

DEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

MINUTES
January 25, 2017

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Susan Butler, Chair
Mayanne Briggs, Vice-Chair
Steve Bilafer
Kevin Coughlin
Lisa Laprade
Tom Ryan
Tracey White

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE ABSENT:

None

MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION PRESENT:

Michael Welch, Superintendent
Ian Kelly, Assistant Superintendent
Samuel Rippin, Assistant Superintendent of Business and Finance

Meeting Location: Avery Elementary School

Meeting commenced at 7:05 p.m.

Mr. Ryan motioned to open the Public Hearing, Ms. Briggs second; a roll call vote was taken:

Susan Butler, Chair – Yes	Mayanne Briggs, Vice Chair - Yes
Steve Bilafer – Yes	Kevin Coughlin - Yes
Lisa Laprade – Yes	Tom Ryan – Yes
Tracey White - Yes	

Supt. Welch opened the meeting discussing the district's reorganization which is intended to convert and repurpose resources to improve student learning. The restructuring will have no impact on the operating budget. The other major initiatives driving the budget include funding free, full day Kindergarten, continuing investment in district Special Education programs, 1:1 access to technology, and reduction of student fees.

Public Hearing FY18 Budget

Mr. Samuel Rippin, Assistant Superintendent for Business and Finance, presented the Operating Budget request for FY18. The presentation will be available on the DPS website. Mr. Rippin discussed the timeline and steps taken to develop the budget.

Mr. Rippin also reviewed the Operating Budget guidelines including State Chapter 70 Education Aid, relief and burden of user fees, pursuing cost reductions wherever possible, in-district Special Education programming, curriculum development and related professional development, instructional materials and supplies, and appropriate school facilities.

Mr. Rippin discussed Operating Budget highlights including contractual obligations; \$500,000 savings to out of district placements; elimination of fees for full day Kindergarten; reduction in HS Athletic and AP exam fees; additional staffing for students with significant needs; new bussing contract with enhanced bus safety and security; necessary supplies, materials, and substitutes.

The proposed School Operating Budget represents an increase of 3.9%.

The proposed School Facilities Operating Budget represents an increase of 4.09%.

Public Comment

Chris Hoban, 25 Maverick Street, stated his support of Superintendent Welch and the changes that are occurring in the system. He noted that on the State's website, Dedham's per pupil expenditure is above the state average and questioned how money was being spent. Mr. Hoban also questioned how the District was measuring success and asked about the focus of the restructuring.

Supt. Welch explained that the per pupil expenditure line includes numbers from the Town side such as retirement figures and employee benefits. He also stated that Dedham has small class sizes and has significantly invested in technology. As for the restructure, Supt. Welch referred to the 'State of the Schools Address' and audit reports that are available on the website. In order to measure success, many metrics should be considered including standardized tests, entry rates, graduation rates, and community satisfaction.

Sue Carney, 47 Greenlodge Street, inquired if SMART Boards are being installed in all DHS classes and why wasn't this done last year.

Mr. Rippin stated that if the Capital Expenditure Committee approves the request, then all DHS classrooms will be equipped with SMART Boards this year. Regarding last year, Mr. Rippin noted that the CEC turned down the request for funding. He requested \$350,000 for SmartBoards in FY17 and was approved only for \$90,000.

Ms. Carney also inquired about the age of the bleachers and if they are being considered for replacement.

Mr. Rippin stated that he has not heard from the facilities department that there was a need to replace the bleachers.

Dave Roberts, Oakland Street, said the recommendation for the SMART Boards was limited by the CEC. The Finance Committee cannot increase money after the CEC has denied it.

Supt. Welch noted that all of the SMART Boards probably could not have been installed over the summer, so it made sense to split it over two years.

Ms. Carney gave a statement regarding her feelings on the position and support of the Finance Committee to the school department; past budget processes and how decisions were made and the state of the current curriculum.

Supt. Welch responded to Ms. Carney's remarks, explaining that many factors have affected the current curriculum including the elimination of the elementary curriculum coordinator, principal turnover at the elementary level, and retirements (institutional knowledge).

Ms. Cecilia Butler, Mt. Vernon Street, inquired if teachers were going to be provided with professional development training for whiteboards.

Supt. Welch stated that ample professional development will be provided for technology training. Pertinent staffs have already been a part of Chromebook training which integrates the use of the whiteboards.

Dr. Kelly stated he and Dr. Langenhorst, the DPS Technology Director, have had meetings regarding the distribution of technology and training.

Supt. Welch would like to invite the Finance Committee to have a meeting at the High School so members can have a firsthand look at the technology being utilized by students.

Marty Lindemann, 121 Village, noted he voted against having the whiteboards installed all at once due to the amount of work it involves and the undercapitalization of training. He questioned the current benchmarks for training.

Supt. Welch stated the whiteboards were first installed in the ninth grade classrooms, since those students coming up from grade 8 were used to working with the Chromebooks. The ninth grade team teachers were immersed in a two-day 'Chromecamp' training which integrated the whiteboards.

Dr. Kelly stated that the principals were also being trained on how to utilize technology in their positions and that Dr. Langenhorst is working on benchmarks for integration.

Mr. Lindemann also inquired on providing WiFi for students whose families cannot afford it at home.

Supt. Welch agreed that everyone should have access to WiFi. He stated the numbers are very small for those students who do not have access to it. Students have been offered options such as the public library. However, the Committee needs to discuss this issue further.

Mr. Lindemann and Supt. Welch discussed exit standards. Supt. Welch noted that SAT scores and AP percentages do not tell a complete story. Dedham encourages lower performing students to take SAT tests and AP exams even though this may drive performance percentages down. The number of students taking AP exams has tripled in the past ten years. Mr. Lindemann would still like to see a rate of change over years to establish a qualitative and quantitative account of what is happening. Supt. Welch noted that it will take time to see the results from the changes that are happening now.

Mr. Lindemann also voiced his concerns about the reputation of the Dedham education system.

Ms. Butler noted that the Committee is thankful to the Town and the Finance Committee for their support of the school system.

Mr. Lindemann noted that he would like to see the data on class sizes as well as an explanation of the small classes (under 10 students). Supt. Welch said the data was currently available and would provide it to Mr. Lindemann.

Ms. Butler asked if there were any final comments. There were none.

Ms. Briggs motioned to close the Public Hearing, Ms. White second; a roll call vote was taken:

Susan Butler, Chair – Yes	Mayanne Briggs, Vice Chair - Yes
Steve Bilafer – Yes	Kevin Coughlin - Yes
Lisa Laprade – Yes	Tom Ryan – Yes
Tracey White - Yes	

Mr. Ryan thanked the members of the Finance Committee for attending this evening. He stated that last year there were not as many questions at the public hearing and then many questions arose at a meeting where the School Committee was not allowed to respond. The Committee is happy to answer any questions the Finance Committee would like to ask.

Old/New Business

Supt. Welch informed the Committee about the power outages that have occurred over the past two days and how they were handled by the staff and students.

Ms. Briggs motioned to adjourn the meeting, Ms. Laprade second; Committee voted unanimously, 7-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:18 p.m.