

Holyoke School Committee
Finance & Operations Sub-Committee
Minutes of Meeting
May 6, 2024
57 Suffolk St (Conference Room)

5:50 p.m Meeting came to order with John Whelihan, Chair; and members Ronald Collamore, Eleanor Wilson present. Finance Director, Sean Mangano assisted with the meeting and presentation. School Committee member Rosalie Tensley-Williams was in attendance.

Mr. Whelihan announced the meeting was held and recorded according to the provisions of the Open Meeting Law; MGL Chapter 30A, Section 21.

Documents Presented:

- FY24 Budget Update Report
- FY25 Budget Update Summary
- Facilities Update

Mr. Mangano reviewed the district's cost center from January-February. Special Education costs were over budget by 20%. The district needed to hire consultants servicing students with special needs.

Budgetary Items Discussed:

There is currently a major budget deficit regarding transportation costs. Transportation costs have increased 12% and are incurred outside of net school spending. The city would be required to cover the increased transportation costs. The administration is currently looking for ways to cover these costs. The committee discussed the increased costs of running student buses and vans. Discussion involved the increased costs of transporting homeless students and students with IEPs in vans.

Charter Schools:

- The district is only reimbursed for Charter School tuition increases that occur "year to year".

Health Insurance Costs:

- Insurance costs are up over 10% from last fiscal year. Discussion involved the pros/cons of the city being self-insured vs fully insured. The city is transitioning to a self-insured system.

Status of employee contracts:

- Mr. Mangano stated that the district is negotiating with various school contracts. Mrs. Wilson stated that the district crossing guards deserve to be compensated for their services.

Facilities Update:

- The committee reviewed a list of ESSER funded facility improvements. Many school improvements included upgrades to HVAC systems, security systems along with repairs to boilers and playgrounds.
- Mr. Collamore asked about fencing replacement that occurred at Peck school. Mr. Mangano would inquire about when the fencing replacement took place.

- Although a grant was procured to fix Dean Tech's boilers, ESSER funding was used to replace two boilers at Holyoke High North.
- The committee praised the school administration's distribution of ESSER funding within the district. Mr. Whelihan stated that surrounding communities have budget deficits partly due to ESSER funding being used to fund operational expenses. Mrs. Wilson state that the Student Opportunity Act provided the district with necessary Chapter 70 funding.

Central Office Rent:

- The committee discussed the fact that it's unlikely that the central office would be moving to 225 High Street. Although the mayor initiated a friendly taking of this property, it appears the property is now under agreement with another buyer.

Food Services:

- The food service budget is 1 million dollars over budget. The administration is currently addressing this issue. Mr. Mangano stated that kitchen equipment was updated throughout the district.

Old Business:

Warrants:

- The committee once again discussed the process of signing warrants. Before receivership, the finance committee physically went to the central office to sign warrants. The committee agreed that a majority of the finance sub-committee should sign the warrants. The committee did not want to adopt a "single member" signature policy. Mr. Mangano stated that the warrants should be available to review and sign electronically. The Board tabled the matter once again.

Upcoming Finance meetings:

- There would be a budget presentation to the full school committee on May 28. The budget hearing would be held on June 11, the next regular full school committee meeting.
- Mr. Whelihan thanked Mr. Mangano for providing the committee with the budget data while running the meeting on zoom.

7:15 p.m.: Ms. Wilson made the motion to adjourn. Mr. Collamore seconded. The motion passed 3-0

Respectfully submitted,

John Whelihan
Chair