

MARION SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES

December 5, 2024 at 4:30pm

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: April Nye and Nichole Nye McGaffey

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT: Michael S. Nelson, Superintendent of Schools, Howard Barber, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations and Melissa Wilcox, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent.

OTHERS PRESENT: Shay Assad and Thomas Crowley, Finance Committee

Ms. Nye called the meeting to order at 4:34 p.m.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION:

Superintendent Nelson welcomed the attendees and thanked the Finance Committee members for being present. He shared that Town Officials are looking for a draft FY2026 budget this week and he communicated the school committee will be discussing the draft this evening. He reviewed that the main budget drivers are again special education and transportation. Last year, \$125,000 in funds was earmarked by the Town in a separate article for special education in anticipation of increased expenses, which have come to fruition. He informed the school committee that a part-time lunch/recess aid, previously funded through ESSER grants, is now part of the operating budget. A second full-time special education teacher needed based on the building needs is incorporated into this budget as well, as it is already taking place this year. Mr. Barber reviewed each department of the proposed FY2026 draft budget, which increased 8.57% from FY2025. He highlighted special education and transportation expenses, along with projected expenses for a new Math curriculum to align all three elementary districts. He added that the technology replacement plan expenses were added back into FY2026 as they had been cut in FY2025.

School Committee Feedback:

Ms. Nye and Ms. Nye McGaffey appreciated the draft FY2026 budget with the additional new initiatives broken out separately. Ms. Nye McGaffey questioned how the amount of bus monitors is determined. Superintendent Nelson explained it is based on student need and legal requirements. Ms. Nye added that many of the new initiatives listed are based on student needs and reminded everyone that many items are out of their control but significantly increase expenses.

Mr. Assad asked if all three elementary districts are working together for a new Math curriculum and what that would look like if one or more towns decided not to support it. Superintendent Nelson said in recent years the elementary districts have been working hard to align curriculum as part of the Strategic Plan Vision 2028 so that all students leading into ORR Junior High School have a cohesive experience. He explained that it is usually more cost effective when all three districts purchase a curriculum together.

Mr. Crowley asked to confirm that the special education teacher position is serving an existing student and if the student services cannot be fulfilled at Sippican, then there would be significant increases to expenses to utilize collaborative or other out-of-district services. Superintendent Nelson confirmed and added that the goal would be to strengthen the special education programming at Sippican in order to maintain students and potentially bring students already placed outside of the district back.

Motion to accept the preliminary draft FY2026 budget and submit it to the Town by Ms. Nye McGaffey

Motion seconded by Ms. Nye

Roll Call - Motion Carried 2-0.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:43 p.m.

Motion to adjourn by Ms. Nye McGaffey

Motion seconded by Ms. Nye

Roll Call - Motion Carried 2-0.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M~N~".

Michael S. Nelson
Superintendent