

# GREATER LOWELL TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL

## FINANCE SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING

### Minutes of February 15, 2024 Meeting

#### CALL TO ORDER

Sub-Committee Chairman Gitschier called the meeting to order at 5:25 p.m.

#### ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mr. Gitschier, Mr. Bahou, Mr. Sheehan

Members Absent: Mr. Nocco

Also Present: Jill Davis, Superintendent-Director  
Michael Barton, Assistant Superintendent/Principal  
Michael Knight, School Business Administrator  
Gregory Haas, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment  
Recording Secretary

Chairman Gitschier stated the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the FY25 budget.

Superintendent Davis and School Business Administrator Michael Knight presented the preliminary FY25 budget to the Finance Sub-Committee members. She began by reminding the subcommittee that the preliminary budget was developed based on the Governor's House Budget Proposal, 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 added that the Massachusetts House, 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 bill is aimed at tackling inequity, specifically for school districts with higher percentages of low-income students, English language learners and Special Education students in order to close the achievement gap. The base rate for a vocational student was increased by \$386.32, the rate for a special education student was increased by \$490.40 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 \$1,362,953, which is a 2.6% increase over this year's budget. She added that \$1,362,953 is all net school spending required funding that needs to be spent each year in addition to future budget increases.

Superintendent Davis and Mr. Knight spoke briefly on the revenue budget, which consists of three categories of revenue: Excess and Deficiency, Assessment to the Towns, and State Aid. Ms. Davis informed the members that the assessment to the towns included an increase of \$755,547 from last year; with \$741,940 of the increase being assessed to the Town of Dracut due to the increase of Dracut student enrollment numbers.

Superintendent Davis reviewed 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. It also includes personnel investments, as well as investments in programmatic resources, supports, and interventions to meet the needs of our diverse learners and deepen learning for all students as well as supporting educational equity and opportunity.

Committeeman Bahou inquired as to why there were no funds allocated for OPEB and would like this affect the school's rating. Mr. Knight informed the members that our rating was OK and currently did not see a need to allocate funding at this time. After further discussion, the members agreed to leave as is.

Mr. Knight reviewed some notable expenditures which include the 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 Liaison; Science – two (1) Science Tutors; Technical Programming – one (1) Veterinary Science Instructor (pending program approval). Ms. Davis also added that due to increased student interest in athletics, including unified sports, there is a need to hire additional coaches. These include: one (1) Asst. Spring

Track Coach, two (2) Asst. Indoor Track Coach, two (2) new Unified sports – Weight Room (1 Coach and 1 Asst. Coach) and Track (1 Coach and 1 Asst. Coach).

Mr. Knight spoke regarding the use of Excess and Deficiency. His recommendation to use \$200,000 comes from the need to meet net school spending. Without this minimum amount added to the budget, we would not meet net school spending and potentially face loss of state funding in the future.

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 assessment 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 &amp; Deficiency</u>	<u>200,000</u>
Total Assessment	18,634,289	Total Budget	57,981,480

**MOTION:** by Mr. Sheehan, seconded by Mr. Bahou to adjourn at 6:11 p.m.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:** 3 Yes, 1 Absent (Mr. Nocco)

Respectfully submitted,



Colette Edmonds  
Recording Secretary