

WOBURN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
May 5, 2020

A Remote Meeting of the Woburn School Committee was held on May 5, 2020, at 7:30 pm.

ROLL CALL

Ms. Chisholm-Present, Ms. Cormier-Present, Mr. Kisiel-Present, Mr. Lipsett-Present, Mr. Mulrenan-Present, Dr. Wells-Present, Chairperson Crowley-Present

Chairperson Crowley began by stating this is a public meeting convened under the new laws that allows a public entity to conduct a meeting that waives the rules that normally requires a quorum in person. We are conducting this meeting remotely under the authority of the Governor's Emergency Order issued on March 10, 2020.

Chairperson Crowley wished all of our teachers a Happy Teacher's Appreciation Day. Chairperson Crowley took a moment of reflection on what is happening in our community with the COVID-19.

REPORTS/PRESENTATION OF SUPERINTENDENT & STAFF

Dr. Crowley began by recognizing the outstanding work of our food service department. They are serving 250 meals per day 2x a week. Dr. Crowley can't thank teachers enough for all they do. Teacher Appreciation Day is a well-deserved tribute.

The WPS nurses have stepped up to do contact tracing for the city of Woburn. Dr. Crowley thanked them for that. Woburn Memorial High School was named as one of the top schools in the country by the U.S. News and World Reports. Dr. Crowley is very proud of our Extended Learning Plan. He would guide anyone with questions to our WPS website. He appreciates the patience of support of the entire community.

FY 21 BUDGET DISCUSSION

Looking at FY 21 one of the things that is a question mark and leads to probably more questions are revenue sources. We rely on the federal government for some of our revenue sources. One of the things that just became apparently available to the schools through the state is the CARES Act. There may be revenue coming. The exact amount is predicated on Title I funding, so we don't have the exact percentage. At the state level the majority of our funding comes from Chapter 70. That number still has not been established. SOA plans need to be submitted by May 15th. We will be able to submit. The amount of money Woburn is set to receive is around \$140,000.00. This is an additional funding source to the city. The significant loss of revenue to the city is real. We are trying to be fiscally responsible where we can. Some other revenue

sources are grants. We are a non-profit, but we rent the HS field, and we do have a preschool revolving account. Dr. Crowley wants the committee and the public to know we are looking under every rock and stone to see if there is something that can help. We have multiple contractual obligations we have to meet. Teachers union, we are in year two of the contract. Transportation costs go up every year. Our enrollment is uncertain. Dr. Crowley received an email this morning that St. Mary's is closing at the end of the school year in June; this might impact our enrollment in the Fall. Our EL enrollment was big last summer. We are dealing with so many unknowns. When we closed our schools on March 13th we asked Mr. Dunkley's facilities crew to immediately unplug everything in our schools; copying machines for examples. Hypothesizing there might be some savings and what we would do with these savings. We will get an energy report mid May. Should they be used to funding capital or are there ways to use these funds more creatively in FY 21? The Mayor extended the deadline for the budget to May 22nd. Moving forward we hope to get a budget to him in line with our priorities and also fiscally sound. We are dealing with so many unknowns and having more time to be thoughtful of our priorities will be helpful. Last year we passed a \$65.7 million dollar budget. When we are talking about budgets, these are real huge numbers. Dr. Crowley feels it is really important to take the time and analyze to make sure we are doing it right, and we always put our kids first. With that being said, our largest expenses personnel at \$48.7 million dollars. Our operating expense is \$17 million dollars. By having the extra week of time it allows us to take a bit of a longer look at some questions we may have so that we can make the decisions for our kids moving forward. As a result of last week's meetings, Dr. Crowley highlighted the positions that are legally mandated.

BCBA \$74,504.00 (we are already paying contractual services for this position)

4 1:1 Nurses \$241,672.00 (we have students coming in that require 1:1 nurses by law)

ACE Teacher \$65,066.00

ACE Social Worker \$65,066.00

As we move forward we need to continue to analyze our revenue and expenses.

We need to continue to look for efficiencies, and we have contractual obligations and contractual deadlines.

Dr. Crowley turned the meeting back to Chairperson Crowley.

Dr. Wells asked for a total amount for the legally mandated positions that were highlighted in Dr. Crowley's slide.

Dr. Baldassarre answered that the total for the ones that were highlighted is \$416,598.00.

Chairperson Crowley said at this point we can hear reports from the 2 subcommittees. Finance which is chaired by Ms. Chisholm and Budget Task Force which is chaired by Mr. Mulrenan.

Ms. Chisholm began asking about the transportation costs. There was discussion on whether we will be paying them when they did not perform a service. Is there an update on what we will be paying them?

Mr. Elia said we owe NRT \$733,000 and North Reading Transportation \$450,000 — \$500,000. No agreement has been reached.

Ms. Chisholm said they also discussed the lunch prices. Mr. Elia said we need to charge \$3.09 in order to satisfy the federal guidelines. At the present time the high school charges \$3.00, MS charges \$2.75 and elementary charges \$2.50. and Mr. Elia suggested a \$3.25 across the board increase. The subcommittee voted 2-1 to increase. Dr. Wells and Mr. Lipsett agreed, Ms.

Chisholm did not. She feels we have not been following the policy that was worked on for three years, until that is done she cannot support an increase. Adding anything additional to families at this time is something she can't agree with. We currently have \$70,000 in unpaid school lunches and will be increased next year. The school committee will have to vote on this tonight.

They discussed preschool tuition. Ms. Ryan came and spoke to the subcommittee about making it equal at both schools. The Shamrock and the Reeves program run at significant cost differences. Dr. Wells wanted to make sure the parents can be made aware of the increase and possibly be made midyear. A motion was made to send this to SSA.

Ms. Crowley had asked the subcommittee to look into the bus routes and how much savings there would be if they were eliminated. The guidelines come down to children sitting one to a seat and if everyone was used the cost of the buses would be unsustainable. Dr. Wells had asked that maybe a survey go out to parents to see who is actually going to be using the buses or afraid to use the bus come September. There was no recommendation on transportation from the committee. Mr. Elia asked for direction on the athletic field that needs to be replaced. The company is holding a time spot for Woburn to have it completed over the summer. We need to move forward with that contract now. The projected cost is going to be around \$595,000. There are funds in the field account but it is short to complete this project. There was discussion on whether to hold off for a year. They talked about how the field is becoming unsafe. Members thought at this time there are many variables with school opening, can we institute this money for the fields and not the day-to-day operations of the schools. They did talk about the budget and that they need a direct number from the Mayor. No one wants any layoffs but our legal obligations have to be met. We need to operate our schools and hold up all of our contracts. We are aware the city is having a revenue shortfall, and we need to add additional staffing. Dr. Wells excused himself at this time during the subcommittee meeting, so they could discuss coaches and whether we will be paying our spring coaches. The committee recommended that Dr. Crowley speak with the athletic director about this. There has been a lot of talk about this with MASC.

Chairperson Crowley said that it looks like the school committee is slowly coming to a consensus in terms of thinking about revenue. It sounds like we are carving out a solution with preschool but are hesitant on any other revenue streams the superintendent has floated to us.

Mr. Mulrenan began his report by saying a lot the discussion was about what we have to do to meet the legal requirements in the SpEd department. Ms. Ryan was in attendance and did a lengthy presentation along with Dr. Baldassarre on the needs and priorities of the SpEd department. There are a lot of needs, and she spoke of program descriptions and what she would like to do. They discussed the preschool for September. Mr. Mulrenan emailed Mr. Elia about allowing Ms. Ryan to restructure the fees. Perhaps allowing Ms. Ryan to change the fees in January 2021. This will give some time for parent notification. Dr. Baldassarre highlighted some outstanding programs we are running. Our goal is to keep the students in the district.

Chairperson Crowley asked the committee if they had any questions for Mr. Mulrenan. It is her understanding that we are now working with version 4 of the budget. This also is what Mr. Elia emailed the committee today. As we stand now our budget is currently at 8.462%. Historically our recommendation from the city is generally 4%, and we were instructed that 4% is aggressive. We have some work to do.

Chairperson took questions and comments from the committee.

Mr. Mulrenan mentioned this is going to be difficult. He also said that administrators and principals, as they have in the past, will come back and say they will get by with less. He wants them to know it is not for a lack of trying. These numbers are real.

Dr. Wells asked about the dollar amount for buses, vocational tuition for two students.

Mr. Elia thinks the amount is correct, but he will double check.

Dr. Wells asked where our athletic budget is located.

Dr. Baldassarre said line 35 in the budget summary.

Dr. Wells asked if we would get any savings from there as we did not have spring athletics.

Mr. Elia will get in touch with the Athletic Director.

Dr. Wells asked what level new teachers start at.

Mr. Elia said we usually start them at M +5, but we can move on that.

Chairperson Crowley asked the committee if we are ready to vote on preschool tuition tonight.

Is there a motion?

Mr. Kisiel asked for the final number.

Chairperson Crowley said right now the Shamrock is \$220.00 and the Reeves is \$400.00 per month. Ms. Ryan would like to make it \$300.00 across the board.

Mr. Kisiel asked if by doing this there will be extra money.

Mr. Elia said this goes into the revolving account; this would be for 3 salaries.

Mr. Kisiel thought Ms. Ryan had a concern in attendance; that this change in preschool tuition might deter some people from coming.

Mr. Elia said that is always a possibility with any increase.

Ms. Chisholm made a motion to increase preschool tuition to \$300.00 across the board beginning January 1, 2021.

Mr. Kisiel on the motion asked how this will affect the third hire.

Mr. Elia believes it will not have an effect.

Ms. Cormier on the motion commented that by moving it to January, would 4 months make a difference. She feels starting in September, if we voted today would give parents the same 4 months notice, and she would support this starting in September.

Dr. Wells, on the motion, has concerns we will not be collecting the money in the fall. He is taking a more conservative approach.

Mr. Mulrenan on the motion, we already waived the fees for preschool from March 13th through the end of this school year. It should not hurt too much going with the increase starting January 1, 2021.

Chairperson Crowley stated there is a motion on the floor; Ms. Chisholm made a motion to increase preschool tuition to \$300.00 across the board beginning January 1, 2021.

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

ROLL CALL:

Ms. Chisholm-yes, Ms. Cormier-yes, Mr. Kisiel-yes, Mr. Lipsett-yes, Mr. Mulrenan-yes, Dr. Wells-yes, Chairperson Crowley-yes.

Chairperson Crowley would advise the preschool folks to widely publicize this.

This was discussed thoroughly in two subcommittee meetings in order to arrive at this decision.

Dr. Wells on the budget, we have the \$416,000 that is legally mandated. Where are we going with this budget? At this time 8.462% is not going to fly.

Ms. Chisholm asked what the dollar figure would be if we would need to cut to get to the 4%.

Mr. Elia said just under \$2.8 million dollars.

Ms. Chisholm said we are going to have to look at ways to get to level funded.

She does believe in this time we have to be conscientious of the dollar.

Dr. Wells made a motion to have administration come back with a 4% increase.

Otherwise, we are just spinning our wheels. In Economic Times 4% would be great.

We have to face reality.

Mr. Lipsett has one concern, with so many things still in the air, uncertainty with bus contracts or how much we are saving on capital purchases; we need a firm understanding of what our options are. Yes, we are at 8.462% but there is not a lot of fat on this. He is hesitant about telling people to cut anything out of this.

Ms. Chisholm doesn't want to waste a lot of time. She feels if we get 4% we will be lucky.

We could ask for a supplement budget maybe midyear if things get better. It is not going to be pretty. The Mayor, city council and taxpayers have been pretty supportive of our schools.

Chairperson Crowley said we have a motion on the floor to have administration come back with a 4% budget.

Ms. Chisholm seconded the motion.

Dr. Wells is afraid time is running late, and we are not going to get firm numbers. If things come up during the school year we can go back to the Mayor then and ask. We have to show the Mayor we are doing our part. Unfortunately we have reached economic hardship. In his 20 + years he has never seen anything like this with the budget.

Mr. Mulrenan said there are many unknowns. He agrees with Dr. Wells as this is the worst he has ever seen. He feels 4% is tough, maybe come up with 4.5%.

Mr. Kisiel commented we have no idea what is coming from the state or federal government. If any stimulus money comes in, is it going to the city or the schools?

Mr. Elia believes it goes to the city first and then it should go to the schools.

Dr. Crowley said the Federal Care Act helps schools. It is going to go through states probably to the cities. In speaking with Mayor Galvin, we need to create a lean budget.

Chairperson Crowley said we have a motion on the floor to direct the administration to come up with what a 4% budget would look like. She passed the Chair to Mr. Mulrenan.

Mr. Mulrenan asked Ms. Crowley to speak on the motion.

Ms. Crowley stated it is up to the school committee to direct administration to come up with a budget and for the community to see what we are facing and build up from there. She thinks 4% is reasonable and a good place to start. She feels it is in line with what the school increase generally looks like. She appreciates all the hard work the leadership team put into this budget. The use of our savings, there might be some flexibility there. Hopefully the federal stimulus will kick in. She is disheartened that we are facing this.

Ms. Cormier had a question on the athletic field. She is curious as to when we need to make a decision on that.

Mr. Elia said Mr. Dunkley contacted the company, and they told him if we signed the contract they would hold the price for one year.

Ms. Chisholm questioned some SpEd significant increases. Consulting went from \$156,000 to \$835,000.00.

Mr. Elia said that is for the evaluations for the students that cost \$1,400.00 each.

She said that is a big jump. Legal is up 60% and translating is up 71%. She said this is somewhere to take a deep dive into.

Things were turned over to Dr. Crowley for a roll call vote to have the administration come back with a 4% budget.

ROLL CALL:

Ms. Chisholm-yes, Ms. Cormier-yes, Mr. Kisiel-yes, Mr. Lipsett-yes, Mr. Mulrenan-yes, Dr. Wells-yes, Chairperson Crowley-yes.

The meeting was turned back over to Chairperson Crowley.

Chairperson Crowley said we will keep the two subcommittees for now.

VOTE ON HS FIELD RENOVATIONS

The school committee voted to pay half of the cost to renovate the field. Are we going to move forward with this?

Dr. Wells asked how we are going to be paying for this.

Mr. Elia said initially it was a 50/50 cost share with the city. It has now turned into a charge for the school department. Fortunately for us, when the school was built, the city council voted that we open a field account. When anyone rents the fields that money goes into an account to pay for a renovation at some point in the future. Right now it will cost \$600,000 to renovate.

Approximately \$450,000 of that will come from the field account, another \$63,000 will come from capital accounts that we have set up before but the monies have all been expended and this is what is left over. The Mayor has agreed that extra money can be used to take care of the field account. The remainder would come from the energy reserve if voted by the school committee.

Mr. Elia said there is \$700,000 in the energy reserve account. We would be using \$90,000 for the field renovation. We are going to hit that this year for \$500,000.

Ms. Chisholm asked if we have already taken the \$500,000 out to use this school year.

Mr. Elia said yes.

Dr. Wells said it sounds like we could sign the contract and not expend the money this year.

Mr. Elia said if we sign the contract this year they will hold the same price. This is for the track and field.

Mr. Lipsett said right now it is hard for him to spend money at this time on the field and turf that we may not be using in September.

Chairperson Crowley said that Mr. Dunkley said the field could cause injuries.

Ms. Cormier said she would hate to see someone get hurt.

Chairperson Crowley commented we are committing to this but not spending in such a difficult time.

Ms. Chisholm said if we are going to dig this up we need to do the whole thing together. If we can put it off for a year, this is something we should do.

Dr. Wells said we lock in the price this year, and we will pay next year.

Dr. Wells made a motion that we have the school department enter into a contract with the company for expenditure in FY 22. That would include the field and track.

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

ROLL CALL:

Ms. Chisholm-yes, Ms. Cormier-yes, Mr. Kisiel-yes, Mr. Lipsett-yes, Mr. Mulrenan-yes, Dr. Wells-yes, Chairperson Crowley-yes.

VOTE ON INCREASE IN SCHOOL LUNCH FEE

Mr. Elia began by saying based on the calculation we have to go through for DESE our average price is \$2.67. You have to go through calculation every year. His feeling would be to raise the price to \$3.25 across the board and this will take or this for the next two year.

Dr. Wells made a motion to increase the school lunch fee as recommended by administration to \$3.25 across the board for all lunches

Ms. Cormier seconded the motion.

Mr. Kisiel asked if there is a reason we are doing this across the board.

Mr. Elia said we are on the low end of the lunch fee; we should be at \$3.09.

Mr. Kisiel asked why we can't increase to \$3.09.

Mr. Elia said because we have to do this calculation every year and it might go up next year.

Mr. Kisiel said it might be best to go to the lowest point possible to make this program work, and be legally obligated to be at \$3.09. This is a tough time for many families. He would like to get it as low as we can.

Mr. Elia said we can vote on this at the next meeting.

Mr. Lipsett said for the families that are experiencing hardship, they could qualify for free/reduced lunch. He does not want to put families through any hardships.

Ms. Chisholm said it comes out to \$14.00 per month. We are over \$70,000 in our lunch debt. There are many people who will not have a job come September.

Mr. Elia said this is something we have to do. We have to charge \$3.09 per meal. It does not matter what grade level. We might be able to charge the \$3.50 for the high school kids and keep the dollar amount for the younger kids.

Chairperson Crowley said there is a motion of the floor to raise lunch prices across the board.

Dr. Wells on the motion, the lunch program was designed to aid students that come from economically disadvantaged families. It is important we charge the right price that Mr. Elia said. We are better off raising it once and letting it go for a few years, and we won't see it in subsequent years.

Chairperson Crowley wants the public to know it is not the school district raising prices. This is coming from the state because we have to meet their requirement.

ROLL CALL:

Ms. Chisholm-no, Ms. Cormier-yes, Mr. Kisiel-no, Mr. Lipsett-yes, Mr. Mulrenan-no, Dr. Wells-yes, Chairperson Crowley-no.

At this point the motion failed 4-3.

Mr. Kisiel made a motion to have the administration go back and come up with the lowest figure possible to raise the lunch fee and still meet the mandates and potentially stagger this at different levels.

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

ROLL CALL:

Ms. Chisholm-no, Ms. Cormier-yes, Mr. Kisiel-no, Mr. Lipsett-yes, Mr. Mulrenan-no, Dr. Wells-yes, Chairperson Crowley-no.

Mr. Kisiel made a motion to have the administration go back and come up with the lowest figure possible to raise the lunch fee and still meet the mandates and potentially stagger this at different levels.

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

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE

Dr. Wells made a motion to approve the balance of accounts.

Motion seconded, all in favor. Motion passes 7-0

Roll Call

Ms. Chisholm-yes, Ms. Cormier-yes, Mr. Kisiel-yes, Mr. Lipsett-yes, Mr. Mulrenan-yes,
Dr. Wells-yes, Chairperson Crowley-yes.

Dr. Wells made a motion to approve the list of bills.

Motion seconded, all in favor. Motion passes 7-0

Roll Call

Ms. Chisholm-yes, Ms. Cormier-yes, Mr. Kisiel-yes, Mr. Lipsett-yes, Mr. Mulrenan-yes,
Dr. Wells-yes, Chairperson Crowley-yes.

Ms. Chisholm wanted to let the committee know that Dr. Wells will be signing these electronically.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was one piece of correspondence from Dr. Baldassarre.

The internet connectivity in the Inwood Drive location has been fixed.

Mr. Mulrenan made a motion to enter into the executive session.

Ms. Cormier seconded the motion.

Roll Call:

Ms. Chisholm-yes, Ms. Cormier-yes, Mr. Kisiel-yes, Mr. Lipsett-yes, Mr. Mulrenan-yes, Dr.
Wells-yes, Chairperson Crowley-yes.

Ms. Chisholm excused herself from attending the executive session.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

For the purposes of negotiation strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation.

No votes were taken in the executive session.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Mulrenan made a motion to adjourn.

Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 6-0.

Roll Call:

Ms. Cormier-yes, Mr. Kisiel-yes, Mr. Lipsett-yes, Mr. Mulrenan-yes, Dr. Wells-yes, Chairperson
Crowley-yes

Meeting adjourned at 9:43 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean MacLeod

Jean MacLeod