

Town of Brookline
Advisory Committee Minutes

Sean Lynn-Jones, Chair

Date: April 12, 2016

Present: Carla Benka, Clifford M. Brown, Carol Caro, Lea Cohen, John Doggett, Dennis Doughty, Harry K. Friedman, Janet Gelbart, David-Marc Goldstein, Neil Gordon, Kelly Hardebeck, Amy F. Hummel, Sytske Humphrey, Alisa Jonas, Janice S. Kahn, Fred Levitan, Robert Liao, Sean M. Lynn-Jones, Shaari S. Mittel, Mariah Nobrega, Michael Sandman, Lee Selwyn, Charles Swartz, Christine Westphal

Absent: * Stanley Spiegel, Jennifer Goldsmith, Dennis Doughty, Steve Kanes, Angela Hyatt, Bobbie Knable, Pamela Lodish

Also attending Melissa Goff, Dr. Joseph Connelly, Interim Superintendent of Schools; Jennifer Fischer-Mueller, Deputy Superintendent for Teaching and Learning; Karen Shmukler, Deputy Superintendent of Student Services; Ben Lummis, Special Assistant to the Superintendent for Strategy and Performance; Mary Ellen Dunn, Deputy Superintendent for Administration and Finance; and Susan Wolf Dittkoff, David Pollak, and Beth Jackson Stram, School Committee Members

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 PM.

1. REVIEW OF FY 2017 OPERATING BUDGET – PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF BROOKLINE

Michael Sandman gave a summary of the School Subcommittee's report.

He noted that the format of the budget has been changed in significant ways and of note is the grouping of related programs. Reserves have been allocated to the places where they belong. Costs are more accurate and budget is more transparent.

Employee benefits need to be allocated on a program by program basis. Currently just salaries and not benefits are represented. Hope to see this in FY 18.

Objectives and Accomplishment for Technology – mostly administrative (see the recommendation).

Dr. Connelly said the motivation driving the budget was the School's 5 Core Values: High Achievement for All, Educational Equity, Excellence in Teaching, Respect for Human Differences, Collaboration. He highlighted the key factors in each value.

Enrollment increases noted over the course of ten years driving the need for expansion project.

For many years Brookline has used buffered zones to help balance enrollment in school districts. The buffer approach has been successful. Of 259 classrooms there are only 7 where enrollment is 25 or higher. Will get more challenging as numbers increase and space availability lessens.

Review of Revenue and Budget Categories demonstrates improvement of services to students.

FTE Changes broken out \$4.9M represents a portion of the \$7M overall increase.

Educational needs, dramatic enrollment increase, core values.

Questions

Q: 17.2 FTEs support specials – do they go to all schools as needed or are they designated for specific schools? Are these all new or will they bring current people up to full time?

A: Literacy and Math will go to all schools, Technology will go to where needed.

Q: World Language Teachers – what will happen starting at 6th Grade?

A: Elementary World Language in all schools, beginning in 6th grade they can stay with Spanish or choose another language – Spanish, French or Mandarin.

Q: No mention of Public Libraries in Brookline collaboration.

A: Oversight. Our librarians collaborate and we share resources.

Q: Unfunded positions - succession planning for transportation? Transportation needs will become very complicated so why it isn't being prioritized in this current budget to be learned from the person who is in the role.

A: We have an individual who has announced retirement June 2017 so should we find funds to begin a succession plan, we will bring someone in to learn transportation – buses and special education vans – takes someone a good 6 months to get a handle on routes and schedules, plan is to bring someone in during the year when funds have been identified to cover the transition from a retiring employee to new employee.

Q: How you expect to identify the funds to cover this position – attrition or how will these positions be funded in the course of the year?

A: Outgoing and incoming salaries are quite different, so through attrition that delta would be used for funding.

Q: 1.0 FTE for Craftsman – where is the position?

A: A timing reconciliation – until the School Committee votes the budget, the FTE hasn't yet been transferred to the Building Department. This will be the first vote and then the next vote with \$41K removed.

Q: Technology – if we are committing funding to additional technology , do you have the personnel and qualified teachers to support this commitment?

A: The two positions are helping with the management of the equipment and are not instructional. The actual instructional support comes indirectly – our educational technology specialists will be freed from the maintenance piece and be able to provide greater support and better instruction.

Q: Are there particular classes in the schools about computer science?

A: Yes in coding but no student team in overall computer instruction. Also have technology professional development for teachers, learning how to use the different devices.

Q: Does \$151M include support services that the Town provides – important that costs associated with other functions buried in various town budgets be included (along with Benefits). Issue of non-resident students (what is FY17 materials fee?) – the Town is entitled to know what these costs are especially if they are potentially driving the need for 9th school.

A: Graduating 25 METCO students this year and anticipate replacing those 25 with others in kindergarten. Materials fees – we are tracking this very closely – Kindergarten registration –pacing close to last year’s number. We should get by with existing 30 classrooms.

Q: \$10K for integration of portfolio tools? What are these?

A: Page 13 of the Summary provides and overview of the Technology Plan.

Q: The IT department talked about increasing bandwidth to the schools, have you seen an increase in usage?

A: Has increased, and increase in use of devices, decrease in reporting of slow access. Teachers are able to engage whole class.

Q: What are the assumptions and instructions for new hires?

A: Hiring at Masters Step 4 as an entry level giving some flexibility to go higher or lower depending on experience. It is the same framework as has been previously used.

Q: Why do substitute teachers have a higher cost per person?

A: The costs are per diem. Can reduce line item based on turnover – from attrition, retirement which is why FY 17 has dropped. Review page 30 of Preliminary Operating Personnel Budget to see actual positions representing the FTEs.

Q: Why is sufficient space (at the High School) a crisis now when it wasn’t a crisis even in 2004 – looking also at class size ratio 16/1 – need help understanding why need for new schools.

A: Classrooms that may have been used for classrooms are now being used for special education and other support programs. We have dramatically reduced number of kids in outside placements. Computer spaces, other spaces that were originally designed as classrooms and now being used for

other purposed. That is the driving issue – so many needs that not all can be used for instruction alone. Class sizes are often larger than 16 to 1.

Elementary calculation is based on bodies in a room. Number of classrooms by number of students 20:1

High School calculation you take total professional teaching staff by number of students/enrollment 16:1

Q: Do you have an updated version of a chart we saw last year?

A: Over the last 6 years. Karen will get it to the AC. Graph will show cost savings when kids brought back into the community as well as outcomes.

We don't have any under-enrolled special education programs. Students with disabilities deserve to be educated in their home school communities like anyone else. This is also federally mandated. We do what is best for kids beyond the federal mandate.

Q: Coaches vs Specialists? Mentoring?

A: Specialists work with teachers and students – coaches primarily work with teachers to improve their practice. Some people on staff will take on role of mentor and stay with a teacher for 1-3 years. Anyone new to Brookline will have that mentorship support for 1-3 years. This has also been expanded to Administrative staff as well.

Q: Are you comfortable with the reduction in Special Education (slide 22, page 11)?

A: \$518K includes \$250K. Last year's reserve \$475 will be expended and it will cover unanticipated tuition costs. It has rolled over in prior years but we will be using it in FY16 and using \$111K more for circuit breaker funds because the tuition budget has increased for next year. 72 and 75% expected from the state.

Q: When Special Ed Students go out of our district who decides and where do they go?

A: The decision is made by a team including their parents – based on the student's IAP. They go to Special Ed Collaboratives made up of a number of schools – private day schools, residential schools. Some districts tuition students in although Brookline is full of our own students.

A MOTION was made and seconded to recommend approval of the Public Schools of Brookline FY17 budget of \$101,058,795.

Note: With a vote of 21 in favor, 0 opposed with 0 abstentions, the Advisory Committee votes favorable action on the motion and the Advisory Committee recommends approval of the Public Schools of Brookline FY17 budget of \$101,058,795.

2. REVIEW OF FY 2017 CIP PROPOSALS – PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF BROOKLINE

Carla Benka gave an overview of the CIP Proposal requests.

66. SCHOOL FURNITURE Subcommittee Recommendation: \$80,000

Furniture in all school buildings absorbs significant wear and tear annually. FY 17 CIP funds will be used to replace the most outdated and worn items. In past years, funding in the School Department's operating budget was also earmarked for this purpose, but that is not the case for the coming fiscal year. The FY 18- FY 22 CIP schedule anticipates the allocation increasing by \$10,000 annually.

A MOTION was made and seconded to recommend approval for \$80,000 FY17 Public Schools of Brookline CIP funds to be used to replace the most outdated and worn items.

Vote: By a vote of 21 in favor, 0 opposed and no abstentions, the Advisory Committee votes favorable action on the motion to recommend \$800,000 FY 17 Public Schools of Brookline CIP funds to be used to replace the most outdated and worn items.

76. SCHOOL STUDIES Subcommittee Recommendation: \$800,000

Two feasibility studies are proposed for the coming fiscal year: one for the expansion of the High School and one for a new K-8 school. A total of \$800,000, a portion of which would be set aside for project management, has been requested.

Comments and Questions:

Consider School without a school ("virtual" high school) – resources with private schools, area colleges, - think about education in a broader way to enrich the educational experience.

Clarifications were offered regarding the RFQ and also for money allocated for site selection and then, once a site is chosen \$300K for FY 17 for a feasibility study for that site.

Is any consideration being given to amending Building Commission's Public Building bylaw in order to accommodate the scheduling of various studies - feasibility, site, concept, etc.? It is in the queue for Town Counsel to look at.

As part of the concept study will we have a determination of walkability, how many of all of the children in all of the children in the district will be able to walk to their schools? Yes – ballparks; specific will be longer term once a site is chosen.

A MOTION was made and seconded to recommend \$800,000 FY 17 Public Schools of Brookline CIP funds to be used for two feasibility studies for FY17: one for the expansion of the High School and one for a new K-8 school.

Vote: By a vote of 18 in favor, 1 opposed and 2 abstentions, the Advisory Committee votes favorable action on the motion to recommend approval for \$800,000 FY 17 Public Schools of Brookline CIP funds

for two feasibility studies for FY17: one for the expansion of the High School and one for a new K-8 school.

80. OLD LINCOLN SCHOOL IMPROVEMENTS Subcommittee Recommendation: \$350,000

Currently using the school for kids from Devotion. When they move out we will move in kids from the High School, will you have to do additional renovation?

The type of work they are doing will make it usable for middle school and high school populations.

Concerns were raised about water quality/safety in the building.

Water and the content of lead in brass fittings – so yes some plumbing will be replaced. This money will allow us to identify the source of the lead and then solve the water quality issue. All hand sinks replaced by spray sinks – can't be used for drinking from or filling bottles. There are bottled water bubbler dispensers in each bathroom and will not be removed until the Health Department determines all is safe. All students have been given refillable water bottles at the start of the year.

A MOTION was made and seconded to recommend \$350,000 FY17 Public Schools of Brookline CIP funds be used for Old Lincoln School Improvements.

Vote: With a vote of 21 in favor, 0 opposed and no abstentions, the Advisory Committee votes favorable action on the motion to recommend \$350,000 FY17 Public Schools of Brookline CIP funds to be used for Old Lincoln School Improvements.

81. CLASSROOM CAPACITY - Subcommittee Recommendation: \$1,038,000

What is going into the Pierce School Annex – 7th and 8th grades.

If you get a 4th space, will this be enough? Yes, very little build out.

Leased expenses being put in the CIP budget? Why putting furniture or paint in the CIP – you can take it out of CIP and put it in Operating but either way you are paying for it. Within the next 8-10 years these costs will go away because we will have built our own spaces.

Capital Subcommittee encouraged the school committee to provide us with costs for utilities and other services that may not be included in the leases so we can have a clear view of actual costs associated with renting.

A MOTION was made and seconded to recommend \$1,038,000 FY17 Public Schools of Brookline CIP funds be used for the leased spaces at the temples, 62 Harvard, 24 Webster Place as well as the Baker modules. These expenses would leave a modest balance in the Classroom Capacity account to address other needs that may arise in the coming year.

Vote: With a vote of 19 in favor, 1 opposed with 1 abstention, the Advisory Committee votes favorable action on the motion to recommend \$1,038,000 FY17 Public Schools of Brookline CIP funds be used for

the leased spaces at the temples, 62 Harvard, 24 Webster Place as well as the Baker modules. These expenses would leave a modest balance in the Classroom Capacity account to address other needs that may arise in the coming year.

Next Meeting: The next meeting of the Advisory Committee will be on April 14.

Upon a MOTION made and seconded and voted unanimously, the meeting adjourned at 10:00 pm.

Documents Presented at Advisory Committee Meeting:

- CAPITAL SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT FY17 PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF BROOKLINE CIP REQUESTS
- SCHOOLS SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT FY17 PUBLIC SCHOOLS PF BROOKLINE BUDGET
- THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF BROOKLINE RECOMMENDED FY2017 BUDGET
- SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDED 2016-2017 BUDGET PPT PRESENTATION TO THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE