

**Woburn School Committee  
Woburn Public Schools  
55 Locust Street  
Woburn, MA 01801**

A special meeting of the Woburn School Committee was held on May 5, 2022, in the Conference Room of the Joyce Middle School, located at 55 Locust Street, Woburn, Massachusetts, starting at 7:30 p.m.

For the purposes of simultaneous viewing, the School Committee arranged for the livestream of the meeting via Woburn Public Media YouTube Channel.

**CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL**

Mrs. Chisholm-Present, Ms. Cormier-Present, Ms. Crowley-Present, Mr. Kisiel-Present, Mr. Lipsett-Present, Mr. Mulrenan-Present, Chair Dr. Wells-Present

Mr. Mulrenan told the audience Chair Dr. Wells was attending tonight's meeting remotely.

Mr. Mulrenan acted as Chair for tonight's meeting.

Also in attendance tonight was Chuck Viola of the city council

The school committee provided another viewing option for tonight's public meeting via ZOOM.

**REPORTS/PRESENTATION OF SUPERINTENDENT & STAFF**

Budget updates to the School Committee from Mr. Alconada and Dr. Crowley

Dr. Crowley acknowledged that it is Teacher Appreciation week. He thanked the WPS teachers and staff for taking such good care of our kids.

Mr. Alconada presented the budget summary page. We are at 3.75%. The major change is that the application of the ESSER funds has been reduced from \$2,000,000 to \$1,287,500. With the application of those ESSER funds, we are still at a total of \$73,273,625. Last week when the school committee met, they had a number of proposed cuts on the table. Some of those cuts remain, and some of them have been taken back and substituted for additional cuts.

<u>School/Department</u>	<u>Position/Line Item</u>	<u>FTE</u>	<u>FY 23 Cost</u>
SPED	Reduce SPED Transportation		-\$150,000
Elementary	Due to Enrollment 2.0 FTE Teachers Eliminated	2.0	-\$110,714
Curriculum	Eliminate History Coordinator Position	1.0	-\$100,600
Facilities	Eliminate Assistant Director	1.0	-\$100,000
ML	Cancel Budget Request for 4.0 FTE ML Paraprofessionals	4.0	-\$92,292
SPED	Wilson Teacher	1.0	-\$67,031
Central Administration	Eliminate Legal Line Item Increase		-\$50,000

SPED	Reduce Budget Request of 16.5 Paraprofessionals to 14.5	2.0	-\$46,146
IT	Cancel Budget Request for 1.0 FTE IT Support	1.0	-\$46,000
SPED	Shift Reeves Pre-School Nurse to SPED Contractual Line Item	1.0	-\$22,500
SPED	Shift Chairperson to Revolving Account	0.4	\$0
<u>ML</u>	<u>Add Interventionists (4 Slots)</u>		<u>\$72,783</u>
Total		13.4	-\$712,500

Reducing the budget by \$712,500 is how we get to \$1,287,500. That \$712,500 savings from this year, FY 23 would be rolled over for FY24. About half of the budget cuts came from the FY 23 budget requests. Roughly 33% came from existing positions and 28% came from line item reductions. This does add up to more than 100% and that is why we have a -10% in adding back the ML Interventionists.

FY 23 ESSER Funds		\$1,287,500
FY 24 ESSER Funds		\$712,500
Salary - Budget Request	-\$351,469	49.33%
Salary - Existing Positions	-\$233,814	32.82%
Line Item Reductions	-\$200,000	28.07%
Add Backs - ML Interventionists	<u>\$72,783</u>	<u>-10.22%</u>
Total	-\$712,500	100%

Mr. Alconada explained the proposed position additions below; that gets us to the 21.5 FTE positions. The initial request was 30.9 FTE positions which was reduced by -13.4 to get to the 17.5 additional positions in FY 23.

<u>School/Department</u>	<u>Position Additions</u>	<u>FTE</u>	<u>FY 23 Cost</u>
SPED	Paraprofessional	14.5	\$336,022
English Language	Teaching Staff	3.0	\$201,093
Malcolm White	Assistant Principal	1.0	\$90,600
SPED	BCBA	1.0	\$67,031
SPED	SLP	1.0	\$67,031
Human Resources	Admin. Assistant	1.0	<u>\$45,871</u>
Total		21.5	\$807,648
<u>School/Department</u>	<u>Position Reductions</u>	<u>FTE</u>	<u>FY 23 Cost</u>
Elementary	Due to Enrollment,		

	2.0 FTE Teachers Eliminated	-2.0	-\$110,714
Curriculum	Eliminate History Coordinator Position	-1.0	-\$100,600
SPED	Shift Reeves Pre-School Nurse to SPED Contractual Line Item	-1.0	-\$22,500
Total		-4.0	-\$233,814
Grand Total		17.5	\$573,834
Initial Request	30.9		
Reductions	-13.4		
New Positions Added in FY 23	17.5		

Mr. Lipsett asked for clarification on the 2 FTE teachers eliminated. Seeing teaching positions eliminated is difficult for Mr. Lipsett, given that we thought we had arrived at a 3.75% budget earlier. Mr. Alconada said they took a look at the projected enrollment across the district, specifically in elementary, and identified several schools where they would go down a teacher and another school might go up a teacher. It netted out to two classrooms that we wouldn't need to carry from FY 22 to FY 23. At that point, Mr. Alconada, Dr. Crowley, and Ms. Young thought that this was the appropriate thing to do and put those two teachers forward.

Mr. Lipsett responded by asking, in terms of these teaching positions, are we talking about full-time staff?

Mr. Alconada replied at the moment they are working full time. More than likely, these two positions will come down to one that is a long-term sub position and another one who is on an emergency license. There could be a possibility where we have a last-minute resignation or a last-minute retirement and these two individuals will land on their feet.

Mr. Lipsett asked about enrollment numbers. He would hate for us to be right on the edge and have move-ins over the summer and early fall; and in September, October, or November, we would have to disrupt a classroom.

Ms. Young said we can never completely know, but in terms of the number of reductions that were made, the number of students needed for an additional classroom is a pretty significant number across the board.

Ms. Crowley asked Ms. Young to talk about the shift from requesting ML paras to Interventionists.

Ms. Young said they have had a lot of success at the elementary level with the Interventionists. When they were looking at the budget and knowing they were eliminating some positions with the 4 paraprofessionals, they looked at the options that they had. Our current interventionists work with our content specialists to determine the specific needs of our literacy learners. The ML interventionists will work in that part, but will also be getting some guidance and support from the EL staff in the building in terms of some really targeted groups; especially our level I newcomer students.

Ms. Crowley likes the ideas of building the ML teachers first and then adding the Interventionists. Ms Crowley is concerned about losing the History coordinator position. Although, this is not a person who is working directly with students, so she feels this is a fair adjustment considering this person wants to move back into the classroom.

Ms. Chisholm asked which schools the ML interventionists will be going to.

Ms. Young said they will be going to Hurd Wyman, Shamrock, Linscott, and Altavesta.

Mrs. Chisholm asked about the Human Resource Administrative Assistant position, was this Jake Donovan's position?

Mr. Alconada said the HR Administrative Assistant is an additional position.

Mrs. Chisholm asked if this position was needed.

Mr. Alconada feels this position is needed. We are a growing district and have a lot of administrative tasks in the human resources area that need to get done. He does believe this position is necessary. This position, although HR, will also have the ability to assist in other areas in the central office as well. Mrs. Chisholm is disappointed that we are not adding in the IT Support position. She worries that we have added so much technology to our district that if we don't take care of this, it will fail very fast. We have to keep an eye on this for next year.

Ms. Cormier asked Dr. Crowley to speak about the 28% increase in the salary of the administrative assistant position. This is being budgeted, and the position hasn't changed yet. What can we expect, and what will the changes be?

Dr. Crowley said it has been 4+ years to create a confidential position rather than a union position in the position of executive assistant to the superintendent. The salary is a competitive number.

Mr. Mulrenan asked if we offered the early retirement incentive this year.

Mr. Alconada said we did not do that this year. There are 12-14 retirees this year.

Mr. Mulrenan commented that we are not asking our families for any type of fees.

He applauded the administration for the work accomplished so far on the FY 23 budget.

Mr. Mulrenan introduced Mayor Galvin.

Mayor Galvin thanked the school committee for working towards this goal to get the budget passed.

Mayor Galvin feels they have been doing a good job of adding to the school department to address the needs that have come up through COVID-19, and through our new influx of new students that are lacking in English speaking; we have a shortage there and have been addressing that. Special Education costs have been creeping up as well. Last year, through the budget process, the spending went up well over 5.5% because we had the ESSER funds. We added close to 40 positions in the budget. Twenty-five positions were included in the budget and 17 were funded by ESSER, so they did not show up in the budget. This year we started the process with about 30 new positions.

Remembering there were 17 positions that were off budget, now made their way into the budget, so are actually included in the budget finding process. Over the past two years, we are in the process of adding about 70 new positions. Mayor Galvin is concerned about the benefits that are associated with those positions as they catch up with us. You don't see them on the school side, but they are seen on the city side. The city does not budget for that many new positions. This was a major concern of the Mayor, and he talked to Dr. Crowley, Mr. Alconada, and Ms. Young on how to address this. They went back to the drawing board to try to reduce it to a closer number that we could be comfortable with. The Mayor said 15, and they worked hard and came to 17. Mayor Galvin thanked them for that effort. With that said, even though the city is approving the 3.75%, the overall spending of the budget is going up to over 5.5%. That is a significant amount of money. We all have to be cognizant that federal funds are not always going to be there. Particularly next year there is going to be a bit of a fiscal cliff and these positions that we are creating we have to be able to fund them. This is a major concern. It is not economically feasible to keep funding at 5.5 + increase. We have had the ESSER funds, and these funds were to be used as one time funds that aren't continuing. They tell you to use the ESSER funds for one time expenditures. Right now, Mayor Galvin does not believe there are any expenditures that are one time in the budget.

Mayor Galvin asked the administration and school committee that when they have additional ESSER funds, to look at what they can do as far as using that money for one time expenses. There is going to be a day of reckoning when we are not able to fund all these positions, and it is going to come sooner than we think. With this budget, we all have to recognize that spending is going up 5.5%. We need to convey to people that we are not cutting the budget; we are increasing the budget. We are increasing our spending by a significant amount.

Ms. Crowley appreciates the Mayor for coming down tonight. Her only feedback is that they can know sooner as they develop the budget. The administration spends a lot of time gathering input. It would be good to know what the whole spending limit is in the very beginning because these positions are brought up in public meetings and people get excited about them, and then we have to reduce them.

It would be more helpful to have communication from the beginning. Other than that, Ms. Crowley is 100% in agreement with the Mayor. She feels tonight we can highlight exactly what we are doing for the school system, which is significant. This is a huge budget and Ms. Crowley deeply appreciates the Mayor working with the committee.

Mayor Galvin said there is a process, and the Superintendent starts early communicating with principals.

Mrs. Chisholm appreciates the Mayor's time here tonight and recognizes we are just one department within the city. She asked the Mayor if he will be giving the school department the capital improvement money they are asking for.

Mayor Galvin responded by saying they will have to sit down and talk about this because there are going to be multiple capital requests. The ESSER funds are there for capital and there are additional funds for capital he thinks we will need to sit down and talk about. There are ESSER funds and city funds, and we will have to sit down and take a look at both of them.

Mr. Lipsett appreciates all the hard work Mayor Galvin has done, and the administration has done. Mr. Lipsett commented, as we are all aware, this is a very difficult time to be in education. We have additional ESSER funds, yes, but our needs are growing at a pretty rapid pace. We are seeing this every day in our school buildings. It is hard to keep things above water right now. It is hard for Mr. Lipsett to look at the budget that was presented a couple of weeks ago and see some of the positions that have been taken out, knowing the good that could be done for our kids. We have a budget before us that is going to do a lot of good for our kids, but he can't help but hear that voice that says we can do more.

Mr. Kisiel has seen many budgets throughout his years. It may take a bit but it seems we always get what is needed for the school system and thanked Mayor Galvin.

#### MOTION TO OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Crowley made a motion to open the meeting up to public comment.

Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

Julie Cotton asked the committee to please stand firm and reject the Mayor's attempt to use ESSER funds to offset a portion of the school budget that is the city's yearly responsibility. Let those funds be used in the manner in which they are intended. The purpose of the ESSER funds is to support the safe reopening and sustaining safe operations of schools while meeting students' academic, social, emotional and mental health needs, resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Use of the ESSER funds is entirely within the purview of the school committee, as these funds do not pass through city hall on the way to the district. It is not the duty of the school committee to focus on the mayor's FY 23 budget concerns over the needs of our students today. Our students deserve to be prioritized and have that ESSER funding directly impacting our educational recovery from this pandemic.

#### MOTION TO CLOSE PUBLIC COMMENT

Mrs. Chisholm made a motion to close the public hearing.

Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

#### VOTE TO SEND THE FY 2023 BUDGET TO CITY HALL AS SCHOOL COMMITTEE FINAL BUDGET

Mr. Mulrenan asked Mr. Alconada for the final FY 23 budget.

Mr. Alconada said that the number is \$73,273,625.

Ms. Crowley made a motion to send the FY 23 budget to city hall as the school committee final budget. Motion was seconded.

Ms. Crowley, on the motion, objects to the Mayor's demand that we use our ESSER money. He does not control how we use our ESSER money. As she told the mayor earlier, she also has concerns about the delay in

communication of the budget. However, she feels this budget represents what Woburn Public Schools is trying to do. She is very proud of the work the administration has done. She is satisfied with the special education spending, and she is impressed with the ML infrastructure that we are building. She is excited about the general education spending and the curriculum advancements that we have made over the years. She is very happy to be voting in favor of this budget despite her concerns about the mayor's overreach. Ms Crowley deeply appreciates all the work the teachers do each and every day.

Mr. Lipsett echoes a lot of what Ms. Crowley just said. This budget is going to do a good job of supporting our students and doing a good job of getting us where we need to be. He still has concerns about potential new enrollments.

Mr. Lipsett, on the motion, made an amendment to the motion to add one full time elementary teacher to this budget.

Amendment failed.

Mr. Kisiel asked what the percentage of the budget is?

Mr. Alconada said it is 3.75%.

Mr. Mulrenan said we have a motion to send the FY 23 budget to city hall.

Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

#### ROLL CALL

Mrs. Chisholm-yes, Ms. Cormier-yes, Ms. Crowley-yes, Mr. Kisiel-yes, Mr. Lipsett-yes, Mr. Mulrenan-yes, Dr. Wells-yes

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

Dr. Wells said there is no executive session this evening.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Cormier made a motion to adjourn.

Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

The meeting adjourned at 7:47p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean MacLeod

Recording Secretary