

**THE GLOUCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

*Our mission is for all students to be successful, engaged, lifelong learners.*

**Minutes of the School Committee Public Hearing  
On the FY 2013 Proposed School Budget**

Wednesday, April 4, 2011

O'Maley Middle School Auditorium

7:00 p.m.

**Members**

Jonathan Pope, Chairman  
Val Gilman, Vice Chairperson  
Kathy Clancy, Secretary  
Melissa Teixeira  
Roger Garberg  
Mayor Carolyn Kirk

**Administration Present**

Dr. Richard Safier, Superintendent  
Assistant Superintendent Brian Tarr  
Assistant Superintendent Shayne Trubisz  
CFO Tom Markham  
Jean Perry, West Parish Principal  
Ellen Sibley, Beeman Principal  
Gregg Bach, East Gloucester Principal  
Cherylann Parker, Veterans Principal  
JoAnne Reiss, SPED Director  
Leslie Sellers, O'Maley teacher

**Also Present**

City Councilor Paul McGeary  
City Auditor Kenny Costa

Recorded by Cape Ann TV

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**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Pope called the public hearing to order at 7:09 p.m. and stated the mission of the Gloucester Public Schools.

**II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG**

**III. INTRODUCTION** – Chairman Pope welcomed the members of the audience and stated that the budget to be presented this evening was voted by the School Committee a couple of weeks ago and that the committee has not yet received any monetary guidelines from the Mayor. Once those guidelines have been received, the budget will be reconsidered and voted by the School Committee on April 25, 2012. From there, the school budget will go to the Mayor, who will present it with her recommendations to the City Council. A public hearing will then be held on the entire city budget. After the City Council votes the city budget, the School Committee will likely have to adjust the school budget to conform to what was voted by the City Council.

**IV. THE PROPOSED FY13 BUDGET PRESENTATION**

Dr. Safier thanked everyone for coming to the public hearing and reviewed highlights in the schools, FY12 education successes, FY13 budget goals, the budget development process, the

budget proposal bottom line, the difference between a level service and level funded budget, FY12 personnel and non-salary/program cuts, and critical needs, including the importance of the BSRI program in all elementary schools. Mr. Markham reviewed the details of the FY13 proposed budget, including loss of funding and necessary increases.

## **V. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS**

Chairman Pope invited members of the audience to comment or ask questions on the budget, and two individuals made the following statements:

**Sarah Grow** is a parent of three school-aged children in the GPSD – an eighth grader at O’Maley and two fifth graders who will be attending O’Maley in the fall. “For nine years, I have been involved in my children’s schools, on site bases and PTOs, involved with the GEF, and supported the GFAA. Like you and many parents, I have been an advocate for education. Together we have worked hard to maintain opportunities for all our students. We volunteer and fundraise. We provide things that the district can no longer afford and support curriculum that the district cannot provide. Today, as you contemplate this year’s budget, I ask that you take a good look at this district as a whole. I commend the new superintendent for making math a priority along with literacy, something that was neglected with the previous administration. However, we should not stop there. This time last year, the O’Maley site base advocated, supported and eventually had Spanish put into the elective cycle with the plan that it would become a core subject this following school year. Currently, this has not been followed through upon. Every year I come here to ask you to make world languages a priority for this district and this city. Math is important. Literacy is important. World language is important. Every year I come here and I say world language is important so that all our children can be part of the world economy, so they can be prepared for what life brings them, and so a Gloucester child can choose to take an AP language class in the high school. But so far, that hasn’t worked. So, this year, I thought I’d use a different tactic. Today I ask you to do it for the foreign language students in our schools that struggle in math and English. Many of them are the low income students that we talk about today. For those students, having a subject that they can excel in will change their path. It will help them become more successful knowing that they can excel in a subject. It will help them do better in school. And if that doesn’t work, I’d like to tell you about Salt Lake City in Utah. According to NPR (and yes, I am a member), Utah created more jobs than any other state in the country. This job boom was not because of oil or gas but because of a technology company, many technology companies. And why did these companies move to Utah? Because Utah has the highest percentage of foreign language speakers in the country. Ebay has just moved hundreds of jobs from the Philippines to Salt Lake City to take advantage of workers that could speak more than one language. These foreign language speakers are Utah’s ‘secret economic weapon.’ Today I ask you, the School Committee and the superintendent, to amp up our educational arsenal, give our children the edge in the job market, and bring languages back into O’Maley’s core curriculum.”

**Jason Grow** of 12 Marble Road thanked the committee for having a public hearing. “Understanding well the fiscal difficulties that have faced our community over the past decade and which will continue for the foreseeable future, I know that there is a delicate

balance that must be struck during the budgeting process. With respect to that, let me say that ‘level service’ is the barest minimum below which we should not go – and by level service, that should include all the programs that were funded for FY12 both in the initial budget and in the supplemental budgets and the funding that came as a result of ‘free cash.’ It’s either level service or it’s not. I was struck tonight by your presentation, Mr. Safier. We’re asking for \$1.9 million to bring us up to level service from last year, which is reflective of a \$1.9 million cut last year at a cost of 37 jobs, at a time when the city recognized \$3 million in free cash. We are asking for \$1.9 million to get us to a level that is a step behind where we would be two years ago if we had a level service budget last year. In order to get to level service budget for two years ago, we would need \$3.8 million. That’s one step forward and two steps back. ‘Level service’ is an absolute baseline, and the priority of the School Committee as well as the City ought to be set towards rebuilding the many programs and opportunities that have suffered or been altogether eliminated. As this district continues to face challenges from school choice, either outside the district or to the charter school, it should view this as a direct challenge to create a school environment that reverses the flow and becomes one that other districts envy. I know that our schools are doing far more than is generally recognized by the public and they are doing it with fewer resources at their disposal, but that can’t continue indefinitely. As long as the specter of further cuts or lack of growth hover over the district, parents will continue to take their children elsewhere, whether that elsewhere is actually better for their kids or not. As you prepare your final budget recommendation, keep in mind that your job is to responsibly advocate on behalf of the children of this district. You do that by putting forward a budget that addresses the needs of the district to perform the task to which you are charged. In previous years, the School Committee has been too willing, I think, to concede ground where it should have remained firm. Put forward the budget you believe is and can defend as being responsible from an educational perspective and which begins the long process of rebuilding that which has been systematically eroded. Your job is not to release the Mayor or the City Council from their obligations in this process. They may well cut whatever budget you present, but that will be on their shoulders, and they will be required to answer for their decisions to the community. Your committee will have to deal with the results of their ultimate decision one way or the other, but should they choose not to responsibly fund education, they should have to make the case as to why not. Don’t do it for them. Do not waver in your commitment to doing what is right and responsible for the children of this community and the long-term health and welfare of the schools. I have said it before. I will say it again, and I will say it till I’m blue in the face. If this community wants to spur meaningful and substantial economic development, excellent schools have got to be part of that equation. You cannot have one without the other. And we need to build the schools to a point where people want to bring their economic development to our community.”

Chairman Pope stated that the full budget book is available for review in the City Clerk’s office, at the Sawyer Free Library, and at the administrative office at Fuller School. He thanked everyone for coming to the public hearing.

*(At this time, a 10-minute break was taken.)*

## **VI. ACTION**

Mrs. Gilman reported that the Program Subcommittee met this afternoon and put together a final draft of the Frequently Asked Questions and Answers for the Fuller School decision and the MSBA process. The subcommittee discussed the process of receiving questions from the public and responding to them. Mr. Garberg will include links for every question directing readers to the answers. They also discussed a process where the public could submit other questions to the committee and those questions could be added to the FAQs.

After discussion, on a motion by Mrs. Gilman, seconded by Kathy Clancy, it was unanimously

**VOTED:** 6 in favor zero opposed, to appoint Roger Garberg as the recipient of emails submitted to [districtresponds@gloucester.k12.ma.us](mailto:districtresponds@gloucester.k12.ma.us). In this role, he assumes the responsibility to acknowledge receipt of each question and bring them forward to the full committee and the superintendent.

The following matters were discussed with respect to the FAQs:

- Adding a question addressing what constitutes a 21<sup>st</sup> century learning environment
- Adding a question regarding equity and fairness that result from consolidating schools and having some very small schools and one very large school
- Including the roof reimbursement in the cost to renovate Fuller School. Mayor Kirk will verify the amount the city would have to repay for the roofs.
- Adding the cost of \$3.5 million for facilities reconstruction
- Changing Fuller's operational costs from \$170,000 to \$300,000 a year
- The fact that Fuller School could only hold 750 students
- Adding positive language about seeking alternative funding for the preschool move to Pathways
- Using Mayor Kirk's updated information on the seven requirements of the MSBA eligibility period
- Changing the cost of the feasibility study to \$500,000
- Adding a sentence indicating that the feasibility study will be funded with a loan authorization funded with general fund revenues.
- Including the \$3.5 million state-of-the-art modulars as a capital investment that we have made and need to protect
- Including a statement that the City Council will hold a public hearing on the loan authorization request for the \$500,000 for the feasibility study
- Including the MSBA meeting minutes on the School Committee website

After discussion, on a motion by Mrs. Gilman, seconded by Ms. Teixeira, it was unanimously

**VOTED:** 6 in favor zero opposed, to approve the April 4, 2012 revision of the Frequently Asked Questions and Answers on the Fuller School Future and the West Parish MSBA Process with the amended notations as discussed.

Chairman Pope thanked the Program Subcommittee for their hard work on putting the FAQs together.

**VII. ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion by Ms. Teixeira, seconded by Mrs. Gilman, it was unanimously

**VOTED:** 6 in favor zero opposed, to adjourn the School Committee Public Hearing of April 4, 2011 at 8:57 p.m.

*All reference documents and reports are filed in the Superintendent's office.*

*Maria Puglisi  
Recording Secretary*