

## Foxborough Advisory Committee

Wednesday, January 30<sup>th</sup> 2019

In attendance:

Susan Dring, Sean McCarthy, Bernard Dumont, Seth Ferguson, Larry Ooi, Robert Canfield, Michelle Raymond, Brent Ruter, Larry Stern, Sharon Weiskerger, Stephanie McGowan, Brian Guild

### MINUTES

7:05PM - Meeting called to order by Susan Dring

The School Committee Board was introduced with Ms. Berdos, Ms. White, Ms. Mello, Ms. Belanger and Mr. Yukna in attendance. Specific points that the board wanted to address were:

- 1) shifting student needs and population,
- 2) no new programs/ initiatives,
- 3) Escalating technology costs
- 4) balancing today's societal needs
- 5) meeting compliance standards per state guidelines
- 6) the assumption of \$125K each year for retirements
- 7) fluctuating returns on grant applications
- 8) All Day Kindergarten

Sue D: How many retirees this year?

A Berdos – 4-5, but that number is not known for sure until the last day of the school year.

Ms. Berdos continued with adjustments to 2019. There is an increase of .5 team share to full time for a SPED coordinator at the Ahern. Also, a .2 share increase for music instruction at the Ahern as more students are staying in programs longer. In the last 3 years, 100 more students are returning to programs.

Sue D – Is the .5 chair already benefitted? Ms. Berdos answered: 'yes'.

B Yukna – We start developing the budget in October/November for the next September when teacher contracts start. It must be a fluid budget as it may completely change due to new needs and/or constraints.

Sean M – reminded the panel that the ADCOMM had previously asked for a 10-year chart of budget increases.

Bernard D – Asked to look at the escalation of changes for FY2020 – what is the essence of the 1.1M increase.

B Yukna – COLA has to cover all contracts – this year is difficult because contracts have not been settled yet.

Sue D – asked where the progress on the Burrell School project stands.

B Yukna - stated that they are in the design stage and expect to go out to bid in June.

The panel continued: the school will contract out for a trainer, which is roughly the same expense as hiring one but affords the town greater flexibility to cover overlapping needs and they are certified by Brigham & Women's Hospital. The department tries to keep kids in the district whenever possible; they try to bring contracts into town rather than ship them out. While rates have increased @ 8%, transportation costs have decreased (running @ \$35K / student). The biggest area of concern is out of district costs/tuitions for 28 students. Many costs are mandated and the town is committed to doing the best for the students; unfortunately, there are no duplicate needs, so no bundling. The town receives some reimbursements but they are a year in arrears and it goes right back into the next budget. It is extraordinary that they increased 25% over previous years.

Larry S – What is the long-term plan for implementing tech? Is it +\$ or -\$?

The panel replied by trying to identify strengths and weaknesses. Tech has benefitted personal development and reduced the number of texts (though there is usually copies in the classroom). Bill Yukna indicated that a model has been adopted by publishers for licensing e-books is becoming a wash. Meanwhile, in the elementary schools, single-use workbooks (consumables) still are in use and need to be replaced each year. We still haven't been able to reduce the number of copies printed.

Seth F – remarked how 8M copies were printed (17 pp/student/day)

Ms. Mello – elaborating on 'consumable' materials: the publications are written for nationwide use. The students are not always using everything in the books.

Bernard D – What were level wishes vs push back/elimination to get down to \$1.1M?

B Yukna – We work with the district's wish lists in conjunction with its priorities. The schools are a much bigger drain, yet receives an 80/20 support in town along with increases in infrastructure and in efficiencies which has fed a growth in demand for more.

Sean M – The Network Mgr. salary is up from 2018, was there a change?

B Yukna – Yes, the position is additional and now represents the school portion.

Sean M – What about software licenses, do we do the PD/FD? Has bundling licenses saved money? Do we assess their usage each year?

B Yukna – No, they haven't and we do not.

Ms. Mello – Online testing has increased from Grade 3 on up.

Larry S – On the macro level, who is Foxborough compared to amongst other towns? Do you compare against a State average or per pupil (referring to Boston Magazine rankings). Foxborough only ranked in performance vs spending > comp towns. There are other towns which rank higher with lower costs per pupil.

A Berdos – Yes, we look and compare, both directly and with comparable towns.

Larry S - Who are those towns?

A Berdos – without naming specific districts, she did remind the board that Foxborough does not charge any fees.

B Yukna – added that Foxborough HS offers a greater amount of AP classes.

Larry S – Referred to the 10/12 benchmarks mentioned earlier:

A Berdos – Those measures change every day.

Larry S – Does the District have educational goals or cost goals?

B Yukna – It is our charge to make educational goals our priority. Parents want smaller class sizes and that has increasing costs.

Robert C – What do you use to measure our academic goals to warrant a 3% budget increase each year? Boston Mag? Some Regional vs National analysis?

A Berdos – Our benchmarks are comprised through MCAS data, AP classes: have an increase in classes shown increased scores, SAT/ACT scores, State assessments and growth of student/at the academic level.

Robert C – Is there a litmus analysis to measure who pursue 2,4 or Grad college degrees?

A Berdos – The drive is to prepare all students to enter college or be career ready. Of our graduates: 93% go on to college; 5% go to work; 2% go to the military.

Robert C – What is the preparation/assessment for students going into careers post-grad? Is nothing measurable, only anecdotal?

Ms. Mello – We use the MCAS results and reassess strategic spending every 3 years.

B Yukna – There has been an increase in students taking an AP class and an increase in those students scoring a 4 or 5. Foxborough has also been able to increase Arts classes where other districts have eliminated them.

A Berdos – Massachusetts leads the nation in education spending per pupil yet also has the largest gap in equity amongst districts. Lower systems struggle with costs on SPED, transients, non-native and poor students.

Sean M – Amongst the growth % pools of schools – what is the average for schools that increase spending 3+%.

B Yukna – It's hard to compare due to pension and benefits being covered by the town where other districts include them.

Seth F – Re: enrollments and class sizes ... the Elementary grades are down 12% (926 – 816). On the analysis page: K-4 has 18.5 class size.

B Yukna – combining classrooms won't work with community schooling (3 elementary) – can't redistrict quickly enough.

Larry S – why are we showing a decrease in math over the last 5.7 years vs goals?

Ms. Mello – we use a 3-year rolling average to set our goals (not necessarily linear).

Larry S – If the budget increases wouldn't follow that performance increases? Where is the relativity?

T Belanger – We exceeded our goals for 2018.

B Yukna – Transportation costs have remained steady; gas prices have decreased this year but that is offset by adding monitors.

Robert C – What about repairs/supplies? What about personnel?

B Yukna – DPW is similar to technology (shared resources). Returns on solar have decreased though NRG credits have amounted to @ \$150K, there is a push to extend that service to other buildings in town. We don't budget for large maintenance items (i.e. a boiler). There is a significant 'maturity' of staff (sooner to max step in 15 years). 2010 was the last purge of teachers; this has now become a district of preference for teachers.

Michelle R – Elementary mandated services have increased 400% in non-English directives

A Berdos – The classrooms engage in 'sheltered immersion'. Teachers are required to get their Masters degree in 5 years and re-certify every 5 years for endorsement. There are also trauma courses to meet student needs.

B Yukna – The district wants to see teachers stay, create less turnover.

Michelle R – The student population is changing dramatically.

B Yukna – The IGO has 19 different languages amongst its students. The whole district is assessed on its enrollment.

Sue D – asked the panel to address pensions.

B Yukna – the teachers pay into the State pool directly.

Bernard D – Over the years, many people moved here for the schools and its benchmarks; there is a perception that home values have increased due to the school system.

Robert C – Are aspirations same as goals? What are Foxborough's?

B Yukna – For every student to be the best that they can be.

**8:55PM** - At this time, the panel and ADCOMM thanked each other for their time and the meeting proceeded to discuss Liaison reports:

Stephanie M – We met with the DPW. There isn't much different this year other than the monthly billing proposal. The consensus is that no one really wants it. They said the Water Commission is pushing for it. No matter their employees – each costs @ \$16K in benefits, but billing would create another job in Finance @ Town Hall. They've been looking for a clerk for 5 years. The department has 5 girls now, one of whom can't take vacation during the billing cycle. They plan on coming in to make the case for this need. They don't think it feasible to cross-train the position; we listened and they weren't that convincing. I'm not on board for monthly billing. There is a good portion of pipes in town that are 50+ years old and need re-lining or replacement.

Michelle R – Many people will not pay monthly when they've been used to quarterly; have they said how this will be more efficient?

Stephanie M – Besides the additional staff w/benefits, the postage will increase by @ \$18K.

Sharon W – asked how many people will be affected

Brian G – voiced concern that the Water Department will miss \*\*\* (customers? targets?)

Brent R – It appears that they are trying to use billing to solve other problems. Counting running water? Good. Work flow isn't worker issue? Move the \*\*\* is no solution. Roger, more than other heads, has a greater challenge of communicating his message – needs PR help.

Michelle R – asked where are the savings with additional office staff and payroll in 2 places?

Larry O – said that the department gave the same reasoning last year.

Stephanie M – When the Water/Sewer and DPW were combined, we were supposed to see financial savings. Now, no savings and people wonder why rates keep going up. Their 10-year plan called for the Enterprise to pay for this.

Brent R – Roger hasn't been convincing to Liaisons, Randy or Town Meeting the last 2 years.

Robert C – asked what the meaning of this conversation?

Stephanie M – They do not submit to the CIP by building these expenses into the budget.

Michelle R – Let's not forget that postage just went from \$.50 -. \$.55, up 10% (now @ \$20K)

DPW issues - Per OSHA guidelines – the garage needs major upgrades, which will be submitted to CIP process later. The filling station has no fire suppressant. Sidewalk maintenance required. They average 160 pieces of equipment, including busses – they will need to replace a certified mechanic with an increased salary (compared to other towns) ... may need to poach talent. Mandated increase in catch basin monitoring.

Sean M – OSHA can get carried away. Why are we thinking of building a new DPW if we are also thinking of building a new FD sub-station? Is it on the 5-year plan?

Sue D – wanted to call attention to the Wages/salaries line.

Stephanie M – Maryanne’s salary increased 6.1% before she retired. Bill Keegan said it was 4% due to a late review.

Michelle R – What do people REALLY make? The numbers don’t match the budget.

Larry S – It’s hard to compare in the book.

Sean M – That’s the way to obfuscate.

Michelle R – Projections vs actuals on salaries. Book doesn’t show budget vs projections / placeholders vs projections.

Sean M – asked Sue D to ask for year-over-year salary expectations – line item for 3 years and projections. Also ask if we can get book reprints like last years. Sue said she was already working on getting new budget books with the same information as last year.

Stephanie M – Ask why the Police Chief salary rose from \$182K to \$197K, up 8.1%

9:55PM

Brent R – sensing a lull in conversation, motioned for Adjournment

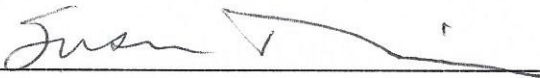
Seth F - 2nd

Vote: 12 – 0 – 0

**Minutes approved by Vote of the Advisory Committee.**

**Date of Meeting: 30 January 2019**

**Vote:**

  
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**Signature of Chairperson**

  
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**Signature of Vice Chairperson**