

TRANSCRIPT OF RECORDED MINUTES

OF

THE METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

BUDGET WORKSHOP SESSION

OF

MAY 12, 2016

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:

DEIDRE RUNGE, PUBLIC RECORDER

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METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
BUDGET WORKSHOP
May 12, 2016

This Workshop of the Methuen School Committee was held at the Central Administration Building, Conference Room and was posted for 5:45 PM.

ROLL CALL:

Mr. Dennis D.J. Deeb – NOT PRESENT (P)
Mr. Robert Vogler - P
Ms. Lynne Hajjar Kumm - P
Ms. Joyce Campagnone – P
Mr. Nicholas DiZoglio –P
Ms. Jana DiNatale - P
Mayor Stephen N. Zanni, Chairperson - P

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mayor Stephen Zanni, Chairperson
Ms. Lynne Hajjar Kumm, Vice Chairperson
Mr. Robert F. Vogler, Secretary
Ms. Jana DiNatale
Ms. Joyce C. Campagnone
Mr. Nicholas DiZoglio

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs. Judith Scannell, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Brandi Kwong, Assistant Superintendent
Ms. Gina Bozek, Director Student Services
Mr. Ian Gosselin, Business Administrator
Mr. Edward Lussier, Director Instructional Technology
Ms. Deidre Runge Public Recorder

CALL TO ORDER AND ATTENDANCE:

Mayor Stephen Zanni, Chairperson called this Workshop to order at 5:45 p.m. with a quorum of members in attendance, and listed above.

BUDGET DISCUSSION

Mayor – There was a chargeback agreement between the Superintendent and School Committee. The City had a different agreement so the Superintendent and I sat down and came up with the current agreement. Ms. Fawcett put a Committee in place to analyze the chargebacks. These numbers you have are actually true and based on the agreement you already have in place. There is 1.4 million in Health Insurance and Pension that cannot be changed. Classroom substitutes is at 600,000 this is very high and stipends are at \$164,000. The City had 190,000 in stipends but I got rid of all stipends on the City side now there is none.

Mr. Vogler – I talked to Jay Sullivan (DOE) and Mike Gilbert (MASC). Historically we have had a problem with chargebacks. We are going department by department. All I can tell you is that Jay Sullivan said “if it is directly school related” then we can be charged back.

Mayor – Come forth with a plan and we will look at it.

Mr. Vogler – We will request some detailed information from the City to see what each department does for us. We are also looking at other cities. Also I know you mentioned stipends but those are contractual issues.

Mayor – I know I am just bringing up the issue.

Mr. Vogler – If we are taking a 2 million dollar cut, hopefully the city is as well.

Mr. DiZoglio – Going from 71 million to 69 million is a big cut. It looks like we are underfunded.

Mayor – Last year we got Net School Spending and 1.3 million plus the penalty monies owed. We are not underfunded.

Mr. DiZoglio – We need to pump up to keep and or improve our schools levels. 75 million is what we need. We are looking at a capitol improvement plan for 4 million for our roofs and a new boiler at the Marsh.

Mayor – Ameresco will help with the ice rink.

Mr. DiZoglio – I wasn’t even talking about the ice rink.

Mayor – We have to look at a realist budget for the City. Some are on the fence.

Ms. Kumm – I was on the Committee and supported the chargeback agreement but I did not approve all of the extra’s they are receiving and the pay hikes that are here. Why did we build a start of the art school to stay at Level 3? I agree with Mr. DiZoglio we saw 72 million plus the money needed for special education. The Superintendent came in with a huge budget and we started cutting. We need to remember Methuen is diverse and needs are more. We have unbelievably talented students. We need to do this for them too. There is nothing frivolous in this budget.

Mr. DiZoglio – A Capital Improvement Plan is needed. I don’t want any student to walk in and see a row of seats missing in the Tenney Auditorium....

Mr. Vogler – The Capital agreement you asked us to give you was a 5 year plan. CGS Kitchen can be condemned. All our schools are old. We were always told not to bring a plan forward now we have major projects that need to be done.

Mayor – I agree with you on that they should have been brought forward.

Dr. Kwong – During our MTSS (Massachusetts Tiered Support System) meetings they always speak of the high school “How well our high school is performing” “How far ahead of other districts we are”... She explained the absurdity of how they rank levels. She translated what the handouts she gave them meant “Our CPI is 96.1, our grad rate increased 9%, our dropout rate (1.3%) has gone down continuously 3% in 3 years and we are still Level 3”. We are outperforming our graduation rate and drop out rate.

Ms. Kumm – We are below the average for dropout rate?

Dr. Kwong – yes so you can see our frustration.

Mayor – How far away from Level 2?

Dr. Kwong – It’s a 4 year calculation. It’s a special education students and ELL sub groups we are focusing on. We are constantly improving.

Mayor – How far away from reaching with our subgroups?

Dr. Kwong – I can’t tell you many of these schools are going to PARC so our comparable school systems won’t be apples to apples.

Ms. Kumm – Are you able to tell us how the subgroups do elsewhere.

Dr. Kwong – Andover did not meet their needs in special education subgroups so they dropped a level. We have a large number of special education students.

Superintendent – We have to look at things differently. We cannot be compared.

Ms. Bozek – In 2014 Andover’s actual NSS was \$81,654,328 with a per pupil cost of \$15,185.

Superintendent – My point is we need to look at things clearly.

Ms. DiNatale – They target special education students.

Ms. Bozek – The students that will not receive a diploma.

Superintendent – We need to continue remediation. We have some great teachers in these rooms.

Ms. DiNatale – We should be targeting the curriculum and kids that are falling behind. I see soft discipline in these schools. Even with Deans I want to see that work better.

Superintendent – The law speaks to what we can do. I have 5 students at Methuen high School out but then I have to pay tutors, another add-on piece we didn’t even go with.

#1 As far as stipends they are all contractual. On top of these you are seeing a lot that comes out of grants. All stipends we can account for. Ms. DiNatale asked if I could look to add money for after school activities. We are looking at adding but all teachers contractually get \$30.00 per hour or a flat agreed upon rate.

#2 Sick day abuse we are working on. Every teacher in the district still gets 3 essential days according to contract. I can’t even ask why they take these days. You are looking at paid maternity, health sick time than you have to pay substitutes that become long term substitutes at more money.

#3 The technology piece was contractual we made 10 month employees 12 month employees with your approval.

Mr. Lussier – I came to you and you all approved my changes. They did not get raises just more hours.

Mayor – You don’t need them all year?

Ms. Kumm – Yes he does that is why as a Committee we approved his request.

Mr. Lussier – 3 out of 5 were 10 month employees and they went to 12 months. The summer months we are putting systems away than resetting up with the direction of the principals. I will be monitoring if they are not fully needed I will get back to you.

Mr. DiZoglio – What about the teaching positions listed?

Superintendent – these are the positions of non-renewals. We are confident it will not affect classroom teachers.

Ms. Kumm – I don’t see how that doesn’t affect students.

Superintendent – Last year we struggled with different Kindergarten numbers. The numbers are down so we can move those teachers. MHS is getting rid of home economics so we will have a place for those teachers. CGS enrollment is going down but Timony is booming out. Good think Timony Kindergarten numbers are down.

Ms. DiNatale – I cannot believe we are moving out teachers.

Superintendent – They are non performing teachers.

#4 Superintendent – I have not put the theater teacher back in but I am listening to my Committee and will be putting it back.

Dr. Kwong – we are restructuring programming.

Superintendent – we might be able to do with 2 more Program Assistants and we are looking at possibly 2 custodians’. We are committed and I would never impact the

students.

Mayor – Medicare is not included here in these figures.

Mr. Gosselin – We have never seen a dime of Medicaid monies.

Ms. Bozek – We are supposed to get anything over 500,000 but we have never got that money.

Mayor – I said that had to go back to you. You didn't get it?

Mr. Gosselin – No

Mayor – I will talk to Tom Kelly.

Mr. Gosselin – showed the Committee a breakdown of % increases for certain department in the City (Police 11.85 increase, DPW 13.37 increase...) and the MPS showed a -3% decrease

Mr. DiZoglio – did we get reimbursed for the snow money?

Mr. Gosselin – No

Mayor – If can find 500,000 and put another 300,000 in stabilization money towards the school budget what will that bring us to?

Mr. Gosselin – 70,118,817 which is still negative -1.7%.

Mr. Vogler – what about the 145,000 for circuit breaker the City owes us this year?

Mayor – He (City Auditor) was supposed to give you that money.

Mr. Gosselin – No we didn't get it and the 145,000 wasn't counting Medicaid.

Mr. Vogler – My view is I would go above the 71,330 million with special education needs and new positions we are looking at. I'd like to hear from Ms. Bozek about special education. I saw Woburn went up 4.4 million and they went from a level 2 to a level 3. Special education mandates have to be paid for or the state will audit and penalize us.

Ms. Bozek – Everyday I have students coming out of our list and others moving in. It's been a wash. It's frustrating. Schools are asked to do more and more with no funding. Parents want to move students to more intensive schools they try to use their insurance and are denied.

Mayor – Special education will be a 3 million increase?

Ms. Bozek – it is 2.5 million with today's figures.

Ms. DiNatale – What's the number we need to keep the schools where we are at.

Superintendent – It's the number we presented. That's the number the district can move forward in a positive direction. There were already 24 cuts last year. People that work out of the classrooms have taken on all that extra work. All these people are the Band-Aids holding this together. Would I of liked to add to K-8 of course, I can't do that. We had great ideas for technology, foreign language and advance in math. Dr. Kwong and I have been meeting. This is when we work different ideas and thoughts to add to the kids.

Ms. DiNatale – With special education numbers so high would programs being set up save us money?

Ms. Bozek – Yes we could but we have to look at ages, needs... but the students out placed are needed to be out placed. We work with students as long as we can. Some out placed won't take them unless they have a 1 on 1 bringing up our costs.

Mayor – I told the other departments to go line by line and make cuts. I told him (Mr. Kelly) to put it in the schools.

Superintendent – Will taxes go up because of schools?

Mayor – No

Mr. Vogler – I am sure the Mayor will fight for us.

Superintendent – Ms. Bozek is going to the state house to speak to unfunded mandates. Senator O'Connor Ives has been working on this piece.

Mr. DiZoglio – Do you think we can have a joint meeting with City Council?

Ms. Kumm – last year the Superintendent worked 1 on 1 with each Councilor and that worked well.

Superintendent – I will reach out to the Council to come wit with me so I can educate them about the state and federal mandates for special education that will impact our budget.

***ADJOURNMENT:**

With no further business to discuss at this Business Workshop, Mayor Zanni entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 PM.

MOTION: Mr. DiZoglio moved to adjourn this Business Session at 8:00 p.m.

Ms. Campagnone seconded the motion.

VOTE: 6-0-0 APPROVED

Respectfully submitted,
Deidre Runge, Public Recorder
Methuen Public Schools