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SCHOOL COMMITTEE

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SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Dr. Margaret Adams

March 7, 2024

Dear Hingham Public Schools Community,

We are writing to update the community on the Fiscal Year 2025 budget process. On Tuesday, March 12, the School Committee will meet to continue discussing the budget and to vote on the FY25 budget proposal.

As explained in an [earlier budget update](#), the school district faces a number of challenges in achieving a balanced budget for the 2024-25 school year due in part to several significant expenses that are increasing at higher rates than the revenue available to support them. Similar to any district, contractual agreements with employees remain the most significant financial obligation. In planning for the FY25 budget, the School Committee must consider increases in salary, wages, and other compensation (longevity, parental leave, etc.) negotiated through ongoing collective bargaining with various units of the Hingham Education Association (HEA).

On February 27, the School Committee presented HEA Unit A (teachers) with an updated offer that includes a 3% cost of living adjustment (COLA) in each year of a newly proposed four-year contract. This proposal includes an increase over the previous offer of 2.5% in the first year of the new contract. Compounded, these COLA increases alone represent nearly 13% pay raises over four years for all teachers. **Combined with step increases, longevity bonuses, and other proposed contractual increases, more than half of all teachers' salaries would increase by at least 16% over four years.**

Prior to this proposal, the district was working to resolve an anticipated deficit of approximately \$2.3 million for FY25. About \$1.4 million of that amount is due to increased special education costs, and the School Committee is requesting additional funding from the town to cover these costs. The Superintendent has proposed the remaining \$900,000 of the projected deficit can be addressed in several key ways. First, due to declining enrollment at the middle and high schools, there is opportunity to consolidate sections of certain courses, thereby eliminating about eight positions at the secondary level. Second, the district is exploring ways to take a more cost-effective approach to the purchasing of some resources, including curriculum materials and technology software.

With the School Committee's most recent proposal to the HEA Unit A, the FY25 deficit is expected to increase by approximately \$317,000, for a total projected deficit of \$1.2 million. At the March meeting next Tuesday, the School Committee will discuss the financial impact and potential additional cuts that may be required to meet the increased deficit.

Fiscal constraints have implications for the ongoing negotiations with our employee unions. Any additional increases proposed by the HEA in the first two years of the contract would require further reductions to other areas of the FY25 budget and place additional financial pressure in future years. As we have stated repeatedly, we remain committed to negotiating in good faith to provide fair, competitive compensation to all of our employees, but we can only ratify contracts that are fiscally responsible in order to uphold our obligations to the taxpayers of Hingham. To learn more about negotiations, please visit our website hinghamschools.org/negotiations.

We appreciate your ongoing support during this challenging period and encourage our community to participate actively in this budget process. For more information about the FY25 budget process, please visit hinghamschools.org/budget-documents/. The School Committee will be held Tuesday, March 12 at Town Hall at 6:30 PM. To access the Zoom link for the meeting, please see the [Town of Hingham meeting calendar](#), where the meeting will be posted tomorrow.

Sincerely,

Nes Correnti
Chair, Hingham School Committee

Margaret Adams, Ed.D.
Superintendent

- Want to update the community on the School Committee's latest package proposal to HEA Unit A (Teachers) - Met with them on 2/27/24
- Package proposal:
 - Special Education and Service Providers Duty-free Periods:
 - Effective next school year, in addition to preparation time already available in their schedules, special educators and related service providers will have no assigned duties. This provides our special educators additional time per day in their regular schedules to complete and score evaluations, complete tasks related to IEPs, correspond with parents correspondence, participate in interdisciplinary consultations, deliver individualized instruction, and complete other tasks.
 - Salary & Wages: COLA increase of:
 - Year 1 (2023-2024) – 3%
 - Year 2 (2024-2025) – Drop the first step; 3%
 - Year 3 (2025-2026) – 3%
 - Year 4 (2026-2027) – 3%
 - Compounded, this would result in a 13%-18% increase, which is competitive with districts who have recently settled contracts.
 - Additionally, the COLA would be applied to all steps and lanes, all stipends, and workshop rate.
 - Flex Block:

The School Committee proposed adding a Flex Block to the high school schedule, which would allow students time to seek extra help, make up tests and quizzes, and receive counseling support, among other activities. Flex blocks have been successfully implemented in many communities, and allow students to access needed supports.

 - We have heard and understand the union's concerns that this is a change, so the Committee has proposed phasing in implementation of the flex block to allow the parties to ease into it and problem solve together to ensure that the flex block is successful for students and staff.
 - Effective for the 2025-2026 school year, a flex block schedule shall be implemented at the high school level, occurring once a month during the 2025-2026 school year; twice a month during the 2026-2027 school year; once a cycle for the 2027-2028 school year.

