



Greater Lawrence Technical School

**DISTRICT COMMITTEE
OPEN MEETING MINUTES
MEETING #1828
January 31, 2022**

<u>Members Present:</u>	Francisco Surillo	Methuen	Chairperson
	Vivian Marmol	Lawrence	Vice Chairperson
	Zoila Disla	Lawrence	Assistant Treasurer
	Marilyn Fitzgerald	Andover	
	Thomas Hatem	Methuen	
	Leo Lamontagne	Lawrence	

<u>Members Absent:</u>	Frank Rossi	North Andover
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<u>Others Present:</u>	John N. Lavoie	Superintendent-Director
	Gerry DiStefano	Treasurer
	Madisyn Portorreal	District Recorder

Roll Call was taken by District Recorder: Mr. Rossi (Absent), Ms. Fitzgerald (Present), Ms. Disla (Present), Mr. Hatem (Present), Mr. Lamontagne (Present), Ms. Marmol (Present) and Mr. Surillo (Present).

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Surillo called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. with a pledge of allegiance and a moment of silence.

2. INTERVIEWS-Business Administrator

a. Interview with Mr. Michael Mason

Give some examples of how you endure consistent, clear and concise communication with your team?

- To communicate when required in writing and to follow up in person with dialogue so that the key members understand what is required.

Describe how you have worked with town/city boards, municipal offices and taxpayers to create an understanding of school budget requirements and resulting funding needs?

- As Business Manager in Chelsea, he worked with the Executive Director of Finance and on the government side, there were no committees, only the school sub-committee and capital planning were involved in developing the budget. In Arlington, he did not see the Town Government and worked with committees.

How do you plan or prepare for a collective bargaining process?

- Look at certain aspects such as goals, financial impact, return to understand the facts and make a proposal to the Committee and Superintendent.

Have you had any experience with a MSBA project? If yes, explain the project and your involvement.

- In Chelsea as the Assistant Business manager he had to act as liaison between facility manager and the project manager. In Arlington he would oversee the capital needs assessment.

Please explain the 30B law and its process?

- Ch.30B are thresholds in order for the procurement to occur. Under \$1,000 you use your best practices. \$10,000-\$50,000 you have to solicit three (3) quotes from three (3) vendors. Over \$50,000 it's an invitation for bids or with exemptions.

Can you explain the process on how to certify an E&D account?

- No direct experience but his thought is that it is where the deficit is pulled out of with DOR and anything above 5% is used as revenue the following year.

Provide a previous experience where you were able to identify a complex problem, evaluate the options and implement a solution?

- In Chelsea they were working with transportation and the budget limitation which resulted in the termination of two (2) buses. After meetings and research, they did come across extra funding so they could bring back one (1) bus.

Describe a time when you had to address a sensitive issue, performance concern or inappropriate behavior. What did you do?

- First, reach out to HR to figure out what the best option is as the employee was a great performer the end result was a letter of expectations and there were no further issues with that employee.

Give an example of a challenge you had to overcome when putting together a budget. What issue did you have to resolve? How did you resolve it?

- Spoke about earlier which was trying to balance the budget with regard to transportation. That resulted in communicating expectations and figuring out a better long-term budget plan that was sustainable.

What kind of financial data would you submit for an end of year report?

- Look at all the revenues and expenditures that are related to the school. Basically, all school related expenses.

What makes you the best candidate for Greater Lawrence Technical School?

- Great interpersonal skills, open door policy, educate, leveraging technology and processes, and desire to help. Would prefer to serve underprivileged demographics which was one of the reasons he put in for this opportunity.

Share an experience in which your attention to detail and thoroughness had a positive impact on the school district finances?

- In Arlington they found mid-year they had an extra 1,000,000.00 in special education funds which was used to create the second-year budget.

Share an example of a professional goal you completed that made you a more effective Business Administrator?

- In Chelsea he was able to take classes at Worcester State where he met colleagues and individuals outside of the field with new technology perspectives that was implemented in Chelsea.

Tell us something about yourself.

- Personally, I volunteer with the REACH program. Professionally, works with agencies that are public service or nonprofit.

Do you have any questions for us?

Mr. Mason inquired how long has the position been vacant and how his role interacts with the school committee.

- Ms. Fitzgerald responded it has been vacant for about 5 months. The business manager will work with the school committee, treasurer and Superintendent. Will also attend bi weekly committee meetings where he will provide reports. Chair also responded, harmonious relationship with committee and superintendent

Mr. Mason inquired, why is this a great place to work

- Ms. Fitzgerald responded she has been a part of GLTS since 1986. The students, staff and culture in this school is amazing.

b. Interview with Ms. Melissa Martel

Give some examples of how you ensure consistent, clear and concise communication with your team?

- She has regular check in meetings with the three employees that report to her to go over what needs to be done during the week and keep on track.

Describe how you have worked with town/city boards, municipal offices and taxpayers to create an understanding of school budget requirements and resulting funding needs?

- In Natick she was the bridge between the school and town. Presently constantly communicating with comptroller, treasurer, finance committee as they report separately but work together to present one budget.

How do you plan or prepare for a collective bargaining process?

- Bargaining right now with teachers. Running scenarios based on a few different contracts and scenarios such as cost of living.

Have you had any experience with a MSBA project? If yes, explain the project and your involvement.

- Involved in one where she just attended meetings to be in the loop. In the process of presently closing a school and opening a remodeled one to make sure it's completed on time.

Please explain the 30B law and its process?

- 30B is purchasing in accordance with the law. \$0-\$1000 use best business practice. \$10000-\$50000 you obtain three (3) bids and over \$50,000 you go out to bid. In Natick the procurement officer handles most of the bids in other places she handled all of the process.

Can you explain the process on how to certify an E&D account?

- Never directly involved but can figure it out.

Provide a previous experience where you were able to identify a complex problem, evaluate the options and implement a solution?

- In July after running it was found that they had millions of dollars in encumbrances. Accounts payables process needed to be fixed so she worked with Town, comptroller, Dir of Finance and school committee by letting them know the current process got movement to change the process to MANIS. Administration initially resisted the change but are now happy.

Describe a time when you had to address a sensitive issue, performance concern or inappropriate behavior. What did you do?

- Recently hired employee that was not a good fit. Had a meeting with the employee and Superintendent where they talked about the issue and how it wasn't a good fit. Employee was swiftly let her go.

Give an example of a challenge you had to overcome when putting together a budget. What issue did you have to resolve? How did you resolve it?

- Every budget has challengers such as funding, understanding the Town revenues, what the Town can bring to the budget and how to meet those challenges. In Natick she had to work with finding an easier way for the school committee members to understand how the school uses the budget. When information is not clear hard it is hard to make decisions.

What kind of financial data would you submit for an end of year report?

- It is the DESE report divided by schedules and where everything is documented. The report goes to the Town, then DESE and then auditors come in to audit the report.

What makes you the best candidate for Greater Lawrence Technical School?

- Working towards this since she started at Sudbury as the business office clerk, became licensed as a school business manager and started working as the business manager. Saw the job description and thought it was interesting that the tech has increased enrollment due to these programs which are highly needed, has a high respect to trade and very valuable for students that want to pursue them.

Share an experience in which your attention to detail and thoroughness had a positive impact on the school district finances?

- In Natick she was going over finances and noticed a program charged a 9% fee. Brought it up to the Superintendent who agreed to the change which saved them \$75,000.

Share an example of a professional goal you completed that made you a more effective Business Administrator?

- Part of professional development program from September to November where the goal was to uncover areas of leadership. During that process it made you look at things via a different light which helped her manage staff.

Tell us something about yourself.

- Personally, loves to ski. Professionally, loves her job. Finance in any organization is similar but in education you make a difference on the greater good. Every single decision needs to be weighed as at the end of the day it impacts students.

Do you have any questions for us?

How long vacant and who has been filling in

- Ms. Fitzgerald responded that the business office has been filling in.

What are you looking for?

- Ms. Fitzgerald responded a credentialed team player that can work well with the school committee and superintendent.

c. Interview with Keith Taverna

Give some examples of how you ensure consistent, clear and concise communication with your team?

- It's about thinking and then writing thing out in draft form, teamwork so he is not the only one set of eyes and be proactive in answering questions that might arise.

Describe how you have worked with town/city boards, municipal offices and taxpayers to create an understanding of school budget requirements and resulting funding needs?

- Works with select board, finance committee, school committee and various constituents. Strong believer of open-door policy and sharing documents publicly.

How do you plan or prepare for a collective bargaining process?

- Relationships you form with the union, town officials, school committee, staff, all involved parties such as being on first name basis as that creates a mutual level of trust so that you are advocating what is important.

4- Have you had any experience with a MSBA project? If yes, explain the project and your involvement.

- 3 projects. One accelerated restoration for elementary school, high school roof repair and 465 student elementary school project.

Please explain the 30B law and its process?

- 30B is centered around procurement. \$0-\$1,000 you use your best practices. \$10,000-\$50,000 you have to solicit three (3) quotes from three (3) vendors. Over \$50,000 access to State contracts that you can use.

Can you explain the process on how to certify an E&D account?

- Not directly involved but would imagine it is based on deficiencies and why it exists.

Provide a previous experience where you were able to identify a complex problem, evaluate the options and implement a solution?

- COVID. Danvers took a team and collaborative approach in deciding when to return to in person. There was a split in wanting and not wanting to return to in person. Utilized relationships to confront and address concerns. Always about the team and feedback.

Describe a time when you had to address a sensitive issue, performance concern or inappropriate behavior. What did you do?

- Confidentiality and empathy are important. There was a case where an employee was arrested but they were not made aware until the CORI. It required a conversation and investigation while keeping it on a need to know basis. Issued a notice of intent and before process took place the employee resigned.

Give an example of a challenge you had to overcome when putting together a budget. What issue did you have to resolve? How did you resolve it?

- 4 students that go to out of district residential schools for a cost of about \$600,000. Had to looking for alternative revenue sources, circuit breaker reserve fund where you get 75% back, restructure health insurance, reduce expenditure or increase revenue to close the gap.

What kind of financial data would you submit for an end of year report?

- Various reports, balance sheet with assets and formal accounting, State of Massachusetts financial report to compare with other schools, Chapter 70 and what funding looks like. Final report with actual expenditures to school committee and comprehensive annual report that tells the story of the financial impact.

What makes you the best candidate for Greater Lawrence Technical School?

- He cares about children it's at his core of every decision. What excites him about GLTS is that he can help kids in their next milestone. He is always helping students reach whatever their definition of success is and why he is in the education field.

Share an experience in which your attention to detail and thoroughness had a positive impact on the school district finances?

- Finds ways to maximize revenue sources such as circuit sources, Medicare and any other max revenue source.

Share an example of a professional goal you completed that made you a more effective Business Administrator?

- As an accountant, business manager and then assistant superintendent it helped him to better understand the education system which in turn provides better support for the community. Learn the different component to be able to support faculty, staff and students.

Tell us something about yourself.

- Father of 2 girls, his be all and end all. Light of his life, dad. Built a 12x16 shed that is still standing over a year later and has a sense of humor.

Do you have any questions for us?

Interested in learning why it would be a great place to be
Ms. Fitzgerald responded that she is the cheerleader for this school. Magic every single day. The education is one part but personal relationships with students and staff. Mr. Hatem also responded that he is a proud graduate and retiree.

What is the transportation like here? Is it self-service or bus contract?

- Ms. Fitzgerald responded that it is a contract.

d. Interview with Robert Conry

Give some examples of how you ensure consistent, clear and concise communication with your team?

- I will talk through an issue first on what we are trying to achieve such as quotes for a project. Anything complicated is put in writing as it enforces that it is not a maybe. Makes sure to explain things in different for different types of learners so you meet them where they are.

Describe how you have worked with town/city boards, municipal offices and taxpayers to create an understanding of school budget requirements and resulting funding needs?

- Regular part of his job so does it quite often. Meet with parents and the Town as they are 3 separate districts on how to allocate the budget and walk them through the process. Town accountants and town administrators are looped in with anything out of the norm.

How do you plan or prepare for a collective bargaining process?

- Look at similar districts and State data for all districts across the state, look and read the financial agreement, find benefits in the agreement and problematic issues should be brought to the table.

Have you had any experience with a MSBA project? If yes, explain the project and your involvement.

- Tail end of one where they could not get final disbursement but worked on the finances to obtain that final disbursement. Has resources to assist him in being able to do an MSBA project.

Please explain the 30B law and its process?

- Goods and services and basically the governing procurement law with some exceptions. Under \$10,000 you use sound business practices. Close and over \$10,000 you get quotes from vendors but you can use state procurement. \$50,000 and above you get bids. Do what you can to promote competition such a request for proposal where you can consider other factors where the higher bid might be better.

Can you explain the process on how to certify an E&D account?

- Local services balance sheet where you can download the ledger to fit into the required categories as they are a whole set of guidelines. Towns free cash only for general funds, excess revenues accepted over time, the surplus over time with a cap of 5%. A deficit in the revolving fund can be deducted. Fairly good relationship with their E&D accountant and no issues for the last five years.

Provide a previous experience where you were able to identify a complex problem, evaluate the options and implement a solution?

- When they were 3 separate districts and they wanted to regionalize the district. Going from three (3) budgets to one (1) set. It was going to be \$600,000 difference from one (1) town to another if they did it as the State wanted so he did some research and they got an agreement with DESE directly but had to walk everyone through on how this would work and the benefits.

Describe a time when you had to address a sensitive issue, performance concern or inappropriate behavior. What did you do?

- There was a staff member that spent a fair amount of time in each of the schools but took his mask off too frequently in the presence of school staff. Spoke with employee this was not an option but another time came up and had to be clear on policy that the primary goal is to support the schools. Resulted in periodic check ins where he has improved.

Give an example of a challenge you had to overcome when putting together a budget. What issue did you have to resolve? How did you resolve it?

- Challenge is there are a lot more requests than they can fund. Brought an approach where they have to evaluate what is being requested all at the same time and not individually so that they can prioritize. If there is a process then all involved parties feel they were considered.

What kind of financial data would you submit for an end of year report?

- There is a DESE chart that outlines what they need and the guidelines. All areas are divided into schedules such as administration, teaching and learning, support services, maintenance, professional salaries, clerical salaries, contract services, revolving grants, grants and donations. There are specific Budget data in each of the schedules and is more intense than E&D.

What makes you the best candidate for Greater Lawrence Technical School?

- Feels his attributes are what you are looking for. His attributes are that he is a calming influence especially during the pandemic, rational and thoughtful in decision making, transparent and communicates what he is thinking respectfully, approachable, accessible, and likes doing a good job. Do something and do it well. Communicates in a way that is understandable and relatable. Good sense of humor and keep things light but at the same time not to overlook he has a job to do. Open to areas for growth and feedback.

Share an experience in which your attention to detail and thoroughness had a positive impact on the school district finances?

- Attentive to detail and thorough. Making sure no returns on grant funding, regular check in with departments, timelines of grant expiration, tries to maximize and seek competitive grants. Looking for opportunities to obtain grants, leveraged grants through the insurance company. Got 2 grants from the insurance company that wouldn't have been funded. In January they look at the budget and ask staff to prioritize year end funding. Having a process to leverage is important in helping to save the district money.

Share an example of a professional goal you completed that made you a more effective Business Administrator?

- Monthly MASCO meetings. Topics on all aspects of the business world and one of the most viable aspects was sitting with all these business administrators. Also, meetings with other business administrators to look at what other schools have done that has worked or not worked.

Tell us something about yourself.

- Married with 2 kids, a big sports fan and coached youth sports where he can provide positive feedback. Also, on the board of Trustees as they are huge outdoor fans.

Do you have any questions for us?

What qualities and attributes do you feel would make for a good candidate

- Ms. Fitzgerald responded they are looking for someone knowledgeable, competent with great skills but most of all a team player.

Are the programs growing? Where is the growth?

- Chair responded aviation and others in the works. Ms. Fitzgerald added that they are looking to expand so they are looking for more space.

Are you looking to build more space?

- Ms. Fitzgerald clarified that they are looking for better utilization of space such as satellite. Ms. Marmol clarified that they will be using the Lawrence Municipal Airport for the aviation and the environmental science program.

I noticed there was an influx of funding, Chapter 70, ESSERT 3 funds, was that for HVAC?

- Chair responded it was for different projects but will have to get back to him.

What kind of working relationship do you have with the community?

- Chair responded that it is great and they know how much GLTS contributes to the towns/cities. They reach out to all elected officials so they can see what they are spending money on.

3. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Ms. Fitzgerald moved to adjourn at 8:21 p.m.

2ND: Ms. Marmol

VOTE: Roll Called by District Recorder:

Ms. Rossi	Absent
Ms. Fitzgerald	Yes
Ms. Disla	Yes
Mr. Hatem	Yes
Mr. Lamontagne	Yes
Ms. Marmol	Yes
Mr. Surillo	Yes

#18031

Respectfully Submitted:



Madisyn Portorreal
District Recorder

Minutes Reviewed:



John N. Lavoie
Superintendent-Director