

**Board of Selectmen
Open Meeting of January 25, 2023
Seekonk Town Hall, 100 Peck Street
BOS Meeting Room**

Members Present: Justin Sullivan, Chris Zorra, Adam Petronio, Michael Healy
Member Absent: David Andrade
Town Administrator: Shawn E. Cadime

Chairman Sullivan opened the joint meeting at 6:02 p.m.

Adam Petronio-Aye; Chris Zorra-Aye; David Andrade-Aye; Justin Sullivan-Aye:
Roll Call Vote: 4-0

School Committee Chairperson Erin Brouillette called the School Committee to order.
Roll Call Vote: Kim Sluter-Aye; Emily Field-Aye; Noah Escaler-Aye; Meaghan Mahoney-Aye; Erin Brouillette-Aye

Also present: Dr. Rich Drolet, School Superintendent
Jill Brillhante, School Business Administrator
George Kelleher, Director of Student Services

JOINT OPEN SESSION MEETING WITH THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

A. Discussion of the proposed FY 24 School Department Budget

Dr. Drolet discussed the school's FY24 preliminary budget and Mr. Kelleher discussed Special Education.

In summary:

- FY24 projected notable increases: special education out-of-district costs; transportation; technology software; rising energy costs; and new positions
- Special Education: the number of students with IEPs increased 22% from 2017-2018 school year; an increase of students with more complex disabilities; and an increase to programming and services
- Newly Required Positions by mid-FY23: Elementary School Adjustment Counselor (AES/MES); Elementary Special Education Teacher (AES); Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant (SES/MES/MHS/SHS); Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant (Flex, Elementary Program AES); Speech-Language Pathology Assistant (Pre-K/Early Elementary AES); and Speech-Language Pathology Assistant (Upper Elementary AED/MES)
- New Proposed Positions FY24: Community Coach for Transitions Academy; Special Education Teacher for new lower elementary school program for students with complex neurological and developmental disabilities; Special Education teacher for new life skills program at HMS; and LPN for Transitions Academy
- Non-Special Education Proposed Positions: SRO
- FY23/FY24 Seekonk Transitions Academy

M. Healy asked what they anticipate the cost for the additional 6 positions to be at the end of FY23, and what it will be for the full-year in FY24.

Dr. Drolet asked if he would also like to know what they saved with unfilled positions.

M. Healy answered yes. He asked for the comparison of what they saved in unfilled opened positions and the breakdown of costs (depending on the date of hire of those positions), and what the projected cost for FY24 would be.

E. Brouillette said it is \$168,000 for the 6 partial-year positions.

J. Brilhante said in addition to the unfilled positions, a couple of teachers have left for the year and one resigned.

A. Petronio asked if they project the same number of students to enroll next year.

Dr. Drolet said they project the number to remain the same at approximately 2,100 students.

C. Zorra asked if they anticipate a reduction of positions next year.

Dr. Drolet said he will have additional information in March since conversations are being had now with Principals and Department Heads.

J. Sullivan asked how many current staff do they have and if they anticipate the same next year.

J. Brilhante answered currently they have 290 and they anticipate 296 next year.

J. Sullivan asked what percentage of the budget is spent on Special Education.

Dr. Drolet answered between 17-20%.

J. Sullivan asked what percentage increase do they anticipating receiving for next year's budget.

E. Brouillette said with preliminary budget and not knowing Ch. 70, they think between 3.2 and 3.5%.

M. Healy said the Board has discussed being in the area of 2.5%.

J. Brilhante said they will have numbers from the Department of Education on March 6th.

J. Sullivan asked Mr. Kelleher if there were positions in the Special Education Department not required by the State.

Mr. Kelleher said they try to keep it to "must haves" to provide the services. With the rise in special education students, they are trying to be as conservative as they can.

Dr. Drolet also provided the Board with an overview of the preliminary findings from the facilities study. Colliers will present their findings to the Board in March. They will also provide an analysis of the existing conditions of the schools in February. The High School and Hurley Middle School are having the highest needs.

The identified needs were broken down to:

Priority 1 – High Priority: to be done within 3 years / \$14.3M / HVAC

Priority 2 – Important: 3-5 years / \$16.3M / exterior shell

Priority 3 – Deferrable: beyond 5 years / \$10.1M

The space utilization analysis needs to be completed, as well as enrollment projections. Dr. Drolet provided the School Department's Capital Improvement list for FY23 through FY26. The greatest concern is the HVAC system at Hurley Middle School which is expected to cost \$8,607,255.

E. Brouillette said if the Board had any questions to forward them to her so they could be addressed during the final presentation.

M. Healy asked them what the school department was approximately spending yearly on Hurley Middle School's heating system.

J. Brillhante said she could not provide an actual number at this time. The repairs could be estimated between \$25,000-\$30,000. Mr. Roy patches some of the repairs. If the school does not have heat, they cannot have school.

Tom Benoit, Ferncliffe Road, asked if there were incremental costs born outside the school department budget (by adding the 6 employees).

S. Cadime said the health insurance and employment costs.

Mr. Benoit also said he was concerned that North and Pleasant Street Schools were not mentioned in the preliminary findings of the feasibility study. He asked if they would be addressed in the final report since it would be important to know what the feasibility study says because if you don't have the data, how can you make a decision on what to do with the buildings.

E. Brouillette said the buildings are being rented by South Coast Collaborative and the day-to-day maintenance and care of those buildings are being covered.

Mr. Benoit said they should know if there are major structural issues with the buildings and thinks the two buildings should be included in the feasibility study.

Doreen Taylor, 175 Bradly Street, asked for clarification on whether the capital improvement list/totals handed out (\$22,362,999) were included in the presentation or if they were in addition to.

J. Brillhante answered said they were included in the feasibility study.

K. Sluter made a motion to adjourn the open session; it was seconded by N. Escaler, and unanimously approved.

Roll Call Vote: Kim Sluter-Aye; Emily Field-Aye; Noah Escaler-Aye; Meaghan Mahoney-Aye; Erin Brouillette-Aye

J. Sullivan stated the Executive Session meeting scheduled for this evening has been cancelled.

A. Petronio made a motion to adjourn open session at 7:15 p.m.; it was seconded by C. Zorra, and it was unanimously approved.

Roll Call Vote: 4-0 all in favor

Michael Healy-Aye; Adam Petronio-Aye; Chris Zorra-Aye; Justin Sullivan-Aye

Respectfully submitted,
Adam Petronio, Clerk

Prepared by:
Kristen L'Heureux

Items Distributed at the January 18, 2022 Board of Selectmen Meeting

- School Department FY24 Preliminary Budget
- School Department Facilities Conditions Assessment (Preliminary)
- School Department Capital Improvement List (1/17/2023)