

MINUTES OF THE HINGHAM SCHOOL COMMITTEE

January 23, 2020

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

- 1. Call to Order** The meeting was called to order at 7:01 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. FY'21 Operating Budget Update**

Dr. Austin presented the proposed budget by starting with the Core Values and Mission of Hingham Public Schools. He followed with the Guiding Principles developed by the School Committee. He presented the budget in tiers: Status Quo, Most Critical, Highly Critical and Fundamental/Structural Needs. The budget proposed by the administration addresses the most critical needs of the district, which would be 6.15% over the FY'20 budget. The items included in each tier were presented.

Review FY'21 Budget Proposals for Functions

Dr. Austin and Dr. Vinnes provided an overview of the Special Education budget recommendations. The total increase over FY'20 would be \$1,075,825 or 8.21%. The drivers for the increase are out of district tuition increases, transportation cost increases, and positions required for direct service to students. The budget was reviewed line by line. Dr. Vinnes noted that the increase to Special Education Transportation includes transportation for homeless students and students in foster care. There could be a circuit breaker increase next year to help offset those costs. John Ferris noted that the current year increase over budget for special education out of district schools was for students who entered those schools after last year's budget was voted. Kerry Ni inquired about the .5 Special Education teacher at East and the 1.0 teacher at HHS. Dr. Vinnes explained that the HHS teacher would be used for an academic strand for students with social/emotional disabilities who require support throughout the day, beyond services available during one block in a resource room. The pilot for this was very successful this year. The East teacher would give East 4.5 special education teachers, consistent with the other Elementary schools in the district. Liza O'Reilly asked about the Integrated preschool teacher. Dr. Vinnes explained that the program is struggling to enroll neurotypical peers and expanding the hours next year will help to attract more students. The preschool does not currently meet the state mandated ratio of typically developing students to students with disabilities, making this a compliance issue. Liza O'Reilly inquired whether tuitions would increase if the program is expanded. John Ferris replied that it makes sense to get the program into compliance and then look at fees. Liza O'Reilly asked about the paraeducators at Foster School. Dr. Vinnes answered that there is an increase in student needs there. Ms. O'Reilly commented that the way the budget was presented was different in the past and that she was looking forward to getting more information on the number of students and services currently in special education. Kerry Ni suggested that Dr. Vinnes update the full Committee on the initiatives presented at the last Special Education Subcommittee meeting. Dr. Vinnes described the new Language Acquisition Home Base program that helps students with dyslexia. This can be expanded next year without additional staff at HMS. This might be a program that could be expanded to the elementary school level in the future. Another initiative is the Inclusion Facilitators at HHS and HMS. The HHS teacher resigned recently but the HMS teacher is helping with evaluations, co-teaching, and supporting special education students. Dr. Vinnes is currently interviewing BCBA's. Kerry Ni commented that she has heard good feedback from parents about the new programs. Dr. Vinnes is proud of the staff and is being thoughtful of FTEs and how we are using our current staff. She will continue to assess. The Hingham Tiered System of Support (HTSS) program in the budget for next year will benefit all children. Liza O'Reilly asked about a Special Education Director role. Dr. Vinnes explained that role would impact students, but not as directly as additional teachers, which will reduce the large caseloads of the current staff. Michelle Ayer mentioned that the Director position would help with Student Services and with

services for foster students and homeless students as well as students with 504 plans. The services would all be under the same umbrella.

The Committee discussed the workload of the Central Office staff. Additionally, it was inquired whether the small groups in which special education services are provided are getting too large. Dr. Vinnes stated that she is trying to take a thoughtful approach when adding staff and developing a five-year vision for the department. They asked about potential savings by adding programs to bring out of district students back to Hingham schools, and whether there were current hiring challenges. The Chair invited comments from the public.

Tim Dempsey, SEPAC co-chair spoke. He noted that Dr. Vinnes is skilled at developing programming. He stated that most families would like to keep their students in district, if their needs could be met, and inquired whether the lack of a Special Education Director would defer the development of new programming. That position is a critical need. Libby Lewiecki asked whether the addition of a Special Education Director is in the five year plan. Dr. Vinnes said yes, but some children will be out of district no matter what. Diane DeNapoli spoke to emphasize the need for a Director of Special Education to create more programming.

3. Update for TRACES program

Dr. Austin visited some potential spaces for the TRACES program. The space at Scituate High School was too small but he thanked the Scituate Superintendent for being willing to share it. He also saw a usable space in Weymouth that would work in the short term. Katie Hartman and Doug Foley are reviewing the space. John Ferris will check with the Weymouth Building Inspector, will arrange to have the vent installed and will contact the owner of the space to discuss a lease. The Committee discussed the details of the lease. Dr. Austin stated that this is a short term solution only and that we need to find a longer term solution.

4. 48 Hour Items: Liza O'Reilly noted that the Governor's budget proposal was released today and she noted there may be an increase to Chapter 70 funding for the Town.

10. Adjourn

Michelle Ayer mentioned that there will be a meeting with the Advisory Committee on Sunday and the Committee will decide then if a meeting is required on January 30, 2020.

On a motion by Libby Lewiecki and seconded by Kerry Ni,

It was

Voted: To adjourn at 8:25PM

Respectfully Submitted by:
Kerry Ni

Documents Included:

Agenda

Proposed FY '21 Operating Budget