MASCONOMET REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE

January 17, 2024

MEMBERS PRESENT:	M. Ogden, Chair, Topsfield	J. McLean, Boxford, Vice Chair
	T. Currier, Middleton	M. Alexander, Middleton
	W. Hodges, Topsfield	Z. Bhuju, Topsfield
	C. Bolzan, Boxford	E. Clements - Boxford
	D. Casamassima, Middleton	K. Petrone, Middleton
	J. Horrigan, Boxford	
MEMBERS ABSENT:		
OTHERS PRESENT:	M. Harvey, Superintendent	
	J. Sands, Assistant Supt. & Chief Procurement Officer	
	L. Bennett, Assistant Supt. For Student Services	

A. **Call to Order** – M. Ogden, Chair, called the Regular Meeting of the School Committee of January 17, 2024, to Order at 7:00pm, in the High School Library.

B. Remarks from the Chair – M. Ogden stated that this is the beginning of the budget process and there will be many meetings to discuss and review the proposed budget. School Committee members will meet with their Select Boards and Finance Committees. No decisions will be made tonight, all deliberations are public, videotaped and subject to the Open Meeting Law.

C. **Comments from the Audience –** Michelle Voner, Topsfield, expressed her concern that there will be cuts to the fine arts department and music department and the hiring of a new department head.
Kathy Bussell, Topsfield, is concerned with the hiring of a new head of the fine arts department.
Hayden Minkus, Middleton, is a senior and has participated in band, chorus and theater and spoke about Mr. O'Keefe's impact on his time at Masconomet.
Quinn Tierney, Boxford, is a junior member of the chamber choir, acapella and jazz choir and spoke about how the fine arts have positively impacted her.
Abby, Boxford, is a senior member of band and theater and spoke about the environment created by Mr. O'Keefe.
Kathleena Scarpato, Topsfield, inquired about the Athletic Director working a second job.

D. **SAB Report** – Greta Hartung informed the SC that the students are under a lot of stress as testing is underway, either midterms or end of unit testing. Freshman/Sophomore semi-formal is on January 26th. A blood drive will take place in February. M Block is still changing with some M Block classes overfilled and there is some confusion about how to best use M Block. Winter sports are underway.

E. **Administration's FY25 Recommended Budget Presentation** – M. Harvey reviewed the Fy25 Budget process overview and budget calendar from October through April/May. The recommended budget is a level service budget. A level service budget is a continuation of

the current services, programs and operations of the District. M. Harvey reviewed the key assumptions and highlights which included revenues and salary costs. Successor CBAs for the MTA and Paraprofessional Union for FY25-FY27 remain to be negotiated. This does incorporate COLA and all other contractual salary obligations specified in the CBAs. Operating costs and Capital costs including debt service expense .
FY25 Budget Assessment Overview was reviewed. The state aid will be updated when the cherry sheets are updated.
FY25 Budget Assessment by Town was reviewed, which includes a 4.0% increase for Boxford, a 3.1% increase for Middleton and a 5.9% increase for Topsfield. Both Boxford and Topsfield are looking at overrides. The Operating Assessment was based on the 4-year average of resident enrollment per the Regional Agreement. Enrollment trends were reviewed for all grades from 2018 through 2023. There has been a 12.8% reduction in total students since 2018. The enrollment projection for FY25 is 27 students less than FY24 or a 1.7% reduction. The estimated enrollment from FY25-FY28 indicates an increase at the Middle School and a decrease at the High School.
Salaries remain the highest expense driver in the budget, combined with other expense drivers resulting in a 2.5% increase.
Staffing proposals for the FY25 Budget include a reduction of 5 FTE positions at the high school. This includes creating 1 FTE Visual and Performing Arts Department Head position; adding 1 FTE Director of Teaching and Learning position; restoring 1 FTE MPFT and 1 FTE IT Tech to the operating budget; and adding 1 FTE HS Academic Successor Center Teacher to the operating budget. Discussion followed regarding HS staffing and class size in FY24. The Principal is discussing reductions with Department Heads. A Visual Performing Arts Department will be created, and a Department Head will be hired.
ESSER Funding ends September 2024. The positions which have been funded by the ESSER grant were reviewed. These positions are critical positions.

M. Ogden stated that based on the presentation, Visual and Performing Arts student facing services will not be impacted, only the supervising aspect of the department will be impacted. Discussion followed regarding retirements and staffing. The merging of visual and performing arts departments with one department head managing the department will take place FY25.
T. Currier asked if the additional art requirement will increase the need in that department. Freshmen and sophomores are taking art classes, and the average class size remains 16.5 students. Discussion followed regarding ESSER funded positions and the transfer of those positions into the budget.
D. Casamassima asked if COVID impacted enrollment numbers. Students transferred out during the pandemic, but the impact was only for one year.
C. Bolzan asked how the 5 FTE reduction will be decided. The CBA provides the process to be followed.
T. Currier asked if the Department Heads would report to the Director of Teaching and Learning. Discussion followed regarding duties of the Director of Teaching and Learning and educator evaluations which are used to strengthen this initiative.
Of the ESSER Grant funded positions; 2 FTE are HS Academic Success Teachers, and 2 FTE are School Adjustment Counselors. It is recommended that 1 FTE HS Academic Success Center Teacher be added to the operation budget. The ASC has been staffed with

1 FTE during the 2023-2034 school year. Discussion regarding caseload reallocation for School Adjustment Counselors followed. The caseloads will increase. Exit criteria are being discussed to help lighten the caseload when possible. There is a projected increased need coming up from the elementary grades that may need to be addressed and how to obtain the funding. E. Clements asked for data regarding the impacts to the caseloads. Discussion followed regarding Adjustment Counselor caseloads at the HS and how losing a counselor would impact the caseload to be redistributed to the remaining counselors. The MS caseload was discussed. The MS has 3 Adjustment Counselors with 95 students being serviced.

The Academic Success Center helps Tier 2 general education students who need to receive extra attention, usually in Math or Science, to reenter the classroom. Executive functioning, and time management skills are addressed in a 6-week program. There are 5-7 students per class period working one on one with the teacher. At the end of the 6 weeks, the students are re-evaluated. Students are pulled during study period or elective period to go to the Academic Success Center. This year the Academic Success Center is working with one teacher, and we can make it work for one more year with one teacher.

Z. Bhuju asked if the additional Adjustment Counselor could be funded where the need for it is still high.

J. Sands reviewed the Excess & Deficiency funds available and how that number is calculated. The amount for FY25 is a fixed number for budget purposes.

F. **Capital Planning Sub-Committee Report: Category III Items** – J. McLean provided an overview of the categories reviewed by the sub-committee.

Category 1 includes roof replacement, HVAC and BMS replacements/repairs. J. McLean reviewed the timeline and process for these replacements/repairs. These are critical items, especially with 20 additional leaks occurring during the December rainstorm. There are incentive programs which are evolving. MSBA accelerated repair funding is only available for replacement of items that are 25 years old, and our roof will be 25 years old in 2026. Discussion followed regarding MSBA repair funding timing for the roof replacement and heat pump electrification.

Category 3 tasks have been prioritized to address the most important tasks. Town Meeting in 2024 we will ask for $1.05 million to address the Category 3 First Priorities. The first priorities were reviewed by J. McLean, which focuses on FY25/26 which total $1,054,100. The second half of the first priorities will receive funding in FY27/28/29. Category 3 second priorities will be funded FY27 and beyond. The portable AEDs in the second priorities may be funded this year with extra funds so that each team will have their own AED.

The DCI/Budget Sub-committee recommends that the SC support the following spend/ask for May 2024: $5 million for an OPM and designer for Category 1 (HVAC and Roof Replacement) and $1.05 million for Category 3 top priority items. The timelines for future Town Meetings were reviewed, and the categories will be funded by those future Town Meetings.

T. Currier stated that with the upgrades proposed, there will be many more people coming to Masco. We will need the cell phone upgrade sooner to have service available.

G. Policy Section F First Reading – T. Currier reviewed the changes for Section F regarding Facilities. Z. Bhuju suggested a change to Section FA, last paragraph by inserting "use high quality construction, and consider MA energy codes and incentive points under MSBA Green Repair Programs. Discussion followed regarding the amendment and potential changes in programs available in the future. It was agreed the amendment should read "use high quality construction and consider MA energy codes and incentives."
A Motion was made by Z. Bhuju to approve Section F as presented with the Amendment as discussed, it was seconded by C. Bolzan and unanimously approved by an 11-0 vote.

MOTION: Approve Section F with Amendment
VOTE: 11-0, Motion Passed

H. **Policy Section I Second Read** – T. Currier stated that the changes discussed were made to Section I.
A Motion was made by Z. Bhuju to approve Section I as presented, it was seconded by E. Clements and unanimously approved by an 11-0 vote.

MOTION: Approve Section I
VOTE: 11-0, Motion Passed

I. **Superintendent's Report** – M. Harvey informed the SC that the next HS coffee will be held January 19th at 8:30am. The MS Musical, "James and the Giant Peach" is underway and performances will be 2/2-2/3.

J. **Sub-Committee Reports**

Community Relations – Held a meeting tonight and the next meetings with community dialogues will be held 2/4, 3/2 and 4/24. The items discussed tonight included M Block confusion; concern about tax increases; artificial turf impacts; and if the Stantech presentation will include public questions and answers.
DCI/Budget –will begin regularly monthly meetings.
Anti-Racism – met 1/8 to discuss issues and the data needed to address the issues.
Policy – will be rescheduling meeting Friday.
Negotiations – no update.
Turf Up – will be presenting an update at the January 31st meeting.
Liaison Updates – Z. Bhuju informed the Committee that a listening session is scheduled for 1/31 at the Library.

K. Consent Agenda

1. Approval of Minutes of January 3, 2024.
2. Warrants $955,128.41 signed since January 3, 2024.
3. Approve Annual Quebec Field Trip.
4. Approve Annual DECA Trips.
5. Accept MEF Grants: MS Author Visit, Latin Dance, African Drumming, Field Trip to MFA, and The Stronger Masconomet.

A Motion was made by Z. Bhuju to approve the Consent Agenda as presented, it was seconded by D. Casamassima and unanimously approved by 11-0 Vote.

MOTION: Approve Consent Agenda
VOTE: 11-0, Motion Carried

The next meeting will be held January 31, 2024, at 7:00pm.

M. Ogden made a Motion to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing strategy relative to collective bargaining with the Masconomet Teachers Association and the Masconomet Paraprofessionals Union and not to return to open session. The Chair has determined that holding these discussions in open session may have a detrimental impact on the School Committee's bargaining position. The Motion was seconded by J. McLean and unanimously approved by Rollcall vote:

M. Ogden – yes **T. Currier – yes** **M. Alexander – yes** **W. Hodges – yes**
J. Horrigan – yes **Z. Bhuju – yes** **C. Bolzan – yes** **M. Alexander - yes**
E. Clements – yes **D. Casamassima – yes** **J. McLean - yes**

Submitted by: _____ Approved: _____
Lynn Viselli, Recording Secretary Date

Per the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law, the list of documents that were either distributed to the Masconomet School Committee before the meeting in the packet or at the meeting.

1. Agenda
2. FY25 Recommended Budget Presentation
3. Capital Planning Sub-committee report
4. Superintendent Report
5. Policy Section F
6. Policy Section I
7. Consent Agenda