

# **GREATER LOWELL TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL**

## **FINANCE SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING**

### **Minutes of February 13, 2025 Meeting**

#### **CALL TO ORDER**

Sub-Committee Chairman Gitschier called the meeting to order at 5:07 p.m.

#### **ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Mr. Gitschier, Mr. Bahou, Mr. Sheehan

Members Absent: Mr. Nocco

Also Present: Jill Davis, Superintendent-Director  
Michael Knight, School Business Administrator  
Alison Rihani, Director of Special Education  
Recording Secretary

Sub-Committee Chairman Gitschier stated the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the FY26 budget.

Superintendent Davis and School Business Administrator Michael Knight presented the preliminary FY26 budget to the Finance Sub-Committee members. She began by informing the subcommittee that the preliminary budget was developed based on the Governor's House Budget Proposal, as well as data and input from administrators, teachers, parents, and community partners and centered around improving student achievement in order to develop confident learners and skilled workers.

Ms. Davis reminded the members that the Massachusetts House, Senate and Governor approved a change in the state funding formula for public education in 2015. The bill provided an investment of \$1.5 billion into schools over the next six (6) years (originally seven years but was reduced to six years last year) and is currently going into year 5. This bill 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 by \$493.96, the rate for a special education student was increased by \$780.72 and the rate for ELL students was increased by \$354.41. Also noted was the low-income percentage (currently at 54.11 – down from 56.2%) which places us in category 10; therefore, receiving \$7,815.03, which is an increase of \$651.44.

Superintendent Davis continued with the new rates of pupil expenditures set by the state and our current enrollment; the Foundation Budget increased by \$1,601,501, which is a 2.99% increase over this year's budget. She added that this amount is all net school spending required funding that needs to be spent each year in addition to future budget increases.

Superintendent Davis and Mr. Knight spoke briefly on the revenue budget consisting of Excess and Deficiency, Assessment to the Towns, and State Aid. Ms. Davis informed the members that the assessment to the towns includes an increase of \$230,912 from last year; with the City of Lowell's

assessment decreasing and the Town of Dracut's assessment increasing, adding this was largely due to the increase of Dracut student enrollment numbers. Mr. Knight reminded the members that last year, excess transportation funds were put into a revolving account to offset this year's budget. Therefore, the increase in total assessment would have been larger; however, was offset by the use of the funds in the revolving account.

Superintendent Davis reviewed the proposed budget priorities as follows, detailing the priorities in each of the following areas:

- Enhancing Curriculum and Instruction
- Maintaining Class Size and Course Flexibility
- Supporting Student Success and Family Engagement
- Investing in Educational Technology and Industry Alignment
- Providing Professional Development for High-Quality Instruction

Mr. Knight spoke regarding the proposed FY26 expenditure budget; noting the proposed preliminary budget of \$59,095,802 represents an increase of \$1,114,322, which is a 1.9% increase. He added that instructional and academic/technical spending continues to dominate the budget expenditure. It also includes investments in programmatic resources, supports, and interventions to meet the needs of our diverse learners and deepen learning for all students as well as supporting educational equity and opportunity.

Committeeman Bahou inquired as to the lack of funding allocation for OPEB and would this affect the school's rating. Mr. Knight informed the members that our rating was OK and currently did not see a need to allocate funding at this time, but was not opposed to including funding if recommended. Mr. Bahou added he would like to see some minimal funding added and recommended \$25,000 be moved to OPEB. After further discussion, the members agreed with Mr. Bahou's recommendation and Mr. Knight will alter the budget to include the move of \$25,000 to OPEB.

Mr. Knight reviewed non-personnel notable expenditures which include supplies/equipment texts, transportation reduction using reimbursement carried over, fringe benefits & retirement, and an increase to the Plant Services Department budget.

Superintendent Davis continued with reviewing the proposed personnel expenditures. The first was the reorganization of the CTE Chair Departments. With the upcoming retirement of the current Construction & Transportation CTE Chair, Ms. Davis was recommending a reorganization of departments that would better group departments; ultimately make a cluster that is STEM based and work together collaboratively. The proposed changes are as follows:

- **Construction & Transportation Cluster:** Adding Automotive Technology & Auto Collision departments to the existing cluster: Carpentry, Electrical, HVAC-R, Masonry, Painting & Design, and Plumbing; Renaming the Cluster to include Transportation; CTE Chair would receive a stipend of \$7,195 dollars due to the additional responsibilities of supervising two additional departments in this Cluster.
- **Allied Health & Communication Cluster:** Removing Information Technology Services from existing Cluster and adding Veterinary Science; renaming the Cluster to Allied Health & Communication Cluster.
- **Personal Services Cluster:** Remains the same.

- **Manufacturing, Engineering & Technology Cluster:** Adding Information Technology department and removing Auto Collision Repair & Refinishing and Automotive Technology from existing Cluster: Computer Aided Drafting & Design, Electronics Technology, Engineering Technology, Metal Fabrication & Joining Technologies; renaming the Cluster to Manufacturing, Engineering & Technology.

Ms. Davis added that due to increased student interest in athletics, there is a need to hire additional coaches. These include: one (1) Flag Football Varsity Coach, one (1) Flag Football Asst. Varsity Coach, and one (1) Flag Football JV Coach.

Ms. Davis asked the Director of Special Education – Alison Rihani to the table to discuss her request for the increase in salary for the two veteran Transitional Worksite Aide non-contractual positions. Mrs. Rihani detailed her request, noting the difficulty in keeping the positions filled due to the current salary and the need for the increase in order for staffing to remain, as well as the need for the consistency in the program. Mrs. Rihani noted that even though they do receive yearly percentage increases, these non-contractual positions do not include a salary step chart in comparison to contractual positions; therefore, do not have the ability to advance steps. When asked about the third position, Mrs. Rihani informed she felt the salary for the recently hired staff member could remain as is and was currently seeking the increase only for the two staff members who have had held the position for 8+ years.

Mr. Knight spoke regarding the use of Excess and Deficiency. His recommendation to use \$400,000 comes from the need to meet net school spending. Without this minimum amount added to the budget, we would not meet net school spending.

Superintendent Davis and Mr. Knight provided a summary of the proposed FY26 budget as follows: The preliminary FY26 total budget would be \$59,095,802, which is a 2.99% increase over FY25.

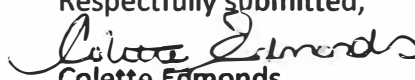
Operating Budget	55,600,722
Transportation	2,241,000
Debt Service	1,253,280
OPEB	0

The preliminary FY26 Budget assessment would be:

Min. Local Contribution	16,870,122	Chapter 70	38,330,600
Transportation Assessment	741,799	Chapter 71 (transportation)	1,500,000
<u>Debt Assessment</u>	<u>1,253,280</u>	<u>Excess &amp; Deficiency</u>	<u>400,000</u>
Total Assessment	18,865,202	Total Budget	59,095,802

**MOTION:** by Mr. Sheehan, seconded by Mr. Bahou to adjourn at 6:17 p.m.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:** 3 Yes, 1 Absent (Mr. Nocco)

Respectfully submitted,  
  
 Colette Edmonds  
 Recording Secretary