

**Budget Subcommittee Meeting Minutes
April 13, 2022**

Present: Lynn Cavicchi; Frank DelVecchio; Michael A. Trowbridge; Sara Walsh; and Walter Wilk were present at 500 East Street in the Community Room.

Also Present: Kevin Dumas, Town Manager and Barry LaCasse, Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director, Matt Violette, Town Accountant, Steve Schoonveld, Jack Cooney, and Ed Donoghue, Assistant Superintendent – Finance & Operations

Not Present: Jenn Walsh

1. Open Meeting

Ms. Sara Walsh called the Budget Subcommittee meeting to order at 6:03 PM. The School Committee had called their meeting to order at 6:01. The motion to open was made by Ms. Linda Fernando and seconded by Lauren Scher.

2. Consideration to Approve Meeting Minutes

- a. January 26, 2022
- b. February 9, 2022
- c. February 23, 2022
- d. March 9, 2022
- e. March 23, 2022

Motion: To approve the meeting minutes of January 26, 2022, February 9, 2022, February 23, 2022, March 9, 2022 and March 23, 2022. **(Trowbridge/DelVecchio) Passed: 5:0**

3. Review of Budget Presentation and Current Shortfall

Ms. Sara Walsh welcomed the members of the Committees and thanked everyone in attendance for passion and commitment to the process. She summarized the goals that need to be achieved in order to balance the budget. She outlined her desire to work together with the one-town, one-budget.

Ms. Sara Walsh asked Ms. Cavicchi to start the discussion with the School's plan to close the gap. Ms. Cavicchi asked Mr. Donoghue to address the group. Mr. Donoghue stated that they have worked on reductions, and reviewed one possible pathway the schools could take to make reductions while recognizing available grant opportunities. He noted that the schools have had, and will have, access to ARPA funding in FY22 and FY23 and that they will be taking advantage of that funding to close the budget deficit by \$440,000. Additionally, the schools will be eliminating two proposed positions and not funding one teacher position. Mr. Donoghue is recommending this proposal as a way to close \$900,000 of the \$1.3 million budget gap.

Mr. Cooney asked for further explanation of the County funding. Mr. Donoghue gave a summary of the how the school's plan to use ARPA funding toward a tuition offset of \$440,000. Ms. Cavicchi asked for some assurance that the requested \$440,000 in ARPA funding will be approved. Mr. Donoghue said, it is pretty much guaranteed because they have already approved the same funding for this year. Mr. Violette said that it is currently at Level II approval, but he does not know when the final approval will take place and while there is no guarantee of approval he can understand Mr. Donoghue's assumptions. Mr. Donoghue said it is highly unlikely that it would not be approved in the second year if it is approved this year. Mr. Wilk asked if will we be laying off these people next year? Ms. Scher stated, we will have to assess the situation again next year. Mr. LaCasse noted that the interventionist are needed as a direct result of effects of Covid, and therefore the interventionists may be reduced or go away as the need reduces or is eliminated. Mr. Wilk stated that we will likely need to be prepared for difficult situations should this need go away, or if Covid is gone, and there is no additional federal funding. Mr. Feeley asked if the schools have started assessing the need for the interventionists. Mr. DelVecchio asked

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what the \$440,000 would be used for if it wasn't used for this? Mr Donoghue said, if it wasn't used for this we would find another useful need. Ms. Scher stated, if the schools cannot use it for a very specific Covid-related need, then the Town could use it, but the schools have a need so that is the priority.

Mr. Schoonveld, stated that these should not be temporary assignments because there will be enough attrition or retirement to be able to keep these teachers. Ms. Sara Walsh affirmed, there is a need and there are the funds, but we need to recognize that it is not sustainable. Mr. Wilk stated, with fuel costs rising and salary increases we will have trouble just to level fund and we could be concerned that we are \$440,000 in the hole. We need to say that at Town Meeting. Mr. Dumas noted that it is much more than \$440,000 because ARPA and other funding will go away after next year. Mr. Schoonveld did quick math to conclude, with total loss of ARPA and other Federal Funding at \$1.3 million, we need to start early in anticipation of a \$2.3 million budget gap that is known already for FY24.

Ms. Cavicchi said that the Schools will need to assess their interventionists needs in order to fully understand the impact before budget planning can be considered. She feels that they have been upfront about the need. She added that the number of "Free and Reduced" economically disadvantaged students has increased significantly to about 25% and added, those students typically need more support. Also, the needs of ESL students are increasing, so it is not as easy as there are less students so costs should decrease. High School education is a four-year pathway, so this is undesirable to eliminate programs which students have already started and are years into the program. Ms. Scher added, there was a need growing before Covid and Covid has only increased that need. Ms. Cavicchi stated, we have discussed whether or not larger classes sizes should be considered. And, the mental health issues that are prevalent right now are not going away, so we need to stay on top of this to avoid students having the same mental health challenges as they become adults.

Mr. Cooney asked what was the definition of economically disadvantaged student. Ms. Cavicchi replied, in part it is based on whether the student participates in assistance programs such as SNAP or Mass Health. Mr Donoghue added that most of the district's economically disadvantaged come straight from the direct certification through the State. The schools get reimbursed from the State for the lunch program. Ms. Scher explained, economically disadvantaged students often have additional social and learning needs. Ms. Scher added that Mansfield is stuck in the middle of a need/funding struggle because Mansfield does not have enough students to qualify for big federal funding, but it has a lot of students with need. Therefore, this is why we need to fund interventionists through our own means. Ms. Cavicchi stated that we should be thinking broadly about this as a community because if we are seeing these kinds of issues in the school system then we are likely to see this more broadly in the community as well.

Mr. DelVecchio asked Mr. LaCasse and Mr. Donoghue if there is anything on the cuts list that they would really not want to lose. Mr. Donoghue said the QMS Dean position is a priority, but the needs at the Robinson are greater. Mr. LaCasse offered the cuts that the Town would like to keep included a DPW Highway position and a police sergeant position.

The School Committee voted to close their meeting at 6:40PM as Ms. Linda Fernando needed to leave the meeting. The motion to close was made by Linda Fernando and seconded by Ms. Lauren Scher.

Mr. Trowbridge asked what the numbers look like for School Choice. Ms. Cavicchi said the initial reaction was only warm, and Ms. Scher noted that it is typical that the numbers start off slow. Mr. Trowbridge asked, what do people think about pushing town meeting off until June to allow ourselves the opportunity get better State numbers for the budget that may allow us to keep a position or two. Mr. LaCasse, stated that he does not think the numbers will move enough to make it worth moving the date. Mr. LaCasse stated that he would prefer that

we do Town Meeting in May because it is a hard lift for much of the staff and takes us away from other work that needs to be done.

Mr. Wilk asked if the revenue was back to pre-Covid levels. Mr. LaCasse answered that it depends on the category. Mr. Wilk asked, could we bring budgeted revenue projections back to three years ago to plug the revenue hole. Mr. LaCasse replied that the Department of Revenue wouldn't approve it if we increased it more than we have already budgeted. Mr. LaCasse noted for the group, the Town has dissected every line item on the Town side of the budget and that we are pretty much at rock bottom on expenditures. And, as revenues increase in FY2024 it will only lessen the problem. Mr. LaCasse gave credit to Mr. Donoghue and the School Department for coming in with this proposed solution because it demonstrates that the two sides are working together on a reasonable solution.

Ms. Scher asked if we would have a better understanding of revenue six months from now. Mr. LaCasse gave a brief overview of how expenditures are potentially a bigger issue. Mr. Wilk stated that it is scary how much salary negotiations could affect things. Mr. Donoghue stated that the first round of union negotiations has shown that initial requests for salary increases are extremely high. Mr. Dumas stated that we are entering into these negotiations differently because of inflation and the economic situation we are experiencing as a country. We will show our empathy and understanding of how hard people are being affected, but we also need to talk about the fiscal cliff for FY2024 and FY2025. And, if we solidify contracts that we cannot keep there will be layoffs.

Ms. Sara Walsh summarized that the next steps would be for the School Committee, the Select Board and the Finance Committee to vote on the proposed budget. Mr. Aptowitz praised Mr. Dumas and Mr. LaCasse for being on top of ARPA funding. He commended them for their work to straighten out what was a very challenging situation with the County funds, and remarked that it could have been a disaster if it they hadn't dealt with it the way they did.

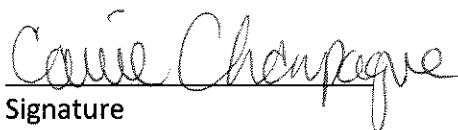
4. Any Items Not Known within 48 Hours

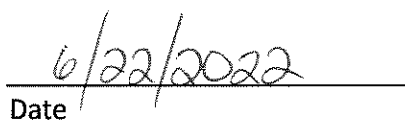
There were no additional items.

5. Meeting Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn the April 13, 2022 Budget Subcommittee meeting at 7:18PM. (DelVecchio/Trowbridge)

Passes 5:0


Signature


Date

Minutes prepared by Nancy Griffin

FY23 Mansfield Town/School Budget Analysis

Town

	<u>Original Budget</u>		<u>Revised 4/8/2022</u>
Revenue	\$ 105,986,606		\$ 108,220,613
Variance			\$ 2,234,007
Town Salary	\$ 16,810,711		\$ 16,151,497
increase vs. FY22	8.66%		4.39%
Town Expenses	\$ 7,966,779		\$ 7,511,933
increase vs. FY22	10.50%		4.20%
FY23 Salary & Exp increase		4.33%	
Overall Budget Increase	5.49%		4.16%
Reduction (\$896,355) Final Budget Increase			3.31%

School Budget

	<u>Salary Expense</u>		<u>Supplies Expense</u>
current proposed	\$ 45,760,246		\$ 10,990,802
increase vs. FY22	3.87%		2.17%
Total Proposed FY23		\$ 56,751,048	
Overall Increase		3.53%	
Potential Reductions	<u>(\$460,000)</u>		<u>(\$440,000)</u>
Revised Budget	\$ 45,300,246		\$ 10,550,802
revised increase	2.82%		(1.92%)
Total Revised FY23		\$ 55,851,048	
Overall FY23 increase		1.89%	
Note: FY23 Budget includes @\$325k in capital lease payments@1.30% eff. increase			

Pathway to (\$900,000) Reduction

Reduced:

Dean QMS-proposed	(\$90,000)		
EL Para -proposed	(\$30,000)		
Elementary Teacher	(\$50,000)		
FY23-Bristol Cty-ARPA	(\$290,000)		
(DW Interventionists)			
FY22 BC-ARPA(tuition offset)			(\$440,000)
Total Reduction		(\$900,000)	