

List of Bills

Dr. Wells said they met and reviewed the list of bills.

A made a motion to approve the list of bills.

Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

They spent a significant amount of time discussing next year's budget.

The finance subcommittee is set up to monitor the school budget.

He feels we can have more updates on circuit breaker money.

Some discussions on the budget process. They have seen Dr. Crowley having a different way of presenting the budget. When the committee receives the budget books, the presenters are not here. This is something for the committee to think about how to handle the budget process moving forward. They discussed SpEd costs and how they can change drastically.

Communication was also discussed.

Fiscal year is fine for this year there should not be any problems.

Resource Utilization Subcommittee

Mr. Kisiel said they are meeting this Wednesday.

Personnel Subcommittee

Ms. Chisholm said they have not met.

Curriculum and Professional Development Subcommittee

Mr. Demers said they have not met.

Policy Subcommittee

Ms. Crowley said they are looking at the fiscal policies and tightening up some language we have in place, possibly for next school year. They looked at the DESE Advisory, language on when a district is facing a shortfall. Discussion only.

The subcommittee would have an updated list so they can monitor out of district costs.

Student Services and Achievement Subcommittee

Mr. Metters said they met earlier this evening.

Discussed ESY positions that need to be filled.

Talked about the NEASC be reviewed in June.

The District Accommodation Plan was discussed. It is more data driven than in the past. This process has been submitted to the state and approved.

CPR - as far as they know all submissions are ok.

The next SEPAC meeting will be May 14th at the Joyce Middle School there will also be a live facebook feed. Tuesday, June 11th there will be an honors ceremony at WMHS.

Communication and Community Relations Subcommittee

No report from this subcommittee at this time.

CORRESPONDENCE

A letter from the Woburn Public Library Foundation along with the Friends of the Woburn Public Library was received on April 12th. The library staff thanked Woburn Public Schools for the contributions they made to our city at the library's opening day celebration in March.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Relay for Life - Paint the Town Purple ceremony will be held this Thursday evening.

GREASE will be held this week at WMHS.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Dr. Wells asked for better communication on the timeline for the budget.

Mr. Kisiel through curriculum, if there is a cut in Woburn public media, maybe through curriculum if someone could see how many students are taking this course.

Dr. Wells suggested maybe a letter to our federal representative stating our concerns.

Ms. Crowley asked that the Superintendent's evaluation be put a future agenda item.

Posting of next budget meeting for May 6th at 7:00pm.

A motion was made to post a meeting for Budget Update on May 6, 2019.

Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

May 29th is scholarship night at the high school. The May 29th meeting needs to be rescheduled.

A motion was made to move the May 29, 2019 school committee meeting to May 28th.

Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

There were none.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made to adjourn. Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

Meeting Adjourned 8:39 pm

Respectfully submitted,



Jean MacLeod

Recording Secretary