



**DISTRICT COMMITTEE  
OPEN MEETING MINUTES  
MEETING #1833  
February 15, 2022**

**Members Present:** Francisco Surillo                      Methuen                      Chairperson  
Vivian Marmol                      Lawrence                      Vice Chairperson  
Zoila Disla                      Lawrence                      Assistant Treasurer  
Marilyn Fitzgerald                      Andover  
Thomas Hatem                      Methuen  
Leo Lamontagne                      Lawrence  
Frank Rossi                      North Andover

**Others Present:** John N. Lavoie                      Superintendent-Director  
Gerry DiStefano                      Treasurer  
Madisyn Portorreal                      District Recorder

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**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 Ms. Melissa Martel**

Are you an active member of the Massachusetts Association of School Business Officials (MASBO)? Explain what their functions are and why it would be beneficial for you to belong to the organization.

Active member of MASBO and attends all of their bimonthly meetings that are specifically for school business members which helps her to prepare for her job. You also meet the business managers from different school districts within the State so you get to see how others are doing things.

What do you see as your responsibility in building the 2022-2023 school budget?

Start early with a meeting with all school principals, Department heads, Superintendent, Director of Finance and myself will prepare worksheets with last year's budget and what was actually spent. Supposed to be a zero-based budget. Go through priorities and take all that data with the

budget analyst, look for priorities and go back to the Superintendent. Once the budget is final o\it goes to school committee, finance committee and then the Town.

Please explain the steps for a bid process that should be used for a school project that is over \$100,000.

Sealed bid process. School department would issue an IFB or RFB which is a document that contains the specifications, advertise in 4 different places 2 weeks prior to bid due date, specify due date, open bid process to watch them open the bids. In an IFB you meet all the qualifications of the documents but you accept the lowest price. Requests for proposals are based on a grading system but you do not have to pick the lowest price.

What do you see as the most difficult challenge/s being a Business Administrator?

The scope of the job. Responsible for budget and finance budget you are also overseeing other areas such as transportation, grants, human resource, point of contact for everything operational, and has to be up to date with M.G. laws so it's not just about knowing finances or managing a budget.

Provide a previous experience when you were able to identify a complex problem and how you resolved it?

Accounts payable process was the prior response. This issue was that the entire payroll staff left so payroll needed attention. Used the current payroll system which is 2-fold. Using time sheets but the Town is the one that processes payments. Received paper time sheets to be entered into a spreadsheet while verifying rate of pay. Salary side uses a spreadsheet so there were 15 of them to link into the main spreadsheet. Changed the process by creating a google form for anyone submitting a timesheet. On the salary side she turned 15 sheets into 1 spreadsheet with available balance to the right. MUNIS assessment on payroll system done jointly with the Town to create a plan going forward.

What would you do if confronted with a questionable payment and/or financial transaction?

Receives checks all of the time without knowing what it is or what for. Call the vendor to find out what it was for. If a questionable payment I would check with accounts payable to see what it was for and if not that way then they would call the comptroller or treasurer to get more information.

In the course of keeping a current equipment inventory you discover that many items of value were missing, how would you proceed?

Look around for items and if it can't be found then bring that to the attention of the Superintendent, Director of Finance and report that.

Once hired as the new Business Administrator for GLTS, what are the first steps you would take in transitioning into the position?

Review the financials and the system, understand how the business office is currently functioning, meet with the Superintendent and Principal to find out the priorities are and for myself as the new business manager.

Assuming the 2023-2024 budget has not been started when you begin your tenure at GLTS, what steps would you implement to build the budget?

What's been done so far. Meet with the Principal to get a handle on the budget. Make sure there is enough in the budget to cover the salary, level fund the departments on their expense budgets and then priorities from the Committee, Superintendent and Principal to see what we can add to the budget.

In your mind, what makes an excellent account payable employee?

Worked with an employee that was very old school and set in her ways but replaced her with someone equally as wonderful but that goes the extra mile and takes the extra step. What makes her more effective is that she is detail oriented, problem solver, issues with resolution or suggestion on how to fix, stay on top of invoices and they are paid in a timely manner so there were no open purchase orders pending open longer than 2 months.

What kind of professional activities would you recommend to your staff if given the position?

Staff participate in PD so always look at courses in Excel, explaining to staff the bigger picture such as why PO's are closed in 2 months, give them an accurate picture of where you are financially and following the contract with regard to salary.

How would you get your staff to accept new ideas and professional insights to encourage new approaches?

Include staff with any new initiative or new idea so they are induced in the decision making. Important to include staff in the decision-making process.

Ms. Marmol reported that this position answers to the School Committee and Superintendent but if there was a procurement violation, who would you inform?

Ms. Martel responded the School committee and Superintendent but she would want to understand why there was a violation or why the process wasn't followed and then let both know how it would be rectified.

Mr. Hatem asked if she knew who we are?

Ms. Martel responded that she knows the communities are Lawrence, Methuen, Andover and N. Andover, has about 1,600 students, majority are Hispanic, 40% go on to college whether 2 or 4, Superintendent is a graduate of GLTS.

Chair responded they have 3 graduates and 3 former employees

Mr. Hatem asked if she was familiar with our Cities or Towns

Ms. Martel responded that she looked at Andover for homes, has been to New Balance in Lawrence, graduate of UMass Lowell so interacted with community members from this district, Lawrence is struggling in their administration and finances, Andover is probably the wealthiest of the communities, students and family are very dedicated and proud of their towns that want the best for their students

Chair asked how much notice is she required to provide her current employer

Ms. Martel responded that she has a 3-month clause with Natick

Chair asked Ms. Martel to elaborate on her statement that Lawrence is struggling with finances, what did you mean?

Ms. Martel said she found that the City of Lawrence and/or school **was** going into receivership?

Chair responded and provided clarification.

Respectfully Submitted:



Madisyn Portorreal  
District Recorder

Minutes Reviewed:



John N. Lavoie  
Superintendent-Director