

Holyoke School Committee
Finance Sub-Committee
Minutes of Meeting
October 18, 2023
Holyoke High Dean Campus (Fifield Room)

5:03 p.m.: Meeting came to order with John Whelihan, Chair; along with members Erin Brunelle, and William Collamore in attendance. Eleanor Wilson was absent by notification. Rosalee Tensley-Williams was absent. Finance Director Sean Mangano attended the meeting.

The meeting was held in person and remotely according to the March 29, 2023 Act signed by Governor Healey that, among other things, extended the expiration of the temporary Open Meeting Law provisions to March 31, 2025. The meeting notice contained a link providing the public with remote access.

Documents Presented:

- Budget Report

The committee welcomed Director of Finance, Mr. Mangano to the meeting. Mr. Mangano provided the committee with a Budget Report detailing various cost centers associated from July-August 2023.

Budget Items Covered:

- Service Contracts were discussed. Mr. Mangano stated that due to a shortage in specialized fields, such as psychologists, the district contracted to provide these services.
- Mr. Collamore and Ms. Brunelle specifically requested a line-item budget report. Ms. Brunelle stated that a simple powerpoint presentation does not provide enough budgetary detail. Mr. Mangano suggested that the School Committee provide suggestions on how they want the budget presented. Although the data lags behind, DESE has budget information available on-line.
- The committee discussed the school improvement plan including newly created central office positions. Mr. Collamore and Ms. Brunelle requested that central office salaries be listed as a separate line item within the budget. Ms. Brunelle requested that a future budget report include the percentage of central office raises since receivership began. The committee asked whether newly created central office positions would remain when receivership ends. Mr. Whelihan stated that the City Council previously requested information regarding cabinet positions and salaries. Mr. Mangano stated that he would provide the Finance Committee with a report detailing recent staffing trends.
- The committee mentioned that Mayor Garcia would likely move the central office to 225 High Street if the city purchases the building. Discussion involved the amount of rent

the city currently pays for central office space. Ms. Brunelle stated that the current rent of \$181,000 seems to have increased since receivership began.

- The committee discussed the need for the Receiver to provide an administrator to the school committee. The committee agreed that the current situation is not working well. Discussion arose over the administrator's role as it applies to the School Committee. Ms. Brunelle suggested that the position be paid through the city side of the budget. She requested Mayor Garcia consider adding a position to the municipal budget. Both the committee and Mr. Mangano discussed whether the position would be a part-time or a stipend position. Mr. Collamore questioned whether the administrator would work from the city hall or school department. Mr. Whelihan and Ms. Brunelle stated the position would not likely have set hours. The administrator should be able to perform many duties from their home. Ms. Brunelle requested Mr. Mangano provide the costs attributed to the administrative position before receivership.

Fiscal Updates:

- Mr. Mangano stated that the FY23 budget would be closed soon. Mayor Garcia would provide the City Council with a supplemental budget in early November.
- The committee discussed the differences between a self-insured vs fully insured city. Both formulas were discussed at length. Mr. Mangano stated the city is fully insured.
- Mr. Collamore suggested that each department head make a presentation to the Finance Committee regarding their annual budget. Mr. Mangano stated he would review the budget process moving forward.
- The committee discussed the process of signing warrants. The past practice was for Finance Committee members to personally go into the central office to sign warrants. Ms. Brunelle didn't feel the need to sign warrants since the district is in receivership. Mr. Mangano stated the warrant process is being re-worked resulting in fewer warrants. Mr. Collamore stated that there has been many changes to existing contracts along with new executed contracts. He would like the Finance Committee to review all contracts moving forward. Mr. Mangano would break down the current food service contract at a future meeting. Mr. Whelihan stated that the Finance Committee would likely have new members after January 1, 2024. The topic of signing warrants was tabled.

Athletic Department Budget:

- Ms. Brunelle asked how the Athletic Department adds positions to their department. Mr. Mangano stated the Athletic Director requests funding, including new positions,

through the annual budget process. The Receiver reviews all department requests at the beginning of the budget cycle.

Post Receivership:

- Mr. Collamore asked whether the service contracts would remain in effect if the district is removed from receivership. He asked whether the School Committee should be reviewing vendor contracts. The committee discussed the current food service contract including the amount of federal and state revenue the district receives.
- Ms. Brunelle stated that the School Committee should be presented with enough financial information so they can fully prepare for local control.
- Mr. Mangano would provide the Finance Committee with the following information.
 - Current lease/rent for central office at Suffolk Street.
 - Food service contract
 - HG&E contract/service data
 - Prior costs of the committee's administrative assistant

The committee thanked Mr. Mangano for attending the meeting and providing relevant financial information.

6:20: p.m.: Motion to adjourn

Respectfully submitted,
John Whelihan, Chair