



Lowell City Council

Finance SC/School FSC Minutes

Michael Q. Geary
City Clerk

Date: September 29, 2020
Time: 5:00 PM
Location: Zoom/City Council Chamber, City Hall

PRESENT:

Present on Roll Call were C. Elliott, C. Conway, C. Nuon, SC Martin, SC Descoteaux and SC Hoey. Also present were Conor Baldwin (CFO), M. Leahy, C. Samaras, SC Doherty, Supt. Boyd, Billie Jo Turner (Asst. Supt. Of Schools), C. Chau, Allison Chambers (Asst. CFO), SC Clark, James Hall (COO-Schools) and Tina Masiello (City Auditor).

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:

C. Elliott called the meeting to order noting the attendance. Supt. Boyd made opening remarks regarding budget process and outlined budget goals.

ORDER OF BUSINESS:

Ms. Turner provided presentation entitled "Lowell Public Schools Budget Update September 29, 2020". Ms. Turner commented on general fund; budget strategies; detailed additions; detailed reductions; funding sources; and revolving accounts. C. Elliott commented on the challenges and noted it would be more difficult for FY22 budget. C. Elliott noted his concerns with the out of district costs and the use of revolving account funds. Supt. Boyd outlined out of district costs noting most were for special education needs. C. Elliott commented on out of district costs for children not in need of specialized services in particular children of teachers in the district. Mr. Hall noted that service was negotiated out of the contract. C. Conway noted special education costs are excessive. C. Conway questioned budget status for transportation services. Ms. Turner noted budget for whole year but would probably on be using one half of the amount which would be six million. SC Martin noted that bussing will not cause a structural deficit. C. Elliott questioned the amount of students that are not being bussed. Supt. Boyd noted that the school committee had to redesign the transportation policy and moved closer to State requirements. Mr. Hall provided statistics for transportation. C. Noun noted challenges in balancing budget this year and that difficulties will remain next year. C. Nuon questioned decision regarding payment to staff. Supt. Boyd noted greater flexibility was created for



existing staff. C. Chau questioned transportation presentation regarding number children being bussed and reason why with full budgeted amount could not cover the full admittance of 25% of children allowed in the system. Supt. Boyd noted that need to allow for possible addition of students allowed into the system. C. Samaras noted that use of revolving funds are a concern and that they must be replenished. Supt. Boyd noted the use was done after a risk analysis. Ms. Turned noted not comfortable position but believes they will be replenished. C. Conway noted the need to be unified and that communication will accomplish that. SC Hoey questioned the City reduction to schools. Mr. Baldwin outlined the reasons and noted that maintenance of effort has substantially increased for the schools and that they would continue to fund well beyond the Net School Funding formula. SC Martin noted that school committee will vote on their budget and present to City. C. Elliott noted that there would be structural deficits in FY22 that will need to be addressed early and commented on unfunded academic positions as well as disparity in salaries at top of administration. Supt. Boyd commented on the unfunded positions and further noted that salaries in his department were in line with similar communities stating Boston as an example.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion to recess by SC Marin, seconded by C. Nuon. So voted.

Meeting adjourned at 6:00 PM.

Michael Q. Geary, City Clerk