

**ORR BUDGET SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES**

**March 11, 2025 at 4:30 p.m.
Remote via Zoom**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: James Muse, Michelle Smith and Matthew Monteiro (all in-person).

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: None

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT: Michael S. Nelson, Superintendent of Schools, Howard Barber, Assistant Superintendent of Finance & Operations, Shari Fedorowicz, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching & Learning, Jaime Curley, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services, Michael Devoll, Principal – ORR High School and Silas Coellner, Principal – ORR Junior High School (all in-person).

Meeting called to order at 4:35 p.m. by Ms. Smith.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION:

Superintendent Nelson welcomed the school committee members and reminded those present that the Governor's budget had been released and was not favorable for our four districts, along with over 200 in the state. He expressed to the school committee to participate in any advocacy they can to support 'Hold Harmless' districts such as ours and changes to the Chapter 70 formula. The level-service FY2026 budget shared at the last meeting was an increase of about 6.51% or about \$1.2 million. Superintendent Nelson recognized that was a daunting number to bring forward to the towns. He worked with Mr. Barber, Mr. Devoll and Mr. Coellner to review the complete budget line by line further and identified areas where potential reductions could be made while prioritizing the faculty and staff that are in front of students every day. Superintendent Nelson continued that these are difficult conversations and it is important to present a programmatically responsible budget for our students, faculty and staff, but also to continue to maintain strong relationships with town officials and consider their task of balancing the entire budget for all departments within their respective town. After Mr. Barber reviewed the changes in each department, he hoped the school committee will recommend a number so that he may share updated information with the towns the next day for feedback.

Mr. Barber reviewed the summary sheet, which proposed an increase of 4.74% or \$989,823. Mr. Barber reviewed changes by department. These updates included removing funds from professional development expenses in the Teaching and Learning department of Central Office because each building has a current budget line for these expenses, reducing computer services, adjusting insurance, pension and benefits and the extended year program in the Special Education Department. He continued to explained updates to the software expenses in the Technology Department. Finally, Mr. Barber reviewed increases to the Transportation Department.

Next, Mr. Barber explained the FY2026 Proposed Statutory Assessments. This assessment takes into account minimum local contributions as determined by the State, allocation based on enrollment as determined by the Regional Agreement, regional transportation expenses and projected revenues for FY2026. The FY2026 Assessment Summary draft for each town includes Operating, Capital Stabilization and Capital BAN Debt. There is not currently Capital Bond Debt, but could be modified in FY2027 if the debt project moves forward. The total by Town is \$5,973,521 for Marion, \$6,484,945 for Mattapoisett and \$5,723,752 for Rochester.

Superintendent Nelson recapped that this current proposed budget does not include the Director of Guidance position, which is currently not filled. Mr. Devoll expressed that he does not want to see the Director of Guidance position removed and explained his thought process on potential reductions based on class selections by students.

Mr. Coellner agreed that it is painful to consider reductions in any way. He reviewed potential options for reductions in the Junior High School based on retirements and staff changings taking place.

Superintendent Nelson stated these are not recommendations the administration wants to make or takes lightly, but they all recognize the current financial situation. With endorsement of this number by the school committee, he will share the information with the Town Officials and then reconvene the Budget Subcommittee to ensure the members are supportive of the final proposals in each department.

School Committee feedback:

Mr. Muse expressed that it is painful to review potential reductions and added that he is astounded by the increase in utility expenses and recognizes the mandated expenses in insurance, contracts, etc. He appreciated the efforts of the administration and their willingness to have honest conversations. Ms. Smith shared that she believes the Director of Guidance position is important and impactful but hopefully less impactful directly on students to remove that from the budget instead of other positions. Mr. Monteiro shared his concern on class sizes in some departements. Ms. Smith agreed. The members supported the reduced proposed budget amount for the administration to work within.

Motion by Mr. Monteiro to share the proposed draft ORR budget of \$21,891,852 (an increase of \$989,823 or 4.74%) with Town Officials.

Seconded by Mr. Muse.

Roll Call: Muse (yes); Monteiro (yes); Smith (yes)

Motion Carried 3-0.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:39 p.m.

Motion by Mr. Monteiro to adjourn the meeting.

Seconded by Mr. Muse.

Roll Call: Muse (yes); Monteiro (yes); Smith (yes)

Motion Carried 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Michael S. Nelson
Superintendent of Schools