

**BudgSalem Public Schools
Salem School Committee
Meeting Minutes
May 16, 2022**

On May 16, 2022 the Salem School Committee held a Budget Hearing meeting at 7:00 PM using the Zoom platform.

Members Present: Mayor Driscoll, Ms. Mary Manning, Mr. Manny Cruz, Ms. Amanda Campbell, Dr. Kristin Pangallo, Ms. Beth Anne Cornell, and Mr. James Fleming

Others in Attendance: Superintendent Stephen Zrike, Assistant Superintendent Kate Carbone, Chelsea Banks, Liz Polay-Wettengel, Marc LeBlanc, Linda Farinelli, Adam Colantuoni

Call of Meeting to Order

Mayor Driscoll calls the meeting to order at TIME and requests a call of attendance. She explained the Public Participation Policy 6409 and also explained the availability of Spanish interpretation.

Move to Open the Public Hearing on the FY23 Budget

Dr. Zrike provides a brief overview of the proposed and finalized budget that is anticipated to be moved along to city council for final approval.

Public Comments

Spoken virtually via Zoom:

Geoff Millar, 29 Boardman Street - Salem, Ma 01970

I have two students, both at Carlton, one heading off to Collins next year. I'm a little disappointed that we seem to be kicking the can down the road a little bit on what needs to be a difficult discussion about priorities. You know, I think part of the reason we are in this position is contracts were agreed to and the school committee did not go seek a supplemental budget adjustment when those contracts came in more expensive than they were planned for. So now we hear a number of 4.6% originally which really wasn't 4.6% based on what the budget should have read for this year, and it looks like we're gonna do the same thing again next year. It's very bad practice to pay next year expenses out of this year funds just so we don't have to have that conversation. I know that you have been told there's just no money available, right now the proposed school budget is the only proposed city budget that anybody's had a chance to even look at. I'm guessing that when the rest of the proposed city budget is published there will be multiple departments that receive increases that are well above 4%. If you look through last year's there were probably a dozen that exceeded that, some in the double digits, one almost in

the triple digits. I hope you all listened to Ms. DeLai said that next year is gonna be even tougher. I'll say one more time that I'm disappointed that we're not gonna have the conversation now.

Spoken in-person:

Lise Hansen-Damato

I wasn't planning to speak. I sort of want to echo what Mr. Millar said, I'm really concerned about attending all the subcommittee meetings and the meetings here and Ms. DeLai has mentioned several times that this is a one time fix, we're gonna have the same problems next year, it's going to be exacerbated next year. I'm worried that we aren't dealing with this now and that's all.

Cynthia Napierkowski

Ms. Napierkowski recognizes her role in the Salem Public schools, noting her daughter is in college and her son is a junior in high school. So I appreciate the opportunity to comment and I know this is really huge, almost 70 million dollars huge. The piece that I'm about to speak about is about much of that 70 million dollars. I think it's great that the pre-k is growing, we have 2 programs that are growing and there's a .4, a current teacher that is working .4 in instrumental music that is needed at one elementary school for the pre-k. It's great that the program is growing and that we need to fill that but we are taking away from another part of our program that's growing and really a part of the social-emotional learning I can't even describe for you how important our music program has been for our students. I mean for a long time, but the last two years we have really proven ourselves and I hope that there might be some miracle that we could save that .4 and I know it needs to go to an elementary but if there is some other way to keep that in the budget it would be really great to help us with scheduling. We are working on scheduling right now and it's really tight. I appreciate all that you do, the hours and the amount of time. If there is a little tiny piece of this, anyway to save that I think it would be really wonderful for our music program K-12, thank you for your time.

Conversation between committee members follows public comment:

Ms. Campbell echoes what she's said about her experience in the finance subcommittee in regard to bringing this presentation and conversation out of the subcommittee. Ms. Campbell notes what is the best time to absorb the financial burdens in FY23 or FY24 as we forecast forward in budgeting. She notes the contractual obligations on the table and she notes the interrupted and unfinished learning for students and that the duty of the school committee is to make sure the funding is in place to provide equitable access to quality education. She notes students being hardest hit by the impact of the pandemic and what amount of the recovery act should be provided to the students to recover learning. She notes with the vote planned for this Friday, having a conversation needs to happen.

Dr. Pangallo notes when the committee was going to be short that 4.6% recommended budget, she notes conversations with Dr. Zrike and her stance on the situation. She notes the one-time expenses that wouldn't be reoccurring in the long term and being supportive to the budget in noting these expenses not being long term while also being cognizant of declining enrollment

and opening the conversation now to be thoughtful in planning ahead. She thinks there's a lot to be considered and looks forward to continued discussion.

Ms. Manning thinks taking a look at the process and discussion at a budget retreat would be helpful. She notes this year being an anomaly of a year with some increased needs for students, staff, families, and schools. She notes it's her responsibility to vote on the budget and pass it along while starting the discussion for future budget planning sooner. She notes with the work of the Central Office, the budget was completed to the best of the ability with the monies noted.

Mr. Cruz notes having an earlier retreat in the summer to discuss budget components. He also discusses the process this year was not usual to the process in year's past. He commends the work of the finance committee while maintaining the focus of kids at the center of creating the budget. He also notes two more negotiations scheduled to discuss contract agreements and keeping that in mind as the budget is being approved.

Ms. Manning clarifies the process of school leaders, district leaders, and the committee; and she notes these groups were scheduled with the finance subcommittee which opened the floor to ask questions following the presentations.

Mayor Driscoll notes trying to do the best we can with the resources we have and clarifies the city has looked at city and school as unity. She notes school is a very important piece of the city while other work is also being done. She notes that in budgets of past recent years, have been given generously. She notes the funding being requested versus the funding being provided to the city are drastically different. She notes finding a way to ensure we weren't making drastic decisions such as increasing class sizes or cutting teachers and that's important for budget purposes as well. The Chapter 70 issue needs to be addressed with banded hands as the city is not getting the funding it should. She shares the funding requests absorbed by the city, and notes in our community schools come first - and that doesn't come without challenges. She hopes we can adopt this budget. She mentions a figure of 3.4million dollars being the expected funding that we are not seeing from the state.

Ms. Cornell reiterates the commitment from the city to the public schools and shares gratitude that the city devotes incredible resources to the school system. She also echoes Mary's point about the great conversations with district leaders to help understand the needs of the various departments. She does share a retreat in the near future would be helpful. She notes having more insight with the city budgetary needs and a retreat offering more details to help her continue to understand.

Mr. Cruz notes in addition to the budget retreat, having the opportunity to schedule COWs over the summer can help Ms. Cornell catches up to speed and works more strategically as a committee.

Ms. Campbell notes her phrase of “kicking it down the road,” and mentions the concern that if the budget is not considered strategically for future years, we will have further issues in FY24 and beyond. She notes all needing to acknowledge the work needing to be done for FY24 as we know this year’s been difficult in planning.

Mayor Driscoll and Ms. Campbell have a conversation about budget outlook in the present versus the future.

Move to Close the Public Hearing on the FY23 Budget

Mr. Fleming makes a motion to close the budget hearing and Ms. Cornell seconded. The committee votes unanimously in favor.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn is requested. Mr. Fleming makes a motion, Mr. Cruz seconded. The committee votes unanimously in favor. The meeting is adjourned at 8:48pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

Jensen Frost

Executive Administrative Assistant to Assistant Superintendent