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FY21 Budget Submission by the School Committee

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To: "Yvonne M. Spicer" <mayorspicer@framinghamma.gov>

Cc: Mary Ellen Kelley <mek@framinghamma.gov>, "Thatcher W. Kezer" <tkezer@framinghamma.gov>, Robert Tremblay <rtremblay@framingham.k12.ma.us>, Lincoln Lynch <llynch@framingham.k12.ma.us>, Joanna Hastry <jhastry@framingham.k12.ma.us>

Mayor Spicer,

On behalf of the School Committee, and following up on the 9-0 vote this past Wednesday, I am pleased to submit the attached FY21 budget request for the Framingham Public Schools.

We submit this budget during the COVID-19 era of uncertainty, stress, and anxiety about our way of life, our health, and the future of our education system. The School Committee motion to put forward this budget passed with the understanding that revisiting this submission and working with you and the City Council over the next several months will be necessary. As city revenue projections are adjusted, federal stimulus allocations become better defined, state aid is finalized, city and state stabilization funds are potentially used, and other factors influencing the FY20 and FY21 budgets are assessed, the School Committee and FPS committed last Wednesday to work with all branches of city government to arrive at a collaborative solution, while also never once losing sight that we are all fully committed to support our school system staff and our students as they work through a crisis driven paradigm shift in education.

The increase requested can be broken down to account for the unique first year of specific new education funds through the Student Opportunity Act, which according to the state is approximately half of the increase at \$4,347,619.

Enrollment growth and the challenging needs of our growing student population continues to be a major factor. With any budget comes the need to plan for year-to-year drivers. This fiscal year, FPS has carefully planned for projected increases in enrollment (more than 220 new students over last school year), dual-language program expansion, new special education expenditures required by law, and, moreover, increased social, emotional, and behavioral health initiatives.

We made this request with the data we had at the time. As you heard, members felt it was inappropriate to reduce the ask now, when so much is unknown, and our school district's multi-month budget review process determined that FPS needs even more than the level of support we voted for. Federal funding from the CARES Act earmarked for schools is on the way. State legislators continue to evaluate consensus revenues, stabilization fund usage, and how to keep the Student Opportunity Act we all worked so hard on in play.

Additionally, the FY20 savings FPS will have due to COVID can play a role to help the FY21 request. At each meeting we will receive updated reports and projections. With the major slow down in FY20 hiring and expenses while school is remote, FPS will have options to use this funding (pending the results of future School Committee votes), to bring forward the funds as allowed by law to carry over to FY21 to help shortfalls. The current request was made to use the new Chapter 70 of approximately \$7M as coordinated with Mary Ellen, meaning the local new share is approximately \$1.8M. This local new share request is already the second lowest in the last seven years, and growing FY20 surpluses can hopefully continuously be reduced to help overall efforts, especially taxpayer burdens.

As you also need to make decisions before the federal and state funding statistics are fully known, the School Committee hopes you can work with us as this all evolves before and after your deadline, and only make reductions when the full facts are known. If and when we are told new numbers by the state, we feel that then and not now is the time to work together on mitigation in a thoughtful way that respects the anxiety staff, students, and families are now going through. By taking our time and making decisions in partnership when the facts are known, we can reassure the community that we will get through this, while balancing fiscal responsibility and uncertainty with the need to fund our schools.

I have placed a reoccurring FY21 item on all meeting agendas going forward. You, Mary Ellen, and/or your designee(s) are more than welcome to participate in this portion every meeting.

I appreciate your recent communications, outreach, and coordination with the school district and committee. We are on call to continuously work with you in the weeks and months ahead as more insight becomes known.

Thank you,

Adam

Chair, Framingham School Committee

District 4

<http://www.framingham.k12.ma.us/schoolcommittee>



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