

Brookline Advisory Committee
Schools Subcommittee Report
Warrant Article 8

The Schools Subcommittee of the Advisory Committee held a public hearing on June 3, 2020, which, due to current health concerns, was held via Zoom, to discuss and possibly vote upon the School budget as part of Warrant Article 8 to be acted upon at the 2020 Annual Town Meeting. In attendance were Subcommittee members Cliff Brown (Chair), Dennis Doughty, Janel Gelbart, David Lescohier, and Paul Warren.

Also present were: Ben Lummis (Interim School Superintendent), Suzanne Federspiel (School Committee Vice Chair) and Mary Ellen Normen (Deputy Superintendent for Administration and Finance), other members of the School Committee, Advisory Committee, Town Meeting and the public. A Zoom attendance log which lists attendees is attached (Attachment A)

The Schools Subcommittee held a subsequent public meeting on June 8, 2020, via Zoom, to discuss further and possibly vote upon the School budget. Attending were Subcommittee members Cliff Brown (Chair), Dennis Doughty, Janel Gelbart, David Lescohier, and Paul Warren. Also attending were Ben Lummis (Interim School Superintendent), Suzanne Federspiel (School Committee Vice Chair) and Mary Ellen Normen (Deputy Superintendent for Administration and Finance), members of the Advisory Committee, Town Meeting and the public. A Zoom attendance log which lists attendees is attached (Attachment B)

SUMMARY

The School Committee has requested that Town Meeting appropriate \$118,998,990 for the FY21 Schools Budget. This represents an increase of 1.37% over the \$117,385,106 FY20 appropriation. The FY21 requested appropriation represents a 3.4% decrease from the original, pre-COVID requested FY21 budget of \$123,361,138.

There are several risks associated with the amount being requested for appropriation. The amount does not include COVID-related costs that are unknown at this time and that could be substantial. Depending on how BEEP is structured in the fall, there could be an additional budget gap that is not accounted for in the budget.

The Subcommittee, based on best available information, recommends favorable action for \$118,998,990 to be appropriated for the FY21 School Budget as provided below.

BACKGROUND

Due to the ongoing COVID health crisis, the Public Schools of Brookline's (PSB) budget has been developed in an environment of unprecedented uncertainty. Some of the factors contributing to the challenges in developing the budget included:

- A reduction in forecasted Town revenue that created efforts on both the Town and School side to close the resulting budget gap.

- The lack of clear information from the State on what school will look like in September.
- A delay in guidance from DESE (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education).
- The learning model likely changing as the year progresses based on the health and safety outlook.
- Contractual obligations with the Brookline Educators Union (BEU).

The uncertain environment, need to close the budget gap, and the increasing concern from the school community resulted in several iterations of the budget that culminated in the School Committee requesting an FY21 appropriation from Town Meeting of \$118,998,990. The following is a high-level description of the budget iterations and timing.

Pre-COVID Budget \$125.9 million

Prior to the effects of COVID being fully known, \$1.35 million in cuts to the FY21 School budget were made to balance out projected increases in contractual and collective bargaining personnel expenses, and transportation costs. The \$125.9M budget was brought into balance by eliminating an optional professional development day for staff; consolidating a few small classes in upper elementary and middle school levels; making limited staff reductions based on class enrollment; and reducing funds for additional maintenance to the school buildings.

\$6.3M revenue reduction resulting in \$119.6 million revised budget

In mid-May, the Town reduced its revenue forecast for FY21 by \$12.6M. This reduction took into account the COVID emergency’s forecasted impact on revenue sources including parking meters and fines, hotels, meals tax and marijuana revenue. **Based on the Town-School Partnership formula, 50% of this reduction (\$6.3M) was allocated to the Schools** resulting in a total revised FY21 Schools budget of \$119.6M.

In order to close the \$6.3M budget gap 44.5 FTEs from existing positions¹ were identified for elimination. These included 6.0 central office staff, 32.5 teachers and 6 paraprofessionals.

Restoration of \$1.9M in revenue closing the gap to \$4.4M resulting in a \$121.5M budget

In late May, the Town Administrator slightly modified his revenue projections and proposed some reductions in expenses, including \$3.5 million in CIP expenses, resulting in an additional \$3.75 million being allocated for operating funds. Per the Town-School Partnership, 50% of these funds were allocated to the Schools, thereby, thereby reducing the School budget gap to \$4.4M and increasing the total FY21 School budget to \$121.5M (of which \$119M comes from the Town and the balance comes the Schools including Tuition & Fees and Circuit Breaker funds).

As a result of the continued budget gap, the PSB’s desire to retain maximum flexibility to deliver education programming in the fall, and a contractually-required reduction in force notification

¹ Written responses dated June 8, 2020 to Advisory Committee School Subcommittee questions submitted to Interim Superintendent Ben Lummis

deadline of May 30, 2020, Reduction In Force (RIF) notifications were sent to 300 Public Schools of Brookline employees.

School Committee reduces the budget gap to \$500K

The School Committee continued to consider alternatives to close the gap and on June 4, 2020 voted to adopt two budget actions to reduce the \$4.4M budget gap to \$500K². **These actions included reducing \$1.7M from central office/districtwide costs and removing \$2.2M from a budget line item for potential salary increases district-wide.**

These two actions allowed the School Committee to direct the Superintendent to bring back as many staff as possible, as quickly as possible.

The School Committee and School Department continue to work towards line item adjustment to close the remaining \$500K gap. One possible source mentioned by the Subcommittee was a reduction in rent from third party lessors on the order of 15%-20%.

The budget impact of State COVID regulations on BEEP are unknown.

State regulations for Early Childhood Education have not yet been fully issued. The final guidelines may impact classroom and program capacity, tuition rates and program revenue. The BEEP program is dependent on tuition to fund its program and personnel. **A reduction in enrollment and tuition revenue may result in a program deficit that is not currently accounted for in the FY21 budget.**

COVID-related expenses are unknown and are not included in the FY21 Schools budget

COVID-related expenses may include a wide range of cost categories including but not limited to cleaning supplies and janitorial labor, technology and printed materials, personal protective equipment (PPE), staff training, and support staff. The impact that these costs have on the budget are dependent upon yet-to-be-finalized guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). **The extent to which these expenses may be reimbursed by Federal monies and amount available to us is still unknown**

PUBLIC COMMENT FROM JUNE 3, 2020 HEARING

Following the presentation by Interim Superintendent Lummis, there was input from members of the public. This input was in addition to many emails received by subcommittee members. A list of the comments and responses follows:

1. Discuss the feasibility of using OPEBS, undesignated reserves, deferring capital expenditures and an override to close the gap.

² Letter dated June 5, 2020 from School Committee to Brookline School Community

Response (from Cliff): Contributions to capital improvements and OPEBs are within our control and are being looked at by Town Administrator (TA) and Advisory Committee (AC) as part of budget proposal; pension contribution already submitted to State and cannot be changed for FY 21 (though will be examined for FY 22); use of reserves may have negative impact for future years; override cannot be assumed for June 30 discussion.

2. Concern about reduction to Special Ed which is a mandated program but is included in RIFs.

Response from Ben: RIFs (300 or so) greatly exceed number of layoffs projected in budget (30 FTE teachers). Need to notice broadly as neither the programmatic direction nor ripple of bumping is known; SPED staff positions will not be cut but notice had to include some SPED individuals because they can potentially be bumped; deadline for para RIF notice is 6/15 and will hopefully be more targeted because we have more info, including EEC guidelines.

3. What is meant by reducing FTE's in under enrolled classes – those below capacity or targeted small group programs?

Response from Ben: Meant for High School courses which are traditionally under-enrolled; specifics to be worked out by school staff once budget parameters are established.

4. Why is there a policy that prevents free cash from being used for operations and can this be overridden by Select Board (SB)?

Responses from Cliff: Policy exists because it is not good practice to use one-time funds for ongoing costs; TA can override and has e.g., by re-directing some of the CIP funding included in free cash; need to preserve resources for FY 22 or recurrence of problems in the fall.

5. Concern about impact on under-enrolled courses on METCO.

See response from Ben (3 above)

6. Not appropriate to cite that budget is higher this year than last; comparison should be to 2018 plan; need short term bridge but long-term plan; AC can advocate for overrides even though it is the province of the SB; Driscoll and Pierce are not optional and should not be part of the discussion; great time to borrow and construction inflation will continue.

7. What about fundraising to support the schools?

Response from School Committee: Would be welcome through the many organizations that currently do this; work thru PTOs or contact School Committee member Susan Ditkoff for info.

8. What are the criteria for using rainy day fund and who decides?

Response from Cliff: Only true rainy day fund is the \$6.7 million stabilization fund which is administered by policies established by SB; distribution requires 2/3 vote of TM; if revenue decreased by 3% or more in any year; maximum of \$1 million/year and \$2.5 million in (3) years.

9. What about using marijuana funds to reduce layoffs?

Response from Cliff: Comes in 2 parts – Community impact restricted by law to offset costs to community (e.g., extra police, sanitation, etc.); excise tax revenue is included in budget but is dramatically reduced due to COVID closing.

10. What is the timeline for re-hire?

Response from Ben: Rolling decisions some of which may be reached before TM; define budget and then departments determine how to implement; need clear direction from the School committee; implement EEC guidelines for BEEP which may impact K-2 bumping; DESE guidelines.

Note: Ben is Interim Superintendent Ben Lummis

Cliff is Cliff Brown, Chair of the Subcommittee

DISCUSSION

The Subcommittee discussed a range of issues, including most prominently, the following:

Teacher Raises

The Subcommittee was concerned that \$2.2M was removed from the budget without a prior agreement from the BEU. **The School Committee explained that the raises were not contractually agreed to and therefore not legally required.** The money was being held in a reserve fund anticipating that raises would be negotiated by the BEU as part of collective bargaining for FY21.

COVID Expenses

The Subcommittee explored two topics related to COVID expenses including estimating the expenses and how to pay for them.

There is currently not enough information to develop a budget for COVID-related expenses. Developing an estimate requires specific guidance from DESE and analysis by the School Department on a range of topics including social distancing, classroom capacity, PPE, testing, and requirements for on-line and hybrid (classroom/online) learning environments. On June 5,

DESE published “Guidance on Required Safety Supplies for Re-Opening Schools”. This is an important input to developing an estimate for FY21 COVID expenses. However, the guidance for on-site and on-line education is still needed as well as a final decision by PSB as to what school will look like in September.

The Subcommittee discussed where the budgets for COVID-related expenses should reside and how they should be paid for. It is important to note that these expenses could easily run into the millions of dollars. Given that the costs are unknown, **the Subcommittee recommends flexibility, quick availability of funds, over any fund money in which money is held and therefore suggests** monies be held in the Reserve Fund and allocated as expenses become known and as Federal and State funds are exhausted.

Partnering and Collaboration

The Subcommittee had a substantive discussion related to a perception that the BEU was unwilling to fully collaborate with key stakeholders as those stakeholders seek to develop a plan for a fully synchronous education, whether online, in person or hybrid, in the fall. This perception was the result of statements made by union officers during an on-line panel discussion sponsored by the Brookline Parents Organization on June 7th, in which hundreds of Brookline community members participated. **Members of the Subcommittee encouraged the BEU to separate collective bargaining activities and advocacy from the critical work being done by the Remote Learning Task Force and to participate in the Task Force’s planning work.**

RECOMMENDATION ***

A **MOTION** was made and seconded to recommend favorable action for \$118,998,990 to be appropriated for the FY21 School Budget. The Subcommittee voted unanimously 5-0.

*** Subsequent to the public hearing and public meeting and the drafting of this report, the School Committee indicated that it has received additional guidance from DESE on class sizes required for the re-opening the schools. This information will be discussed during this evening’s Advisory Committee Meeting.

Attachment A
June 3, 2020 Public Hearing Zoom Attendance Log

	chanel keenan	Emmie Foster
Alaina Ortiz	Charlotte :)	Emy Chen
Allyson Poole-Foster	chenry	Eric Latimer
Amie Lindenboim (amielindenboim)	Chi Chi	Erica X. Wong
amielindenboim	Chi Chi Wu (Chi Chi)	Eugene Kim
Ana Hoffman	Chris Maxwell	Evan Macosko
Andrew Maglathlin	Christina Collins	Flora Traub
Andrew Mullins (Andy Mullins)	Claire Stampfer	Fred Levitan
Andy Mullins	Claudia Ordonez	Gael
Angus Lansing	Cliff Brown (Cliff Brown)	Glen Gurner
Anne Sheridan	Colleen Muldoon	Graciela Schimmel
Annie Eagle	Cynthia Creem	hannah bjornson
Anoushka Mallik	D. Perry (Madeline Parker)	harriet rosenstein
Avishai Lindenboim	Daniel Simard	Heather Hamilton
barbara keenan	Dave Gacioch	Heather Pineault
Barry Rosenwasser	David Ford	Helen Charlupski
Ben Birnbaum	David Lescohier	Helen Charlupski (Helen Charlupski)
Ben Lummis	dchisholm	Hiroko Aspi
Betty Strong	debbie mercer (debbiemercer)	hirokosmac
Bianca Medina	debbiemercer	hollysmith
Bridget Muelbert	Deborah Abner	Hsiu-Lan Chang
Britt Stevens	Dennis Doughty	iPhone
Brooks Ames	desktop	Isabel Gunther
Carla Benka	Devon Powell (iPhone)	Isabella Delatorre
Carol Caro	Diane Houghton	Janet Aronson
Caroline Pierce	EF (Emmie Foster)	Janet Gelbart
carolyn munchbach	Eileen Bruen	Janet Kelley (iPhone)
Catherine Burke	eleana	janicekahn
Catherine Shain	Eliana Bernard (OJL Teacher 4)	JdeFoleschampe
Cécile	Elizabeth Bales	Jed Miller
Celeste Peterson	Elizabeth Brennan's iPhone	Jeffrey Benson
Chad Hunte	Elizabeth Sullivan	Jen Sullivan
chanel	Emily Friedman	Jenna Laib

		Name (Original Name)
Jennifer Breneisen	Lindsay Asselin	Nancy Gorer
Jenny Doggett	Lisa Weil's iPhone	Nancy Gorer (Max.G)
Jenny Malaguti	Lisa Wisman Weil	Natasha Goldman
Jeremy Bloch	Lisa Wisman Weil (Lisa Weil's iPhone)	Nathan Shpritz (NATHAN's iPad)
Jess Levasseur	liz	NATHAN's iPad
Jessica Flaherty	Lora Kim	Neil Wishinsky
Jim Bales	Lori Lynn	Niels Svenstrup
John Roberge (JohnR)	Luca Kelley Nielsen	Nina Daly
John Roberge (johnroberge)	Lucy Chie	OJL Teacher 4
John VanScoyoc	Lucy's iPhone	Padmaja Raman
JohnR	Luisa	Paul Warren
johnroberge	Luisa Badaracco (Luisa)	pavlos
Joshua Paris	Madeline Parker	Pavlos Pissios
Julie James	Maggie Hoey	Pavlos Pissios (pavlos)
Julie Young (Julie's Awesome iPhone)	Margo Cox	phil dawicki (eleana)
Julie's Awesome iPhone	Maria Surina	Phone 1 (16177302423)
juneharris	Mariah Nobrega	Phone 2 (16305366747)
Kaitlin Robinson	Marianna Yang	Phone 3 (16172124461)
Karen Lurie	Marney Krupat	Phone 4 (16179357824)
Kari Buys	Martin Fishkin	Pranav Bahl
Kate Silbaugh	Mary Ellen	Rachel Sater
Katharine Garvey	Mary Ellen Normen (Mary Ellen)	Rachel Swanson
Kathleen Conti	Mary Minott	Riley Bellao
Kathy Defaut	Maureen Shaw	Rob Blanton
katy moy	Maurene Doherty	Rosemary Stoner (Rosemary's iPhone 8)
Keira Flynn-Carson	Max.G	Rosemary's iPhone 8
Kelly Lamb (klamb)	Maya Kimbro	Rusty Browder
Kelly Quaye (Gael)	Maya Kimbro (Maya Kimbro)	Sara Scott
Kelly Tynan	MC (Margo Cox)	Sarah
Kim Loscalzo	Melissa	Sarah Cuddihy's iPhone
klamb	Melissa Barden (Melissa)	Sarah Stanton
Kristen Van Dyke	Melissa London	seth michaelson
kyle tompkins	Michael D'Onofrio	sharon abramowitz (sharonabramowitz)
Kyle Williams	Michelle An (tt N)	sharonabramowitz
Kyssandra Perkowski	Mickey Shih (Mickey Shih's 6S iPhone)	shelley
Lauren Cecchini	Mickey Shih's 6S iPhone	Sheryl Steeves
Lauren Finucane	Mies Boet	Siena Zhao
Leigh Youmans	Mike Sandman (AC) (Advisory Committee)	Siew Tin Gan
Lina	Mike Toffel	SJ You
Lindsay (Lindsay Asselin)		

Sophie
sophiegorlin
Stacey
Stacey Kottis (Stacey)
Stephanie Liu
Steve Simolaris
Steven
Steven Ehrenberg (Steven)
Steven Kanis
Susan DiPesa
Susan Granoff
Susan Rosser (Charlotte :))

Susan Wolf Ditzkoff (desktop)
Suzanne Federspiel
SZ (Siena Zhao)
Talmadge Nardi
Tanya Paris
Teresa Gallo-Toth
Thintz
Tim Hintz (thintz)
Tomoko Ouchi (Lina)
tt N
Victoria Cavanaugh
Vikki-Lynn Castellano

Wendy
wendyames
wendysheridanames (wendyames)
Wesley Chin
Xavier Schoen
Yaakov Jaffe
Yayun (Wendy) Wang (Wendy)
yhayashi
Youly Diamanti-Karanou
yuki hayashi (yhayashi)
Zev's iPhone ☐ 📱.

Attachment B
June 8, 2020 Public Meeting Zoom Attendance Log

Alissa
Ben Birnbaum
Ben Lummis
Bobbie Knable
Biscotto
Carla Benka
Cliff Brown
David Lescohier
Dennis Doughty
Desktop
Fred Levitan
Garry Boyce
gus costa
Harry Friedman
Janet Gelbart

Janet Kelley
John VanScoyoc
Jonathan Golden
juneharris
Kate Silbaugh
Kim Loscalzo
Leora Faiber
maria kalaitzidis
Mariah Nobrega
Mark A Gray Jr
Mark Levy
Marlene Goncalves
Martha Recht
Mary Ellen
Matt King
Michael Herdeg
Mike Toffel
NATHAN's iPad
Padmaja Raman
Paul Warren
sarah Kitterman

Susan WD (desktop)
Suzanne Federspiel
Teena
Wendy Wang