

Schools Subcommittee of the Advisory Committee

Public Meeting January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Held Via Zoom 5:00 PM-6:30 PM

*Subcommittee members (in attendance noted by Y/N)*

Cliff Brown, Chair	Y	Paul Warren	Y
Dennis Doughty	Y		
Susan Park	Y		

School Staff present: Dr. Jim Marini, MaryEllen Normen, Matt Gillis

Town Staff Present: Charlie Simmons

Attendees and registrants included: Mariah Nobrega, Carol Levin, Carla Benka and Mike Sandman, John VanScoyoc, Helen Herman, Michelle Herman, Joseph Russo, Robert Miller and Lucy Florman.

Materials provided ahead of time to the Subcommittee included: • [FY 2022 Budget Overview](#)

• [FY 2022 Budget Development Calendar](#) and also memos and letters presented at the January 14<sup>th</sup> Schools Finance Subcommittee (attached)

Information shared via Zoom during the meeting: [FY 2022 Budget Overview](#)

Cliff Brown opened the meeting remotely via Zoom due to COVID, ensured all members were able to participate with audio and video, and announced that the meeting would be recorded. He stated that the presentation was essentially identical to the one provided to the School Committee on January 21<sup>st</sup> and that materials from that meeting had been distributed. He then introduced MaryEllen Normen.

**Discussion of Preliminary School Budget for FY22**

MaryEllen Normen, Deputy Superintendent for Administration and Finance, began restating that some materials had been previously distributed and highlighting the inclusion of Charlie Simmons from the Building Department to speak on pressing matters related to maintenance and staffing.

Dr. Jim Marini, acting Superintendent, made a statement in which he stated that he anticipated a very painful budget. Preliminary indications of an \$8 million deficit suggested difficult choices and obvious need for reductions. season the preliminary numbers for FY 22 were.

MaryEllen Normen and Dr. Marini then went through the presentation they had made to the School Committee. After reviewing their mission, they discussed base assumptions to the budget, beginning with enrollment projections (K and 1 from the Cropper McKibben report and 2-12 based on estimates of retention from grade to grade). Also, an assumption that there would eb no remote learning and that

focus would be for high quality curriculum. He also reviewed other strategic planning and staffing/re-staffing initiatives, diversity, equity and inclusion goals, professional development and program breadth, meet contractual obligations, other mandated costs, etc. Class size guidelines were reviewed and discussed as the other driver (along with population) for the number of anticipated sections. Target average class size of 20.

Initial allocation to the Schools from the Town School Partnership along with anticipated funds from materials fee tuition and other state funds indicated a base revenue allocation of \$120.1 million, approximately \$1.4 million less than FY21 revenue allocations.

In addition to the expenses anticipated to be incurred in FY21, Dr. Marini listed \$4.7 million of NET additional costs. Additional needs added about \$1.5 million.

Further costs related to the maintenance of buildings added another \$450 thousand. The total amounts to an increase of \$6.66 million of budget growth. When added to the revenue reduction, the total gap is about \$8.1 million.

Dr. Marini listed a host of possible actions that could reduce the gap, some of which are in the control of the Schools and some of which are not.

Charlie Simmons was then provided an opportunity to discuss the situation with school related operational expenses. Simmons has been asking for several years to have more money for personnel to deal with the new high school building, there is also an increase in the utility budget that will be likely. Contract might result in lower price but if green power is used it will be more expensive. Schedule for building usage will impact costs. Simmons has 3 HVAC positions that have been unfilled for 4 years. Cutting preventative maintenance.

### **Discussion/Questions**

Paul Warren asked what other Towns/Cities are dealing with. Dr. Marini said that Newton is in trouble without federal support. Not hearing from many other districts. Warren also raised the issue of compensation and asked about the components of the increase. The response from Ms. Dunn highlighted that this is a contract year and that to discuss the issue would be a violation of the negotiating rules.

Susan Park asked about waiting on the buildings/all of the repairs to save money and put towards teachers. Charlie Simmons said there would not be any savings and would cost more.

Cliff Brown asked about class size target of 20 which is below guidelines—why? Dr. Marini acknowledged the number would provide 'headroom' if there were larger numbers of returning children than anticipated, citing poor survey data as requiring flexibility. He also discussed the likely need for more focused attention for many children coming back to in person instruction and a desire to resist cuts for as long as possible.

In response to questions about philosophically where cuts might come from, Marini discussed the trade-offs between across-the-board reductions which might weaken all areas vs. targeted reductions or eliminations of programs which, on a relative basis, were deemed either not as critical to core learning

or were believed to not be as effective relative to the investment in them. Ms. Dunn mentioned the goal of trying to ascertain 'base budget' required to provide core curriculum and mandated services.

Carla Benka asked about Eastern Bus and monies that Brookline was supposed to get as a credit for funds paid last year for services not rendered as well as understanding the projected increases for this year. Matt Gillis responded by saying that there might be some money coming back to the Town but that Eastern Bus had to wait for the results of an audit. He also mentioned that there is a budgeted \$300,000 increase in costs due to anticipated additional special education transport expenses.

The meeting was adjourned.

Subsequent to this meeting, the School Committee was presented with an update that indicated a reduction in the projected deficit of about \$3 million.

DRAFT