

WOBURN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
May 28, 2020

A Remote Meeting of the Woburn School Committee was held on May 28, 2020, beginning at 7:30 pm.

Chairperson Crowley took a moment of reflection on what is happening in our community with the COVID-19.

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 new laws that allows a public entity to conduct a meeting that waives the rule that normally requires a quorum in person. We are conducting this meeting remotely under the authority of the Governor Emergency Order issued on March 10, 2020.

APPROVAL OF RECORDS

A motion was made to approve the minutes of 4.28.20.

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

A motion was made to approve the minutes of 5.5.20.

Ms. Chisholm asked that this be put on hold as she did not have a chance to read the minutes.

REPORTS/PRESENTATION OF SUPERINTENDENT & STAFF
BUDGET DELIBERATIONS

Chairperson Crowley began by saying tremendous progress was made last night. We started whittling down to a budget that is possible. It is the goal of the committee to adhere to the vision and strategic plan that the Superintendent and the school committee have created over the last couple of years. We are also up against unknown but also known fiscal challenges that we have. That being said we are continuing to try to develop a budget that is always focusing on the best interests of the children.

Dr. Crowley thanked the school committee and thanked the many people who are on the call tonight. He went on to say that none of this is easy. Unfortunately we are in a position where we have to make some difficult choices. The COVID-19 has put a damper on the state revenue to a tune of over 6 billion dollars and at the local level in the millions of dollars range. Dr. Crowley is hearing reports that the unemployment rate is at or near what is what during the depression. The economic impact of COVID-19 is real, and we're fighting, and we're doing everything we can to preserve and protect the strides we have made in the Woburn Public Schools and preserve and protect jobs for all the people that make it possible for our children to receive a world-class education. That being said after last night's meeting Dr. Crowley, Ms. Sprague, Mr. Elia and Mr. Alconada met again today and put together a couple of lists of things that were agreed to cut and things the committee wanted to put back in. These were shared with Ms. Crowley. As a recap last night we presented a budget that if the school committee had agreed to it in its entirety would have landed at 3.4%. Fortunately they didn't and it gave the flexibility to add things back in. When we started last night at 3.4% and started adding things back in; this morning when we tallied it up, the additions that the committee added back in put us at 5%. We have work to do or the committee has deliberations to undertake. Again, none of this is easy. He does not envy the decisions that we have to make. Dr. Crowley will be happy to answer any questions the committee has as it relates to the impact perceived on the education of the kids that we serve and the families that we serve. It is a challenging time, and we are doing our best. Dr. Crowley thanked the school committee, Mayor Galvin, the city council and the community for their patience as we muddled through this.

Dr. Crowley turned the meeting back over to Chairperson Crowley.

Chairperson Crowley gave a recap. The school committee basically went through and cut what seemed to be themed by non-personnel or anything that would impact someone's employment. We were able to whittle down around \$700,000, so we made progress. As Dr. Crowley indicated, we are still at 5%. What Chairperson Crowley was hoping the school committee would do tonight is get this done and move this budget forward because we have a public hearing on June 1, 2020.

Dr. Wells asked if there has been any more discussion with the Mayor about what he is expecting. Dr. Wells said there was a vote of the school committee to try to reach 4% his Recommendation is the committee try to reach that goal since it was the vote of the full school committee. We should work on that.

Ms. Cormier asked what they would need to take off to get to 4% from 5%.

Mrs. Chisholm said we need to cut \$677,000 to get to 4%.

Dr. Crowley said the cuts that were added back into the budget total \$1,000,000.

We are doing our best to not have people lose their positions. The curriculum coordinator

position is an administrative position cut. High school reduction is non-salary. For the benefit of further discussion perhaps, Woburn unlike many other communities does not

charge for AP Exams. The school department pays for AP Exams. Principal Callanan recommended that students pay. The AP Exam in total is \$33,000.00.

Ms. Cormier asked what the cost is per exam. Dr. Crowley said the cost per exam is \$100.00. The other part is there are waivers given to low income and free & reduced. Chairperson Crowley said what the school committee could do is take items 1-5 and cut them without severe harm to the district.

Dr. Wells made a motion to eliminate the \$176,510 to Title I/Non Renewals.
Motion was seconded.

Mr. Mulrenan, on the motion, asked Dr. Baldassarre to speak on this to the audience. Dr. Baldassarre explained in the Title I grant we do have a number of teaching positions. The non-renewal teaching positions would open up availability in the Title I grant so that we would be able to transfer teachers that are currently working in the FY 21 budget that we are scheduled to pay. We would be changing the funding source, instead of using the local funds to pay the salaries we would use the Title I fund to pay the salaries. Chairperson Crowley stated we have a motion to eliminate that line item in the amount of \$176,510.

ROLL CALL

Ms. Chisholm-yes, Ms. Cormier-yes, Mr. Kisiel-yes, Mr. Lipsett-no, Mr. Mulrenan-yes, Dr. Wells-yes, Chairperson Crowley-yes
Motion passed 6-1.

Dr. Wells made a motion to reduce the substitute line of \$175,000.
Motion was seconded.

Ms. Cormier on the motion, administration would have to make the appropriate choices to make this safe for all the children. Dr. Crowley said none of this is ideal. We have no clue if and when we are coming back to school. We will do our best to keep all of our kids safe and prioritize the younger kids with adults.

ROLL CALL

Ms. Chisholm-yes, Ms. Cormier-yes, Mr. Kisiel-no, Mr. Lipsett-yes, Mr. Mulrenan-no, Dr. Wells-yes, Chairperson Crowley-yes
Motion passed 5-2.

Dr. Wells made a motion to eliminate freshman athletics \$77,000.
Motion was seconded.

Mr. Lipsett on the motion, has there been any guidance from the state that suggests anything that says what fall sports will look like, so we might have an understanding of what kind of impact this will have. Dr. Crowley said he was on a call with Commissioner Riley. His comment was that non-contact sports might be more likely like golf or cross-country where it's a little easier to social distance. There was nothing definitive about soccer or field hockey; any sports where people cluster. We are two weeks away from any information as it relates to the opening of school and Dr. Crowley assumes fall sports would fall under that as well.

Ms. Cormier on the motion, confirming it is not the freshman cannot do sports it is they would not have their own team.

Mrs. Chisholm wanted to make sure that we would be in compliance with Title IX.

Mr. Kisiel on the motion, what would we do with that \$77,000?

Dr. Crowley said we would put it towards the substitute line item.

ROLL CALL

Ms. Chisholm-yes, Ms. Cormier-yes, Mr. Kisiel-yes, Mr. Lipsett-yes, Mr. Mulrenan-yes,

Dr. Wells-yes, Chairperson Crowley-yes

Motion passed 7-0.

Chairperson Crowley said this might be a good time to have a discussion on athletic fees. One side of it is that it would be school revenue that we could use. On the other side it would be charging families to play a sport.

Mrs. Chisholm said she would not support any athletic fees, especially during this time. We have parents losing jobs, added expenses, and parents taking time off to be with their Kids in the fall when they won't be in school. She will not support anything that is going to add additional cost to a family.

Dr. Wells looks upon it as a silent tax and it goes against the nature of the public school system. He is not going to support this.

Mr. Kisiel will not support athletic fees. It is a real tough situation out there for some of our families.

Ms. Cormier said if it comes to laying off educators vs. having a sport; sports are not required. She does not know where this leads.

Mr. Lipsett is conflicted. He hears and appreciates Dr. Wells' statement about public education but our backs are up against the wall here. If it is a choice between charging a fee for athletics and cutting academics he knows where he is going to come down.

Chairperson Crowley referred this to the Finance subcommittee.

Mr. Mulrenan does not know if anyone had the opportunity to ask the Mayor about the reserve rainy day account.

Dr. Crowley said at this time Mayor Galvin has not indicated. They are faced with the same variables we are.

Mr. Mulrenan asked Mr. Elia for a ballpark figure of any savings we might have since the closing of the schools.

Mr. Elia responded by saying any savings this year is a moving target right now because We are still paying out of district tuition and other bills that are coming in right now.

We are still hopefully on track for around 2.5 million in savings. There has been talk with the mayor if any of that money could come back to the school department in the form of capital for Chromebooks possibly.

Chairperson Crowley said there were savings from the school district when schools closed but that too remains an unknown. We do anticipate a savings but that goes back into the general fund meaning it does go back to the city. Perhaps in a calculation to fund

the schools that would be taken into consideration from the city particularly for one time capital plans or Chromebooks or something that is just a one-time thing.

Mr. Kisiel asked based on what we have cut so far does anyone have a number?

Mr. Alconada said at this moment we are at 4.37%.

Dr. Wells made a motion to reduce high school reductions non-salary \$96,861.

Motion was seconded.

Chairperson Crowley added that this would include charging for AP Exams.

Right now we pay for the AP Exams. \$30,000.

Dr. Wells amended his motion to take out \$30,000 the cost for the AP Exams.

Dr. Crowley said it is closer to \$35,000.

Dr. Wells made a motion to reduce high school reductions non salary \$61,861.

Mr. Elia said there are various accounts in the high school line items; he will put a summary together for the committee.

ROLL CALL

Ms. Chisholm-yes, Ms. Cormier-no, Mr. Kisiel-yes, Mr. Lipsett-no Mr. Mulrenan-yes,

Dr. Wells-yes, Chairperson Crowley-yes

Motion passed 5-2.

Mr. Kisiel made a motion on the remaining items. It has been indicated by administration and many emails were received in the last day or so to be kept on the budget.

Mr. Alconada said we are now at 4.284%.

Motion was seconded.

Dr. Wells on the motion, administration did rank the items. Maybe we should take action on the lunch monitors.

Mr. Kisiel withdrew his motion.

Chairperson asked Mr. Mulrenan to preside over what she thinks is going to be a motion on number 3. Mr. Mulrenan took over as chair. Ms. Crowley left the meeting.

Dr. Wells made a motion to reduce lunch monitors by 50% at \$76,652.

Motion was seconded.

Mr. Lipsett on the motion, without certainty he can't vote to take away these jobs.

ROLL CALL

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

Motion fails 2-4.

Ms. Crowley returned to the chair.

Mr. Kisiel made a motion to keep the remaining items 3, 6, 7, and 8 that we have not voted off and also the lunch monitors that we voted to keep.

Motion was seconded.

Chairperson Crowley said we have a motion to add back into the budget 3, 6, 7, & 8. Dr. Wells asked Mr. Elia if he was able to come up with what we have gotten for budget increases for the previous years.

Mr. Elia has a sheet that he will send to the committee tomorrow that goes back 15 years. Dr. Wells wanted something for tonight to get some perspective on what past budgets looked like percentage wise. He wants to put it into context of the situation we are in right now.

Mr. Lipsett, on the motion, feels the need to discuss school committee stipends and if those are something we can use to reduce a line item. He understands we are talking about nearly \$60,000. He also understands that this includes our Northeast school committee representative, and he would not feel comfortable voting on taking away that member's stipend. He thinks the school committee should have a conversation about whether they can reduce or nearly eliminate their own stipends for the year given that we do need to make this up and given they are not going to have a direct impact on students. Chairperson Crowley feels that is appropriate for additional discussion if there is a Motion.

Chairperson Crowley said we have a motion to go as is with what we cut tonight. Any further discussion on that?

Mrs. Chisholm on the motion, if we keep the curriculum coordinator position in the budget it would not be for \$60,000 it would be for \$95,000. We would need to add in an additional \$35,000. We could not get a curriculum coordinator for \$60,000.

Chairperson Crowley commented for an additional piece of information that was a cut to administration. There was some comment that administration or management hasn't been touched by this budget when in fact eliminating the curriculum coordinator is directly in the central office. Mrs. Chisholm said, but we didn't do it.

Chairperson Crowley responded that it was a proposed cut by the administration.

Mr. Elia said if you add the curriculum coordinator position back in that position is going to come in around \$95,000.

Chairperson Crowley wanted to state one thing without arguing on the motion. There are other positions that the administration desperately wants such as an assistant principal at the Goodyear and a SpEd coordinator for the elementary school yet the committee is choosing to fund a position that they have told us they don't need anymore.

ROLL CALL

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

Motion passed 5-2.

Chairperson Crowley passed the Chair to Mr. Mulrenan, so she could make a motion. Mr. Mulrenan retained the Chair at this time so Ms. Crowley could make a motion.

Ms. Crowley made a motion to eliminate the position of curriculum coordinator for the purpose of funding the SpEd Coordinator for the elementary school. She has been to SSA meetings and feels this position is essential to the district and feels the curriculum coordinator position is not.

Motion was seconded.

Dr. Wells is not clear if Ms. Crowley's motion is allowed because the committee just voted to retain those positions. He thinks the motion would have to be to add that position separately, independent of those three.

Ms. Crowley withdrew her motion and made a new motion.

Ms. Crowley made a motion to add the position of Elementary SpEd Coordinator that was originally proposed to us, and we did not place it in the budget.

Motion was seconded.

Ms. Crowley feels this position is essential to really invest in Special education particularly to our most vulnerable children.

Dr. Crowley said that this position is in the budget. This and the two nursing positions are already in the budget.

Ms. Crowley withdrew her motion.

Mr. Lipsett would like to make a motion that the school committee agree to reduce our stipends for the FY21 school year; excluding the stipend for the representative for Northeast and excluding the additional stipend for the Chair.

Dr. Wells said he is not sure that motion is allowed because the salary is stipulated by the city council. Just like we can't raise our salary we can't cut it.

Members can donate their salary back to the school system.

Mr. Lipsett withdrew his motion.

Mr. Lipsett made a new motion that we offer a request to city hall if they require additional funds to be taken out of our budget the first thing to be cut would be school committee stipends.

Motion was seconded.

Dr. Wells is not sure there would be a guarantee that we would get this money.

They could eliminate our salary based on Mr. Lipsett's recommendation to them.

Dr. Wells does not want to give up money and have it not go to the school system.

Mr. Lipsett withdrew his motion a second time.

Mr. Lipsett made a new motion that empowers the chair of the school committee to enter into a discussion with the city council president to work out mechanics so that should the city council determine that we have too much in our budget the school committee stipends be reduced to the extent they can be and added into our school budget.

Motion was seconded.

Mr. Lipsett feels that if we are going to be asking our schools, our teachers, and our students to sacrifice we need to be willing to do the same thing. He doesn't think any of the school committee members are in this for the money. He knows this is a lot to ask and this is a personal vote.

Ms. Chisholm said that is an ordinance, and we can't change that. It would have to come from the city council, and they would have to make that recommendation to us. At this time when everyone is hurting you don't know if some of us might be too. Anybody at any time can donate their salary directly to the school department. Some have done scholarships and some have done directly to a sports team.

ROLL CALL

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

Motion failed 3-4.

Chairperson Crowley made a statement to the committee; if we could leave the door open for more exploration of CARES ACT funding; particularly for mental health services and social emotional support.

Chairperson Crowley made a motion to officially advance this budget to public hearing.
Mrs. Chisholm on the motion, how many new people are we hiring?
Mr. Lipsett said 4 new people.
Dr. Crowley responded with 2 nurses, 1 BCBA, and 1 SpEd Coordinator.

Mr. Alconada stated the FY 21 Budget would be \$68,565,726.00.
Mr. Kisiel asked what the percentage would be.
Mr. Alconada responded it is 4.284%.

Chairperson Crowley said a motion was made to officially advance this budget in the amount of \$65,565,726.00 to public hearing.

ROLL CALL

Ms. Chisholm-yes, Ms. Cormier-yes, Mr. Kisiel-yes, Mr. Lipsett-yes, Mr. Mulrenan-yes
Dr. Wells-yes, Chairperson Crowley-yes
Motion passed 7-0.

Chairperson Crowley is thrilled we have advanced a budget to public hearing that both supports the school district and yet takes into consideration the fiscal realities of the city. She thinks it was a well balanced approach. She thanked Mr. Alconada, Mr. Elia, Mr. Baldassarre, Ms. Sprague and Dr. Crowley. She is so proud of this district and of this community. She has full confidence that this will be a successful endeavor.

CORRESPONDENCE

Chairperson Crowley said at the public hearing we will read all of the letters and correspondence from people that have emailed her about the budget. The school committee at the public hearing will set aside enough time for everybody to speak at the budget. We will have public comments with an ample amount of time.

Mr. Mulrenan made a motion to enter into the executive session.
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
Motion passed 7-0.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

For the purposes of strategy in collective bargaining or litigation.
Regular meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM to enter into the executive session.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made to adjourn.

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.

Meeting adjourned at 10:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean MacLeod

Jean MacLeod