

School Committee Finance Subcommittee
Thursday, January 31, 2019
4:30 PM-6:00 PM
4th Floor Conference, Town Hall

Finance Subcommittee members present: Susan Wolf Ditkoff (Chairman), Jennifer Monopoli, David A. Pearlman, and Barbara Scotto.
Other School Committee members present: Helen Charlupski.
Staff present: Mary Ellen Dunn, Jeremy Stull, and Robin Coyne.
Others present: Advisory Committee members Carla Benka, Bobbie Knable, and Michael Sandman.

1) Approve Meeting Minutes

On a motion of Ms. Scotto and seconded by Ms. Monopoli, the Finance Subcommittee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the January 22, 2019 Finance Subcommittee meeting.

2) FY 2019 and FY 2020 Budget Discussion

Ms. Dunn provided an update on the FY 2019 Budget. The district has continued to operate in FY 2019 with a structural deficit. New town revenue growth is not keeping pace with the assumptions in the 2018 three-year override budget projection approved by the voters. The causes of the deficit include the following: revenue offsets that are no longer allowed or viable; an increase in personnel costs; out-of-district tuitions; and the ongoing structural deficit and revenue problems in Athletics and the Food Service Program. In order to balance the FY 2019 budget, including anticipated additional student services expenses, at least \$1 million in funds must be held in reserve in order to ensure that enough resources are available to end FY 2019 without a deficit. The Superintendent put in place a budget freeze to identify \$1 million in cost reductions. The administration is hopeful that the freeze will be lifted during the February school vacation week.

The agenda for the next School Finance Subcommittee meeting will include the Athletic, Brookline Early Education Program (BEEP), and Brookline Adult and Community Education (BACE) Revolving Funds; Grants; and Rental Facilities.

Athletic stipends and transportation costs have increased over the years without commensurate increases to the budget. The \$300 per student athletic fee is one of the highest in the league. Members requested a comparison of Brookline athletic fees to fees in comparable districts.

Ms. Dunn reported that she is looking into the reason(s) for the reduction in Title I funds. Ms. Dunn is recommending that the School Committee vote to accept upcoming grants in the spring instead of the fall. If projected funding isn't sufficient, programs may need to be reduced or redesigned.

Subcommittee members stressed the need for clarity with regard to our philosophy on revolving funds. What should be included in a revolving fund? What is the methodology for assigning costs to revolving funds vs the operating budget? What are the implications for our current budgeting? How do our fees compare to other districts? (This is particularly important if the administration is recommending any increases.)

The Subcommittee discussed the budget schedule. School Committee members were asked to email any substantive budget-related questions by January 30, 2019 and to deliver in hard copy any specific comments, (e.g., typos, items needing clarification), to the Administration and Finance Administrative Assistant Suzanne McCormick-deBoer no later than February 1, 2019. The second deadline was extended to Monday, February 4, 2019. Mr. Bott will present the Superintendent's Preliminary FY 2020 Budget later this evening.

The summary budget document (will not include any reductions needed to close the deficit, currently projected at \$626,254) will be posted by February 7, 2019. The Town-School Partnership meeting will take place February 8, 2019. The School Committee's Public Hearing on the FY 2020 Budget (on the overall budget number; not the detailed cuts) will be well publicized and will take place February 14, 2019. School Committee members will receive a draft budget book by February 25, 2019 (budget changes will be highlighted.) The School Committee is expected to vote on the FY 2020 Budget number on February 28, 2019. Any edits on the draft budget book must be sent to Ms. Dunn by March 4, 2019. The final Budget Book will be sent to the printer by March 15, 2019. Mr. Sandman indicated that Advisory Committee receipt of the final budget book by March 15, 2019 would work, but that it would be helpful to be able to view an earlier draft.

The Subcommittee discussed the use of the fees charged to ride-hailing companies such as Uber and Lyft. By statute money from the fees must be used to address the impact of the transportation services on roads, bridges and other infrastructure, or toward other public projects "substantially related" to operating the services.

Ms. Dunn will talk to Mr. Bott about when proposed reductions will be presented to the School Committee (currently engaged in fact finding; perhaps on February 28, 2019) and how best to show building based and program based budgets (want to be clear and transparent and not give readers the mistaken impression items are being double counted). Subcommittee members noted that the budget book breaks out some high school programs. Members suggested pulling out the programs that have the largest budgets and/or are a part of a larger district focus, e.g., programs that attempt to address the achievement gap.

The Subcommittee agreed to add a February 14, 2019 Finance Subcommittee meeting (5:00 PM-6:00 PM, in the 4th Floor Conference Room). The February 28, 2019 meeting was moved to February 27, 2019 (4:00 PM-6:00 PM, in the 4th Floor Conference Room).

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 PM.