

**GREENFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**SCHOOL COMMITTEE SPECIAL MEETING: BUDGET HEARING**  
**MINUTES: Wednesday, March 4, 2020**  
GCTV Studio, 393 Main Street, Greenfield MA

**Present:** Katie Caron (KC); Susan Eckstrom (SE); Jordana Harper (JH); Susan Hollins (SH); Glenn Johnson (GJ) (attending remotely due to out-of-town travel); Amy Proietti (AP); Jean Wall (JW); Roxann Wedegartner (RW)

**Absent:** None

**Also present:** Tara Cloutier, GHS teacher; Jodi Falk, parent, SEPAC; Shirley Gilfether, resident; Lukas Martin, GHS teacher; Steve Nembirkow, Business Manager; Karin Patenaude, GHS principal; Aleashia Pease, parent; many school staff; citizens, and the press.

### **I. Call to Order**

With a quorum present (KC, SE, SH, GJ, AP, JW, RW), Chair Proietti opened the meeting at 6:03 p.m.

### **II. Public Comment**

Aleashia Pease, parent, shared concerns about GMS no-homework policy due to extended learning time, prefers homework to reinforce learning and prepare for high school.

Ginny Desorgher asked for update on enrollment and on GPS providing special education transport to other towns.

Lucas Martin, GHS teacher, noted increase in Chap. 70 funding and asked what share of Chap. 70 funds the City would keep; asked about cost-of-living increase for teachers; requested appointment of School Committee representative to continue Unit A negotiations.

Tara Cloutier, GHS teacher, noted that teachers have been without a contract for about a year and asked about cost-of-living increase for teachers.

Jodi Falk, parent and SEPAC member, spoke to need for more behaviorists and inclusion specialists, and benefits of well-supported inclusion.

Shirley Gilfether spoke against proposed 11.9% increase, provided handout of recommended cuts, including special education administrators, building administrators, psychologists; praised cost savings in transportation.

### **III. Public Hearing on FY21 Budget**

AP opened public hearing at 6:28 p.m.

AP reviewed work of Budget Subcommittee; different approach to start not with level funding but “what do we need?”; seeking structural changes in process, cooperation between school and City.

SE, Budget Subcommittee Chair, reiterated goal of showing actual costs of educating students; acknowledged budget likely to be decreased.

Budget presentation from Superintendent Harper

- 11% increase would be challenge for Greenfield; changes are likely; encouraged all to stay involved

- Enrollment figures with increases in special education and high-needs students
- Most schools at capacity, which limits choice-in seats & income
- Chap. 70 State Aid increases; Student Opportunity Act Plan to address achievement gaps
- Increases re: Units A and C contracts, operating costs
- Which new positions are included (most required for special education) & omitted from budget
- Per pupil spending comparisons
- Concern that we are unsustainably spending revolving funds
- Cost savings – e.g., transportation
- Karin Patenaude, GHS principal, briefly explained goals of Green River Alternative Education program

Discussion:

- Newton has PT music teacher
- Noted that SH has long warned of risks of spending down revolving accounts
- Reminder of policy on spending revolving accounts
- RW: Challenging budget year. “Nobody is going to get what they need.” Seeking creative ways to bring in revenue, find efficiencies.
- City uses Chap. 70 \$ to cover School Dept’s indirect costs (e.g., health insurance, retirement, vehicles)
- Reduction of school space: administrative offices replaced by Community Center; GMS space taken by new administrative offices; Green River School, now closed, had housed 100-student MSA program, now moved into GMS space.
- Concern that School Dept bears full burden of minimum wage adjustment for Unit C
- Importance of updating schools’ technology
- RW focusing budget decisions on safety, security, infrastructure. Support for beginning budget process earlier in year.
- Effect of Greenfield’s high-needs students (trauma, frequent transition, poverty)
- Need to stagger expenses (e.g., contracts, vehicle purchases)
- Concern that “cutting” the budget gives negative impression; support innovations, e.g., how to buy computers with sources other than property taxes
- Discussion, adjustments will continue, but budget must be settled this month

**SE moved to approve the draft proposed budget as presented by the Superintendent and the Budget and Finance Subcommittee, to be shared with the Mayor for review. GJ 2nd.**

**Roll call: Yes – KC, AP, JW, SE, GJ; No: SH; Abstain: RW. Motion passed 5-1-1.**

Budget Subcommittee will continue to meet. Budget on agenda for next School Cte. meeting.

SE moved to close public hearing on budget. 2nd SH. Roll call: YES – KC, AP, JW, SE, GJ, SH, RW. Motion passed unanimously.

#### **IV. Funding Unit C Contract**

**SE moved to use School Choice funds from FY 19 funds in the amount of \$169,099 to fund the unfunded portion of the Unit C contract. JW 2nd.**

Discussion:

- Thanked Unit C for patience with process
- Unit C contract negotiated anticipating customary reliance on City's contract stabilization funds. Because of lack of quorum at City Council meeting, funds not made available.

**Roll call – Yes: SH, RW, AP, JW, GJ, SE. Abstain: KC. Motion carried 6-0-1.**

**SH moved to urge the Mayor and City Council to replenish the special education stabilization fund and return to the historic process of full first-year funding of new contract negotiations through the contract stabilization fund. SE 2nd.**

Discussion:

- Suggestion that this should be two separate motions
- Suggestion for working group to study contract stabilization practice
- RW abstaining because funding cannot be assured

**Roll call – Yes: SH; No: AP, JW, GJ, SE, KC; Abstain: RW. Motion failed 1-5-1.**

**SH moved to urge the Mayor and City Council to replenish the special education stabilization fund. SE 2nd. Roll call vote – Yes: SH, KC, RW, AP, JW, GJ, SE. Motion passed unanimously.**

**SH moved to work as a School Committee with the Mayor and the City Council to study the historic process of first-year funding through the contract stabilization fund or alternate funding methods. KC 2nd. Roll call vote – Yes: SH, KC, RW, AP, JW, GJ, SE. Motion passed unanimously.**

#### **V. Vote to Cap Enrollment at Greenfield Commonwealth Virtual School at 1%**

JH recommended 1% cap; Greenfield's enrollment is slightly above 1%.

**GJ moved to cap the enrollment at GCVS at 1%. SE 2nd.**

Discussion:

- No currently enrolled students would be removed
- Support for parents' choice; students' legitimate needs for VS (e.g., illness, bullying)
- Students should stay in Greenfield; GCVS competes for Greenfield students
- State cap is 2% which would allow potentially up to 20 additional Greenfield students;

however, doubt that there would be such a large increase

- GCVS has different reimbursement rate than charter schools, lower impact to GPS funding
- If VS isn't available, parents likely would not choose regular public school

**Roll call vote – No: SH, KC, RW, JW, SE; Yes: AP, GJ. Motion failed 5-2.**

Cap remains at 2% (state limit).

### **VIII. Adjournment**

JW moved to adjourn. 2nd SE. Roll call: SH, KC, RW, JW, SE, AP, GJ. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Susan Farber  
Recording Secretary

### **Meeting Documents**

- Agenda March 4, 2020
- FY21 GPS Budget Hearing Presentation (Supt. Harper)
- Notice of Budget Hearing with Draft/Proposed Budget
- Chapter 132, "An Act Relative to Educational Opportunity for Students" (Nov. 26, 2019)
- Published Budget FY21 (Feb. 20, 2020)
- Budget Reports (March 2, 2020)
- Massachusetts Virtual School Enrollment Restrictions (December 2019)
  - Appendix A: FY2020 District Enrollment Information and % in CMVS
  - Appendix B: Letter Template for Department Notification of School Committee Vote to Restrict CMVS Enrollment
  - Letter re: CMVS enrollment to DESE from Supt. Harper (draft, March 4, 2020)