

TRANSCRIPT OF RECORDED MINUTES
OF
THE METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WORKSHOP/BUSINESS/EXECUTIVE SESSION

OF
MAY 22, 2019

SUBMITTED FOR THE APPROVAL OF:

THE METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

AND

THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

“AN OPEN MEETING ADVANTAGE FOR THE COMMUNITY OF METHUEN”

RECORDED BY:
MARTHA SIROIS, PUBLIC RECORDER

TRANSCRIPT OF RECORDED MINUTES
METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
WORKSHOP/BUSINESS/EXECUTIVE SESSION

May 22, 2019

Workshop/Business/Executive Session of the Methuen School Committee was held at Methuen High School, Media Center, and was posted for 6:30PM

CALL TO ORDER AND ATTENDANCE:

ROLL CALL

Robert F. Vogler (P)
Susan M. Nicholson (P)
Nicholas DiZoglio, Vice Chairperson (NP) arrived to meeting at 6:32PM
Jana DiNatale (NP)
Dennis D.J. Deeb, Secretary (P)
Jana Zanni Pesce (P)
Mayor James P. Jajuga, Chairperson (NP)

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Robert F. Vogler
Susan M. Nicholson
Nicholas DiZoglio, Vice Chairperson arrived to meeting at 6:32PM
Dennis D.J. Deeb, Secretary
Jana Zanni Pesce

MEMBERS NOT IN ATTENDANCE:

Jana DiNatale
Mayor James P. Jajuga, Chairperson

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Brandi L. Kwong, Interim Superintendent of Schools
Ian Gosselin, Business Administrator
Martha Sirois, Public Recorder

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ATTENDANCE:

Secretary Deeb-called this Workshop/Business/Executive Session to order at 6:30PM with a quorum of members in attendance, and listed above.

Flag Salute

Member Deeb turned the meeting over to Vice Chairperson Nicholas DiZoglio at 6:32pm. Member Deeb also asked that it be noted Member DiNatale is out of town and unable to attend tonight's meeting.

Acceptance of the Agenda

MOTION: Member Vogler moved to accept the agenda as presented
Member Nicholson seconded the motion to approve as presented

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: 5-0-0 APPROVED

Public Participation-None

1. FY'20 Proposed Budget

Superintendent-She has a concrete budget number from the Mayor's office that she would like to give to the Committee tonight. She has an updated memo of budget cuts because of that concrete number. She included an updated memo in their packet to reflect the Mayor's number. The number she was given by the Mayor was \$80,950,000.00, which is a 3.8% increase over last year. The school's budget is \$81,864,472.00. Her team came up with a list of positions to eliminate in this budget to get to the Mayor's number. That list is in the memo in their packet. She feels at this point the 3.8% increase is reasonable. It is the will of the committee to decide how they will move forward with this process and to decide what budget number they would want to move forward with for the Public hearing and for the Committee vote on the 28th.

Member Vogler-Is the original budget based on the Governor's budget?

Superintendent-It is her understanding everyone is working with the Governor's budget. The Senate is voting on the budget this week and she is hopeful they will receive more funds. She should hear about any additional Chapter 70 money in the next few weeks. The list in the memo tonight is what they would work on to bring back if they receive additional funds.

Member Vogler-Have they received any money from the Medicaid reimbursement?

Superintendent-No

Member Vogler-Have they received any Comcast money?

Mr. Gosselin-No

Member Vogler-That is over \$425,000.00 they were told they were going to get.

Superintendent-She went through the memo and spoke about each position on the list to be cut. She does not want to eliminate any teacher positions or the classrooms sizes will go to 30.

Member Vogler-He complemented the Superintendent on the great job she did on the budget book. The Special Education budget was reduced from 2.2 million to 1.7 million. Is that being reduced too much?

Superintendent-Gina Bozek went back to the table with her administrators. They have had some reductions in the out placement of students. They do not have control over transportation, contracted services and out of district tuitions. If they make any more changes they will be out of compliance.

Member Vogler-With the lunch monitors eliminated, how will this be resolved?

Superintendent-She will work on the K-8 schedules with the administrators.

Member Vogler-Can the lunch monitors come out of the Food Service revolving account?

Mr. Gosselin-No they cannot.

Superintendent-The Committee has voiced over the past two months that the priorities would be to put the K-8 administrators and the maintenance back into the budget if they received additional funding.

Member Nicholson-She commends the Superintendent and her team. The budget format was very helpful and there was clarity and back up for these positions and reasons how they could off-set some of these costs. She would also like to inquire about the half million dollars that the Mayor promised they would get last year for this year. She hopes they will receive at least some of that money. She looked at the Executive summary and was able to identify 9 of the requests that the Superintendent and her staff were making as part of the increase in the budget. The concern of keeping classrooms below 30 was foremost and she appreciates that, as well as her colleagues, staff, parents and students. She is sorry to see they need to pull back on the K-8 administrators. She is hopeful that will change. She likes that the cost of the new reading program will be \$120,000.00. The District has not invested in a comprehensive reading program in 12 years. This is a big regret that she has that it took 12 years. It is a compelling justification for that part of the budget for instructional materials. You justified the purchase of the Chromebooks over 4 years by not purchasing the Eureka Math workbooks which have an annual cost between 170-180 thousand dollars. She regrets the cuts of the 4 K-8 administrators. She looks forward on a plan of how the work that the Superintendent envisioned them doing is going to be handled. If the Marsh resource room position is being eliminated how will those issues be addressed?

Superintendent-That is part of the conversations Gina Bozek is having with her team.

Member Nicholson-The resource room tutoring was not needed because there was a teacher in the classroom?

Superintendent-The student needed a specific reading program and the teacher in the classroom is certified in that specific program.

Member Nicholson-With the MHS guidance counselor position eliminated, what would the student/counselor ratio be?

Superintendent-There is a new position being filled that will be grant funded that will bring the number of councilors from 10 to 11. They would have about 200 students each which is a good recommendation.

Member Nicholson-What maintenance will not be done with the maintenance cuts?

Superintendent-It is too early to tell.

Mr. Gosselin-They are using this year's money to get done as much as possible.

Member Nicholson-With the bottom line number given by the Mayor, what shape will they be in for contract obligations?

Superintendent-She believes they will meet all of their obligations.

Member Deeb-Are this past year's psychologist positions continuing on the grant?

Superintendent-Which positions are you asking about?

Member Deeb-Specifically Mr. Crocker's position.

Superintendent-John Crocker, David Lacroix and the position in the Bridge program at the high school, she received confirmation from the State that those positions will all roll over. She can allow those positions to stay in the grant as long as the grant is awarded to them.

Member Deeb-The grant has been awarded for FY'20?

Superintendent-Yes

Member Deeb-Are they funding staff for the Medicaid billing in this budget? They had been paying a part-time person to do the billing.

Mr. Gosselin-They are not paying anyone additional to do the Medicaid billing.

Member Deeb-Are they paying anyone to do the billing?

Mr. Gosselin-It is the staff that is doing it. They are not paying them additional money to do it. It is part of their responsibilities to file the report. When there was no bookkeeper in the Special Education office, they were paying a part time person to file the report. They have replaced the bookkeeper and eliminated the part time position.

Superintendent-With the onset of Infinite Campus Mr. Lussier has worked with Gina Bozek to make the reporting more streamlined and that has helped with the amount of work that goes into filing the report.

Member Deeb-Will they be receiving a breakdown of personnel salaries? It was not included in this budget. He would like the breakdown to be all employees and their salary for FY'19 and FY'20.

Mr. Gosselin-He will get that information to the Committee.

Member Zanni Pesce-She thanked the Superintendent and her team. To have a second pass at this budget and have received a number from the Mayor and have an amended budget given to them without all the panic and chaos, they really appreciate that. She is thankful the BCBAs were left in the budget. She feels it is a safety piece and would have had a hard time supporting this budget without them. Have they received any Comcast money?

Mr. Gosselin-They have not seen any Comcast or Medicaid money. They have met with the Mayor and asked for a status on this but have not received anything.

Member DiZoglio-Point of Information the Mayor said he would have a number for the Committee tonight.

Member Zanni Pesce-Have we received that?

Mr. Gosselin-No we have not. He did mention this to the CAFO when they met last week.

Member Zanni Pesce-If they do receive those additional funds, she would like to see more teachers than administrators. She would like to see the classroom numbers down to 25 students per classroom and that may help with not needing as many administrators. She doesn't have a lot of experience with budgets which is why she would like to see the positions listed so she can match the numbers to the budget by position. She would also like page numbers on the budget.

Member DiZoglio-He loves this budget. It is smaller, cleaner and neater. He is not giving up on this budget yet. They were promised half a million dollars that was from the Comcast account that was dedicated to education and the Medicaid money that they signed a contract for, and they have not received a dime of that money. Every year they hope that they get the money they are promised. He does not want to impact jobs, teachers or classrooms. He would like to go back to the City with the original budget and push the boundary.

Mr. Gosselin-The Mayor's number of 80.9 million dollars is more than he expected. He doesn't want to push the boundary.

Member DiZoglio-He worries about the grant funded positions and what would happen if they did not get the grant funds to pay for these positions. They are getting less and less money in these grants. He would like Sean Cronin and the new CAFO to come to a meeting and introduce themselves and explain their rolls.

Superintendent-She will invite Sean Cronin to attend the next meeting. The CAFO does not officially start until July 1st.

Member DiZoglio-He would also like to discuss the Capital Improvement plan at a future meeting.

Superintendent-They do not have the official chargeback numbers yet so they are going with what they had last year.

Member DiZoglio-With the new chargeback agreement they have he thought the chargebacks were locked in every year.

Superintendent-The agreement is locked in but the actual number they get charged back is not locked in. They are using last year's number and that is what they have used in the past.

Superintendent-Is she posting the \$81,864,472 as the budget or is she posting \$80,954,540?

Member Zanni Pesce-She asked the Superintendent if she is comfortable going forward with the number they were given from the Mayor?

Superintendent-Yes she is comfortable. She thought the number would be less. They need to come up with a plan for the next 3-5 years to bring the budget up to where it should be. She has worked here for 17 years and every year something has been lost out of the budget and they keep doing more and more at their jobs. She has a great staff but there is going to be a breaking point. This year they have put some of those supports back into place. If more money comes in from the State she will fight for that money and the Mayor understands that. If education money comes to the City it has to go towards education.

MOTION: Member Zanni Pesce motioned to move forward with the Mayor's Budget amount of \$80,954,540.00

Member Deeb seconded the motion

DISCUSSION:

Member Vogler-He would like added that this amount will not totally fulfill the needs currently of the system.

Member Zanni Pesce-Anyone watching this meeting would know that if anyone tried to say to them "hey you accepted this budget and they thought it was great and didn't need any more money" that would be disproved by watching this meeting.

Member Deeb-He respects what Member Vogler is saying and maybe a substitute motion is in order but his concern is attaching language to a number. He has never seen that happen before and thinks it may not be procedurally correct.

Member DiZoglio-They also need to take into consideration the money they were promised in FY'19 and it is now FY20.

Member Vogler-He would like to do a friendly amendment to add in the K-8 Administrators and make the Budget number \$81,400,000.00. He feels very strongly that this will make a statement that these are important positions. He feels they need to do this to make a point.

Member Zanni Pesce-She went on the record and still feels the same way that if there is extra money that comes in, she would like to see it go to teachers and not administrators. She doesn't think they need to make a point. They need to say they have leadership in place right now that is telling the Committee this is okay, it is not perfect but they can work with this number. They need to put trust in that judgement and go forward and not cause chaos for no reason.

Member Vogler did not make a Friendly Amendment.

ROLL CALL

Robert F. Vogler (NO)

Susan M. Nicholson (NO)

Nicholas DiZoglio, Vice Chairperson (NO)

Jana DiNatale (NP)

Dennis D.J. Deeb, Secretary (YES)
Jana Zanni Pesce (YES)
Mayor James P. Jajuga, Chairperson (NP)

VOTE: 2-3-0 MOTION FAILED

MOTION: Member Vogler motioned to move forward with the Budget amount of \$81,390,000.00
Member Nicholson seconded the motion

DISCUSSION:

Member DiZoglio-They should leave the discretion to the Superintendent of how to spend the additional funds. If it is for administrators or any of the other 5 line items.

ROLL CALL

Robert F. Vogler (YES)
Susan M. Nicholson (YES)
Nicholas DiZoglio, Vice Chairperson (YES)
Jana DiNatale (NP)
Dennis D.J. Deeb, Secretary (NO)
Jana Zanni Pesce (NO)
Mayor James P. Jajuga, Chairperson (NP)

VOTE: 3-2-0 MOTION APPROVED

Member Deeb-He does not support Member DiZoglio's comment about leaving the discretion up to the Superintendent to spend the additional \$440,000.00. Their responsibility as a Committee is to vote the line item budget and it would concern him to give any person that discretion. It is their responsibility as a Committee to give direction.

Member DiZoglio-There are 7 areas that they cut. If any of these are the Superintendent's top priority, she should be able to pick those over the K-8 Administrators. That should be at the Superintendent's discretion.

Member Deeb-He doesn't think they can do that. They have to approve a line item budget.

Mr. Gosselin-He is hearing the Committee say that if the additional \$440,000.00 is approved they would like that money to go into professional salaries specifically for the 4 administrator positions. If they want to do something different with that money they will bring it before the Committee.

Member Deeb-This budget that they just voted on is a 4.9% increase and he feels that is way too much to ask the taxpayers for.

2. Budget Transfers-Approval (if needed)-NONE

Executive Session

MOTION: Member Deeb motioned to go into Executive Session Pursuant to 1. M.G.L. c. 30A, Section 21 (a)(3) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigation position of the public body and the chair so declares-Unit B, C, D, Custodian and Nurses Negotiations. 2. Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, Section 21 (a) (2) To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel-Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent and all other nonunion personnel. 3. With the workshop/business session completed, we will not reconvene from Executive Session.

Member Vogler seconded the motion

ROLL CALL

Robert F. Vogler (YES)

Susan M. Nicholson (YES)

Nicholas DiZoglio, Vice Chairperson (YES)

Jana DiNatale (NP)

Dennis D.J. Deeb, Secretary (YES)

Jana Zanni Pesce (YES)

Mayor James P. Jajuga, Chairperson (NP)

VOTE 5-0-0

**Respectfully submitted,
Martha Sirois, Public Recorder
Methuen Public Schools**