

GREATER LOWELL TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL

FINANCE SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING

Minutes of March 13, 2023 Meeting

CALL TO ORDER

Sub-Committee Chairman Gitschier called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mr. Gitschier, Mr. Nocco (remote), Mr. Sheehan

Members Absent: Mr. Bahou (absent at time of roll call; arrived @ 5:42 p.m.)

Also Present: Jill Davis, Superintendent-Director
Michael Barton, Assistant Superintendent/Principal
Michael Knight, School Business Administrator
Gregory Haas, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
Stacy Bezanson, Director of Cooperative Education
Ralph Hogan, School Committeeman
Curtis LeMay, School Committeeman (remote)
Paul Morin, School Committeeman
Raymond K. Richardson, School Committeeman
Recording Secretary

Superintendent Davis informed the committee members that the meeting was to present the proposed FY24 budget. Ms. Davis asked School Business Administrator Michael Knight to join her in presenting the proposed FY24 budget information resulting from the recently released Governor's House Budget. Ms. Davis reviewed updates pertaining to the proposed budget, as well as the data and input used for its development.

The Massachusetts House, Senate and Governor approved a change in the state funding formula for public education. The bill provides an investment of \$1.5 billion into schools over the next six (6) years and 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 \$793.05; the rate for a special education student was increased \$1,351.77; the rate for ELL students was increased \$384.46; and low income category places us in category 10; therefore, receiving \$6,579.86, which is an increase of \$737.22.

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 \$2,872,431, which is a 5.82% increase over this year's budget. She included that this is year 3 of a 6-year SOA implementation; therefore, we should expect roughly the same budget increase over the next three (3) years. She noted that \$2,872,431 is all net school spending required funding that needs to be spent each year in addition to future budget increases.

Superintendent reviewed the proposed total revenue budget (\$56,504,026) broken down as follows:

Excess & Deficiency:	\$ 200,000
Total City/Town Assessment (min. contribution, transp. & debt):	\$ 17,878,743
Total State Aid (Ch. 70 & Transportation Reimbursement):	\$ 37,716,232

Ms. Davis reviewed the individual assessments for each city/town, noting the increase in assessments for Dracut and Tyngsborough were due to a slight increase in enrollment in those towns, as well as the state provided assessment formula.

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

- refining curriculum and instruction;
- ensuring class size mitigation and adequate course offerings and schedule flexibility;
- allocating staffing;
- maintaining educational technology, resources and equipment; and
- providing relevant and personalized professional development and coaching.

Superintendent Davis reviewed some notable expenditure changes which include Carpentry equipment replacement/shop floor project, display board/lobby projector upgrade, Culinary exploratory, Electrical, and Plumbing shop redesign, as well as replacing two (2) vans with mini buses. Additional expenditures include health/dental insurance and benefits being large budget drivers, despite below market increase due to our position in the Mass Bay Health Trust.

Superintendent Davis continued with reviewing the proposed personnel expenditures. The Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment (Mr. Haas) and Director of Cooperative Education (Ms. Bezanson) were also present to answer questions by the committee. Detailed information was provided for the following proposed staff additions: Special Education – one (1) Paraprofessional (offset by exiting School Counseling Paraprofessional) and one (1) Adjustment Counselor; Main Office – one (1) Adjustment Counselor/Social Worker; Plant Services – one (1) 2nd shift Custodian; Cooperative Education – one (1) Cooperative Coordinator (offset by reorg and replacing worksite aide); and Athletics – one (1) Unified Basketball Coach, one (1) Unified Assistant Basketball Coach, one (1) Jr. Varsity Field Hockey Coach, one (1) Assistant Golf Coach, and one (1) Freshman Boys Volleyball Coach.

In addition, discussion was held regarding increasing the substitute daily rates in order to remain competitive with surrounding school districts. Due to the lack of current substitute availability, it was determined that the proposed increases would be brought to a vote at the upcoming March School Committee meeting in order to become effective immediately, rather than waiting until the FY24 school year. The proposed increases are as follows: substitutes with no degree would increase to \$147.50; substitutes with a Bachelor's degree would increase to \$162.50; and substitutes who are teacher certified would increase to \$177.50. It was noted that this change would not affect the budget, as the substitute line has not been able to be fully spent in the past.

Mr. Knight included the use of Excess and Deficiency was increased from \$100,000 to \$200,000 and will be used for expenses that do not qualify for net school spending, such as Medicaid

filing, OPEB and capital vehicle purchases. Mr. Knight noted that after reviewing the budget numbers, he was able to include the addition of \$50,000 into OPEB as requested.

The proposed FY24 total budget would be \$56,504,026, which is a 6% increase over FY23.

Operating Budget	52,371,931
Transportation	2,775,000
Debt Service	1,307,095
OPEB	50,000

The proposed FY24 Budget revenue sources include:

Min. Local Contribution	14,996,648
Transportation Assessment	1,575,000
<u>Debt Assessment</u>	<u>1,307,095</u>
Total Assessment	17,878,743
Total Assessment	17,878,743
Chapter 70	37,225,283
Chapter 71 (transportation)	1,200,000
<u>Excess & Deficiency</u>	<u>200,000</u>
Total Budget	56,504,026

School Business Administrator Mr. Knight continued the budget discussion, noting that he included additional slides outlining the proposed capital project (Track & Field) that would ultimately affect the overall final budget. He included an additional budget summary which included the cost figures of the capital project as a comparison for the members. The track project is estimated to cost \$4,000,000 with the funding projected to come from three (3) sources – a special earmark grant for \$1,000,000; an appropriation in the state budget for \$1,500,000; and use of Excess and Deficiency in the amount of \$1,500,000.

Mr. Knight informed the members that the use of E&D would reduce the balance from \$2,200,000 to \$500,000 and includes the amount used for the operating budget as well as the capital project. Mr. Knight noted that there would also be a transfer to the operating budget of \$1,500,000 from the LPN and Adult Education accounts. This funding is a markup charge for building use costs (utilities, maintenance, custodial fees, etc.) to these funds that were not done and were absorbed by the general fund in the past. Therefore, the transfer to operating would eventually close out back to E&D assuming it is unused in the budget year and would not affect the net school spending requirements or ability to meet net school spending.

The proposed FY24 Expenditure Budget, with the inclusion of the capital project, would be \$59,504,026, broken down as follows:

Operating Budget	53,871,931
Transportation	2,775,000
Debt Service	1,307,095
OPEB	50,000
Capital Project	1,500,000

The proposed FY24 Budget revenue sources, with the inclusion of the capital project, would be:

Min. Local Contribution	14,996,648	Chapter 70	37,225,283
Transportation Assessment	1,575,000	Chapter 71 (transportation)	1,200,000
Debt Assessment	1,307,095	Excess & Deficiency	1,700,000
		<u>Transfer to Operating</u>	<u>1,500,000</u>
<u>Total Assessment</u>	<u>17,878,743</u>	<u>Total Budget</u>	<u>59,504,026</u>

With no further discussion, Sub-Committee Chairman Gitschier asked for a motion to adjourn.

MOTION: by Mr. Sheehan, seconded by Mr. Bahou to adjourn at 6:40 p.m.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 4 Yes

Respectfully submitted,



Colette Edmonds
Recording Secretary