

THE GLOUCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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

Building & Finance Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 12, 2020
District Office Conference Room
2 Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA
5:00 p.m.

Members Present

Kathy Clancy, Chairperson
Joel Favazza, Vice Chairperson (5:51 p.m.)
Specialist
Jonathan Pope, Member

Administration Present

Dr. Richard Safier, Superintendent
Cody Marshall, Accounts & Budget

Kathy Verga, Transportation Director
Grant Harris, IT Director

Also Present

Samantha Verga Watson (5:31 p.m.)
Melissa Teixeira Prince (6:05 p.m.)

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- I. CALL TO ORDER** – Chairperson Clancy called the meeting to order at 5:04 p.m. and stated the mission of the Gloucester Public Schools.
- II. CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER’S REPORT**
- III. REPORTS/DELIBERATIONS/DISCUSSIONS**
- A. Transportation – Driver Shortage** – Kathy Verga reported that the driver of Bus 4 is retiring on February 24th and there will not be enough drivers to transport the students we are currently transporting. Dr. Safier noted that we were down three drivers at the beginning of the school year, and Ms. Verga stated that we have lost seven drivers in the past 18 months.
- Ms. Verga reported that the driver retirement affects students at O’Maley and Beeman. She recommended eliminating 11 students from the O’Maley run and 28 third to fifth graders from the Beeman run who live within a mile and a half and can walk to school on the path behind Beeman. Dr. Safier indicated that two of the 11 O’Maley students are sixth graders and suggested asking their parents to drive them to school with mileage reimbursement for a couple of months.
- There was a discussion about allowing students to go to another bus stop. Ms. Verga indicated that of the 23 O’Maley students that were on Bus 4, eight can walk out to Essex Avenue and take Bus 6 and four others are going on Bus 8. That leaves the 11 students mentioned above.

Ms. Verga reported that she has called Bob Ryan at CATA several times and has emailed Pathways to see if they can lend us a driver. She has also posted the need for drivers on SchoolSpring, Indeed and Facebook and sent backpack flyers to all of the principals. She recommended offering paid training (60 hours), paying drivers for school vacation weeks, offering referral bonuses and a sign-on bonus after a year, and doing a job fair to bring people in. She also suggested reaching out to retired policemen and firemen.

Dr. Safier recommended sending out a notice to parents of the affected students that we cannot provide transportation at this time. Chairperson Clancy recommended that someone call the parents instead of sending a letter.

(At this time, the agenda was taken out of order.)

- G. Carbon Monoxide Detectors** – Mr. Harris reported that he spoke with Joe Lucido today and indicated that the fire department is requiring NFPA certified devices. He is recommending installing 16 standard certified CO detectors in the schools at a cost of approximately \$50.00 each, for a total cost of about \$800.00. Chairperson Clancy recommended that he send an email to Mr. Lucido confirming where the detectors will be placed and the obligation of the custodians to check them daily. Dr. Safier indicated that he will speak with Mike Hale about this.

Mr. Pope made a motion to recommend to the full School Committee that we direct the IT Director to acquire and install carbon monoxide detectors in all school buildings. After discussion, he withdrew the motion.

- B. District Expenditures FY20** – Mr. Marshall reviewed the expenditure report, and there was a discussion about prepayment of out-of-district tuition. Mr. Pope reported that John Dunn will be handling the budget this year and he seems more receptive to prepayment of tuition.

(Mr. Favazza joined the meeting at 5:51 p.m., at which time a quorum of the School Committee was present at the meeting.)

- D. Revolving Funds** – Mr. Marshall reviewed the revolving funds.
- E. Budget Transfers** – Mr. Marshall reviewed the budget transfers.

On a motion by Mr. Pope, seconded by Mr. Favazza, it was unanimously

VOTED: 3 in favor, 0 opposed to recommend to the full School Committee that we approve the January budget transfers, as presented.

- F. Free Cash** – Mr. Marshall reported that there were two instances where School Department money was deposited in the city's general fund, one being E-Rate funds in the amount of \$17,325.14 and the other being \$23,902.78 from closed

revolving funds. Mr. Pope noted that the committee has already requested a supplemental appropriation for the closed revolving accounts before free cash was certified.

After discussion, on a motion by Mr. Pope, seconded by Mr. Favazza, it was unanimously

VOTED: 3 in favor, 0 opposed to recommend to the full School Committee that we request a supplemental appropriation from the city in the amount of \$41,227.92, representing \$17,325.14 of E-Rate funds and \$23,902.78 that was returned to the city from closed school revolving accounts.

C. Draft FY21 Budget Overview – Dr. Safier presented a slide show on the FY21 draft budget, including the budget calendar, guiding principles for budget development, a summary of annual changes to the budget, funding by source, percentage of expenditures, and significant cost adjustments to the budget. He reported that the draft budget totals \$44,568,716, an increase of \$1,429,819 (3.31%) over this year’s approved budget. He noted that the increase is based on receiving \$1.2 million from the city plus \$229,000 from the Student Opportunity Act.

Dr. Safier reviewed expenditures by school per pupil and optional additions to the draft budget (Options A, B and C). He noted that Options A and B (\$565,000) are included in the draft budget proposal and Option C includes another \$384,000 in new positions. There was a discussion about the reduction of CAD class offerings.

Dr. Safier reviewed potential city funding, and Mr. Favazza advocated for presenting the budget without the health insurance increase since other city departments do not have health insurance in their budgets. Dr. Safier indicated that they will highlight the fact that the budget includes health insurance and without it, the percentage increase is less for purposes of comparing the percentage increase with that of other city departments.

Finally, Dr. Safier reviewed out-of-district tuition costs over the last five years, the increase in ELL enrollment, health insurance costs, grant adjustments, circuit breaker funds, capital needs, and salaries funded by revolving funds and grants.

Mr. Favazza advocated for including the positions listed in Option C in the draft budget, noting the importance of showing the city what the district’s needs are. Mr. Pope indicated that the draft budget will be presented to the full School Committee on February 26th.

IV. ACTION – See III.E and F.

V. ADJOURNMENT – On a motion by Mr. Pope, seconded by Mr. Favazza, it was unanimously

VOTED: 3 in favor, 0 opposed to adjourn the Building & Finance Meeting of February 12, 2020 at 6:44 p.m.

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

*Maria Puglisi
Recording Secretary*