



City of Malden

Malden City Hall
215 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148

Meeting Minutes - Final Finance Committee

Councillor-at-Large McDonald, Chair
Councillor Condon, Vice-Chair
Councillor O'Malley
Councillor-at-Large Colon-Hayes
Councillor Simonelli
Councillor Linehan

Tuesday, June 6, 2023

5:30 PM

City Hall, Room #105
215 Pleasant Street

Please click the link below to join the webinar:
[https://cityofmalden.zoom.us/j/93611868654?](https://cityofmalden.zoom.us/j/93611868654?pwd=amFvYytuOVYyNkxtRGw2QjNtWEI3dz09)
pwd=amFvYytuOVYyNkxtRGw2QjNtWEI3dz09
Passcode: 862905

Roll Call

Present: 5 - Councillor at Large Carey McDonald, Councillor Paul Condon, Karen Colon Hayes, Chris Simonelli and Amanda Linehan
Absent: 1 - Ryan O'Malley

Also Present: Councillors Murphy, Crowe, Spadafora, Winslow
Maria Luise-Mayor's Office
Zaheer Samee-Assistant City Solicitor
Ron Hogan-Chief Strategy Officer
Adam Weldai-School Committee Member
Toni Mertz-Director of Finance and Operation Malden Public Schools
Ligia Noriega-Murphy-Superintendent

Councillor McDonald called the meeting to order at 5:37 PM.

Minutes to be Approved

[230-23](#)

Minutes of May 30, 2023 to be approved.

A motion was made by Councillor Linehan, seconded by Councillor at Large Colon Hayes, that the Committee Minutes of May 30, 2023 be tabled to the Finance Committee. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

Business

[219-23](#)

Order: The Fiscal Year 2024 Annual Appropriation Order

Sponsors: Carey McDonald

Attachments: [Mayor's Transmittal Letter on FY24 Proposed Budget](#)
[FY2024 Proposed Budget](#)
[Final Paper: 219-23](#)

The Finance Committee will continue with discussions on the proposed FY24 Budget and any other business which comes before them. The following departments will be in attendance to discuss their proposed FY24 Budget:
Ligia Noriega-Murphy-Superintendent of Schools
Toni Mertz-Business Manager School Department

Toni Mertz thanks the City Council for having them and thanks Mayor Christenson the generous increase in the budget this year. She said thanks to Chapter 70 and the City to increase the budget by \$11.3mill. It keeps all their positions they currently have and helps them to move positions from ESSER2 on to the budget and they have added a lot of positions to balance their budget this year. Toni then goes through the slide presentation from the Budget Sub-Committee Meeting. (see enclosed) Some of the FY24 focus goals are an increase in student learning and performance, mental social and emotional needs to create safe learning environments, transparency and communication. The historical data shows a huge increase in Chapter 70 this year, although the foundation budget has increased the required contribution on the City side has increased quite a bit. Referring to page 7 if you compare Malden to Chelsea we are pretty much the same size in student enrollment the required contribution amount Malden has to pay to fund the requirement net school spending is huge. When taking the Chapter 70 equation it can't sustain itself. This year with the increase we are grateful and we can sustain what we currently have, but we still fight to change that formula and it will stay in the forefront. Ron said it is real it doesn't hit all at once but there is an additional \$12mill that has to come from the city side over to the school side. According to the Chapter 70 formula we should be able to pay \$12mill more than what we are paying right now and that is misaligned with revenue. We will start feeling this after this year as we start a new year. Councillor Spadafora said this is an issue where we need our state delegation to spearhead fixing the equation that we know is broken. Toni said we have funded all of our raises this year, keeping our positions and adding all the positions on page 9 of the presentation. As we add positions we also have to increase operations and maintenance. Our utilities have gone up a little so we have increased some line items to account for inflation and cost of living adjustments. We are adding 43 positions this year.

Councillor Colon-Hayes asked if some of these positions are new such as Assistant Principals

Toni said we have two Assistant Principals and we are adding a third.

Councillor Linehan asked how the third Assistant Principal will flow in the building Superintendent said it will be different in every school based on the need of the school The student enrollment is presently 6,500 in the schools which has increased this year.

Councillor Colon-Hayes asked about the IEP's 504 plans and are there enough coordinators for the program

Superintendent explained that they have sufficient IEP 504 coordinators in place and as there is an increase in students they will add more coordinators

Councillor Linehan asked about adjustments councillors/social workers have we filled the open position in Beebe for this year or is this in addition to that

Superintendent explained right now there is an adjustment councillor that goes between Beebe and Forestdale but next year they will have their own it is explained on Page 10 of the presentation. They have added a BRYT coordinator who will work with the dean of students to support students who get suspended to help them get back into the school. Bridge for Resilient Youth and Transition. The students at the High School have

advocated for this coordinator.

Councillor Linehan asked about the 5th grade model changing

Superintendent they are going to have two teachers one for Math and one for ELA and they will work together with the middle school with Math and Science. Because of the number of students in Beebe we have to have 5th grade counted as middle school.

Councillor McDonald asked about the school facilities and the enrollment balance as you've been shifting around programs and classes we talked about this when we talked about overall city facilities costs can you tell us where we are with terms of enrollment and overall facilities conditions

Superintendent last year we ran the schools really close to capacity right now the enrollment is mainly at the High School. Last year at Beebe we ran the school at 950 but the max we wanted was 920. We have to look at with space what type of programs we have and what is the maximum amount of children that have to be in the classroom and do we need more space. There is presently 1,863 students which is the highest enrollment. There is a high number of new comers at the High School age.

Councillor Colon-Hayes asked about 504 students and administrators has that been addressed in this budget

Superintendent said that it has been addressed but it is not in this budget. They have added a coordinator for PreK-8th grade for the transition to the High School.

Toni said we have invested a lot to the upgrade of our facilities and have used some of ESSER2 and ESSER3 funds to upgrade our facilities which is the equivalent to ARPA funds. We are constantly upgrading with our onetime funds so that we do not have to go out to bond for that.

Ron said the Mayor had complimented the exterior side with money to upgrade the ventilation system and the schools picked up the interior side.

Toni said there is continuous work that needs to be done but we continue to look for grants for the upgrades.

Councillor McDonald asked if Toni could send the Council a report on how ESSER funds are used and she said she could get that information over to them.

Adam said one of our goals this year was to take all full-time positions off of grant money and back into our budget along with adding all the new positions. This year with ESSER money these positions are being paid.

Councillor McDonald asked how close are we to the district wide number of capacity in the schools?

Superintendent said according to the schools we have room in K-8's but the High School is getting full but we still have room to grow.

Councillor Colon-Hayes asked about the schools overcrowding and are we not "busting out of the seams" and also asked about the drop out rate and how have they been since Covid

Toni said no we still have capacity within our schools without having to build a new school

Superintendent said she would be able to get the drop out rate information for the Council but they are just collecting it now.

Toni mentioned the next costly investment in our schools will be the roofs. This is an investment we are thinking about looking ahead to the FY24 & 25 budgets looking at replacing new roofs on some of our schools

Councillor Murphy asked for clarification on data driven topics and asked if the current total enrollment was 6500 and how of an increase was that?

Superintendent said the total enrollment is 6514. In September 2022 it was 6337, in January 2023 it was 6,435 which has been increasing steadily. In 2020 and 2021 it was 6,120.

Councillor Murphy said one of the things we are talking about as a Council is potential zoning changes which would increase the number of folks coming into Malden. She would like to know what the exact number of open seats are in the schools and would like to see a fact sheet of what they are.

Superintendent said they could get that information for her.

Councillor Murphy said that would give us an idea of where we are in the threshold. It would be helpful making decisions moving forward with future budgets.

Toni said we have such a transient population the numbers we certify in October increase during the year which increases the number of students we are educating which we are doing what we are supposed to do and are not receiving funds for it with Chapter 70 but we are asked to make classrooms bigger.

Councillor McDonald asked if there were a system where we were updating the whole Chapter 70 formula expectations two or three times throughout the year would that also potentially impact our local contribution

Toni said there is a huge array of things that should be looked at once a budget has been set they are not going to take money away from you if you lose students but there has to be some kind of a true-up to compensate.

Councillor Linehan wanted to follow up on the after school program and are they seeing any improvements in recruitment for that?

Toni said we have changed some of the ways for our staff how we are running the after school program. We are creating multiple shifts so that teachers can commit to a one or three hour shift and we are hoping that will help to bring in some of our own staff which would help increase our enrollment. She won't the results of it until they open it and people start applying.

Councillor Simonelli asked about the influx of the students leaving in the summertime are there other communities compatible with that and what they are doing about it?

Toni said she believes looking at Chelsea, Revere, Everett and Malden we are all going through the same thing but for us our local contribution is so high compared to other communities which are so much lower than ours they are not as effected by that. It is unfair to Malden when we are the same comparatively speaking as Chelsea why do they get double the Chapter 70 and one-third less of the local contribution, they can spend \$18mill more on city side and the state will fund the school side.

Councillor McDonald said in his conversations with Senator Lewis' staff part of what they said is driving this is the Chapter 70 formula contains tiers of the socio-status of the community and Everett and Revere are in a less affordable tier than we are which is driving the foundation side. We want to have a local side to the formula which has our ability to pay but this formula does not.

Councillor Linehan asked about library staffing

Adam said we currently have one full time librarian budgeted who travels between the five K-8's but currently in our budget is a media center specialist for each K-8 so all 5 K-8's should have a person staffing the library. We are currently negotiating with the union to see what the job will look like.

Councillor McDonald asked about the Malden High School Teen Health Center. He said that is built out with some Federal Stimulus funds are there additional ongoing operating costs that with that and what are they?

Toni said this is the first full year and as part of the agreement we were capped at \$110,000 we don't know what it will come out at this year. It was budgeted for FY23 and will continue in FY24. This covers whatever isn't paid by students insurance. There is a cost for what they get from insurance or someone who doesn't have insurance. We capped it as part of our agreement because we didn't want it to be a bill we couldn't afford.

Councillor Colon-Hayes asked if this is a contract with Cambridge Health Alliance as a forever partner or is it a certain amount of years

Maria said it is year to year we could go back out but we don't have to.

Councillor McDonald noted in most cases other departments adding so many staff we would ask if this is sustainable but in this case it is state mandated so we expect that to continue. He feels we do need as a Council to make a statement or affirmation to get the State to address this state local contribution and get on the record in a more formal

way.

Motion to adjourn was made by Councillor Colon-Hayes and seconded by Councillor Condon. All were in favor.

Other Business

Tabled Papers

[167-23](#)

Minutes of April 11, 2023 to be approved.

[168-23](#)

Minutes of April 18, 2023 to be approved.

[226-23](#)

Minutes of May 16, 2023 to be approved.

Adjournment

Motion was made by Councillor at Large Colon Hayes, seconded by Councillor Condon, that this meeting be adjourned at 6:39 pm. The motion carried unanimously.