

TRANSCRIPT OF RECORDED MINUTES

OF

THE METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

WORKSHOP/BUSINESS MEETING

OF

APRIL 24, 2017

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

MS
8/22/17

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METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
WORKSHOP/BUSINESS MEETING

APRIL 24, 2017

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

ROLL CALL

Mr. Dennis D.J. Deeb (P)
Mr. Robert F. Vogler, Secretary (P)
Ms. Lynne Hajjar Kumm, Vice Chairperson (P)
Ms. Joyce C. Campagnone (N)
Mr. Nicholas DiZoglio (P)
Ms. Jana DiNatale (N)
Mayor Stephen Zanni, Chairperson (P)

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr. Dennis D.J. Deeb
Mr. Robert F. Vogler, Secretary
Ms. Lynne Hajjar Kumm, Vice Chairperson
Mr. Nicholas DiZoglio
Mayor Stephen Zanni, Chairperson

MEMBERS NOT IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms. Joyce C. Campagnone
Ms. Jana DiNatale

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs. Judith Scannell, Superintendent of Schools
Mr. Ian Gosselin, Business Administrator
Ms. Martha Sirois, Public Recorder

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ATTENDANCE:

Mayor Stephen N. Zanni called this Business Session to order at 6:30 p.m. with a quorum of members in attendance, and listed above.

MOTION: Mr. Vogler motioned to accept the agenda as presented
Ms. Hajjar Kumm seconded the motion to approve as presented.

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: 5-0-0 APPROVED

2. Ameresco School Project-Approval:

Superintendent-This past Thursday she sat with Bruce Stella, Mayor Zanni and Ameresco Representatives. The Business Manager, Ian Gosselin was on vacation and did not sit-in on this meeting. They went over many items and this meshes with the CPI Plan that the School Sub-Committee members, Nick DiZoglio, Robert Vogler and Joyce Camagnone worked very hard putting together. Bruce Stella spent a lot of time looking over the priority list and they discussed what was most needed in order of preference for the schools. Bruce and Ameresco did many walk throughs of the buildings. Ameresco came about a few years back and they did a fieldtrip in every building and that is when the process started. They had an issue with D.E.S.E (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) but are now in a good place and trying to move on. The Superintendent introduced Ed Lepore and Bob Larochele.

Mr. Lepore introduced himself. He is a senior account executive and project manager for Ameresco. Ameresco has done several audits of the city and school buildings. They did a Preliminary Energy Assessment and put together a report for the City and the School Department. The School Department decided to eliminate some of projects from the Scope of Work and include others which were priority items on the Capital Improvement Plan. They made the adjustments and created an Investment Grade Audit. The project as it stands is about 2.7 Million Dollars. This is a self funded project. Energy savings from the Energy Conservation Measures is what pays for these Capital Improvements. Mr. Lepore went on to list the items that are listed in the project. (see attached handout) The annual energy savings is \$235,000.00. It has an 11 year payback and fits into the terms of the Massachusetts General Law Chapter 25. Mr. Vogler-The roof at the Marsh is a major issue. There is also major issues at the CGS with their roof? Can we include the CGS roofing?

Mr. Lepore-To fund another roof would be difficult, however it is not out of the picture. When the engineer goes out and updates the energy audit we will be looking at any other potential energy savings measures to fortify the project and report back to the School Department and the City.

Mr. Vogler-How long will that take?

Mr. Lepore-3-4 weeks.

Mr. Vogler-Will this change the bonding amount?

Mr. Lepore-Yes. They put out all the measures and get RFP's and put the figures together. Generally it comes under budget. That money would go back to the schools since this is an open book project. With the additional money they may be able to get other Capital Improvement projects added.

Mr. Vogler-At the Timony School there are HVAC issues. Is this included in the project?

Mr. Lepore-No it isn't. There is intergrated system energy work and that would help balance the existing HVAC systems.

Mayor Zanni-At the end of the first Ameresco Project there was money left so they were able to fix the ice rink roof which cost \$700,000.00. At the end of this project if there is money left, we can add to this list. The previous project lasted about 18 months. If we get this project started

this summer it would be around the same time frame. The interest is around 3 percent and it may even be less.

Mr. Vogler-There are no funds coming out of the School Department? It is going to be a Bond for the City so the City will be picking up the general government like the MHS Bond. So we will not be paying for the roof at the Marsh or any of these projects? At no time will anyone call the Business Administrator and ask him to write a check or make a transfer for thousands of dollars out of the school budget.

Mr. Lepore-The guaranteed energy saving, the credits coming out of your existing utility budget is what is making the debt service payments.

Mr. Vogler-He is very concerned that the CGS roof is not being repaired. Is there any way the CGS roof repairs can be added to this project.

Mayor Zanni-We will see what the cost will be.

Mr. Deeb-This looks like a great plan. His concern is the numbers. If this is recommended to City Council and they approve it and take out a Bond, it was mentioned that the Bond would be funded with the annual savings from the energy. Will we see chargebacks from the City? He would like to know exactly how it is going to affect the school budget.

Superintendent-The chargeback document is outdated and it has to be redone. She looks to the School Committee to work this out with the City. There is a sub committee but it has been difficult for them to get together.

Mr. DiZoglio-You spoke about debt services. Is that going to be coming out of the School Budget? Will the charge backs increase to cover the cost?

Mayor-You have to look at the credits. The City will be taking out the loan so the credits will come back to the City.

Mr. DiZoglio-Will the City be paying for any overhead cost for this project?

Mayor-He wants to have the City put out the Bond and have the schools benefit with the repairs. The energy credits will come back to the City.

Mr. DiZoglio-He is looking at the proposed Ameresco repairs and he is also looking through the 5 proposed Capital Improvement plans and only sees 2 items on the new Ameresco plan that were on these Capital Improvement plans. It is 1.5 Million Dollars less than the Committee was looking for and it is all different repairs. The Committee had originally looked at a 5 year plan.

Mayor-Bruce Stella sat down and went through this list. The Mayor feels this is a process that can be completed in 18 months. The majority of work will be completed. The City can only afford so much. He has to look at the overall City finances. If they can accomplish some things now it will be good for the School System.

Mr. DiZoglio-The list is growing and if we push these items off another 18 months what else is going to happen. He wants to ask the Business Administration are these the necessary needs right now or would the Capital Improvement plan that we discussed and voted on 6-1 be the main priority?

Mr. Gosselin-He thinks the focus on the plan you are currently looking at is more on energy savings. Our group focused on the needs and not the energy piece. It is looking at it from 2 different angles.

Mr. DiZoglio-So it is an A and B plan? He doesn't see anything in this plan about the chillers or duct work.

Mr. Lepore-There is duct work being done at the Marsh.

Mr. DiZoglio-He sees there is \$350,000. needed at the CGS. \$ 315,000. needed at Timony and another \$170,000. needed at the Tenney. It seems like we are focusing on the Marsh. He sees a few things being done at the CGS, Tenney and Timony. He would like to know why they are just centralizing on the Marsh? The CGS roof needs it the most.

Mr. Lepore- We focused on the roof because it is a Capital Improvement need. The energy savings was able to get a roof that has a long payback and that the DOER would approve.

Mr. DiZoglio-What is the life span on this roof?

Mr. Lepore-The life span on the roof is 20 years. You could expect 25-30 years.

Mr. DiZoglio-He is not sure where he stands on this but he would like to speak to Bruce Stella. Committee Member DiNatale was also interested in voting and listening to some of what was said at this meeting and have an input as well. They worked on a Capital Improvement plan that was approved. It was based off of necessary needs. He understands the energy needs but he is not sure if sacrificing another 18 months is going to help in the long run.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-She is happy to see the dehumidifying system at the ice rink is included. In the fall they were told Ameresco was not a fit for the schools because of D.E.S.E. She would also like to hear about a parallel strategy. She needs to hear what the change was with D.E.S.E. If there are shortfalls with the energy savings what happens then? She is also concerned about charge backs and how this will affect them. She needs more information to feel comfortable with this plan.

Superintendent-The biggest issue with D.E.S.E. was the windows. We wanted to replace the windows at the Marsh and they pulled back so we removed any window replacement from the plan. This is all about the energy cost. There will be no check cut from the School Department to Ameresco. Working on the Budget the past few months we discussed this and they discussed this last year. She is looking at ways to get things done for the School Department. The City does not have a healthy budget and she is looking for ways to refurbish the buildings and move forward. This is a piece that is positive in that direction. This is not in her budget and can not be in her budget.

Mayor-He understands the Committee's concerns. They will get an engineer study done possibly by the next meeting in May and take a look at the plan again. It would be impossible to get everything done. He has to look at the tax rate and everything that goes with that. There is the possibility of a plan in place that will meet the needs. Bruce Stella was in the meetings and he thought these were the immediate needs that could get us by for a period of time. It is not a bandaid approach it is a good approach. Having the dehumidify done in the ice rink will help bring revenue all year. They will come back to the next meeting with more information. This will put a lot of things to rest.

Mr. Vogler-If this is all based on energy saving why are we not doing any solar?

Mr. Lepore-We have gone back and forth with this. We could look at solar at MHS because it has a new roof. If we put a new roof on the Marsh we could look at solar panels there as well. You do not want to put solar panels on an old roof.

Mr. Lepore-Once this is approved we can get out the RFP's and see how much money we can save budget wise and apply those saving to other potential measures.

Mr. Lepore-This is an open book project and fully transparent.

Mr. DiZoglio-There are a lot of exterior panels that need to be replaced. Have you looked at any of the siding?

Mr. Lepore-In Massachusetts under Chapter 25a this is considered an Energy Performance Contract. There has to be energy savings associated with each measure. This is not for brick and mortar initiatives. They would not allow that.

Mr. DiZoglio-Where would the track repairs fall under?

Mayor-That would be under the Bond. Will Ameresco be getting some additional figures for us so we can get this going?

Mr. Lepore-Now that we have come up with a project that is self funding according to the law, the next step would be for us to engage in an Energy Savings Agreement. We would then put all of these measures out for RFP's. We would then get all the information back to you and you would decide which contractor you wish to use and then we would go into construction. The energy savings starts the day we start construction. It will be monitored and verified every year to prove the savings. If it does not come to fruition Ameresco will cut you a check. The savings over the 15 year term is about 4.5 Million Dollars. That is what is funding this for you.

Mr. DiZoglio-Where did the figure 2.7 Million Dollars come from?

Mr. Lepore-We get prices from contractors based upon a roof's square footage.

Mr. DiZoglio-Let's say this gets approved June 1st. When will the project start?

Mr. Lepore-The lighting and energy management systems would start right away. The roof is the one we need to get on. It has to be done in the summer.

MOTION: Mr. DiZoglio moved to table the Ameresco School Project approval until the next Business Meeting and to have Bruce Stella, Ian Gosselin and Ameresco at the meeting.

Mr. Deeb seconded the motion to approve as presented.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. DiZoglio-He would like Bruce Stella, Ian Gosselin and Ameresco to be at the next Business Meeting for further discussions.

VOTE: 5-0-0 APPROVED

Superintendent-The next Business Meeting is May 8th. She will try and get the sub committee together before that and they can talk to Bruce Stella. She introduced Paul Trussell, Ice Rink Manager, to speak on the dehumidification at the ice rink.

Paul Trussell-He spoke about the importance of getting this dehumidifier in the ice rink. He also spoke about renting the ice for the entire year.

Mr. Deeb-What is the lifespan of a dehumidifier?

Mr. Lepore-You should get 15-20 years out of it.

3. Preliminary Budget Presentation for FY'18

Recess 7:26PM

Meeting Resumes 7:29PM

Superintendent read the Budget Message in the Budget Packet (handed out to members at this meeting). She also read continuing topics of conversation with School Committee throughout the year. These are objective that have come from the School Committee.

1. Continue policy to not charging user fees to participate in sports and fine arts, including band.
2. Pursue in-district programs for students who are currently placed in out-of-district programs.
3. Pursue all opportunities to reduce energy expenses.
4. Continue policy of not charging user fees for bus transportation. This is where she is going to be looking for support from the Committee. As they go through the budget book, these are the pieces that can kill a budget. Just by eliminating 2 bus runs, was a savings of \$100,000.00 in this budget. When she says eliminating, they talked about the tier transportation, she can not have buses stopping at every door. She can not have bus routes re-routed for bus stops when a parent calls. We always look at safety first. By constantly changing the routes it has added up. She is looking for Committee support when she has to say "no" I can not do door-door stops" and "no, I can not move a bus stop". Parents do not like their students having to walk a distance to a bus stop but we check all the safety. She goes out with Sgt. Aiello. Colleen McCarthy and Ian Gosselin go out with Sgt. Aiello to check the bus stops.
5. Implement strategy to best serve education needs of transient students.
6. Support the Mayor's initiative to control the cost of Health Insurance.
7. Pursue in-district vocational programing that may interest students that may be considering regional vocational schools. We will be adding Biotechnology and Robotics this coming school year.
8. Continue to expand AP offerings.
9. Continue to support CPAC and its initiatives.
10. Pursue opportunities to operate the ice rink all year.
11. Make sure all school facilities are maintained with green products.
12. Work with the City to propose Ameresco Project.
13. Make sure that non-school organizations pay all expenses related to use of facilities and grounds.
14. Expand use of iPad technology in the classrooms.
15. Expand use of Chromebooks in classrooms.
16. Maintain quality of facility and grounds maintenance.
17. No-fee kindergarten

18. Academic summer school for grades 7-12.
19. Continue to expand foreign language in grade 8
20. Expand enhanced enrichment in the upper schools
21. Implement Innovation Lab at MHS for grades K-12.
22. Implement Robotics Lab at MHS for grades K-12
23. Expand the Family Resource Center located at Ditson Place
24. Expand the van fleet for district-wide use.
25. Purchase box truck to accommodate band program

Superintendent also read the Organizational Standards of Excellence. She is very proud of her Management team. This district is now the 13th largest district out of 351. The team does a great job.

Business Administrator Ian Gosselin presented the 2018 Budget.

Superintendent-She is available all week if any Committee member would like to speak with her. Last year's Budget was rough. The Mayor made it clear that the next 2 years are going to be very difficult before we can start coming out of this. No teacher or PA layoffs. They had to look at positions differently. Positions have been changed. Some positions have become obsolete in some areas. We are constantly looking at things differently for the growing and needs of our students. This Budget has been a work in progress since last August. We knew what we were walking into.

Mayor-It is important that the Committee make appointments to come see you. He appreciates what they have done with the transportation. His understanding is that it is State Law that if you live less than 1.5 miles from your school we are not required to provide transportation. Are they looking at that?

Superintendent-Yes they are and it depends on the grade level.

Mr. Deeb-He thanked the administration for being pro-active. This is what this Committee has asked for. He commends them for being proactive with the positions no longer needed. What is last years number verse this year's number? He is looking at the Budget Summary.

Mr. Gosselin-The second section of the summary breaks it down. \$66,806,000. plus transportation will be the operating budget. The next section shows what the minimal net school spending must be. We are about 1.3 Million Dollars over the required amount.

Mr. Deeb-Is this more or less than we were asking for last year?

Mr. Gosselin-It is lower. 2.2 percent decrease.

Mr. Deeb-They talk about goals and he knows they are not always achievable. We have set goals for class sizes. What are the class size goals for MHS?

Superintendent-We like to keep them below 20 students. She will get those figures from Principal Barden.

Mr. Vogler-He commends the staff. This budget will be sustainable for the school system. You also had a large number of retirees that helped this budget. This is a tight budget and he hopes the Mayor and the City Council is happy. It reflects a major cost savings across the board. He

would like the Superintendent to give the Committee a list of the consolidations. He also hopes they can do some work with the chargebacks.

Superintendent-She will get him the information he is requesting but it will not be right away. She needs to meet with staff about the changes before she releases that information.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-Is the Budget Memo available online? She feels that families need to see this. She does not think everyone understands what level of education and services we provide that the families are only paying for as part of their property tax and not another cent. She is confident they will meet the goals. It is amazing all the hard work that is done behind these goals. Every one of those 25 items touches a student. A band member, an athlete and a student that needs special services. Every one of these goals helps make our schools better and our District better. She agrees with Mr. Vogler, she would like to see the consolidation list. She is also concerned about the chargebacks. The agreement has expired. She wants to see a productive and respectful conversation about chargebacks with the sub-committee and the City auditor. She would like to see a chargeback number that is best for both sides.

Mr. DiZoglio-He appreciates the team's hard work. He is concerned about next year. We are asking for 1.5 Million Dollars less. With the chargeback increase he wants to make sure they are not putting themselves in a financial hit next year. Does the Superintendent see this Budget affecting the following school year?

Superintendent-They spoke about this in great length. We always walk on eggshells with our Special Education. You never know from month to month what could possibly happen. The Mayor said if anything out of the ordinary happens I can bring it to his attention and we can see what can be done. We know how high that number is for all the right reasons, we are here to educate all of our students.

Mr. DiZoglio-He would also like to see the consolidations. He would also like to see the eliminated positions and any new positions that will be added. He would also like to see the positions that become open. He asked the Mayor when they will see a chargeback document. Mayor-We are working on a new agreement.

Mr. DiZoglio-He would like to get a meeting together for the Chargeback Committee. He would like to meet around the 8th to have it for the mid-May meeting. He asked the Mayor if they will have any chargeback information by the May 2nd meeting.

Mayor-He is going to have Tom Kelley and Ian Gosselin set up a meeting this week so he may have something for next week. He approves this 72 Million Dollar Budget. As a revenue source for our City we have 2 major projects. One of the projects will bring in 1 Million Dollars in permits and 1 Million Dollars in taxes. We also have 2 big companies getting ready to move into Methuen and he will announce that in June. He feels the Superintendent and her staff has done a tremendous job putting this together.

***ADJOURNMENT:**

With no further business to discuss at this Business Session, Mayor Zanni entertained a motion to conclude the Business Session for the evening at 8:14 pm.

MOTION: Ms. Hajjar Kumm moved to adjourn the Business Session at 8:14 pm.
Mr. Vogler seconded the motion

VOTE: 5-0-0 UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Sirois, Public Recorder

Methuen Public Schools