

**Joint Budget Task Force Committee
Minutes of September 30, 2015
Selectmen's Chamber, Town Hall**

Present for Board of Selectmen: Alison Hughes, Tony Archinski, Linda Wright, Town Accountant, Ann Vandal, Assistant Town Manager/Finance, Jim Duggan, Town Manager and Recording Secretary Shannon Rowe Beaulieu

Present for School Committee: Betsy Murphy (arrived 6:09 p.m.), Michael McNamara, Steven Stone, Superintendent of Schools and Bill Frangiamore, Business Manager

Present for Finance Committee: Louise Tremblay and Bob Corey

Mrs. Hughes opened the meeting at 6:07 p.m.

Review of "Draft" School 5 Year Expenditure Projections

Mrs. Hughes stated that Superintendent Stone's "Draft" 5 Year Expenditure Projections presentation is not a defensive of the School Department's budget.

Superintendent Stone presented the Committee with the Dracut Public Schools Draft Expense Projections, Report to the Budget Task Force, September 2015. Superintendent Stone stated that the public could access the presentation on the School Department's website.

Superintendent Stone discussed Assertion #1: "The Schools Are Always Crying Wolf".

Superintendent Stone stated that they are as transparent as possible and regular budget updates are given at the School Committee's meetings.

Superintendent Stone discussed possible budget changes at any given time, Town money, the State Budget, Grant money, etc.

Superintendent Stone discussed the necessity of Circuit Break and explained how it works.

Superintendent Stone discussed Kindergarten money, net school spending for transportation costs, Special Education budget. Litigation and potential settlements.

Superintendent Stone discussed the 8 layoffs on June 30, 2015 and after the State budget, Parker Avenue School Lease, Maintenance budget, etc. all but 1.5 employees were hired back.

Dr. McNamara discussed the reduction in athletics for this school year.

Mr. Archinski asked what happens to the budget if Special Education students leave during the school year.

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Superintendent Stone explained how the budget works if a Special Education students leaves during the school year and explained how the School Department is still responsible for those students.

Superintendent Stone discussed projecting the Special Education budget on historical trending and stated that the numbers stay fairly level.

Superintendent Stone discussed Assertion #2: "We Keep Adding Staff".

Superintendent Stone discussed the report submitted to the database based on Full Time Equivalent, there being no High School Special Education program and discussed reducing positions and having to add positions within the school year due to Special Education students coming in and going out.

Dr. McNamara discussed years ago the school's had Office Aide's but they no longer have them.

Superintendent Stone discussed Kindergarten Paraprofessionals, Librarian Paraprofessionals and Computer Teacher Paraprofessionals.

Mrs. Hughes discussed how Teachers are hired and their step/grade grids.

Superintendent Stone discussed shifting positions to part-time when they are able to.

Superintendent Stone discussed Assertion #3: "Mismanagement of the Transportation Contract".

Superintendent Stone explained going from a 3 tier to 2 tier busing system. Superintendent Stone discussed the number of students on buses and the amount of time some students spend on the buses.

Superintendent Stone stated that if a student lives within two miles of the school and are using the bus, they have to pay a transportation fee.

Mr. Frangiamore stated that the School Department pays \$56,000 per bus.

Superintendent Stone discussed increasing the walk zones which would decrease the number of buses needed.

Superintendent Stone stated that they are in year two of the three year bus contract.

Superintendent Stone discussed per pupil spending by category for FY14 and discussed using context comparables from Greater Lowell Technical School, Billerica, Tewksbury and Tyngsboro.

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Superintendent Stone discussed per pupil spending including Administration, Instructional Leadership, Other Teaching Services, Professional Development, Teachers, Instructional Material, Equipment, Technology, Guidance, Counseling, Testing, Pupil Services, Operation, Maintenance, Benefits, Fixed Charges and In-District Total.

Superintendent Stone stated that approximately 1.2 million dollars would be needed for wireless technology including fiber and infrastructure. Superintendent Stone discussed a Cloud bases system.

Superintendent Stone discussed the need for additional School Psychologists and Mental Health Counselors as they only have 3 now for 3,800 students.

Superintendent Stone discussed Aspirational Staffing Increases for FY17-FY21 and reducing the size of Teachers per pupil.

Mr. Duggan stated that it appears that the need for staffing increases are program driven not due to the number of pupils in the system.

Superintendent Stone discussed the staffing increases being an investment and discussed the staffing increase being broken out by need. Superintendent Stone discussed the short term and critical needs for staffing increases.

Superintendent Stone stated that they are below the benchmark in the number of Custodial services for the School District

Public Input

Mrs. Alison Volpe, 32 Clement Road, appeared before the Committee and stated that Adjustment Counselors are very important and discussed Title 1 being a Federal Program.

Superintendent Stone discussed the Title 1 program and how it works.

Old Business

Mr. Archinski stated that there would be a Tri-Board meeting on October 22, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. in Harmony Hall.

Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Dr. McNamara to approve the Minutes of August 10, 2015. Motion seconded by Mr. Corey. Motion passed 5 to 0. Mrs. Murphy abstained from voting.

Motion made by Dr. McNamara to approve the Minutes of September 3, 2015. Motion seconded by Mr. Corey. Motion passed 5 to 0. Mrs. Murphy abstained from voting.

(Joint Budget Task Force Committee Meeting Minutes of September 30, 2015)

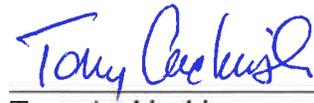
Motion made by Dr. McNamara to approve the Minutes of September 9, 2015. Motion seconded by Mr. Corey. Motion passed 5 to 0. Mrs. Murphy abstained from voting.

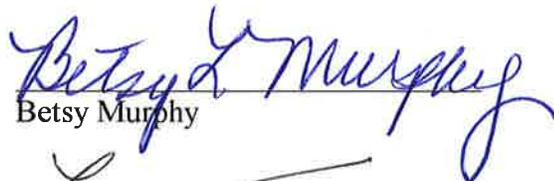
Adjournment

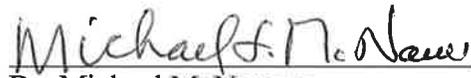
Motion made by Mr. Corey to adjourn the meeting. Motion seconded by Ms. Tremblay. Motion passed unanimously.

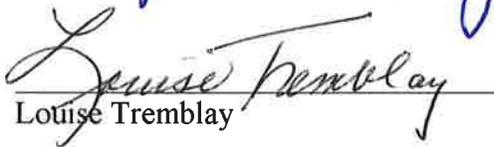
The meeting adjourned at 7:31 p.m.


Alison Hughes


Tony Archinski


Betsy Murphy


Dr. Michael McNamara


Louise Tremblay


Bob Corey