



City of Malden

Malden City Hall
215 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148

Meeting Minutes - Final Finance Committee

Councillor Murphy, Chair
Councillor Condon, Vice-Chair
Councillor-at-Large Karen Colon-Hayes
Councillor Jadeane Sica
Councillor Christopher Simonelli
Councillor Stephen Winslow

Tuesday, June 14, 2022

5:30 PM

City Hall, Rm105

215 Pleasant Street

Roll Call

Minutes to be Approved

[299-22](#)

Minutes of June 7, 2022 to be approved.

A motion was made by Councillor Winslow, seconded by Councillor Condon, that the Committee Minutes of June 7, 2022 be tabled. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

Business

[236-22](#)

Order: Annual appropriation for FY2023

Sponsors: Barbara Murphy

Attachments: [Proposed Budget](#)

[Final Paper: 236-22](#)

The Finance Committee will continue discussion of the Proposed F/Y23 Budget with the School Department.

Superintendent Ligia Noriega-Murphy, Toni Mertz, Finance Director-Business Manager of the Schools, Adam Weldai, Budget Chair-School Committee and Jennifer Spadafora, Vice-Chair-School Committee will be in attendance.

Councillor Murphy explained we have a public hearing scheduled tonight for the Proposed F/Y23 at 6:00 and we will recess Finance have the public hearing and then reconvene the Finance Meeting.

Superintendent Noriega-Murphy started the discussion with the budget presentation which was given to the committee (see attached) She explained budget conversations in February 2022 included discussions in which they look at staffing and studies for next year. Looking at the projection of the students we basing how we determine the number of staffing. They are committed to supporting students and ensuring success at all aspects which protects the instructional core in each school, preserves the quality of services and meets the needs of all students.

Toni Mertz explained the school appropriation this year was a generous budget from the City a 5% increase which they haven't seen in years. The total appropriation is \$80,057,800 an increase of \$4mill from the prior school year. The problem is the costs

of operations and maintenance have gone sky high which has absorbed most of the increase. This is where the dilemma of balancing the budget comes in. She speaks of Chapter 70 money which is determined in October for the next school year 2023 they have added 340 students that they are not being funded for. This is the argument with the state the October numbers go up and the state is not helping paying for the students the City is picking up the cost. Cities that surround us get higher local aid than Malden we are getting short changed. As we put the budget together we had to add staffing the classrooms are increasing and we added seven positions to our budget which is coming out of ESSER 2 which is a grant which will run out next year. We need to incorporate that into our budget.

Councillor Murphy asked about enrollment a long term question is the size of the schools and seeing a 344% increase this pass year what is our capacity from a plan standpoint Toni said there are two things that effect our enrollment one being the redistribution of the ELL students. When we started to redistribute all of the ELL's from Salemwood, Beebe and Ferryway schools are at capacity and the only space we have there is Kindergarten students. If any additional students move in we have to put them in schools which are out of their neighborhood.

Councillor Colon-Hayes asked in general enrollment is it up to where it was previously or have we gone over before Covid's numbers is it just shifting the same kids around Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said we started the year with 5,600 and we are now at 6,401 we have had a big increase once again the redistribution of ELL students has caused schools like Linden and Salemwood to be empty.

Councillor Linehan asked if the message comes up is there a way to get on a waiting list if someone un enrolls she understands it is a challenge but just in terms of what we should be telling constituents with Beebe full

Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said there will be a waiting list at the welcome center and if there is an opening they would be the first on the list to move and we are also working to create a map with people to help them see how close they are and if we can provide transportation, take a bus, drive or walk to the closest school

Councillor McDonald asked about the out of school time program and where do the funds come from for that program and is funding a challenge for this program

Toni said it is a revolving fund the money is used for supplies and salaries. This year there was a grant which only covered a portion. It is not budgeted within our budget. There is a sliding scale and people can apply for that but the challenge is the staffing. The program is huge. We do have the children who want to go. We do pay well for the staff but we are not getting the people to come in. We have posted on idealist hoping to get staffing and it will generate people to look at it.

Councillor Murphy posed the question that once the ESSER funds disappear what does do to your future how do they plan to address that

Motion to recess the Finance Committee meeting was made by Councillor Condon and seconded by Councillor Winslow at 5:59 PM. All were in favor.

Motion to reconvene the Finance Committee meeting was made by Councillor Winslow and seconded by Councillor Sica at 6:13 PM. All were in favor. The meeting was back in session.

Councillor Murphy asked how much they received in ESSER funds and it's going to expire what did you use for?

Toni said they received \$7mill from ESSER 2 and they used under half of it this year and will use the other half in 23. In terms of salary they used \$1.5mill, they also bought new curriculum and PPE and tests. ESSER 2 will expire next year and they have budgeted 100% for 23. They are concerned with the \$1.5mill used for salaries coming out of that. As people leave, you could almost move two lower paid salaries in which will get deferred to ESSER 3. ESSER 3 has been budgeted in for salaries. They are trying to at a bare minimum to stay level funded, tightening the belt on what they can predict but there are unknowns of prices going up such as gas prices and transportation.

Councillor Murphy said we do have room maybe not a school choice situation but within the schools themselves to educate more children should we need to

Toni agreed we do have room. At one point prior to 2016 we were at 6,700 to 6,800 students but we are not there yet the hope is to get back to those numbers which were pre-pandemic.

Councillor Colon-Hayes spoke of the transportation costs going up said is it do to out of district students and asked if they had plans and how are you addressing trying to keep kids in district do you think it is anyway related to Covid

Toni said it has nothing to do with children it is with the transportation company if you are not doing the service we were not paying them now that they are back it is price gauging to make up for the loss of service

Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said they are opening an assessment center where the welcome center used to be. They are hoping it will help to create revenue sending students to be assessed to set up a price that would be cost neutral and help to keep students in-district. They have a partnership with ESS and they will be training their staff the goal is to keep capacity at our schools so that they will not have to depend on outside agencies.

Councillor Simonelli asked where are the homeless students and where are they being housed

Superintendent said the majority are families who are in Revere, Everett, Boston and New Bedford they live in shelters and hotels.

Councillor McDonald asked about Para-professional salaries and asked if they are part of the same bargaining units as teachers.

Toni answered by saying they are part of the MBA there are three bargaining units, teachers, directors and Para-professionals so they are within the MBA

Adam Weldai said we are competitive and try to make sure our Para's are paid as high as the districts surrounding us and have added things like credits for education and steps and are consistently on the forefront of where they are without judging that where they are is not good

Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said we have a high level of Para-professionals taking courses to become teachers we are investing on the Para's as educators

Councillor Condon asked how they handle a teacher who has been in the system over 20 years making \$60,000 versus a newer teachers making \$30,000 have we gotten rid of teachers making more money

Toni explained when a teacher retires what you come in at is based on your experience and what they have for educational credits. Over the years they move up steps 1-10 so if a teacher retires at a step 10 making \$98,000 we budget for someone new coming in at a step 1 or 2 to possible get a 2 for 1 we budget for \$55,000-\$60,000 we look at qualifications and what is best for students. Most of the seasoned teachers do not move around or leave.

Councillor Winslow asked if they could give us an overall sense of how teacher recruitment is going?

Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said they have already posted positions and tomorrow they are having a fair to recruit more teachers and the goal for September is to have a full staff.

Councillor O'Malley asked if there is any desire or potential need to construct a new school over the next 10 years

Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said she wishes she could say we need a new High School she would love to have one. She said they need to pay for care of the buildings they have now. They are concerned about the Voke and as a City how we are going to be paying for that. She explained we cannot build a vocational school that has the same programs as the Voke it is against policy and we can be penalized. We have a great program for culinary arts and arts but we can't compete with the Voke.

Councillor O'Malley asked if the Charter School was to have their charter revoked would

we be prepared to take on the additional students in our system do we have a plan for that if it was to happen

Toni said we have about 600 students that attend the Charter School and we could absorb 500-600 more students she is not sure they will all come

Councillor Murphy thanked them for coming into the Finance meeting and thanks them and their budget team for their work on the budget and now the work is up to us. She continued discussion with the Finance Team. She explained she wants to talk about the next steps and said if they would like to bring in other departments or if we wanted to move the budget forward. We could always bring any department into Finance to talk about what they are doing at another time if it does not impact the vote on the budget. She would like to discuss what changes we would like to see in the budget to give Mr. Ranaghan, CFO, enough time to go back to the Mayor and the Finance Team. We can cut, we can accept, we can reduce but we cannot add. She begins with a list she has of changes she would like to see. She said one of the things she would like to increase is the July 4th funds. The budget presented to us has an increase of \$3,000 to \$5,000 she would like to increase to \$5,000. It has been \$3,000 since she came on board 13 years ago. Everything has increased dramatically and this money is used for events happening in their Wards to build a fabric of community. She would also like to change the name to an event or celebration category. The second increase is very personal to her which is increase the Ward Improvement Account to \$10,000. The fact that if we go to the traffic commission for example and want to have something done it is thrown back at us do we have the money to do it. We don't have money to play with as a Council. She would also like to include all Councillors including the Councillors-at-Large. The last item is to add \$25,000 into the City Council Budget for training. This would allow us to bring in specialists to help us as we move forward working through some of the issues we face as Councillors.

Councillor Sica agrees the 4th of July increase is huge. Everything is doubled this year in price and she would appreciate this increase. The majority of us will use this money and more. She would be happy with any increase in Ward Improvement Funds.

Councillor Linehan agrees with Councillor Sica we are getting sticker shock after not having the event for the past few years. She would appreciate the resources for other events such as movie nights or slush parties. She would also love to see Ward Improvements increase residents can't believe she is struggling to find the money for these improvements such as safety barriers. She suggests maybe even a separate line item for infra-structure or ancillary Ward Improvements that don't come out of any other budget.

Councillor O'Malley said he agrees with the sentiment. He suggests maybe increase the Traffic Commission Budget to \$50,000 to do some of those interventions they deem are required.

Councillor Winslow he agrees with the Ward Improvement increase. He also supports the training. He suggests adding \$3,000 to the DPW Budget for training and equipment needs which would be money well spent.

Chuck said they have reached out to all the Department Heads and this was not something Mr. Knox has asked for but he will check with him to confirm this is something needed in the DPW Budget.

Summary of Items:

1. 4th of July funds from \$4,000 to \$5,000 (and also call it an event or celebration category)
2. Ward Improvement Account from \$2,500 to \$10,000 (for every Councillor including Councillors-at-Large)
3. DEI Training Session \$25,000 into City Council Budget for Training
4. \$50,000 to Traffic Commission (Infra-structure)
5. Add DPW Training and Equipment \$3,000

6. Add \$10,000 to Teen Center Budget

Councillor McDonald supports the suggestion of this there are things that will be more expensive than others and likes the funds across the board. He asked about the Teen Center and Senior Center and that the funds are going down and suggests giving the Teen Center \$10,000.

Councillor Murphy said the Teen Center has a Board of Directors that does a lot of fundraising but we could ask for additional funding. We are running everything we want to run currently and the bank account looks good.

The following motion is made:

Motion to ask Charles Ranaghan, CEO to go to the Mayor and ask for the changes stated above was made by Councillor Sica and seconded by Councillor Winslow. All were in favor.

Councillor Murphy said we will have a meeting next week and have Mr. Ranaghan come back and bring back the decision from the Mayor hopefully we can vote it out of committee and docket the Budget for the Full Council Meeting.

Other Business

Tabled Papers

[246-22](#)

Minutes of April 19, 2022 to be approved.

[248-22](#)

Minutes of May 17, 2022 to be approved.

Motion to take the minutes of May 17, 2022 was made by Councillor Winslow and seconded by Councillor Condon. All were in favor.

A motion was made by Councillor Winslow, seconded by Councillor Condon, that the Committee Minutes of May 17, 2022 be approved. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

[266-22](#)

Minutes of May 24, 2022 to be approved.

Motion to take minutes of May 24, 2022 off the table was made by Councillor Winslow and seconded by Councillor Condon. All were in favor.

A motion was made by Councillor Winslow, seconded by Councillor Condon, that the minutes of May 24, 2022 be approved. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

[267-22](#)

Minutes of May 31, 2022 to be approved.

Adjournment

Motion was made by Councillor Jadeane Sica, seconded by Councillor Stephen Winslow, that this meeting be adjourned at 7:07 PM. The motion carried unanimously.