

**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
OF THE
DARTMOUTH SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

December 11, 2023

The warrants for bills payable were reviewed and signed by the School Committee.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Kathleen Amaral at 5:00 p.m. in the Planning Board Meeting Room, Room 315, at Dartmouth Town Hall.

On a roll call the following members were present: Kathleen Amaral, Mr. Oliver, Elizabeth Coughlin and Shannon Jenkins. John Nunes was not in attendance.

Also present: Dr. Saba-Maguire, Mr. Kiely and Ms. Genthner.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Renee Vieira and Jody Parisi, Co-Presidents of the Dartmouth Educators Association, provided comments relative to the FY25 budget.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Oliver moved, seconded by Dr. Jenkins to approve the Regular Session Minutes of November 20, 2023 as written. The motion passed unanimously: 4-0.

Dr. Jenkins moved, seconded by Ms. Coughlin to approve the Executive Session Minutes of November 20, 2023 as written with the stipulation that the minutes be held until the matters under consideration are resolved. The motion passed unanimously: 4-0.

Dr. Jenkins moved, seconded by Mr. Oliver to adjourn at 5:08 p.m. into Executive Session to hear DEA Level III Grievances and to reconvene in open session. On a roll call the motion passed unanimously; 4-0: Ms. Amaral – Yes; Mr. Oliver – Yes; Dr. Jenkins – Yes and Ms. Coughlin – Yes.

At 5:41 p.m. Mrs. Amaral called Open Session back to order and asked for a roll call. Mrs. Amaral – Yes; Mr. Oliver – Yes; Dr. Jenkins – Yes and Ms. Coughlin – Yes.

PRESENTATION

FY25 Budget: The Chair invited Dr. Saba-Maguire to present the proposed FY25 Budget.

Dr. Saba-Maguire provided comments regarding the budget process, where the District is in the process and noted financial challenges the District faces emphasizing the “critical importance” of the community’s support to maintain the standard of education our students deserve.

Dr. Saba-Maguire invited James Kiely, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations, to present the proposed FY25 Budget for the School Department.

With the use of a PowerPoint presentation, Mr. Kiely presented the proposed FY25 School Budget.

Mr. Kiely was assisted in his presentation by Ross Thibault and Catherine Pavao, Directors of Teaching and Learning/Secondary and Elementary Level respectively; Laurie Dionisio, Director of Student Services; and Jonathan Gallishaw, Chief Technology Officer.

Mr. Kiely provided a brief explanation of where the District is “coming from” financially and how “we” compare to the State average as well as to our “D.A.R.T.” group (other like districts as determined by the Department of Education) and local districts (within a 25-mile radius.)

Mr. Kiely provided a breakdown of the proposed FY25 budget noting the total budget is \$54,664,691.

Mr. Kiely stated the major factors impacting this budget are contractual obligations, new transportation contract (to be “bid out” in January), inflation and its impacts on special education rates for out of district tuition, as well as legal counsel services and maintenance efficiency improvements.

Mr. Kiely went through the budget recommendations including technology and personnel as well as personnel reductions that total \$181,190.

Dr. Saba-Maguire explained the necessity for a line item in the budget specifically for high-quality instructional learning materials.

Dr. Jenkins moved, seconded by Ms. Coughlin to adjourn at 6:23 p.m. into Joint Session with the Select Board and Finance Committee and to return into open session. On a roll call, the motion passed unanimously; 4-0: Ms. Amaral – Yes; Mr. Oliver – Yes; Dr. Jenkins – Yes and Ms. Coughlin – Yes.

CALL TO ORDER of JOINT SESSION

The meeting was called to order by Select Board Chairperson David Tatelbaum at 6:30 p.m. in the Select Board Meeting Room (Room 304) at Dartmouth Town Hall with Select Board members as well as members of the Finance Committee and School Committee.

School Committee Chair Kathleen Amaral asked for a roll call of School Committee Members: Kathleen Amaral – Yes; Chris Oliver – Yes; Shannon Jenkins – Yes; Elizabeth Coughlin – Yes. John Nunes was not in attendance.

Also present were June Saba-Maguire, Superintendent of Schools, James Kiely, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations for the School Department along with Town Finance Director Gary Carreiro and Town Administrator Shawn MacInnes.

Mr. Tatelbaum thanked present participants for their work as well as members of the Town's Long-Term Planning Committee which is comprised of members from multiple town committees, boards and departments including Finance, Capital Improvement Planning, Select Board, Department of Public Works and the School Department.

Mr. MacInnes gave a presentation on the Town's FY2025 Town-School Budget Analysis; a copy of the presentation was provided to the School Committee members in their meeting packets.

Mr. MacInnes stated we were "here" last year going through the budget cycle noting the budget deficit with the school department and a way was found to bridge the gap adding "we" knew this year would be more difficult.

"We" thought it was important this year to take a look at the school department and its needs so that we would not be back "here" every year just looking for ways to bridge "gaps."

Mr. MacInnes provided a brief overview of the FY25 budget process, budget challenges and options to solve issues adding the goal is to look not just at the impending budget cycle but long-term planning.

Mr. MacInnes briefly reviewed the school department's FY25 proposed budget changes noting he and Town Finance Director, Gary Carreiro, have met with Superintendent of Schools, June Saba-Maguire, and Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations, James Kiely, to address the district's needs to get to a "restorative" level service budget as well as future budget needs.

Mr. MacInnes stated there is a \$1,521,226 budget deficit between the Town and the School Department proposed FY25 budget adding "we" need to find a way to fund "that."

Mr. MacInnes stated "we" need to find a way to address several issues to help the Town fund the school department: average annual budget increase of over 4%; deficiency in net school spending; deficiency in per pupil spending; employee turnover related to compensation and health benefits.

Mr. MacInnes reiterated that "we" need \$2,346,226 to restore the schools to level service.

Mr. MacInnes reviewed FY25 funding options: free cash utilization; staffing reductions, stabilization fund utilization and restorative override.

Mr. MacInnes provided a schedule if the override option is pursued calling attention to the possibility for a joint session on January 8th.

Mr. MacInnes noted the Town was told to prepare for an estimated 10% increase in the FY25 average annual health insurance rate.

Mr. MacInnes reviewed the work of the Long-Term Capital Planning Committee evaluating the Town's long and short-term capital needs.

Mr. Oliver shared some data that the School District provided in its proposed FY25 Budget Presentation highlighting Dartmouth School District's spending as compared to like school district.

Mr. Oliver gave his thoughts on the Town's policy regarding "capital" as it relates to the school department's technology needs.

Mr. Oliver stated his willingness to look at funding one-time capital purchases with school choice funds if that would help the Town; we want to "work" with the Town and other town departments.

Select Board Member Stanley Mickelson asked what is that number.

Mr. Kiely stated there is approximately \$2,000,000 in the school choice fund adding those funds were not used recently due to ESSER funding.

Dr. Jenkins added that school choice funds has been treated as non-recurring revenue because its existence depends on an annual vote by the school committee adding a change of 2 or 3 members on the committee and those funds could "go away."

Dr. Jenkins stated "we" are willing to put our money on the table but we need to have a conversation about flexibility around recurring expenses and non-recurring revenues; is technology operational or is it capital; we need to be consistent with Town policy.

Finance Committee Chair Robert Gauvin asked that its sub-committee meet with the School Committee's budget sub-committee along with the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent and would like to have this meeting before the January 8th meeting.

The School Committee agreed to meet with Finance Committee's sub-committee.

Finance Committee Member William Boles asked for more information pertaining to Town data from Mr. MacInnes.

Mr. MacInnes responded.

Mr. Tatelbaum commented that at this point "we" are asking the Dartmouth residents what kind of school system they want and how do you want to pay for it and we need to take this opportunity to bring this matter to the community.

Mr. Boles added if the level of your school district goes down so do your property values.

Select Board Member Heidi Silva-Brooks made comments about the school district; about other Town needs adding the time is now to start addressing these needs.

Select Board Member Shawn McDonald stated the importance of a detailed discussion of the pros and cons of an override and the Town's ability to pass and override.

School Committee Chair Kathleen Amaral, commented that “we” are dedicated to provide information about the budget and encourage people to watch the school department’s FY25 budget presentation that was presented at tonight’s school committee meeting.

Finance Committee Terri Hamm thanked the Select Board and School Committee for its efforts to address the long-term planning and school budget issues.

Dr. Jenkins stated that the budget proposal is to keep doing what we are doing as well as to meet legally required mandates for instruction; it is not filled with “bells” and “whistles.”

Mr. Tatelbaum stated it appears that “we” are moving towards pursuing an override and noted the schedule is going to be very tight and we need to educate the public before the vote.

Mr. MacInnes suggested another joint meeting in early January to get the process moving.

Dr. Jenkins moved on behalf of the School Committee, Ms. Coughlin seconded, that we adjourn out of Joint Session at 7:35 p.m. and to reconvene into Open Session in Room 315. On a roll call the motion passed unanimously; 4-0: Mrs. Amaral – Yes; Mr. Oliver – Yes; Dr. Jenkins – Yes and Ms. Coughlin - Yes.

At 7:39 p.m. Mrs. Amaral reconvened Open Session and asked for a roll call. Mrs. Amaral – Yes; Mr. Oliver – Yes; Dr. Jenkins – Yes and Ms. Coughlin – Yes.

PRESENTATION

FY25 Budget: The Chair opened the matter for questions and discussion.

Dr. Jenkins recommended funding technology and high-quality instructional materials out of school choice monies as a way of doing our part to “pick it up.”

Mr. Oliver agreed.

Ms. Coughlin agreed.

Mrs. Amaral agreed.

Mr. Kiely agreed it’s a good use of funds on a short-term basis but we need to have a plan moving forward; the technology replacement article is clearly a recurring expense that was moved from its “home” as a separate line item in the annual operating budget before it came into question last year for some reason and was eliminated.

Mr. Oliver suggested the school committee set a policy for the use of school choice funds.

Dr. Jenkins asked when does a non-recurring revenue become considered a recurring revenue.

Mrs. Amaral stated it is her understanding school choice funds were able to accumulate because of ESSER funding.

Mr. Kiely stated the District used school choice funds to start its one-to-one technology initiative.

Mr. Kiely stated he will take this feedback and make adjustments to the proposed FY25 budget.

NEW BUSINESS

Superintendent's Update: Dr. Saba-Maguire provided information and updates of events and activities happening throughout the district:

- Entry Planning Phase Update
- Personnel Update
- Newcomer Student Update
- Holiday Season Update
- Attended the John and Abigail Adams Scholarship Breakfast (79 students received scholarships)
- Attended a production of *Freaky Friday* at DMS
- Winter Sports Update: Basketball started tonight.

Report of the Chair: The Chair did not have additional matters.

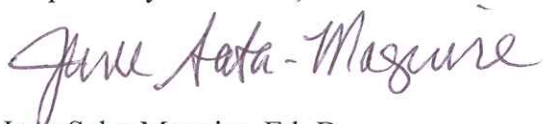
Other Matters that may not have been anticipated at the time of Agenda posting:

NEXT MEETING

Next Meeting: The next regular session of the School Committee will take place in the Library Media Center at Dartmouth High School on Monday, January 8, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. It was noted the January 8, 2024 meeting may be a joint session.

Mr. Oliver moved, seconded by Dr. Coughlin to adjourn at 8:27 p.m. from Open Session. The motion passed unanimously; 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,



June Saba-Maguire, Ed. D.
Superintendent of Schools

Open Session - Documents/Exhibits

Agenda

Brief

Regular Session Minutes for November 20, 2023

PPP – FY25 Budget

Executive Session – Documents/Exhibits

Level III DEA Grievances

Joint Session – Documents/Exhibits

FY25 Town-School Budget Analysis