

MINUTES OF THE HINGHAM SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Budget Workshop I

January 6, 2022

Remote meeting via Zoom Webinar

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 PM by Chair Kerry Ni at which time she read the following statement regarding remote meetings:

CHAIR COMMENT: This meeting is being held remotely as an alternate means of public access pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021 temporarily amending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law. You are hereby advised that this meeting and all communications during this meeting may be recorded by the Town of Hingham in accordance with the Open Meeting Law. If any participant wishes to record this meeting, please notify the chair at the start of the meeting in accordance with M.G.L. c. 30A, § 20(f) so that the chair may inform all other participants of said recording.

Jenna Manto from the Hingham Journal indicated that she would be recording the meeting.

Members participating remotely: Chair Kerry Ni, Vice-Chair Michelle Ayer, Secretary Nes Correnti, Liza O'Reilly, Jen Benham, and Tim Dempsey

Members not present: Carlos DaSilva

Central Office Members participating remotely: Interim Superintendent Dr. Gary Maestas, Assistant Superintendent Dr. James LaBillois, Director of Business and Support Services John Ferris, Executive Director of Student Services Dr. Suzanne Vinnes, and Director of Human Resources Susan D'Amato

Visitors: There was no sign in as this was a remote meeting. Kerry Ni stated that 22 people on the call were participating remotely

2. Budget Overview for FY '23

Dr. Maestas indicated the budget was difficult to build as there were a number of things to take into consideration.

- There were a number of teaching positions added as a result of prior year's budget process. Those positions were able to be hired due to funding received from federal COVID relief funding. In order to continue with those positions, the district has to fund them going forward.
- A new school building for Foster Elementary is being considered, to be voted on in the near future.
- Considered all the economic conditions the town is going through, i.e. possible operational override, along with the added positions and Foster School funding; the administration wants to ensure we approach the school budget that is responsible given those economic conditions.
- There are a number of directives the district is working that will help determine the path forward. The administration is currently working through the strategic plan of the district, with a finished product projected by June. The administration will also be working through a classroom audit to understand what staff we have and what function they perform. Dr. Maestas will be leading that work in the upcoming months.

Interim Superintendent Dr. Gary Maestas gave a presentation that included:

- Preliminary FY '23 Budget Breakdown
Highlighted increases in Energy costs, Transportation, Counseling and Psychological Services, Teaching contractual allowances. Increase of General Ed status quo budget is 3.83% (\$1,563,602). For Special Ed there is a decrease in the budget of 4.18% (642,271), relating to the decrease of Out-of-District payments; students are aging out. There is also a budget decrease in Vocational Tuition of 18.24% (\$36,277) due to students graduating from the program. Total change in the budget is 1.43% increase or \$885,054. ESSER Funds of \$1,376,192 was included in budget for FY'22. If ESSER Funds had not been included in prior year budget, the increase to the current year budget would be 3.74%. Total proposed budget for FY'23 is \$62,677,112.
- FY '23 Outer Year Budget Proposal
Dr. Maestas commented on the additions

Central Office additions include: Full year of Media and Communications, Data Analysis support, HR Clerical Support, Payroll and Benefits Manager

District additions include: Assessment Tools, a Fine Arts Director, late bus for the High School, substitutes, two additional vans for special education runs and two van drivers. Dr. Maestas noted the ongoing discussions about moving the technology costs out of the capital budget and into the operating budget. The administration is proposing to make that change in FY'24. Also, a Director of Equity and Inclusion is being proposed for FY'25.

Dr. Maestas then noted the proposed additions for each school. Several additions noted for the High School for FY'23 and outer years. Music teacher needed at Middle School and PRS. One additional counselor needed for each elementary school. Jamie LaBillois later added that each elementary school is adding a general ed guidance counselor to take responsibility over social-emotional support of the students and help work on classroom-based incidents, whereas Adjustment counselors do small group support for students. As students return to the classroom this year full-time, Adjustment counselors are having a difficult time balancing the individual needs of students who might be in crisis with the demands of support programs that have historically been run. The model would be consistent with the support that is provided at the secondary levels.

Dr. Maestas and John noted there were requests made from Athletics however no action is currently being proposed.

Major Budget Drivers were discussed – slide 6.

- FY '23 Offsets to Budget Proposal
John Ferris discussed the offsets to the budget relating to Grants, Full-Day Kindergarten, and Revolving accounts. Mr. Ferris noted there was a drop in offsets relating to Kids in Action as a result of COVID. Noted KIA will need to hire a nurse through the program in future years. Dr. Austin determined the district would no longer continue applying for the Cable grant was; approximately \$18k.

- Dr. Maestas provided pie charts showing the percentage of the pie for the following areas:
 - Proposed FY'23 School Budget Proposal
 - Proposed FY '23 School Budget by Program Area
 - Special Education FY '23 Budget Breakdown
 - Regular Education FY '23 Budget Breakdown
 - FY '23 Budget Proposal Facilities Breakdown
- Articles and Partial Capital for FY '23
- Capital for FY '23

John Ferris discussed the possible articles and partial capital needs of the district for FY'23 – FY'27.

Discussion: The Committee asked questions after the presentation was completed

- Liza O'Reilly asked whether there was a discussion with the town about the drop in enrollment; there will be an impact on the revenue received for students going forward. Stated asked whether there are any ESSER or ARPA funds available for FY'23. She also asked why Media and Communications is being shown as an added position this year as it was in the FY'22 budget. John Ferris noted last year it was only partially funded. Liza also asked whether the counselors at the elementary are taking the place of the contracted adjustment counselors. Jamie LaBillois noted they are not. The two contracted adjustment counselors that were added this school year will sunset next year. Going forward the model will be one adjustment counselor and one guidance counselor at each elementary school. Liza O'Reilly also stated she believes we need to increase the Athletic Fee for FY'23. The budget continues to absorb more of the expense every year it is not increased.
- Nes Correnti noted that most positions suggested in the planning session were captured in the FY'23 and Outer year's budget, noting the Director for Equity and Inclusion and HS Assistant Principal are being planned for future years. She asked about what happens when John Ferris retires, do we need two positions to fill his role, one separate for Finance and the other for Capital. John Ferris noted some of the added positions in Central Office will help with the workload going forward. Nes also asked whether the drop in special ed students going out of district has anything to do with the structures added at the elementary schools and lab at the middle school. Suzanne Vinnes did note there are less students going out of district in more recent years. She stated students needs were not so significant that could not be managed through HPS. Nes also asked about whether energy savings from the PRS windows being replaced was captured in the FY'23 budget. John Ferris stated he didn't as he wants to see the savings after the first year to get the most accurate number. Nes stated that some other questions had been asked by Liza. She also stated this might be the year to transfer the technology out of Capital and into Operating.
- Tim Dempsey asked about why instructional technology decreased. John Ferris noted that it had increased over the past couple years due to COVID needs. John noted technology needs are up overall since COVID began, noting that bump up is now permanent. Tim also noted a formula error in the vocational technology slide 3. Tim also noted we may need to provide for consulting fees when John retires as the replacement will need some help transitioning into the position.
- Michelle Ayer noted some questions have already been answered. She also noted there may need to be consulting fees added to help transition new people into positions. She noted that although enrollment has decreased, the High School looks consistent. Gary Maestas stated they will add enrollment numbers into the presentation. Liza O'Reilly asked for historical numbers

along with the current year. Michelle noted that HS Assistant Principal is currently being budgeted for FY'25. John Ferris shared that the strategic plan may indicate the districts needs it sooner therefore would be pushed forward. Michelle also asked about the TRACES lease. John Ferris stated it is included in the FY'23 budget. He also shared that the High School will need some work in the future, the health and wellness center and possibly other areas. That might be the time the district adds more space for the TRACES program. Michelle asked about proposed Kindergarten tuition rates for next year. John Ferris stated he was not proposing an increase next year. In the past, the Committee discussed providing free kindergarten, as is done in most other towns. John was leaving the rate where it had been, understanding eventually it would be free; by not increasing, the expense gets absorbed into the budget over time and the impact to the town gets less and less over time.

- Jen Benham asked if the tennis courts and turf replacement would be removed from the Capital list if a warrant article was put in place for those items. John Ferris noted some items on the Capital list past FY'23 is there for placeholders. It will be adjusted over time. Jen also asked if there are other positions, similar to the contracted counselors, that will be sunset as the contract ends. Suzanne Vinnes noted there two part-time psychologists, two part-time special educators and two speech and language pathologists; she anticipates that some of the hours for the speech and language pathologists would decrease and the additional psychological services will not be needed. These services were needed as part of the COVID recovery services.
- Kerry Ni stated her questions were covered by everyone else. She thanked the administration for adding the Fine Arts Director into the budget for FY'23. She noted there are other needs that will be identified through the strategic plan. She would also support funding for a coach / consultant to help transition both John Ferris' role and the superintendent position. John Ferris shared that they heard the message about the need for a Fine Arts Director; he also notes seeing the impact of not having one.

3. To discuss warrant article placeholders and act as appropriate

John Ferris shared the proposed language for warrant articles on the following:

- a. Consideration of a joint article with rec (if legal) for a major reconstruction of the tennis courts at the High School, or to be submitted by School Committee solely if not legal to be managed by new grounds management organization with participation from the school department.

On a motion by Michelle Ayer and seconded by Nes Correnti

It was **voted** to authorize Director of Business and Support Services John Ferris to submit the proposed warrant article to town counsel for review by January 20, 2022

Michelle Ayer – aye

Jen Benham- aye

Nes Correnti – aye

Tim Dempsey – aye

Liza O'Reilly – aye

Kerry Ni – aye

- b. Article to correct the ultimate funding for the PRS window project via available funds or fund balance.

The Committee discussed a proposed warrant article to properly fund the Plymouth River Window Project in the amount of \$3,993.600.00

On a motion by Michelle Ayer and seconded by Nes Correnti

It was **voted** to authorize Director of Business and Support Services John Ferris to submit the proposed warrant article to properly fund the Plymouth River Window Project to town counsel for review by January 20, 2022

Michelle Ayer – aye
Jen Benham- aye
Nes Correnti – aye
Tim Dempsey – aye
Liza O’Reilly – aye
Kerry Ni – aye

- c. To discuss required Mass School Building Authority (MSBA) vote language and responsibility for submitting a warrant article for funding of a building project under the MSBA’s core building program guidelines, and act as appropriate.
- d. An article for a majority Vote approval to enter into a five-year lease for Special Education Van.
The Committee discussed a proposed warrant article to enter into a municipal lease for Special Education Vans for up to five years. John Ferris and Dr. Suzanne Vinnes answered the Committee’s questions about the transportation of Special Education students.

On a motion by Michelle Ayer and seconded by Nes Correnti

It was **voted** to authorize Director of Business and Support Services John Ferris to submit the proposed warrant article for Special Education 7D Van Municipal Lease up to town counsel for review by January 20, 2022

Michelle Ayer – aye
Jen Benham- aye
Nes Correnti – aye
Tim Dempsey – aye
Liza O’Reilly – aye
Kerry Ni – aye

- 4. **Provide an overview of New Capital Requested for FY 2023**
As noted above

- 5. **Other items not reasonably known 48 hours in advance**
None

- 6. **Adjournment**
On a motion by Michelle Ayer and seconded by Nes Correnti
It was **voted**: To adjourn at 8:52 PM

Michelle Ayer – aye
Jen Benham- aye
Nes Correnti – aye
Tim Dempsey – aye
Liza O’Reilly – aye
Kerry Ni – aye

Respectfully Submitted
By:
Nes Correnti

Documents Included:

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-  2022 Warrant Article for New HHS Tennis Courts.docx 

 -  Consolidated Five Year Capital View FY 2023.pdf 

 -  FY 2023 Budget Proposal.pdf 

 -  Hingham FY 2023 Budget Presentation).pdf 

 -  Instructional Personnel Budget FY 2023.pdf 

 -  Mark Up of MSBA Vote for Hingham - Example Only - PSB_Vote_Language_Bulletin_Cities_Towns_Apr-2011_B2_...

 -  New Capital Requests for 2023.pdf 

 -  Non Instructional Budget Back Up Pages FY 2023.pdf 

 -  TM 2022 Placeholder Warrant Articles for School Department.docx 