

**MARION SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING  
BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES**

**March 13, 2024 at 11:00 a.m.  
Via Zoom**

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:** April Nye (remote) and Nichole Nye McGaffey (remote)

**ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:** Michael S. Nelson, Superintendent of Schools (in-person) and Howard Barber, Assistant Superintendent of Finance & Operations (in-person)

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Geoff Gorman, Town Administrator (remote) and Heather O'Brien, Finance Director (remote)

Ms. Nye called the meeting to order at 11:05 a.m.

**SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION:**

Superintendent Nelson shared with the school committee that as they are aware, the transportation bids came in higher than expected and this information was shared with Mr. Gorman in an updated memo as it related to the Sippican budget. He shared his appreciation for Mr. Gorman and Ms. O'Brien and their continued conversations and support during a difficult budget year. They are working to balance the proposed budget, which is level service.

Mr. Gorman said he appreciates the comments from the Superintendent and appreciates the opportunity to meet with the school committee. He explained the Town has taken a fairly conservative approach to revenues. They requested information from all departments including the schools and reviewed the differences between level service from FY24 to FY25. They reviewed FY23 by line item to see what, if any funding was left over and determined why, along with discussing FY24 in the winter to see how much money had been spent so far. The Town has been updating their projections regularly as they receive more concrete numbers in insurances, retirements, cost of doing business and much more. Mr. Gorman explained that Marion is about \$260,000 out of balance so now they have to look to decrease budget line items. He understands there have been low budgets over the last few years but asked the Budget Subcommittee to review the proposed budget in order to decrease around \$75,000. He stated all departments within the Town are being asked to decrease.

Superintendent Nelson explained there is no additional expenses or 'fluff' in the Sippican budget and if the needs of a student change or enrollment changes, where would the Town stand if there needs to be adjustments with no extras built into the current level service budget. Mr. Gorman said the Finance Committee, a special town meeting or a debt exclusion could be options. Superintendent Nelson asked if the special education stabilization fund was still available if needed. Ms. O'Brien said she believes there is about \$400,000 available but would need to confirm. Superintendent Nelson said in his ten years of experience in the district that has not been used.

**School Committee Feedback:**

Ms. Nye said special education and transportation have been driving forces this year. She is concerned if additional students did move into Marion and having to go back to a Town meeting in order to give students what they need. Ms. Nye McGaffey agreed, especially if it's services that are legally required. Superintendent Nelson shared that current level service budget is all known costs, and does not take into account for any hypothetical situations. He prefers that individual family situations do not end up at a Town meeting because of financial implications since it is a small community. He would like to think

about the next few years, because if a situation like this arises and the stabilization fund is used, it will still be an issue in the future as that is one-time funding. Ms. Nye added that recent reports show over 34% of families utilizing free and reduced lunch, which is the highest number she has seen in her over seven years as a school committee member. This is showing the increased need for folks below poverty level, which typically means higher needs in other areas as well. She appreciates the feedback and working with Mr. Gorman and Ms. O'Brien.

Mr. Gorman and Ms. O'Brien exited the meeting at 11:28 a.m.

Superintendent Nelson discussed with Ms. Nye and Ms. Nye McGaffey having another Budget Subcommittee next week ahead of the Public Hearing on March 26th to review how to decrease the budget as directed by the Town in the amount of \$75,000. He stated he appreciates the Town working with and communicating openly with the District.

Meeting was adjourned at 11:47 a.m.

Motion to adjourn by Ms. Nye McGaffey

Motion seconded by Ms. Nye

Roll call, Motion Carried 2-0.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "M. Nelson".

Michael S. Nelson  
Superintendent