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Framingham Public Schools
Robert A. Tremblay, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Adam Freudberg, Chair • Tiffanie Maskell, Vice Chair • Priscila Sousa, Clerk
Jessica Barnhill • Karen Dempsey • Geoffrey Epstein
Beverly Hugo • William LaBarge • Scott Wadland
Yvonne M. Spicer, Mayor
73 Mount Wayte Avenue, Second Floor, Framingham, MA 01702
Telephone: 508-626-9121 Fax: 508-877-4240

SCHOOL COMMITTEE: OPEN MEETING MINUTES

DATE AND TIME: May 27, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

LOCATION: Remote

MEETING CALLED BY: Chair Adam Freudberg

PRESENT: Jessica Barnhill
Karen Dempsey*
Geoffrey Epstein
Adam Freudberg
Beverly Hugo
William LaBarge
Tiffanie Maskell
Priscila Sousa
Scott Wadland
Mayor Yvonne Spicer

ABSENT: Mayor Spicer

ALSO PRESENT: Dr. Robert Tremblay, Superintendent
Nick Small
Lincoln Lynch
Joanna Hastry, Executive Assistant for the School Committee

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The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He noted that this meeting was being held fully remotely in accordance with the Governor of Massachusetts' March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law G.L. c. 30A, Section 20, and announced those in attendance. He said that the meeting can be viewed Live on Facebook on the Framingham Public Schools Facebook Page. He noted information on how to participate in public comment through emails sent before and during the meeting and through Zoom. He said that Facebook comments will be reviewed, but likely not responded to in real time since there is now a voice option for public comment. He noted that Ms. Dempsey and Mayor Spicer are absent due to previous commitments. He asked for a moment of silence to recognize all those suffering in our city, nation, and world. Mr. Freudberg noted that this meeting was just recently scheduled, and noted that the Superintendent will be joining the City Council meeting after it ends.

*Ms. Dempsey arrived at 7:03 p.m.

Dr. Tremblay said he has been concerned about the budget shortfall falling on staff in the return in the fall and on supporting students. He said due to this he is looking to have Central Office staff work remotely, and is recommending to not accept the Perini RFP, which would end the existing lease agreement at the end of this month, and terminate the lease without renewing. He said that staff have continued to work remotely and we can get creative on how to run day to day operations using existing resources in schools. He said that there is a need to think about education in a way that's different, as it will not be returning how it used to be, and can be more efficient and make ends meet in a way that is creative and will not impact staffing. He said that he did tell the staff that this is impacting, and there was support to do what's best for students with an understanding of the challenges. He said that they are looking at storage areas within the district so it will not be a cost, as well as any physical space or materials that staff will need. He said that in the short term this should save us over \$500,000 a year, and he is not willing to commit to a \$1.5 million lease over three years in the current climate. He thanked the Perini Corporation, the Mayor and the City Financial Officer. He said that he is also not hiring two assistant director positions as discussed previously; they were previously filled by Kerry Wood who is now the Principal at Fuller Middle School and Brenda Mauro who is serving as Principal at Stapleton Elementary School. The assistant director positions are and will be currently vacant at the end of June, and he is recommending not filling them which will provide savings of \$220,000. Mr. Lynch is working with the copier vendor at how many copies and prints we use, as well as at the leases for copiers; there is no formal agreement yet but looks like it could help save an additional \$100,000 for FY21.

Questions. Mr. Wadland thanked Dr. Tremblay for thinking outside of the box and this continues the trend of cutting central office staff and adding additional funds into front facing positions continues that trend. He added that as the biggest municipal department in the city, this shows an example of how every department should look at their budget going into the next fiscal year. Mr. Epstein said that this can help simplify entry in the fall, and he would suggest to continue to move forward with how to use digital over paper.

Motion: To accept the Superintendent's three recommendations: to have Central Office staff continue working remotely, not accepting the Central Office RFP response in order to be able to avoid the need to enter into a new lease for \$512,500, to further reduce the Central Office

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personnel budget by \$220,000 and to reduce the usage of paper and copiers by \$100,000 for a total reduction of \$832,500. This results in a new FY21 operating budget level of \$140,949,434. The Framingham Public Schools and Framingham School Committee offer this insight to the City Council collaboratively as they continue to deliberate on the FY21 budget for the Framingham Public Schools.

Moved: Mr. Epstein **Seconded:** Mr. Wadland **Roll Call Vote:** Unanimous (9-0-0)
(Yes: Hugo, Dempsey, Wadland, Freudberg, Sousa, Epstein, Maskell, Barnhill, LaBarge)

Discussion: Members asked for more detail on the plan for staff without having a physical space in Perini, especially with the space issue already existing in the high school, and the need to move the Technology Department to a different location. Dr. Tremblay said the space challenge involves looking at where we have space and where we need space. The original thought was to move the Technology Department to Perini, that has all changed due to fiscal matters and COVID-19, and the need to prioritize student instruction over office space. He said that he realizes some Central Office staff will need places as well, and there are 15 school buildings, and principals and other staff have already stepped up to offer solutions. He said that the next step is to inventory from staff what concerns/needs there are. Ms. Maskell said there are still issues with elementary schools going to the middle schools and students not being kept together with peers when needing certain programs such as special education, she urges that this stay at the forefront while thinking of space. Ms. Sousa verified, through a question, that this will not get in the way of moving any students out for office space. Dr. Tremblay said that the discussion with MassBay is still ongoing with what happens with the Farley building, and it could be an option for the Central Office in the future, once MassBay's new building is finished. Ms. Hugo asked what percentage this brings the budget down to compared to last year, and hopes that with this cut from the original all in budget of a 10% increase City Council does not ask to cut it down further. Mr. Lynch said with this reduction it will be a 1.78% increase from last year. Ms. Hugo said that with issues at Stapleton parents had suggested an administrator be put into that school, and now there is an opportunity for that as well as for other schools in order to see what is happening. She said that she is worried about the efficiency of Central Office staff not being together, as in the past they were scattered, and it was a positive response from them when they were working all in the same building. She asked if this plan does not work, what are other options spacewise, as well as there is knowledge that there are needs for students and schools, and if the budget continues to be cut where do students and education in Framingham stand. Dr. Tremblay said that is hard to say as we cannot even predict what will happen with school in the Fall. He said that while a main Central Office helps people feel like they are working as a team, it can also lead to a feeling of disconnect of the Central Office from the rest of the district, He said that this move does create an opportunity for leaders to spend more time in schools. Dr. Tremblay said that he hopes these cuts provide all that is needed, and no further once are asked for.

Public Comment:

Jennifer Israeloff said that she is a Stapleton teacher and appreciates the support from the district and school committee for teachers who are looking for a level service budget so they can provide level services to the students. She said that there have been many cries for help from Stapleton, and to hear the City Council Finance Subcommittee suggest another budget cut of 10 percent is disheartening. She said that students will need more than ever when they go

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back in the Fall, and teachers will be pushed to the max. She said that when the city is looking to cut budgets it's disturbing to see Framingham students considered in all other budget considerations.

Mr. Freudberg noted that he will read the approved motion at the City Council Finance Subcommittee meeting tonight, and Dr. Tremblay will be present in order to speak to it.

Mr. Freudberg noted that this year there was a new deadline for submissions of resolutions to the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC). Ms. Hugo said that for the past fifteen years the School Committee has always submitted a resolution and summarized the intent of the one she submitted for review. She said that GLBTQ+ students, teachers and staff are victims of discrimination, harassment, and at-risk behaviors at rates alarmingly higher than non-GLBTQ+ persons; and it is up to school districts to protect them, as under laws they are not a protected class. She said that this resolution asks MASC to file legislation which would have the effect of adding gender identity to the list of protected classes in order to provide equity and support to our GLBTQ+ students, teachers and staff.

Motion: To send this resolution forward to MASC to be submitted to their Board of Directors, and hopefully to the MASC Delegate Assembly.

Moved: Ms. Hugo **Seconded:** Ms. Barnhill **Roll Call Vote:** Unanimous (9-0-0)
(Yes: Hugo, Dempsey, Wadland, Freudberg, Sousa, Epstein, Maskell, Barnhill, LaBarge)

Adjournment

The Chair announced that the next meeting is on June 3, 2020.

Motion: To adjourn.

Moved:

Seconded:

Roll Call Vote: Unanimous (9-0-0)

(Yes: Hugo, Dempsey, Wadland, Freudberg, Sousa, Epstein, Maskell, Barnhill, LaBarge)

Meeting adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

Meeting Materials

Agenda

MASC 2020 Resolution Submission