

MINUTES OF THE HINGHAM SCHOOL COMMITTEE

January 9, 2020

School Department Conference Room, 220 Central Street, Hingham, MA 02043

- 1. Call to Order** The meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM by Michelle Ayer.

Members Present: Michelle Ayer, Nes Correnti, Carlos Da Silva, Libby Lewiecki, Kerry Ni, Liza O'Reilly and Ed Schreier.

Central Office Present: Paul Austin, James LaBillois, Suzanne Vinnes and John Ferris.

- 2. Review Format of Meeting**

Dr. Austin reviewed the budget timeline. John Ferris explained that preliminary budget sheets and details are included in the binders given to each member. Tonight's meeting will focus on General Education and Other Allowance accounts. Next week will focus on operations and the following week will be Special Education. Dr. Austin's budget memorandum has been updated and is also included.

- 3. FY'21 Budget Overview**

Dr. Austin presented preliminary budget starting with Hingham Public Schools Mission Statement and Core Beliefs, which is our foundation for budget development. He then read the Budget Guidelines that were adopted in October, 2019. He explained the process of developing the preliminary budget, which included meeting with Central Office Administrators, Principals and Department Directors. This led to the development of 4 relatively equal priorities: 1) to ensure adequate and appropriate general education supports, services, and interventions for students; 2) to ensure adequate and appropriate special education supports, services, and interventions for students with disabilities; 3) to ensure adequate and appropriate levels of general education classroom staffing and support; and 4) to ensure adequate and appropriate levels of administrative support. He then discussed the proposed budget totals and the breakdown by category. He noted that 83% of the proposed budget is dedicated to contractual obligations. For the regular education budget, the proposed increase is 5.5%. Dr. Austin then detailed items that are included in the base budget, those that were requested and recommended but not funded in the base budget, and those that were requested but were not recommended or included in the base budget. Kerry Ni inquired how items were categorized in each of the three categories and Dr. Austin explained that the first tier is needed, the second tier is needed but is less of a priority and third tier are items that could be deferred. Some specific items included were a Public Relations contract, an additional 25% for a Human Resources Director (75% was approved for FY'20), and STAR 360 – a tool to create an academic Tiered System of Supports used for student academic interventions. Additional requests include two more math specialists for the elementary schools to bring the total to four – one for each school, and .5 integrated pre-K Special Education teacher. Items that are recommended but not funded in the proposed budget include a Fine Arts Director, a high school guidance counselor, .2 art teacher at HMS, .2 music teacher at PRS, and Unified Track and Basketball Coaches. If the proposed items were adopted, there would be a 6.11% increase over FY'20. If the not proposed but recommended items were included, it would add \$342,195 to the proposal and that would be an increase over last year of 6.74%. If all items were included, it would increase the budget by \$1,058,033. or an increase of 8.68% over FY'20.

- 4. Review FY'21 Budget Proposals**

John Ferris went through each function. He explained that the Other Allowances reflects potential salary increases for members in the six collective bargaining units, all of which are in negotiation. Nes Correnti

inquired about health care costs. These are covered in the Town's budget. The schools have about 48% of employees participating in the health plans. Kerry Ni asked when the new MA fine arts curriculum standards must be adopted. Dr. LaBillois explained that he attended training with the DESE art representative and they are expecting full implementation by Fall of 2020. He received information about significant revisions to the standard, including strands in arts, drama, music and dance. There will be cross curricular integration of the arts (for instance, the dance component will be integrated with Physical Education). Kerry Ni asked how much of his time it would consume. Dr. LaBillois will need to focus a lot of his time on this if a Fine Arts Director is not hired. He would oversee the program changes with the help of the resource teachers. Liza O'Reilly asked whether the resource teacher roles would be eliminated if a Fine Arts Director was hired. That is unclear, but there might be a need for them to act as lead teachers. Dr. Austin outlined next steps and upcoming meetings. John Ferris stated that the presentation would be on the website tomorrow.

5. Warrant Article for Foster Feasibility Study

The Committee discussed whether there would be a need for feasibility study money for the Foster School project beyond the \$750,000 approved at the 2017 Town Meeting. Michelle Ayer noted that this is a continuation of a conversation they had at the School Committee meeting on January 6th. Dr. Austin spoke to Tom Mayo, the Town Administrator. The comparable costs of recent new school feasibility studies were generally greater than \$750,000, so we are on the edge of what we need, but could make it work if necessary. A discussion ensued about whether a revision to the original article or a new article would be best. John Ferris stated that all warrant articles are reviewed by Town Counsel. Liza O'Reilly asked if we could get legal advice from Town Counsel prior to the next budget meeting. The School Committee would be comfortable requesting up to an additional \$350,000. John will speak with Town Counsel and this will be discussed again on January 16, 2020.

6. SOI and Warrant Article for Plymouth River School Windows

Dr. Austin discussed the need to replace the windows at PRS. There is \$666,000 in a mitigation fund and \$334,000 will be added to that. The School Department does not need Town Meeting approval to use those funds, but the MSBA will require a vote or other documentation that funds are available for a feasibility study. The plan is to submit an accelerated repair statement of interest to the MSBA. School Committee and Board of Selectmen approval will be required for the SOI. If invited into the MSBA program, a feasibility study will take place in September 2020. The Committee discussed whether it was appropriate to ask for an appropriation of up to \$200,000 for that purpose. John Ferris proposed using the MSBA language if a warrant article is brought to the Town. The submission deadline with the MSBA is February 20, 2020. The Committee asked what votes were needed, whether a feasibility study would be required if PRS was not invited into the MSBA Accelerated Repair Program, and the costs of an independent feasibility study. The Committee will discuss this again at the next budget meeting on January 16, 2020.

7. Warrant Article for Buildings 12 and 179

The Committee discussed the recent displacement of the High School TRACES program due to building 12 being declared unfit for occupancy. The town engineers have not yet assessed ways to bring either of the buildings up to code. Also, those buildings may be included in the Town Master Plan. The Committee emphasized the need to find a location for the TRACES program as soon as possible because the current location, the woodshop at HHS, is too small and is used by other students. The possibility of moving the program to the old light plant was discussed. It is not suitable because it lacks a sprinkler system. If an adequate sprinkler system were installed, the robotics and crew teams could also use the space after school hours. John Ferris mentioned that modular classrooms or leasing commercial space might be options. Questions included whether we could get money from the reserve fund for sprinklers and if we could join other towns' programs. Dr. Austin does not support using other towns as our program is good, we just need space. He will discuss the possibility of installing a sprinkler system at the light plant again, while simultaneously investigating other locations for the

program. The Committee will discuss this issue again at their next budget meeting. Meanwhile, the Committee and administration will reach out to local residents and realtors about leasing space.

8. **48 Hour Items:** None

9. Adjournment

On a motion by Libby Lewiecki and seconded by Nes Correnti,

It was

Voted: To adjourn at 9:08PM

Respectfully Submitted by:
Kerry Ni

Documents Included:

1/9/2020 Agenda

FY'21 Proposed Preliminary Budget

FY'21 Draft Proposed Budget Requests

Memo from Paul Austin and John Ferris RE: Proposed Preliminary Operating Budget Overview

Budget Function Sheets