

**GREENFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BUDGET & FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING
DRAFT MINUTES: March 7, 2019**

Greenfield Public Schools Central Office, 195 Federal Street, Greenfield, MA 01301

Present: Cameron Ward (CW), Chair; Susan Hollins (SH); William Martin (WM)

Absent: None

Also present: Susan Eckstrom, School Committee Member; Jordana Harper, Superintendent; Steve Nembirkow, Business Manager; Joshua Solomon, *Recorder* Reporter

I. Call to Order

With a quorum present (CW, SH, WM), CW opened the meeting at 12:35 p.m.

II. Public Comment

None.

III. OML Complaint

CW read aloud the Open Meeting Law complaint filed by Adrienne Nunez. Members reviewed the complaint line by line.

- WM: discussion at the meeting in question was according to the agenda as advertised. Additionally, agenda did include the language: “The public body may consider and take action on unforeseen matters not specifically named in this notice.”
- WM suggested response letter should answer the questions simply and briefly
- Members would like Nunez to publicly apologize for filing the complaint
- SH feels that she and the mayor have been unfairly targeted; WM agreed

IV. Discussions and Vote Re: Superintendent’s FY20 Budget

Business Manager Nembirkow presented a proposed budget of \$19,970,347. The \$1.3 million increase from the FY19 budget includes \$500,000 in intractable costs (including step increases for personnel and increases in the transportation contract and in out of district costs) and \$800,000 to solve a structural problem by reducing the use of revolving funds.

- GPS will receive an increase in state funds/Chapter 70 for a total of \$1.1 million
- SH: revolving funds should be separated out when discussed
- SH: administrative costs could be looked at as a place to make cuts
- SH: not in support of any cuts which could give a reason for a student to choice out
- Transportation department another area being looked at to save money
- Business Manager Nembirkow: Three new positions to open Green River School are just the big-ticket items; the rest of the support needed to open the school would be incidental costs

Members discussed proposed cuts to the budget.

- Superintendent Harper informed members of the outpouring of support from parents for keeping a third section of Kindergarten at Four Corners
- Health, Safety, and Facilities Subcommittee recommended to keep from eliminating two bus routes
- Before/after school care program proposed cut would not affect the programs put on by Greenfield’s Recreation department

Superintendent Harper explained that an “all funds” budget includes not only state aid and taxpayer money, but also grants, tuition from school choice, and other revenue coming into the school department.

- FY19 all funds budget was \$22.6 million and the FY20 all funds budget is \$23.1 million, a difference of only \$500,000
- Subcommittee can recommend to either ask for an increase in local contribution or an increase in use of revolving funds

Superintendent Harper noted that she would need endorsement from, and agreement among, the subcommittees/full school committee in order to spend time going to other districts to recruit students and/or discuss merger/regionalization opportunities in order to bring in funds.

V. Indirect Costs (City Expenses) Included in Education Budget

WM explained that there is \$350,000 of new expenses (due to healthcare and retirement increases) related to the school department, not counting the expenses of new employees hired. Including the school department's budget, the total educational contributions from the city are \$32 million, which is 69% of the city’s operating budget. Superintendent noted that the school department is not responsible for the entire \$32 million.

Superintendent Harper expressed her concern that though there has been lots of discussion surrounding the efficacy of the school department and its spending, there has been little discussion surrounding the \$14 million also considered education funding from the city. She noted that all of the Chapter 70 funding should go directly to the children. If a portion of it should go to the city, a more complete conversation is in order regarding this issue in particular. Based on numbers from WM, SH suggested that 60% of the Chapter 70 funds go to the school department, and 40% go to the city.

SH moved that the subcommittee recommend a budget of \$19,675,000, adding together: 1) the FY19 budget of \$18,575,000; 2) \$500,000 of intractable costs (including contractual costs for step increases and transportation, as well as increases in special education; and, 3) \$600,000 of the new state aid. CW 2nd. Superintendent Harper wondered if there would be a recommendation to increase the amount if Chapter 70 aid increased. She also suggested that the subcommittee work to understand where the Chapter 70 money is going, if part of it is going to go to the city (and not to the school department); SH agreed. SH suggested that a three-month subcommittee be formed to look at cost-saving ideas. **Motion failed.**

Superintendent Harper reminded the committee that for whatever budget number is voted, though the administration will work to make any reductions in service and/or staff necessary to align with that budget, doing so will take up a lot of time. She also would recommend varying from policy in order to increase revolving fund usage, if local contributions are not increased and revolving funds must be used.

WM moved that the subcommittee authorize by whatever means possible for the superintendent to spend an additional \$650,000 from revolving funds. CW 2nd. SH cannot support such a motion, as continuing to deplete the revolving fund will cause problems in the following years’ budgets; Business Manager Nembirkow agreed. SH would like to look at each revolving fund separately and not as a whole. **Motion failed (CW-No; SH-No; WM-Yes).**

CW noted that the subcommittee will not be making a budget number recommendation to the full school committee at its special budget meeting scheduled for the evening of March 7th.

VI. Approval of January 22nd Budget Meeting

Passed over.

VII. Adjournment

WM moved to adjourn. CW 2nd. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting closed at 2:50 p.m.

Meeting Documents

1. Open Meeting Law Complaint
2. Agenda
3. FY20 GPS Budget Statistics
4. January 22nd Minutes