



**LOWELL SCHOOL COMMITTEE**  
**Henry J. Mroz Administration Office**  
**155 Merrimack Street**  
**Lowell, Massachusetts 01852**

**Sokhary Chau**  
**Mayor and Chairperson**

**Finance Subcommittee Meeting**

**Tel: (978) 674-4324**

**Fax: (978) 937-7609**

**Jackie Doherty**  
**Vice-Chairperson**

**Monday, March 6, 2023**  
**City Hall – Mayor’s Reception Room**  
**6:00 p.m.**

**Susie Chounn**  
**Eileen Delrossi**  
**Dominik Lay**  
**Connie A. Martin**  
**Stacey Thompson**

Subcommittee Members Present:	Chairperson Lay and Ms. Delrossi Ms. Doherty was absent.
School Committee Members Present:	Ms. Martin
School Department Personnel Present:	Ms. Turner, Chief Financial Officer

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Chairperson Lay called the meeting to order at 6:09 p.m. The following agenda items were discussed:

1. **Payment for FY21/22 Expenditures in Accordance with MGL Chapter 44 Section 64**
2. **Fair Student Funding Pool for FY24**
3. **Budget Update for FY23/24**

Ms. Turner addressed the Subcommittee and stated the delayed bills from last fiscal year total approximately \$298,000. She stated that conflicts between laws around transporting homeless students have been an issue. She stated that there have been numerous delays from the law department as they try and protect the city from violating these laws. She stated that the school department must also abide by the law and provide transportation to homeless and special needs students and so that results with the school having timing issues. She stated that she has been working with the Auditor and City Solicitor to try and resolve these issues. She stated that several bills were delayed because the purchase orders were closed prematurely. She stated one (1) of the bills in question is due to ordering without a purchase order.

Ms. Martin asked if any other districts have these issues. She also asked for the amount of money that was paid out in FY 21/22 for bad bills.

Ms. Turner stated that she reached out to other districts and they're not experiencing these issues.

Mr. Lay asked if a separate line item could be created to pay the overdue bills.

Mr. Turner stated that she will ask the Auditor.

Ms. Turner then stated that the budget presentation includes the following:

- Update of FY24 Budget Calendar/Process
- Forecasted Ch70/Student Opportunity Acts Funds
- Department of Elementary & Education (DESE) released Governor's Budget Numbers
- Preliminary Review of Contractual Obligations that need Funding
- What happens next in Fair Student Funding
- School Develop Quality Improvement Plan/Fiscal Plans with School Site Councils

Ms. Turner stated that there was a five (5) week delay getting the numbers from the state. She stated that they have received the estimated Student Opportunity Act funding and it is \$27 million dollars. The report included a Foundation Budget comparison to understand the reason for the following increases:

- SOA increased the per pupil rate in all areas and most significantly in SPED, EL and Economically Disadvantaged
- Fifty-seven (57) student increase to Preschoolers
- 366 student increase in EL populations (requires significant increase to level service costs)
- 517 student increase In Economically Disadvantaged Student counts

Ms. Turner stated that she needs to double check the vocational increase of 291 students to make sure that it is correct. She discussed estimated annual increases to address as well as any obligations before any new spending happens. The report provided a summary of projected revenue and expenditure changes for FY23/24. She stated that there are many spending obligations that must be addressed with the new money before any new initiatives can be considered. She stated that due to the impending fiscal cliff caused by ESSER grant money expiring next year, we must also consider moving ESSER funded costs onto the general fund using these additional dollars. She stated that the school based budget amounts must be determined as well as the fair student funding pool and supplemental funding. She stated that a portion of the \$30 million in additional Chapter 70 funds have to be earmarked for uncontrollable cost increases such as health insurance and other contractual increases such as step/CBA increases, transportation rate increases and raises to out of district tuition rates. She stated that ESSER funds covered three (3) years of addressing learning loss such as extended learning time, professional development for staff and districtwide support for schools and these funds are restricted to only cover eligible cost.

Ms. Martin asked if the district could expand the quality of the food as well as using the money for any kitchen needs.

Ms. Turner stated that she will look into that. She stated that the district has increased the quality. She stated that the reimbursement from Aramark used to be \$1 million dollars and this school year the district will only be receiving \$200,000. She stated that another option that we can look into is better signage in our cafeteria's.

Ms. Turner then spoke about Fair Student Funding and stated that the amounts will be included on the agenda next week and the budget report will be updated to show that. She stated that last year the total was \$158 million dollars plus \$10 million supplemental dollars which totaled \$168 million dollars.

Ms. Martin asked if only \$120 million dollars are being used for guardrails.

Ms. Turner stated yes and stated for central office expenses. She stated that the schools use the guardrails to guide them. She stated that budget decisions are vetted through the school site council process, presentations to central office, teacher, parent, community, and student forums, finance subcommittee meetings, School Committee presentations, and public budget hearings. She stated that she can separate it out in the budget.

Ms. Martin asked what amount of money the School Site Councils have control of.

Ms. Turner stated that she will provide that to the Committee.

She concluded the report stating that administration determines the SBB amount then uses weights and baselines to determine initial amounts for each school. She stated that it is reviewed to ensure there are no large swings. She stated that each school gets a funding summary to clearly explain how their allocation was determined.

**Ms. Delrossi made a motion to adjourn at 7:00 p.m.; seconded by Mr. Lay. 2 yeas, 1 absent (Ms. Doherty) APPROVED**

Respectfully submitted,



**Billie Jo Turner, Chief Financial Officer  
for Dr. Joel Boyd, Superintendent and  
Secretary, Lowell School Committee**

BJT/mes