



**Haverhill School Committee  
Remote Special Meeting Minutes of June 4, 2020**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Mayor James Fiorentini, Chairperson and a roll call of the members was requested:

Mrs. Sapienza Donais	Present	Ms. Sullivan	Present
Mrs. Ryan-Ciardello	Present	Attorney Magliocchetti	Present
Mr. Wood	Present	Attorney Rosa, Vice Chair	Present
Mayor Fiorentini, Chair	Present		

Dr. Margaret Marotta, Superintendent of Schools and Mr. Michael Pfifferling, Assistant Superintendent were also present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

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." This meeting is being livestreamed by HCTV and also broadcast over WHAV. The full meeting recording will be available on our website [www.haverhill-ps.org](http://www.haverhill-ps.org) the next day.

Dr. Marotta stated that the School Calendar would be on next week's agenda, but wanted to announce the first day of school would be Wednesday, September 2, 2020.

In response to the Transportation Contract, that discussion would be held later in the meeting after the FY21 Budget.

Superintendent Marotta commented that budget guidance had been provided by the Mayor. She noted that the budget scenario would include no staff layoffs, however, several positions would remain unfilled for next fiscal year. Dr. Marotta deferred to Assistant Superintendent Pfifferling to provide more detailed budget information.

Assistant Superintendent Pfifferling noted that Chapter 70 was unknown at this time. He related the Mayor had provided some budgetary guidance. Mr. Pfifferling commented that COVID-19 funds (\$1.8m minus the Haverhill private school partners' share of \$155,000) provided additional funding for FY21. He noted that longevity would be paid out in the earned fiscal year and would provide savings for the district in next year's budget. Mr. Pfifferling reported that savings was also realized in not having to pay out contracts and other savings due to not having in-person school sessions. The Assistant Superintendent commented that \$500,00 in unfilled positions also resulted in savings and were not classroom positions. Mr. Pfifferling noted that retirees and remote summer session could result in savings. He stated Circuit Breaker needed to be budgeted conservatively, along with School Choice reimbursement. The Assistant Superintendent further stated tuition offsets remained steady and athletic offsets were reduced by \$50,000 and also included was an increases/decreases line item (social/emotional, curriculum, ELL, hardware devices, special education/ELL teachers). He concluded

the budget included a 1.7% or \$1.5m increase and the more detailed budget would be available next week.

Mr. Wood asked for a breakdown of increases/decreases when this information was available.

In response to Mr. Wood's question on unfilled positions, Mr. Pfifferling clarified the savings were realized by attrition.

Mr. Wood suggested holding on the administrative position previously held by Dr. Thakkar. Superintendent Marotta stated that the position was necessary specifically since the individual had oversight over the Title I Grant. Mr. Wood provided a historical perspective on the position.

Mrs. Sapienza Donais agreed with Mr. Wood's opinion and offered that if the right person was hired for the Chief of Teaching, Learning and Leading the other position would not need to be filled.

Mrs. Ryan-Ciardello concurred with not filling this position and would rather preserve teaching and educational support positions. She asked for a specific description on the positions.

Dr. Marotta replied the existing positions were previously held by Dr. Thakkar and Mrs. Kitsos. She stated one position's responsibility handles teaching, learning, curriculum development, support teachers/principals, professional development, mentoring, and principal development. She noted the other position's duties included, student engagement, student supports, tiered supports, extended learning, and remote learning. The Superintendent commented that no layoffs (there were only open ESP positions not being filled) would occur to support these positions.

In response to Mrs. Ryan-Ciardello's comments on remote learning, Dr. Marotta concurred that on-line learning provided unique challenges for both students and teachers. The Superintendent noted that weekly meetings were held with principals and curriculum team to discuss the remote learning issues.

Attorney Rosa asked for clarification on the \$1.5m budget increase. Assistant Superintendent Pfifferling agreed but noted that many of the monies (one-time cuts) would need to be built back into the FY22 budget or possibly the second half of FY21 budget.

Attorney Rosa stated that initially the budget increase for a level-service budget was \$3.2m. Mr. Pfifferling responded that the increase was for salaries. Vice Chair Rosa asked about if some of the savings was from the bus contract. The Assistant Superintendent replied that was correct.

Ms. Sullivan commented that the Finance Subcommittee had been meeting bi-weekly to work on developing a budget was based on many unknowns and without definite guidance. She related that the boundaries were to provide the best education, while minimizing cuts. Ms. Sullivan indicated that everyone who works with children is extremely important and the way the district goes back to school will require different staffing needs. She complimented Dr. Marotta and Mr. Pfifferling for their work.

Mrs. Sapienza Donais asked who in the district was currently fulfilling the roles of the Chief of Support, Engagement and Innovation. Dr. Marotta responded several staff members were handling these duties, including Dianne Connolly, Kathy Smith, Michael Pfifferling and herself.

Attorney Magliocchetti noted the almost weekly meeting schedule of the Finance Subcommittee. He related that the one of the driving goals was people matter in our school system. Attorney Magliocchetti commented that the education world will be changing and that the Chief of Support, Engagement, and Innovation could be a critical position especially in a hybrid learning model. He commended all his colleagues on the Committee for compromising and thanked the Mayor for agreeing to a budget number that sustained our workforce.

Mayor Fiorentini acknowledged the sacrifice by the City in using the “rainy day” fund to increase the school budget and noted it was not a worst-case scenario budget. He thanked the Finance Subcommittee and Superintendent Marotta for their contributions. The Mayor stated it would take a lot of convincing for him to support the additional Chief position.

In reference to the bus contract, Mayor Fiorentini stated that a letter was received from the bus company indicating that if agreement was not reach, the children would not be transported in the fall.

Mrs. Ryan-Ciardello questioned that if there was a contract it would require him to transport our students.

Mayor Fiorentini stated that the owner had stated that he could not fulfill the contract.

Mr. Wood commented the letter was extortion and the vendor employed bullying tactics into making payment.

Mayor Fiorentini asked for a motion to enter negotiations to resolve this situation.

Attorney Rosa indicated without knowing the cost, the Committee could not make decisions.

Attorney Magliocchetti agreed with Attorney Rosa. He proposed that the district begin training our own bus drivers and possibly weaving in our own busses over the next several years.

Mr. Pfifferling questioned our negotiating power based on NRT’s agreement with other districts.

Mayor Fiorentini suggested sending it to Attorney Cox to negotiate with NRT.

Mrs. Sapienza Donais asked if payment was made to NRT and what cuts would need to be made to fund the payment.

Mr. Pfifferling stated the cost would be roughly \$522,000 (i.e., 10 teaching positions). He was torn on the decision.

Attorney Rosa responded that there might be a refund since we paid at full price through 3.31.20.

A motion was made by Attorney Magliocchetti to refer the NRT Transportation Contract Issue to Attorney Cox. Attorney Rosa seconded the motion.

Mrs. Ryan-Ciardello asked if there were no other bus companies that could fulfill our transportation needs. Mr. Pfifferling replied that Mr. McCarthy had acquired other contracts and would be deploying “our busses” to fulfill those contracts and indicated there might be other options.

