

Marblehead School Committee

June 8, 2020

7:00 PM

Zoom Conference - Meeting ID 957 0026 5199 & Password: 869782

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Meeting ID 9570026 5199

1. Marblehead School Committee - Public Hearing on the Proposed FY21 School Budget

The public hearing was called to order at 7:06 PM

Superintendent William McAlduff presented the proposed FY21 School Budget

Mr. McAlduff presented the FY21 budget goals as follows:

- Meet Contractual Obligation including 2.5% COLA, steps and lane adjustments
- Re-organize central administration staffing: eliminate human resource director and director of operations and technology as well as restore full funding to Assistant Superintendent position
- Manage special education tuition and transportation services to full funding.
- Provide full, equitable and consistent access to the curriculum:
 - Complete the purchase of elementary science kits for all classrooms and provide funding for annual replenishment of science kits
 - Purchase “Go Math” consumable material and online access
 - Fund an additional Grade 8 teacher
 - Fund a curriculum coach at Village School
 - Provide equitable and improved access for student support services
 - Fund full time Guidance Counselor at Glover School
 - Fund the BRYT program at MHS to include 1 full time clinical counselor and 1 full time academic support staff person

Mr. McAlduff then presented the FY budget calendar to show meetings that had been planned and discuss the budget happenings regularly from February through June. He noted that the original calendar had the School Committee voting on the budget on March 30. Due to the situation with Covid-19 the budget season and town meeting was postponed therefore the budget subcommittee continued to meet regularly and re-adjust the budget as needed to meet the new needs of the pandemic. Mr. McAlduff noted that as new budget information became available it was appropriate to adjust the budget.

Mr. McAlduff presented the enrollment reports and projections. He noted that it was being projected that MPS enrollment would decrease by 120 students to a projected 2847 students enrolled. Mr. McAlduff presented the proposed classroom sections which are dependent on the enrollment projections. It was proposed that classroom sections were reduced by (-1) first grade section, (-2) Third Grade sections and an addition of (2) fourth grade sections.

Mr. McAlduff noted that the initial proposed FY Budget as presented on February 6, 2020 was \$41,440,961 which was \$356,539 above the proposed town budget figure.

Mr. McAlduff presented the many adjustments that were made to get the current proposed FY21 Budget through the budget adjustment tracking sheet. It was noted that as of June 8, 2020 the FY21 Budget being proposed is \$40,521,000. The following are the adjustments that were made in the Budget Adjustment Tracking Sheet:

- Reduce energy and utility budget in line with threshold spending \$100,000
- Reduce ELL Director salary line \$60,000
- Reduce Veterans school special education salary \$60,000
- Reduce for Kindergarten teacher resignation \$30,000
- Reduce Special Education transportation due to leasing vans \$45,000
- Reduced Out of District placements to reflect current obligations \$215,105
- Reduce for High School special education teacher retirement \$32,500
- Reduce for prepayment of FY21 SE OOD tuition \$200,000
- Reduce for MHS FY21 staff by 2.6 Full Time Employees \$205,055
- Reduce for not provide COLA to administrative personnel \$43,000
- Reduce for not funding Village Curriculum Coach \$65,000
- Addition for budget line for Covid-19 unknowns \$135,699

The result of the additions and reductions through the budget process was a proposed FY21 Budget of \$40,521,000 which is \$563,422 under the State of the Town provided budget target and \$919,961 below the originally proposed FY21 Budget first presented on February 6, 2020.

Mr. McAlduff noted that the proposed FY21 budget met all of the budget goals except the curriculum coach and the Administrative COLA.

Mr. McAlduff noted several FY21 school re-opening unknowns including social distancing, PPE, transportation, clean/ disinfectant supplies, student support and technology. He noted the line item of Covid Unknowns for \$135,699 was to help cover these unknowns. Mr. McAlduff noted several additional funding sources for the re- opening unknowns to include FED Cares Act and a technology grant.

Mr. McAlduff then opened to questions and or comments from the public.

Jerry O'Neil, 18 Orchard Street. Mr. O'Neil asked if the HR director and director if IT were eliminated who would be leading the HR decision, employee training and IT technology decisions. Mr. McAlduff replied that the position of director of technology and operations was a former position that oversaw the director of operations and the IT director. Mr. McAlduff noted that both eliminated positions were vacated and it was decided due to budget constraints not to replace them. He also stated that the two directors of IT and operations would be assuming more responsibility and combined would be assuming the duties of the former director of technology and operations. Mr. McAlduff noted the current person serving as the director of Finance had an additional skill set that would allow them to take on the responsibility of procurement. Mr. McAlduff noted that he was able to take on the responsibilities of the HR director this year and he did not see that a district this size would require a dedicated HR director.

Jeff St George, 29 West Shore Drive. Mr. St George asked what the reasoning behind the \$136,000 Covid response line was. Mr. St George noted that as a professional in

the facilities management field he wanted to be assured we were planning for a disinfecting procedure rather than simply a cleaning procedure and noted the financial difference between the two. Mr. St George noted the need to understand the impact of janitorial services. He also wanted the air quality of our buildings addressed prior to sending students and staff back into the buildings. He was concerned not enough labor and or supply costs had been built in. Mr. McAlduff thanked Mr. St George and noted he made many excellent observations. Mr. McAlduff noted he may be reaching out to Mr. St George for further information and feedback.

Sarah Gold addressed Sarah Fox and noted the public would be going first followed by the School Committee.

Catherine Martin, 29 West Shore Drive. Ms. Martin asked about technology and what the cost to provide a consistent remote learning technology package would be. One that would provide hardware for all students and teachers as well as software licensing specifically educational platforms other than zoom that provides an interactive teaching methodology and training for teachers to implement these things. Ms. Martin noted that there is a \$162,970 line item for this but asked if that number would be capable of carrying 2800 students and 500 staff. Mr. McAlduff responded the state is working on identifying the various platforms and he was awaiting information on cost and feedback on the various platforms. Mr. McAlduff noted he did not know if the \$162,000 was enough and that it would require more finalized plans for reentry. Mr. McAlduff noted he wanted to be clear the CARES act money could be used for some of these items.

Jerry O'Neil referenced last year's budget hearing that resulted in the suggestion that an override for the schools wait until FY21. Mr. O'Neil asked if any discussion or work had been done on preparing for the override. Mr. McAlduff noted he was not involved in any of the meeting the previous year and that we had been informed about the thought that went into the idea of an override for FY21. Mr. McAlduff noted through his work over the past year it was determined all the expense requests from the principals could be met. Mr. McAlduff noted he advised letting the incoming administration devise the new five year strategic plan which would guide the budget drivers. Mr. O'Neil re-iterated his question if there had been any meeting to discuss a potential override and asked Sarah Gold to answer the question.

Sarah Gold noted the school committee would not be interacting with the public and that Mr. McAlduff would only be addressing the public.

Muffy Paquette, 44A Cloutmans Lane. Ms .Paquette asked for clarification on the prepayment of Special Education tuition, wanting to make sure that the \$200,000 prepaid for FY21 would come back into the base budget when preparing the town allocated number for FY22. Mr. McAlduff noted this has been a discussion and that the budget should reflect the cost of our out of district placements at the time. Ms. Paquette asked if that amount coming back into the budget would be a school decision or a town decision and Mr. McAlduff said it would need to be a discussion between the two. Mr. McAlduff stated that when time to build the FY22 budget all costs of special education would need to be budgeted and the money would need to come from somewhere.

Meredith Tedford, Locust St. Ms. Tedford wanted to know what went into the number developed for the Covid expenditure line and that the Committee has earmarked to cut it if the Covid line is not enough to cover expenses. Ms. Tedford commented that a very thorough accounting of the budget tracking had been down. Ms. Tedford voiced her concern that what had been presented was tactical and not strategic and hoped that the School Committee would discuss their overall philosophy regarding the budget and how the operating budget affects student services and morale and at what point does the proposed budget start to impact student services if further cuts need to be made, Ms. Gold asked if Mr. McAlduff had anything to reply. Mr. McAlduff replied, no other than that given the unknowns of Covid we are currently flying blind for that line item.

Catherine Martin asked if there was an assumption that there would be compensatory services for lack of speech and language as well as other services in the Spring. Mr. McAlduff stated there was a process that would be followed and there would be a need for compensatory services. Mr. McAlduff anticipated the Federal IDEA grant would be able to cover compensatory service costs. Ms. Martin asked for clarification if we carried any budgeted funds for compensatory services from the Spring. Mr. McAlduff replied that it would be included in the unanticipated Covid Expense line. Ms. Martin asked to hear from the School Committee how we would prioritize technology, compensatory services and cleaning and facilities given that there is a wide range of costs that are budgeted in that Covid line.

Ms. Schaeffner noted we were getting into a long list of questions the public asked. Ms. Gold stated she would close the public hearing portion prior to having the School Committee speak. Ms. Fox stated it was her understanding that at a hearing the public had the opportunity to interact with the elected officials. Ms. Gold stated that was not her understanding and asked Mr. McAlduff who replied it is allowable for the School Committee to answer the public's questions and if that was what the Committee wanted to do he did not see a problem with that. Ms. Schaeffner asked how the other committee members felt. David Harris recommended that we go through the rest of the public's questions without the committee responding and that he has never experienced the Committee responding to the public during the Budget Hearing. Ms. Taylor stated she would like to hear the rest of the comments from the public as well and not respond to the questions that had been presented. Mr. Harris commended Mr. McAlduff on how well he was doing answering the questions presented. Ms. Schaeffner stated that several people had asked for the School Committees opinions. Ms. Gold stated the committee would have a chance to speak later in the meeting and following meetings.

Erin Noonan, Beverly Ave. Ms. Noonan stated she would like to hear directly from the Committee regarding their thoughts on the issues that had been brought up. Ms. Noonan stated she was hoping for a town hall style meeting. Ms. Noonan asked if the proposed budget relies on full Pre-K and Kindergarten tuition as a budget driver in the same way as it hysterically has. Ms. Noonan stated she felt given Covid-19 if that it is unlikely families would pay that tuition. Mr. McAlduff stated the possible loss of Kindergarten tuition had not been taken into account. Mr. McAlduff stated that there was a possibility of not filling the two Kindergarten vacancies with full time employees to make up for the shortfall.

Ms. Noonan asked if there was any allowance made for possible influx of students returning from private schools if we remain in a full remote format. Mr. McAlduff answered, "Not at this point, no."

Alastar Connor. Ms. Connor stated she was concerned about social emotional health and if there was a budget line item to address additional needs in this area as well as training for the teaching dealing with this. Ms. Connor also said given the financial ramifications of the pandemic was the additional reliance of school supplied technology budgeted for given many families may no longer be able to purchase on their own. Ms. Connor voiced concerns regarding air quality at the Coffin School and possible need for further HVAC or outdoor classrooms. Ms. Connor also asked if school nurses had been involved in the budget process. Mr. McAlduff responded that many of these costs could fall under the Covid unanticipated costs line. Mr. McAlduff stated there is \$100,000 budgeted for staff development district wide as well. Mr. McAlduff noted we would engage in air quality testing prior to school reopening and felt it would be appropriate to engage in repeat testing as has been done at some of the schools this year.

Jerry O'Neil stated there had been a lot of discussion tonight but nothing new from last year in his opinion. Mr. O'Neil said he looked forward to having a more detailed discussion on where we go from here and he felt we continued to be forced to do more with less and he thinks it time to get together as a community and put a strategic plan in place to determine where to go from here.

Erin Noonan commented she is concerned about the social emotional needs of students reentering the district. Ms. Noonan noted that at the Village school we currently have two guidance counselors and is concerned with more than 700 students for 2 counselors the result is a very high case load given the social emotional impact of Covid-19. Ms. Noonan asked if the increase in social emotional needs had been budgeted for. Ms. Noonan noted she is very concerned that "a lot of stuff was going into the bucket for the Covid unanticipated". Mr. McAlduff noted no specific allocation had been made.

Ms. Noonan asked how the backlog of pending special education evaluations would affect the budget and what had been allocated for. Mr. McAlduff responded that Eric Oxford had a plan and that he hoped to complete all the evaluations and hold meetings over the summer. Ms. Noonan stated she wanted assurance that we were not perpetuating an unfunded mandate around the special education services.

Ms. Noonan commended Mr. McAlduff on his constant honesty. Ms. Noonan referenced hearing at prior meetings from Mr. McAlduff that any further cuts from the budget would affect student services and asked Mr. McAlduff to confirm this. Mr. McAlduff stated that yes further cuts would affect student services. Mr. McAlduff stated it was his understanding that there would be a fall town meeting and as we get into the school year if we find that costs have gone above what was expected and supplemental funding is necessary, the fall town meeting would be the opportunity to secure additional funding. Ms. Noonan asked the School Committee to identify how they would prioritize the possible cuts that will be needed mid-year given all the uncertainties.

Sarah Gold closed the public hearing at 9:20 pm

Sarah Fox asked if we could close the hearing and continue to have the meeting as the hearing was the only thing on the agenda. Ms. Gold stated we could close the public hearing and continue with the School Committee having a discussion.

Ms. Fox agreed with Mr. McAlduff that there had been a lot of discussion regarding the Budget but that the letter released by DESE late the previous Friday with several unfunded mandates is concerning as we had not had a chance yet to discuss the impact of those of the proposed budget. Ms. Fox stated she was concerned about the current budgeted student to teacher ratios and how they do not line up with the guidelines for distancing as dictated by DESE. Ms. Fox asked given the DESE guidelines would we need to add staff and how were we funding that staff.

Ms. Gold stated after sitting through rumors last year of cutting staff she wanted to state that staff cuts had never been discussed.

Ms. Harris agreed that staff cuts were never discussed.

Ms. Fox asked to return to her original question of how we would meet the student to teacher ratios with the distancing mandate with our currently funded staff. Ms. Fox stated that the allocated money from the town is fixed as the town is also in a precarious financial position however as a School Committee member wanted to make sure our budget as reflective of achieving the student to teacher ratios needed to provide distancing.

Mr. McAlduff stated that the guidance that came out on Friday was only for student services and that we needed to wait for the fall DESE plan.

Ms. Fox asked for clarification on who would be paying for the estimated \$300,000 school share of PPE given that the packet noted \$180,000 would be coming from the town, Mr. McAlduff noted that must have been a typo and that the entire cost of the PPE would be covered by the town CARES act allocation.

Jenn Schaeffner asked Mr. McAlduff for clarification on the line item for Go Math as her understanding was the district would need to be implementing a new curriculum in the 21-22 school year. Mr. McAlduff said the plan was for the Math study group to start this summer researching new Math Curriculum, pilot the program in the fall to allow for enough time for appropriate feedback prior to selecting the new Math curriculum program for 21-22 school year so that the cost could be included in the FY22 budget. Ms. Schaeffner reiterated that the plan would be to research and pilot a new math curriculum in FY21 and then purchase and implement the plan in FY22. Mr. McAlduff confirmed that was the plan. Ms. Schaeffner asked if there was a cost associated with those study groups and Mr. McAlduff answered that typically there was summer work pay at \$33 per hour. Ms. Schaeffner asked if that was budgeted and Mr. McAlduff stated it likely could be funded through a Title 1 grant.

Ms. Schaeffner asked Mr. McAlduff and finance director Michele Cresta where they would suggest finding additional funds if all the unknowns referenced by the public tonight did cost more than budgeted. Ms. Schaeffner asked Mr. McAlduff how he would envision the process of deciding how to reallocate funds if the district finds we do

have additional costs and or decreased revenue mid-year. Mr. McAlduff responded he would bring the leadership team together and explain the issue. He would work as a team to identify areas that would have the least impact on student services, next he would ask the leadership to bring it back to some staff for feedback. Mr. McAlduff stated he then would bring back different suggested scenarios to the School Committee and ask if they had a list of priorities regarding the various scenarios. Mr. McAlduff would then use those priorities to adjust the plan and return to the School Committee with a final suggestion.

Ms. Schaeffner stated it would be very important to monitor costs on a frequent basis. Ms. Schaeffner noted that if costs escalated that it would be important for the administration to come to notify the School Committee sooner than the monthly finance update to avoid any budget emergencies. Mr. McAlduff noted the new practice of encumbering salaries and purchase orders would allow for weekly expenditure reports to be easily produced which will be important for budget tracking.

Ms. Schaeffner asked regarding previous comments about air quality tracking if the associated cost could be applied to the CARES act. Mr. McAlduff answered he was unsure.

Ms. Schaeffner stated she felt Ms. Noonan's question of what are the School Committees members philosophy regarding budget priorities was a fair question. Ms. Schaeffner stated that in the past year the need to build a zero based budget was discussed, however we were unable to do that for FY21. Ms. Schaeffner said she felt coming into the next year we would need to be able to manage both the current situation of unknowns with Covid-19 and produce a zero based budget for FY22. Ms. Schaeffner stated that when the new admin team came in she felt we needed to start immediately to determine what we wanted an education in Marblehead to look like and plan associated costs. Mr. McAlduff stated the School Committee would need to meet and possibly include the town finance side and write down what definition of a zero based budget we would be using as there are several varying definitions. Mr. McAlduff also stated a large part of the FY21 budget is zero based but that there is a lot more work to be done.

Sarah Gold stated she appreciated the clarification from Mr. McAlduff as she felt we had done a good job of developing a zero based budget and what we needed to do now was move into developing a needs based budget. Ms. Gold noted when Mr. McAlduff started as superintendent the School Committee had given him a list of priorities that he had used to build this budget. Ms. Gold stated we would need to use the strategic plan the Dr. Buckey would be developing and use that to design "the override we all know is needed" Ms. Gold stated Mr. McAlduff had come into a disaster and straightened it out compared to the previous year when she "could not figure out what was up or what was down" Ms. Gold stated the school committee would work with Dr. Buckey to figure out what the needs of the district are and how to move it forward.

Mr. Harris noted we keep hearing that these are unchartered waters and he feels that state and local government are working very hard to make sure everyone has what they need. Mr. Harris noted all the savings in FY20 due to Covid-19 and if we are assuming we may have additional cost from Covid-19 we should assume we will also have expense reductions.

Mr. Harris agreed with Mr. McAlduff and suggested that at the summer retreat the School Committee work on defining what a zero based budget means for us. Mr. Harris commended Eric Oxford for providing a clear view of our special education costs. Mr. Harris noted his appreciation to Mr. McAlduff for admitting we have a declining enrollment. Mr. Harris voiced his frustration in the past as this information was very hard to get and noted the size of the new elementary school we are building as reflective of the declining enrollment. Mr. Harris commended Bill McAlduff, John Morretti and the building principals for the work done to balance staff with declining enrollment. Mr. Harris also noted that pre-Covid the proposed FY21 budget added a teacher at Vets, curriculum coach at Village and guidance counselor at Glover and that the current budget went beyond a zero based budget in his mind. Mr. Harris mentioned a need for more comprehensive work to be done but felt we had accomplished a lot since last March. Mr. Harris noted he felt that everyone involved in the budget process had done an outstanding job and he was confident that with everyone working together we would be able to pull through this year.

Meghan Taylor noted Mr. Harris had stated what she had intended to. Ms. Taylor stated she agreed with everything everyone has said. Ms. Taylor thanked Mr. McAlduff for putting together the presentation, and thanked the community for participating and for their constructive feedback. Ms. Taylor noted the silver lining of going virtual was the ability to have more public participation. Ms. Taylor noted that the unknowns and how they will be funded is what is discussed every time the budget subcommittee meets. Ms. Taylor said we need to await DESE guidance and work with our families to determine who can or will be in our buildings this fall. Ms. Taylor noted there are areas we know we have 100% funded and as we flesh out what the needs of the fall will be we will need to work with town to determine as a community how we will address the District's needs. Ms. Taylor wanted the community to know the unknowns are something the finance subcommittee is talking about on a regular basis. Ms. Taylor stated she likes to think about and process what she has heard so she anticipated having more to say at the next meeting Wednesday.

Ms. Fox noted Kindergarten tuition is a concern. She noted the revenue driver being used is roughly \$500,000 and as concerned that this revenue was unlikely and suggested it not be relied upon. Ms. Fox asked Mr. McAlduff if he would recommend being more conservative in order to set ourselves up for success. Mr. McAlduff replied he did not currently have an answer and needed to speak with Ms. Cresta. Mr. McAlduff confirmed we were projecting \$529,000 in revenue from Kindergarten tuition.

Ms. Fox asked about transportation being a potential cost driver. Ms. Fox asked if there was a way to speak with our transportation providers for out of district placements and lock in rates so we can better project costs. Mr. McAlduff noted the rates are locked in and he would need to determine where we are in that process. Ms. Fox asked if we had not locked rates in yet if we could do that prior to voting the budget so we know we have an accurate number as that has been a million dollar driver in past years. Mr. McAlduff replied he did not know that answer but would get more information from Eric Oxford.

Mr. McAlduff clarified if we were going to make an adjustment in the kindergarten tuition and or transportation projections the money would need to come from the proposed budget. Ms. Fox suggested we may want to take advantage of Mr.

McAlduff's historical knowledge and make those adjustments now rather than midyear. Mr. McAlduff stated he would look into Kindergarten tuition and special education transportation.

In regards to questions about social emotional health, Ms. Gold stated she was unsure how we would address all the concerns. Ms. Gold noted, as the school counselor for the Tower School she works 10 hours a week at the school and her personal experience is that everyone does what they need to do. Ms. Gold noted that she believes the school professionals would figure out how to meet all the additional needs. Ms. Gold noted there is an ongoing discussion among mental health professionals of the shortage and that the concern she is hearing is valid, however she believes children will be supported not just by school counselors but also the teachers. Ms. Gold noted the new assistant superintendent coming in would be able to help get the professional development out to the teachers on how to respond to the increased social emotional need.

Ms. Gold asked if any other committee members wanted to add anything.

Ms. Fox asked if there was an availability to utilize CARES act funding to provide professional development that focuses on maximizing outcomes from distance learning as well as professional development regarding trauma awareness. Mr. McAlduff said he would need to check.

Ms. Gold noted another meeting to discuss the budget is scheduled on Wednesday and noted contrary to concerns in the community she did not anticipate any significant changes from what was presented tonight.

Ms. Schaeffner asked when the School Committee would be voting. Ms. Gold responded the vote is scheduled for June 18.

Ms. Gold adjourned the meeting at 10:05 pm.

Approved 11/5/2020