

TRANSCRIPT OF RECORDED MINUTES

OF

THE METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

WORKSHOP SESSION

OF

May 23, 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:

MARTHA SIROIS, PUBLIC RECORDER

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METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
WORKSHOP SESSION
May 23, 2016

This Workshop of the Methuen School Committee was held at the Central Administration Building, Superintendent's Office and was posted for 6:30 PM.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mayor Stephen Zanni, Chairperson Present (P)
Ms. Lynne Hajjar Kumm, Vice Chairperson (P)
Mr. Robert F. Vogler, Secretary (P)
Mr. Dennis D.J. Deeb (P)
Ms. Jana DiNatale (P)
Ms. Joyce C. Campagnone (P)
Mr. Nicholas DiZoglio (Entered meeting at 7:16pm)

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs. Judith Scannell, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Brandi Kwong, Assistant Superintendent
Mr. Ian Gosselin, Business Administrator
Ms. Gina Bozek, Student Services Director
Ms. Martha Sirois, Public Recorder

CALL TO ORDER AND ATTENDANCE:

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

Budget

Mayor-He and the Superintendent met today and things are moving in a positive direction. The superintendent will go over everything we talked about today.

Superintendent-Last week we had our first meeting with Mr. Kelly and the Mayor. Our goal is not to cause financial stress on the City. She met with the Mayor today and he gave her his budget numbers.

She needed to make 1 Million Dollars in cuts. This is still a fluid work in progress. This is going to go on until the June 13th Business Meeting. She made the following cuts to the budget;

Supplies-\$9,000.00

Substitutes-\$42,000.00

14 vacant positions will not be filled

\$50,000.00-Snow removal

Gina Bozek and the Special Education Administrators are going through every student Individual Education Plan (IEP). We currently have 148 students that are outside the District placement. These numbers can change weekly. She has not filled the media position at the Marsh. They have done this in the past and made it work.

Councilors-1 moved to a grant

Custodians-2

Superintendent supplies-\$2,000.00

Asst. Superintendent supplies-\$1,000.00

Non renewal letters went out last week.

Mr. Deeb-He commends the Superintendent and the Administration for taking a lead in cutting their budgets. Are we being level funded at last year's budget amount?

Mayor-He cut \$750,000.00 from the City side to help fund the schools. He started with the school budget figure of 69 Million Dollars and is now up to funding a school budget of 71 Million Dollars.

Mr. Deeb-We are level funded?

Mayor-Yes. Any Medicaid money over \$500,000.00 will go to the school side. We also have many school contracts that have not been settled yet.

Mr. Deeb-Are the City departments being level funded?

Mayor-Some have gone below. Police and Fire budgets have gone up. Some contracts will be getting a 2% increase.

Mr. Deeb-The City gets 2% raises as of July 1st?

Mayor-Some departments are level funded. The City budget has a 3-31/2 % increase.

Mr. Vogler-Have we factored in the unemployment for non renewals in the budget?

Mr. Gosselin-No

Mr. Vogler-All the vacant Program Assistant positions are Special Education positions?

Superintendent-Yes

Mr. Vogler-The Medicaid reimbursement concerns him. In the agreement the City would keep \$500,000.00 and we would receive the remainder. He does not think we have seen any Medicaid money for the past 2 years. His concern is that the schools never received any Medicaid money over the \$500,000.00. He needs to know before June 13th all the figures. He would like another meeting before June 13th. The Charge Back Committee is reviewing the charge backs and will get back to everyone.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-What happened to the theater teacher position?

Superintendent-It is still in the budget.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-Does cutting the supply numbers impact the classrooms and teachers?

Superintendent-These supply cuts are paper and pencils.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-Will this be on the parents?

Superintendent-No we can get through this year.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-This Committee gave a directive last week that we were going to stay with our \$74,000,000.00 budget number and now she sees that number has gone down. She is not happy with the additional cuts. She will not support any more cuts. She thought we were not going to chop the \$74,000,000.00 budget.

Superintendent-We spent 2 hours with the City Council. There is no way we can make any Special Education cuts. We gave them a lot of information and they asked where we could make cuts that do not impact students.

Ms. DiNatale-She is concerned with the cuts in the supply lines. She hopes that does not fall back onto the teachers. The guidance councilor that is being moved to a grant, are they doing something different?

Superintendent-They will be providing the same student services.

Mr. Vogler-How many positions are being cut at the high school?

Superintendent-None. The positions on the list are non renewals. The cuts you have in front of you do not impact the teaching force.

Ms. Campagnone-Are all the Special Education tuitions currently in the budget?

Ms. Bozek-An increases from Collaborative are included in the budget.

Mr. Vogler-What is the 2.4 Million Dollar Special Education increase based on?

Ms. Bozek-We have 124 out of district placements.

Superintendent-Our hands are tied on the Special Education 3 Million Dollar increase to the budget. They are looking at every IEP. Ms. Bozek went to Boston last week and these mandates are coming from the Federal Government.

Mr. Deeb-We spend \$5,200.00 on the PSATs. We can cut that instead of supply and snow removal lines. It is a private test and if students want to take it they should pay for it. We do not receive enough money from the Federal Government to cover our mandates.

Mr. Vogler-Massachusetts has a high level of State Services mandates.

Ms. Bozek-The State of Massachusetts has more stringent mandates than the Federal Government.

Mayor-This Committee should read all the sped laws. It is amazing.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm- She would like another meeting date, June 7th @ 6:30PM. She wants details from the City side and their budget at the next meeting. As a Committee we agreed on \$74,796,183.00 not \$73,796,108.00.

Superintendent-June 7th can be a Business Meeting.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-We are at a 3% budget increase. She has concerns if we go below the 74 Million Dollar budget.

Mr. DiZoglio entered the meeting at 7:16PM

Ms. DiNatale-She will not support any more classroom cuts.

Superintendent-If we have to make cuts below the 73 Million Dollar figure there will be an impact in the classroom.

Ms. DiNatale-What about administration cuts?

Superintendent-We have gone back and forth with this. These are not neighborhood schools. There are 1500 students in each building. There are already 4 administration positions that are not filled at the Central Building. The deans are handling all the behavior issues and come in on Saturdays. She believes it is not a good idea to cut administration.

Mr. Deeb-We do a phenomenal job with what we have. He feels the City is over funding. If he sees that City departments are being level funded or less than he can agree with the 73 Million Dollar number.

Mr. Vogler-He is not going to play regular education kids against special education kids. All kids deserve a good education. We are going to have to start cutting the meat of our programs. We are at the bottom of all other towns and cities when it comes to funding our schools. He does not want to hear anymore about what level our schools are at. The Committees job is to recommend a budget for the schools. We are here to represent the kids. We are not an overspending district. At the June 7th meeting he wants a Medicaid commitment from the Mayor.

Mayor-The Medicaid agreement is \$500,000.00 goes to the City and anything over that amount will go to the schools.

Mr. Vogler-There is not much more we can cut. No one wants to lay off teachers. Should we charge for sports or user fees? We should be voting a functional budget.

Mayor-At the June 7th meeting we should have a bottom number. This 1 Million in cuts does not affect the classroom or the teachers. As we move forward you need to make a decision on your

number and where your cuts are. We are in a better place from last year. He is not going to jeopardize the safety of the City. Everything is still very fluid.

Mr. Deeb-He hears that the Police and Fire budgets have significant increase.

Mayor-The Police body cameras were in last year's budget. He is not adding any new police officers. He is hiring 4 firefighters to avoid closing a fire station.

Mr. Deeb-Why is the City budget not being level funded?

Mayor-Some departments have a 2-3% increase that was already included in their contracts.

Mr. DiZoglio-He apologized for coming in late to the meeting. He thinks we are going backwards and not forwards. He did not sign up to be a School Committee member to cut teachers. He has toured the Special Education classrooms in our schools. He toured the CGS and MHS. He recommends every Committee member takes the tours. Cuts to the budget will affect Special Education students and add more students into these classrooms. That will add stress to the classroom and the teachers. He is creating his family here in Methuen and he is afraid for his future children. If he has a Special Education student, a smart student or a superstar sports star he does not want to be paying fees for them. We need to think about who this budget affects. The end result is what is best for the students and the teachers.

Mr. Gosselin-He handed out 2 Capital Improvement Plans. The first is a 1 year plan. The second is a 1,2,3,4,5 year plan. The packet includes a time line for when projects will be done.

Mr. DiZoglio-Are the highlighted items what needs to be done right away? We need to look right away at the ice rink roof.

Mayor-Ameresco is almost finished at the Quinn Building and the ice rink roof is next on their list.

Mr. DiZoglio-We have players skating around water buckets on the ice.

Mayor-What you need to look at is a bond. We have an AAplus rating. Get your list of priorities together and he will look into a bond. We have a 2 Million Dollar bond on the stadium. The high school bond is coming due this year and the K-8 schools next year.

Mr. Vogler-The key is to get the City Council to vote to approve a Capital Improvement Plan.

Ms. Campagnone-The ice rink has needed repairs for a long time. The City Councilors know what is necessary. Let's get their support.

Mr. Deeb-He thanked Mr. Vogler, Mr. DiZoglio and Ms. Campagnone for the Charge Back packet.

Mr. DiZoglio-The Tenney small gym floor is also in need of repairs.

Mayor-The Marsh gym is also in need of repairs.

Ms. Campagnone-Is there a problem at the Tenney auditorium?

Superintendent-Yes the balcony railings need to be brought up to code.

***ADJOURNMENT:**

With no further business to discuss at this Workshop Session, Mayor Zanni entertained a motion to conclude the Workshop Session for the evening at 7:49PM.

MOTION: Ms. Hajjar Kumm moved to adjourn the Workshop at 7:49PM.

Ms. Campagnone seconded.

VOTE: 7-0-0 UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

Respectfully submitted,
Martha Sirois, Public Recorder
Methuen Public Schools

