

GREATER LOWELL TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING & PUBLIC HEARING

March 21, 2024 – 5:30 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Gitschier called the Public Hearing to order at 5:36 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members

Present: Mr. Bahou (remote), Mr. Morin, Mr. Richardson, Mr. Hogan (remote), Mr. LeMay (remote), Mr. Sheehan, Mr. Gitschier

Members Absent: Mr. Nocco

Also

Present: Jill Davis, Superintendent-Director
Michael Knight, School Business Administrator
Recording Secretary

MOTION: by Mr. Morin, seconded by Mr. Richardson to open the Public Hearing.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 7 Yes, 1 Absent (Mr. Nocco)

Superintendent Davis, along with School Business Administrator Michael Knight, presented an overview of the proposed FY25 budget. Ms. Davis began by informing the members that the budget was developed based on the Governor's House Budget, as well as data and input from administrators, teachers, parents, and community partners and centered around improving student achievement in order to develop confident learners and skilled workers. Ms. Davis and Mr. Knight reviewed updates pertaining to the proposed budget, as well as the data and input used for its development.

Ms. Davis began by speaking about the Student Opportunity Act (SOA). The Senate and Governor approved a change in the state funding formula for public education in 2015. The bill provides an investment of \$1.5 billion into schools over the next six (6) years and we are currently going into year 4. This year, GLTHS was required to develop a new Student Opportunity Act Plan. About \$700,000 or about 1/2 of the net school spending amount of this budget is dedicated to the Student Opportunity Act initiatives. The SOA is aimed at tackling inequity, specifically for school districts with higher percentages of low-income students, multilingual learners and Special Education students in order to close the achievement gap. For this year's budget, we received a \$421,908 increase to Chapter 70 aid and the budget being recommended for FY25 is \$57,981,480 (2.6% increase over this year's budget.) The base rate for a vocational student was increased by \$386.32, the rate for a special education

student was increased by \$590.40 and the rate for ELL students was increased by \$342.42. Also noted was the low-income percentage (currently at 56.2%) which places us in category 10; therefore, receiving \$7,163.59, which is an increase of \$623.06. Superintendent Davis added that although all rates have increased, she pointed out that the increase amounts have declined in comparison to last year's increase rates.

Superintendent Davis informed the members that based on the new rates of pupil expenditures set by the state and our current enrollment, the Foundation Budget increased by \$1,362,954, which is a 2.61% increase over this year's budget. She added that \$1,362,954 is all net school spending required funding that needs to be spent each year in addition to future budget increases.

School Business Administrator Michael Knight spoke briefly on the proposed revenue that is going to support the budget which consists of three categories of revenue: beginning with total State Aid which is made up of Chapter 70 funding and transportation reimbursement, for a total of \$39,147,191; Assessment to the Towns totaling \$18,634,289; and Excess and Deficiency totaling \$200,000 to cover expenses that are not Net School spending eligible.

Superintendent Davis highlighted the proposed budget priorities which primarily focused on:

- refining curriculum and instruction to expand opportunities for student voice and choice and strengthen ownership of their education, as well as opportunities to make connections between their academic and vocational coursework, earn industry recognized credentials, and participate in real-world work experiences;
- ensuring class size mitigation and adequate course offerings and schedule flexibility for all students;
- allocating staff and resources needed to effectively meet the academic, vocational, social-emotional and behavioral needs of all students and create a vision for engaging their families;
- maintaining educational technology, resources and equipment to ensure currency with industry and global trends; and
- providing relevant and personalized professional development and coaching to staff to sustain high quality instruction to meet the needs of our multi-lingual learners and deepen learning for all students in order to ensure educational equity and opportunity.

Mr. Knight spoke regarding the proposed FY25 expenditure budget; noting the proposed preliminary budget of \$57,981,480 represents an increase of \$1,477,455, which is a 2.6% increase focused on teaching and learning. He added that instructional and academic/technical spending dominated the budget expenditure. Additionally, we'll see notable decreases in fixed charges and programs with others districts (school choice reducing) and no contributions in OPEB funding.

Mr. Knight reviewed some notable expenditures that aren't related to instruction or personnel. Increases include utilities (specifically the substantial electricity rate increase), transportation (both regular and special transportation), and classroom technology (significant increase to Chromebooks and software).

Superintendent Davis continued with reviewing the proposed personnel expenditures. Ms. Davis provided information for the following proposed staff additions: English Language Education – one (1) Instructional Coach and one (1) Family Parent Liaison; Science – two (1) Science Tutors; Technical

Programming – one (1) Veterinary Science Instructor, and two (2) Science tutors, along with the addition of a few coaching positions due to the increased interest and participation among the students.

Mr. Knight spoke regarding the use of Excess and Deficiency from necessary expenditures that do not qualify for net school spending. Chairman Gitschier asked Mr. Knight if purchasing our own vehicles to transport our students could be included in net school spending in lieu of paying a transportation provider to do this. Mr. Knight replied that has already reached out to inquire about this and would not be approved for net school spending.

Superintendent Davis and Mr. Knight provided a summary of the proposed FY25 budget as follows:

The preliminary FY25 total budget would be \$57,981,480, which is a 2.6% increase over FY24.

Operating Budget	53,584,885
Transportation	2,927,000
Debt Service	1,269,595
OPEB	0

The preliminary FY25 Budget Revenue Sources would be:

Min. Local Contribution	15,937,694	Chapter 70	37,647,191
Transportation Assessment	1,427,000	Chapter 71 (transportation)	1,500,000
<u>Debt Assessment</u>	<u>1,269,595</u>	<u>Excess & Deficiency</u>	<u>200,000</u>
Total Assessment	18,634,289	Total Budget	57,981,480

Chairman Gitschier asked if there were any public participants wishing to speak on the FY25 budget. With none present, Chairman Gitschier announced the vote on the FY25 Budget would take place during the regular School Committee meeting at 6:30 p.m. and asked for a motion to close the Public Hearing.

MOTION: by Mr. Sheehan, seconded by Mr. Richardson to close the Public Hearing at 6:02 p.m.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 7 Yes, 1 Absent (Mr. Nocco)

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Gitschier called the school committee meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. following a recess after the Public Hearing.

Chairman Gitschier stated Committeeman LeMay and Committeeman Hogan will be participating at tonight’s meeting remotely.

ROLL CALL

Members

Present: Mr. Bahou, Mr. Morin, Mr. Richardson, Mr. Hogan (remote), Mr. LeMay (remote),
Mr. Nocco, Mr. Sheehan, Mr. Gitschier

Members Absent: None

Also

Present: Jill Davis, Superintendent-Director
Michael Knight, School Business Administrator
Recording Secretary

PUBLIC APPEARANCE

There was no public appearance.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE COMMUNICATIONS

There were no School Committee communications

REPORT OF STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Student Representative, Cameron Koza provided an update of recently held clubs and sporting events.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: by Mr. Bahou, seconded by Mr. Nocco to approve the minutes from the meeting of February 15, 2024.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 8 Yes

MOTION: by Mr. Morin, seconded by Mr. Richardson to approve the minutes from the meeting of February 29, 2024.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 8 Yes

REPORT OF DISTRICT TREASURER

MOTION: by Mr. Sheehan, seconded by Mr. Bahou to waive the reading of the warrant.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 8 Yes

MOTION: by Mr. Morin, seconded by Mr. Richardson to approve expenditures for the sum of \$6,133,155.13 allocated as follows:

Warrant 2128B	dated 02/23/2024	Payroll # 943	1,367,350.47
Warrant 2129A	dated 03/08/2024	Payroll # 945	1,298,522.25
Warrant 2129B	dated 03/22/2024	Payroll # 947	1,347,666.31
Warrant 2129M	dated 03/01/2024	Payroll # 2129M	4,124.05
Warrant 2129M2	dated 03/08/2024	Payroll # 2129M2	1,680.01
Warrant 2129	dated 03/01/2024	Accounts Payable	370,482.84
Warrant 2129-1	dated 03/15/2024	Accounts Payable	931,700.45
Warrant 2123-4	dated 02/21/2024	Sysco Check re-issue	20,505.27
Warrant 2129-5	dated 02/23/2024	Turf Tank – VOID Reconciliation	10,092.75
Warrant 2129-7	dated 03/15/2024	Sales Use/Meals Tax	2,163.78
Warrant 2129-6	dated 03/01/2024	Mass Bay Health	778,866.95

ROLL CALL VOTE: 8 Yes

REPORT OF GENERAL COUNSEL

There was no report of general counsel.

REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT-DIRECTOR

Superintendent Davis informed the committee that Greater Lowell was awarded a CCC Classroom Enhancement Grant from the Collision Repair Education Foundation in the amount of \$3,000. These funds will be used by the Automotive Collision program to provide tools, equipment, and supplies needed.

Superintendent Davis informed the committee that Greater Lowell was awarded the 2024 LRIG-New England Marsha Paul Education Grant in the amount of \$2,480. These funds will be used for students in the Information Technology Services program toward Robotics.

Superintendent Davis notified the Committee that 'Day on the Hill' is scheduled for Monday, May 6, 2024 at the State House in Boston asked if any members were interested in attending to notify her.

Superintendent Davis informed the committee that the number of senior and junior students participating in cooperative education employment opportunities reported as of the end of February totaled 228 senior students and 40 junior students. Ms. Davis added, to date, the number increased to a total of 231 senior students (representing 42% of the class of 2024) and 59 junior students (representing 10% of the class of 2025.)

Superintendent Davis asked for the Committee's approval to accept a donation of a refurbished and fully functional Styker stretcher from Dr. Romanowski's office. This donation has an estimated value of \$2,500 and due to due to the lack of space in his office area, Dr. Romanowski would like to donate this item to our Health Assisting Department.

MOTION: by Mr. Morin, seconded by Mr. Richardson to accept the stretcher donation from Dr. Romanowsky.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 8 Yes

Superintendent Davis asked for the Committee's approval to accept a donation of a 2014 Ford Focus from the Ford Motor Company. Ms. Davis added the donation has an estimated value of \$8,000 and would be used for educational training purposes only in our Automotive Technology program. The vehicle was donated to Greater Lowell because our Automotive Technology program participates extensively with the Ford online program for industry certifications through Ford Motor Company from grades 10 through 12 and have one of the highest usages of the program in New England.

MOTION: by Mr. LeMay, seconded by Mr. Bahou to accept the donation of a 2014 Ford Focus from the Ford Motor Company.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 8 Yes

Superintendent Davis informed the committee that she was seeking their approval for Title I Facilitator Cheryl Bomal to travel out-of-state to attend the Haas Technical Education Conference on April 26, 2024 in Danielson, CT at no cost to the district. The conference focuses on building successful C&C training programs. Ms. Bomal has currently been working with Mass Hire and Commonwealth Corporation providing adult training during the evening.

MOTION: by Mr. Nocco, seconded by Mr. Richardson to approve the out of state travel request for Title I Facilitator Cheryl Bomal to attend the Haas Technical Education Conference on April 26, 2024 in Danielson, CT.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 8 Yes

For the last item on the Superintendent's report, Ms. Davis asked the Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment – Mr. Greg Haas, to provide information regarding the 2024 Student Opportunity Act (SOA) Plan before asking for the Committee's approval.

Mr. Haas began his presentation showing a brief overview of the purpose behind the Student Opportunity Act (SOA), the focus on the funding provided and the targets and evidence required by districts for improving disparities in achievement among student groups. Plan development included collection of data (MCAS, formative assessment, midterm/final exam, grades, etc.), as well as data related to multilingual learners, students with disabilities, low income, African American/Black and Hispanic or Latino groups were identified as having disparities. Another element included engaging families and stakeholders to gain insight on which direction to take. The plan required identification of focus areas and to select from a bank of evidence-based programs given as an option.

For the 2024 SOA Plan, there were three (3) focus areas chosen. Focus area #1 is to promote students' physical and mental health and wellness in welcoming, affirming, and safe spaces. Mr. Haas gave detail regarding the staffing positions to support this focus, as well as the individual tasks/activities

associated as well. Focus area #2 revolves around family engagement and strengthening the school to home connection. Mr. Haas continued by highlighting each budget category and the tasks/activities/staff that correlate each area which includes two-way communication, family engagement institute, a Family Resource Center, technical program nights and the addition of a Parent Liaison.

Focus area #3 revolves around teaching and learning which is the largest in terms of funding. A large portion of this category/budget is looking for supporting the specific student groups, expanding co-teaching model, continuing project-based learning, additional instructional coaches/tutors.

Budget Summary is as follows (allocated funds are dispersed over three years – FY25, FY26, and FY27)

Focus 1.1:	\$741,000
Focus 1.3:	\$350,765
Focus 2.2	\$1,016,715
Total:	\$2,108,480

Mr. Haas completed his presentation with informing the members that Greater Lowell is required to commit to meeting the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s (DESE) three-year targets for increasing performance for the Lowest Performing Students’ group in ELA and Mathematics, both in Achievement and Growth as measured by the MCAS. Greater Lowell will also review applicable metrics for all focus areas to monitor the progress of Evidence-Based Program implementations. These results will be reported to DESE annually as part of the SOA Plan update.

MOTION: by Mr. Nocco, seconded by Mr. Richardson to approve the 2024 Student Opportunity Act (SOA) Plan.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 8 Yes

REPORT OF BUSINESS MANAGER

Mr. Knight spoke briefly to the committee, noting the Public Hearing on the proposed FY25 budget that occurred prior to the start of the School Committee meeting. With no further questions pending, he asked for approval of the proposed FY25 budget as presented at the Public Hearing.

MOTION: by Mr. Bahou, seconded by Mr. Richardson to approve the presented FY25 budget of \$57,981,480.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 8 Yes

School Business Administrator Mr. Knight provided the committee with an explanation of the budget transfer request and asked for approval totaling in the amount of \$1,060,894.

MOTION: by Mr. Morin, seconded by Mr. Sheehan to approve the budget line item transfers.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 8 Yes

Mr. Knight's last item on his report was to provide an update, as well as request a vote on the Food Service Management contract award. Mr. Knight reported that the state changed the bid/proposal process; with the process now going through the state to align with federal requirements. He informed the members that upon the bid being put out, there were two companies that came to pre-bid walkthrough; Aramark and Chartwells. He added that proposals were due March 6th and were reviewed on the merits on how they would conduct food service without looking at pricing with set benchmarks. Based on the threshold set, the proposal received from Aramark was rated as highly advantageous and Chartwells was rated as advantageous. Under the new state process, only highly advantageous cost proposals are opened. Upon opening the financials, Aramark is providing a program that will achieve greater participation amongst our students, as well as offer a net profit of operating the program of approximately \$398,000 annually. Mr. Knight added that funding is solely for food service; therefore, options would need to be explored of use. He also noted that this is a single year contract with four extension years on it which is a federal requirement of the USDA programs.

MOTION: by Mr. Bahou, seconded by Mr. LeMay to award the Food Service Management Contract to Aramark.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 8 Yes

OLD BUSINESS

Outstanding Items from Previous Meetings

1. Superintendent's Wall (O'Hare)
2. Building Security (Sheehan)

NEW BUSINESS

Chairman Gitschier stated that it was time for the annual re-organization of the Board to be effective April 1, 2024.

MOTION: by Mr. Bahou, seconded by Mr. Gitschier to nominate Mr. Sheehan for Chairman.

Chairman Gitschier asked if there were any other nominations. Hearing none, he stated that nominations were closed.

BALLOT VOTE: Number of votes cast was 8. Mr. Sheehan received 8.

MOTION: by Mr. Sheehan, seconded by Mr. LeMay to nominate Mr. Morin for Vice Chairman.

Chairman Gitschier asked if there were any other nominations. Hearing none, he stated that nominations were closed.

BALLOT VOTE: Number of votes cast was 8. Mr. Morin received 8.

MOTION: by Mr. Morin, seconded by Mr. Nocco to nominate Mr. LeMay for Secretary.

Chairman Gitschier asked if there were any other nominations. Hearing none, he stated that nominations were closed.

BALLOT VOTE: Number of votes cast was 8. Mr. LeMay received 8.

Committeeman Nocco announced that the 2024 graduation signs have been designed and made and are now available through the PTO.

COMMITTEEPERSON MOTION

There were no committeeperson motions.

REPORT OF SUB-COMMITTEES

MOTION: by Mr. LeMay, seconded by Mr. Sheehan to approve the minutes of the February 15, 2024 Finance Sub-Committee meeting.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 8 Yes

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Chairman Gitschier requested a motion to enter into executive session pursuant to 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 – Teachers.

MOTION: by Mr. Sheehan, seconded by Mr. LeMay to enter into executive session.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 8 Yes

Chairman Gitschier announced there would be a potential vote on ratification discussed during executive session; therefore, the committee would be returning to open session.

The meeting ended to go into Executive Session at 7:03 p.m. with a roll call vote of 8 present.

The meeting reconvened at 7:26 p.m. with a roll call vote of 8 present.

MOTION: by Mr. Richardson, seconded by Mr. Nocco to approve the three-year contract for the Greater Lowell Teachers Organization for July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2027 as presented.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 8 Yes

ADJOURN

MOTION: by Mr. Bahou, seconded by Mr. Nocco to adjourn the meeting at 7:28 p.m.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 8 Yes

Respectfully submitted,



Colette Edmonds
Recording Secretary

Meeting Documents:

Meeting Notice

Agenda

Minutes for Approval: February 15, 2024, February 15, 2024 (Finance Sub-Committee), February, 29, 2024

Copy of CCC Grant Award Notification

Copy of LRIG Grant Award Notification

Copy of MASC Day on the Hill Letter

February 2024 Cooperation Education Report

Copy of Donation Letters

Budget Transfer Request

Copy of Memo regarding Food Service Management Contract

Year-to-Date Budget Report