



**School Committee Finance Subcommittee
Remote Meeting of April 22, 2020**

The following statement is included in the record: due to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic, Governor Baker issued an Emergency Order temporarily suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A sec. 20. Public bodies otherwise governed by the OML are temporarily relieved from the requirement that meetings be held in public places, open and physically accessible to the public, so long as measures are taken to ensure public access to the bodies' deliberations "through adequate, alternative means."

Attorney Magliocchetti, Chair called the remote subcommittee meeting to order at 8:30 am. Also present were, Ms. Gail Sullivan, member, Attorney Richard Rosa, School Committee Vice Chair, Dr. Margaret Marotta, Superintendent of Schools, and Mr. Michael Pfifferling, Assistant Superintendent. Mr. Scott Wood, member was absent.

Chair Magliocchetti read the following statement: "Those participating in this remote subcommittee meeting should be aware that the meeting is being audio recorded. This is to comply with the MA wiretap statute." The listings of matters are those reasonably anticipated by the Chair, which may be discussed at the meeting. Not all items listed may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law."

Agenda

1. Call to Order by Attorney Magliocchetti, Chairperson.
2. A Reconsideration Discussion including Cost Analysis.
3. FY21 Budget Discussion.
4. New Business.
5. Next Meeting: TBD.

A Reconsideration Discussion including Cost Analysis.

Attorney Magliocchetti had spoken with several members in hopes of getting clarification on the issue. Attorney Magliocchetti asked Attorney Rosa about the recent transportation subcommittee meeting.

Attorney Rosa briefed the Finance Subcommittee on the recent transportation subcommittee meeting held on Friday, April 17, 2020. He related that some districts had agreed to a percentage of the contract and others were not paying their bus companies. Attorney Rosa commented that the Superintendent had spoken of the establishment of a consortium of NRT districts who were in negotiations with John McCarthy with the assistance of an attorney from Murphy Toomey Hesse and Lenane.

Dr. Marotta was asked about any updates. She noted that Lowell had become part of the Consortium.

Assistant Superintendent Pfifferling answered that Lowell was a "hard no" because City Auditor would not allow payment for services that were not rendered. Mr. Pfifferling related that Chelmsford's Superintendent was also a "hard no" and had the support of the School Committee. He reported that

Mr. McCarthy had tried to “go around” directly to the members and this action was met with dissatisfaction.

Attorney Magliocchetti noted his concern was mainly about payment to bus drivers and preventing layoffs. He asked for Ms. Sullivan’s viewpoint on the issue.

Ms. Sullivan wanted to continue with the consortium and not stand alone on this issue. She recommended NRT begin training new drivers since this time was a great opportunity for him to be proactive.

Attorney Magliocchetti asked if there was anything in the contract that would force bus driver training.

In response to the contract question, Mr. Pfifferling stated that the contract was not a strong contract and did not follow any contract template from the MCPP Program. He questioned the 11-year contract because he had never seen one that long. The Assistant Superintendent noted he was not in the district when the contact was signed.

Attorney Rosa noted other amendments could be made at this time. Ms. Sullivan concurred and stated it would allow for a better contract.

Attorney Magliocchetti asked about the dollar value/savings on 80% of the \$720,000 contract. Dr. Marotta commented it would be lower than the 80% percentage.

Attorney Rosa replied the savings on the big bus contract (\$720,000) and small bus/special education (\$260,000) along with the other bus contracts (\$675,000); these saving would be for not paying on the contracts.

It was clarified that Attorney Magliocchetti’s question was on the 70-80% cost.

Attorney Rosa responded \$210,000.

Mr. Pfifferling related that the votes (big and special education contracts) needed to be voted together because they are NRT. He noted the other companies had PPE protection and the smaller bus companies were still in business; these bus companies supplemented their business with school transportation.

Attorney Magliocchetti asked how a limited schedule (split) to allow for social distancing would impact bussing. He asked how many additional bus monitors would be needed to insure social distancing.

The Assistant Superintendent stated once a plan was developed, negotiations could be commenced with NRT.

FY21 Budget.

Dr. Marotta was concerned about laying off teachers. She reported that the Mayor is indicating the district would be facing a \$1-2 million cut considering that the schools are the biggest portion of City’s budget.

Ms. Smith related a conversation with City Auditor Chuck Benevento about a level service budget (4.8%) and if the district is comfortable with this figure to avoid layoffs.

Superintendent Marotta replied the City was considering a level service budget and the possibility of budget cuts.

Attorney Magliocchetti suggested negotiations with teachers' unit to prevent layoffs.

Attorney Rosa asked about entering discussions with teachers' unit to avoid layoffs. Attorney Magliocchetti commented that there were similar discussions when he first was elected to the School Committee. He suggested amending the contract to allow for re-opening contingencies.

Dr. Marotta commented that until a consortium reached an agreement to hold off on negotiating independently and expected a resolution this week. She reported that there was a conference call on Friday which the Assistant Superintendent joined and the consortium was close to an agreement between 75-78% of contract.

Ms. Smith noted that the Mayor indicated the transportation savings would be placed in a stabilization fund. Mr. Pfifferling agreed that this was a good strategy.

Attorney Magliocchetti recommended prepayment of materials/services; since it was the only guarantee of receiving monies.

Ms. Sullivan recommended establishing a list of prepaid materials to ensure the monies are committed to the school systems.

Ms. Smith has not moved the offsets so there is \$750,000 under the control of the school system.

Attorney Magliocchetti stated the district needed to be prepared for a new definition of school operations with the possibility of a major disruption next fall/winter.

Dr. Marotta related an Online Instructional Technology Director is needed for the district and possibly there would be tradeoffs in other positions and IT team was "light" in regards to online learning/instruction.

Ms. Sullivan suggested contracting with someone to provide technology instructional leadership to assist our hardworking teaching staff. Dr. Marotta commented that other districts were ahead of us on instructional technology and it would be a competition to get the best people.

Attorney Magliocchetti was concerned with all students having access to online learning. In response to Attorney Magliocchetti's suggestion about technology staff visiting homes, Dr. Marotta and Mr. Pfifferling advised against this option.

Dr. Marotta was concerned with the health of employees and would not recommend visits at this time, instead students and parents would be brought to a clean environment to be set up in our school buildings.

Attorney Magliocchetti was concerned about the well being and safety of our children. Attorney Magliocchetti asked about wellness checks. The Superintendent replied there were checks and then the district-wide team headed by Lorna Merchant had made some home visits.

Attorney Magliocchetti asked about the need for more social workers to assist our students. Dr. Marotta responded that more social workers would be needed for the district. She heard unofficially that SOA monies would be coming to Haverhill.

In response to Ms. Sullivan's question on payment to cab companies, Dr. Marotta replied that small transportation companies were not being paid. Attorney Rosa responded it was a savings of \$600,000.

Ms. Sullivan also wanted to see a definitive list (items/amounts) for planning purposes since there was a concern about money staying in the school department budget.

Mr. Pfifferling suggested an agreement between the school department and Mayor on layoff prevention. He noted that there was savings resulting from services non-payment funds.

Attorney Magliocchetti offered opening negotiations with the teachers' unit to establish a COVID-19 stabilization fund for layoff prevention.

Ms. Sullivan recommended having the discussion in public at a meeting with the Mayor. Attorney Magliocchetti believed there is going to be intense pressure on the Mayor to balance the City budget next year.

Ms. Sullivan met with Administrators' Group and informed them of the uncertainty. She noted there would be another meeting on May 11, 2020.

Attorney Rosa asked the Superintendent about the possibility of summer school. Superintendent Marotta replied that were some form of summer school, but is unsure due to the complexity how it will be implemented and was uncertain of the financial impact.

Attorney Magliocchetti asked about the personal protective wear such as masks and who would fund the cost of the equipment and who would distribute to students.

There was also discussion on implementing technology to check temperatures of staff and students. Additionally, enacting measures to limit access to school buildings to allow for this assessment.

In terms of lunches, Dr. Marotta stated that to ensure physical distance of 6 feet, there would be significant increase in the number of lunch periods in the school day.

In relation to Attorney Rosa's question on MTA's request regarding school year, Superintendent Marotta replied it was for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year.

Dr. Marotta asked for the timeline on the budget.

Ms. Sullivan and Attorney Magliocchetti commented that the deadline for budget submission and approval needed to clarified by the Mayor.

In reference to the FY22 budget, discussion was held on how to prepare the next fiscal year's budget and there was consensus on a level-service budget.

Mr. Pfifferling questioned the appearance of a one twelfth budget.

Attorney Rosa recommended passing a full year's budget.

Ms. Sullivan asked for clarification on the total amount of the budget and what one twelfth meant in terms of monthly allotment.

Attorney Magliocchetti commented that the one twelfth budget allocation was provided by the Mayor and solidified his control over the budget.

Dr. Marotta answered it was usually in equal payments.

Ms. Sullivan suggested advocating for our budget by developing one.

In terms of shifts in the budget identified by Attorney Magliocchetti, the Superintendent stated that shifts meant people because the budget was lean.

Assistant Superintendent Pfifferling replied doing a level service budget and an SOA budget. He indicated the Mayor could provide a foundation budget (\$108m for next year) and it was difficult to play catch up with the budget.

Regarding foundation budgets, Mr. Pfifferling noted in a conference call last week with Mayor and City Auditor there was a difference of opinion.

Ms. Sullivan asked about Medicaid reimbursement outlook. Dr. Marotta replied it was abysmal and the rules were changed with zero warning and there was new documentation required and there was language that could be deemed frightening by staff members.

Attorney Magliocchetti suggested keeping the Committee informed about the Consortium's NRT offer.

It was agreed the Finance Subcommittee would meet bi-weekly (next scheduled meeting May 6, 2020) unless the Superintendent recommended a meeting next week.

Attorney Magliocchetti was concerned with the lack of guidance at the state level.

Attorney Rosa asked Superintendent Marotta if there were any items that needed to be approved at next week's meeting.

Dr. Marotta reported that MASC had submitted 80 questions to the Commissioner and Governor and it is anticipated that guidance will be forthcoming this week. She asked about starting layoffs for programs that are not occurring for the remainder of this school year.

Attorney Magliocchetti suggested beginning to make budget adjustments to preserve funds in the budget.

Mr. Pfifferling asked if PPE was available to municipal employees. He asked about the possibility of furloughing employees that we are not utilizing in programs/areas.

Attorney Magliocchetti commented the rules were different. He suggested contacting an unemployment specialist whose contact information was on the City's website.

Dr. Marotta was hopeful that more people would be returning to work especially in regards to cleaning schools and directed Ms. Smith to order now the necessary equipment and supplies such as, wax, floor stripper (PO on paint) and any equipment that is needed. Ms. Smith would contact Ms. Forgione and Ms. Santarlasci to begin the process.

Mr. Pfifferling reported that the Pool Roof Contract was renegotiated with the contractor yesterday by Mayor with a \$25,000 savings.

Dr. Marotta suggested replacing ceiling tiles in order to ensure a successful building inspection. In reference to Consentino ceiling tiles, the Superintendent noted that they were frequently replaced.

Attorney Magliocchetti stated that the unemployment specialist's name was Norca Disla-Shannon and he would send her contact information to Mr. Pfifferling.

A motion was made by Attorney Magliocchetti to adjourn the subcommittee meeting (9:45 am). Ms. Sullivan seconded the motion.