



SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Priscila Sousa, Chair • Jessica Barnhill, Vice Chair • Valerie Ottaviani, Clerk
 Adam Freudberg • David Gordon • Beverly Hugo
 William LaBarge • Tiffanie Maskell • Jennifer Moshe
 Charlie Sisitsky, Mayor
 Farley Building, 19 Flagg Drive, Framingham, MA 01702
 Telephone: 508-626-9121 | www.framingham.k12.ma.us/schoolcommittee

SCHOOL COMMITTEE: OPEN MEETING MINUTES

DATE AND TIME: March 15, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.
LOCATION: Memorial Building - Blumer Room
 150 Concord Street, Framingham
 Remote Option via Zoom
MEETING CALLED BY: Chair Priscila Sousa
PRESENT: Jessica Barnhill
 Adam Freudberg
 David Gordon*
 Beverly Hugo
 William LaBarge
 Tiffanie Maskell
 Jennifer Moshe
 Valerie Ottaviani
 Priscila Sousa
 Mayor Charlie Sisitsky
ABSENT: None
ALSO PRESENT: Dr. Robert Tremblay, Superintendent
 Nilufar Noorian, Student Advisory Committee Chair
 Lincoln Lynch, Executive Director of Finance and Operations
 Joanna Hastry, Executive Assistant for the School Committee

Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., noted all in attendance, and said that Mayor Sisitsky and Student Advisory Committee Chair Nilfur Noorian were joining remotely and School Committee member David Gordon would be joining remotely in progress. She said that the meeting is being broadcast live on the Government Channel and can be viewed live on Facebook on the Framingham Public Schools Facebook Page. She noted information on how to participate in public comment in person and through Zoom. She asked for a moment of silence to think about all those lost and who are suffering in our community, nation, state, nation, and world.

Public Comment on Non FY24 Budget Topics

There were no participants for this section of public comment.

Announcements from the Chair

There were no announcements from the Chair.

Mayor's Update

Mayor Sisitsky said that all the necessary funding for the High School tennis courts have been secured, the pre-construction meeting will be in a few weeks, after which the contractor anticipates to begin work and finish before school starts in the fall.

Remarks from the Student Advisory Committee (SAC)

SAC Chair Nilufar Noorian said that spring sports at the High School will be starting soon and the SAC will start closing the start time surveys and start preparing for the presentation soon. Ms. Barnhill requested that the questions that were asked in the survey be shared.

Superintendent's Update

Update from MWRTA

MWRTA Community Outreach Manager Jon Fetherston handed out a presentation to members that he said was translated into three languages and is to try and alleviate the unknowns for the public about public transportation. He said that Walsh Middle School pickups were becoming an issue, so the solution is to request a deviation to Frost Street. He noted that they are happy to work with families and at different hours to help. Ms. Moshe asked what impact the MWRTA fees returning will have and if there is a list of students who are using this per school. Mr. Fetherston said that on May 1st they will start charging fees again for all modes of transportation, which will affect the students, but the District purchased a large amount of tickets for students which they will need to remember to bring on the rides. He said that he can work with the Manager of Wraparound Services to see if there is a list of students who are using the transportation. Mr. Freudberg suggested looking into Cornell Road for the Walsh drop off area and asked how to best track the service and make it easiest for the students. He said that we should also track how much it is being used and how much the District is paying for it and request payment from the transportation company per the contract with them. Mr. Lynch said that they purchased the passes with funds from the Operating Budget and he will make sure that NRT will reimburse for those payments with invoices. Mr. Fetherston asked if there is a need for this during summer school. Mr. Lynch said that he does not think it will be needed to the extent it is used now, but he will confirm with them.

Announcements

Dr. Tremblay said that they have created a High School alarm incident action tracker and a Frequently Asked Questions document based on the questions at the last meeting, those items and the video from the last School Committee meeting with tagged times were shared with staff at the high school, and links are on the Safety and Security Department's website page. He said that one of the requests from the last meeting was to have the Emergency Response Plan (ERP) linked into policy, but they do not want the full plans to be made public as they are very

specific to what the procedures are, so instead a one page summary of the ERPs has been created which is now linked into the policy. There was discussion on if the ERPs had been updated, as that was part of the motion, and Dr. Tremblay noted that they are always a work in progress and were updated to reflect the new practices, such as on communication.

Dr. Tremblay gave an update on his residency which has now been completed. He said that there was a debrief discussion with FTA Building Representatives and Executive Team to discuss the findings from his residency, he is in the process of finalizing a video and presentation with findings and questions that were asked during his residency, and next steps will help with the budget and strategic planning. He said one of the major themes was to give staff more professional autonomy, now that there was a lot of work completed on making sure there was equity of opportunity across all the schools it's time to hand this back to educators, including having staff trained in being able to pull data reports.

Dr. Tremblay said that a new proposal was put into place on March 6th to help with the traffic issues during drop offs and pickups at Brophy Elementary School. He said so far the feedback has been positive with the new system and to let him know if there are any concerns so they can correct any issues.

Dr. Tremblay announced that FPS is currently receiving applications for the 2023-2024 academic year for the Framingham Teacher Residency which is a one-year experience for future teachers working with a mentor in one of our schools with course work at Framingham State towards the Education Preparation program. He said that this is a reciprocal program with Framingham State University to improve the educator pipeline, diversify staff, and encourage more people into the field of education by creating these kinds of opportunities in our community.

Superintendent's FY24 Budget Recommendations Presentation

Executive Director of Finance and Operations Lincoln Lynch shared a presentation on the proposed budget that included the trend analysis of the School Department Budget, the School Department Budget breakdown, the overview of the proposed Fiscal Year 2023-2024 School Budget, the Operating Budget drivers, the FY24 budget summary, and next steps towards an approved budget. The current FY24 budget request was an increase of 7.40% for a total of \$165,043,582

Public Hearing on the FY24 Budget Proposal

Christine Mulrone said that she is speaking to the deep concern that the FTA has regarding the City's use of state aid for our public schools. She said that Chapter 70 funds from the State are meant to ensure that every student in Framingham is receiving an appropriate education, but they have been diverted to other uses over the past two years. She said that diverting any state aid away from students has an impact on supports and programs for some of our neediest students and by deliberately diverting aid this City and Committee are undermining our support for our students from low income families, Special Education students, and English learners. She said that we also desperately needed to improve our staff to student ratio across the District and to provide the social emotional support that our scholars need to be successful.

She said that she is asking everyone to please contact their City Council and School Committee representatives and demand that aid not be diverted away.

Robert Bolles said that for many years the taxpayers were getting hammered by taxes, Framingham was way underfunded by Chapter 70, and now that there is an increase he hopes that some can go back to the taxpayers.

Discussion on the FY24 Budget Proposal

Ms. Moshe confirmed that the yellow bus revenue fees were based on having the full contracted 77 drivers and noted that this has not been fulfilled in the past, asked if families still need to pay for their child to attend Pre-K at BLOCKs and what that amount is total for all families for the year, if there needs to be any additions in the Safety and Security line in the wake of the incident on February 17th, and asked who is allowed to use the 15 passenger buses. Dr. Tremblay confirmed that Pre-K is still a cost to families, there are scholarships available to those families who would otherwise not have access, and until they can accommodate all four year olds, such as with another site with an Early Childhood Complex, they cannot provide free universal Pre-K. He spoke about the plan to increase spaces for Pre-K including at the Farley Building once MassBay has moved into their new building. Mr. Lynch said that they are making changes this fiscal year within the Safety and Security Department and thinks that there is enough funding in FY24 to continue to make those changes, which includes the wedges and belts for each classroom. He said that staff need to go through a training with the Transportation Department in order to drive the 15 passenger buses and there is a running sign up sheet to use them once approved.

*Mr. Gordon joined the meeting remotely at 7:59 p.m.

Mr. Freudberg suggested some items to be added to the budget book including the State Wide Operational Department increase for Special Education, adding the City Solicitor, changes to how we use legal services, adding the Title IX attorney, reflecting annual savings by switching to the City Solicitor, and changing the amount of ESSER III that has been used to the \$13.3 million that the School Committee had approved plans for instead of the \$8.3 million that has already been used to date. He asked if the solar savings and students who have not attended a Pre-K program were correct, as they both increased significantly and confirmed, through asking, that the program to put menstrual products in all middle schools and the high school will be funded through the Health and Wellness Department line and the Health Teacher position for grades K-4 was added. Mr. Lynch said that he worked with the City's Sustainability Coordinator and CFO on the solar savings and based on the Power Purchase Agreement and usage the savings was higher than expected. He said that the increase of 11% for students who have not had Pre-K experience before Kindergarten was data from the BLOCKs Preschool. Dr. Tremblay noted that this is probably due to families who cannot pay for Pre-K compounded with increased students and increased prices. Mr. Freudberg noted that with Chapter 70 and the local share there are differing views, and with the increase in Chapter 70 this year we have to make sure we are spending it appropriately and balancing it with the local share. He said that the local share affects taxes and will be decreased over \$4 million due to this allocation, the entire school budget increase of \$11 million is more than covered by the year to year Chapter 70 increase of \$16 million, and the \$5 million remaining he does not view as being diverted from education as

it goes to items such as healthcare increases and for new positions. Ms. Sousa said that at the state level there have been conversations on legislative solutions to help protect districts in the event that Student Opportunity Act (SOA) funds run out, what happens then, and if projections from the Fair Share Amendment are lower than expected. She said that she appreciates that there has been collaboration with this proposed budget and efforts to ensure we are growing our budget in a sustainable form to not have to make very difficult decisions in the future.

Continued Discussions on Transportation/Busing

Mr. Lynch said that they put out a bid for a supplemental 10 busses and although there were some companies that had questions, ultimately there were no bids. He said that they are going to reevaluate and more than likely put out another bid soon, at least for the start of the next school year. Members asked if the bid could include a higher pay rate than prevailing wage, for a minimum of 2 buses instead of 10, and encouraged the bid to go out for this year. Mr. Lynch said that they can put another bid out, but they would not see any busses until mid May if there were bids. Mr. Gordon spoke about his experience with his position in another District looking for support for after school athletics and how a lot of other districts are also looking to enhance their transportation and many bus companies are already maxed out.

Mr. Freudberg said that NRT provided a document in the packets, at the request of the committee to share their thoughts on if more funding would help, although there is a limited role in what the committee can do, and asked what the City and District thinks about their analysis on raising rates. He said that he is also concerned with a line in the document that said that they are going to be removing the non-compete clause, which means they can recruit Framingham drivers to go to other districts, and would like to know what can be done so that does not happen. Mr. Lynch said that document shows that neighboring districts are paying drivers more, so if the rates are increased there could be an impact. He said that the NRT recommendation to have a change order to increase rates is not allowed per the Inspector General, as the scope of the contract, including the section on paying prevailing wage, cannot be changed with a change order per Chapter 30b. He said that a neighboring district went out to bid mid contract and set their hourly rate at \$34 instead of the prevailing wage and he continues to look into any option there is. Mr. Freudberg said that this should be discussed with NRT when they are at the next meeting; to look at what can be done to support our busing infrastructure and do everything to recruit and retain drivers, as they can change the pay rates whenever they would like to. He said that if we were to increase rates this would fit within the budget due to the savings from not having the contracted amount of drivers. He said he would also like to know why NRT is saying that 30b allows for a change order and the State does not, as well as why they are removing the non-compete clause.

Executive Director of Finance & Operations Update

FY23 Operating and Capital Budget

Mr. Lynch said that FY23 YTD is in the packets and shows 65% expended or encumbered, they continue to monitor expenses and salaries, and he will provide another round of projections likely at the next meeting.

Request for Vote on Transfer of Funds from Salaries to Expenses

Mr. Lynch said that due to open positions District wide they have had to contract out with vendors that can provide staff members to provide services our students need. He said due to this he is looking for a vote to transfer funds per Policy DBJ: Budget Transfer Policy.

Motion: To authorize the Executive Director of Finance and Operations to transfer \$1,301,311.16 from the FY23 salary budget to the FY23 expense budget.

Moved: Ms. Barnhill **Seconded:** Mr. LaBarge **Roll Call Vote:** Unanimous (9-0-0)
(Yes: Hugo, Gordon, Moshe, Freudberg, Sousa, Ottaviani, Maskell, Barnhill, LaBarge)

FY24 Capital Budget

Mr. Lynch said that the Farley roof mid-year appropriation request was approved by the City Council and they will be able to replace the roof this summer. He said for the King front entrance mid-year appropriation they are also looking to start in the summer. Mr. Gordon spoke about the experience he has had in the District he works in and not receiving sub bids which has led to having to delay projects.

Request for Vote of Support and Commitment for the Renew America Schools Grant through the Department of Energy

Director of Building and Grounds Matt Torti and Senior Construction Project Manager Andrew Rován said that the District recently applied for \$15 million in funding through the Department of Energy (DOE), funded by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, by submitting a concept paper, which was ranked as one of the most competitive. Based on this, FPS was one of few school districts invited and given a letter of encouragement for the next step of submitting an application. Mr. Lynch said that a commitment letter is required as part of the application and the commitment is \$750,000, the required 5% minimum of the \$15 million request. He said that the District has submitted an earmark of \$750,000 through the State to cover the entire cost of the requirement and if the request is not funded or partially funded, the District will include the costs of our personnel and fringe costs in combination with current earmark funding and other funding sources if needed.

Mr. Freudberg asked if there is a backup plan for adding solar to the Farley roof, in case this grant does not come to fruition, as it is the next for solar. Mr. Torti said that it is included in the current construction project; the designer needs to provide us with structural and solar analysis and it would be made solar ready. He said the City would then need to decide what contract method, such as a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) or buying solar panels outright. Mr. Freudberg said that similar to the solar panels at Fuller it would be a team decision with the City, Mayor, and School Committee and should be discussed in a future meeting.

Motion: That the School Committee vote to support the proposed project at McCarthy, Harmony Grove, and Farley and authorize the School Committee Chair to work with the District administration on a commitment letter to be submitted by April 21st to reflect the funding share requirement and to convey the results of this vote to the Framingham State Legislative Delegation, two United States Senators, and Congresswoman Clark.

Moved: Mr. Freudberg **Seconded:** Ms. Hugo **Roll Call Vote:** Unanimous (9-0-0)
(Yes: Hugo, Gordon, Moshe, Freudberg, Sousa, Ottaviani, Maskell, Barnhill, LaBarge)

Subcommittee Reports

Mr. LaBarge said that the warrants were signed for a total of \$1,896,430.97 and a payroll total of \$4,828,691.95 on the dates of February 27th and March 6, 2023.

Mr. Freudberg, as the Chair of the Finance and Operations Subcommittee, said that the Joint Meeting with City Council's Finance Subcommittee on the budget has been rescheduled to tomorrow due to the weather.

Ms. Maskell, as the Chair of the Policy Subcommittee, said that they will have a meeting next week starting at 4:30 p.m.

Ms. Hugo gave updates on organizations she is a liaison to including that the TEC Board of Directors will have a meeting on March 24th and MASC's Day on the Hill will be held on May 4th. As the Chair of the Climate Change, Environment, and Sustainability Subcommittee she said that the meeting yesterday was canceled due to the weather and will be rescheduled. She said that the meeting will include a discussion on the booth for Framingham Earth Day with the FHS Environmental Club, Superintendent, and School Committee and a video from Keep Framingham Beautiful. She thanked those involved with the recent Intruder Awareness Program presentation and Read to Students at Stapleton Elementary School.

Ms. Moshe, as the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Chair, said that she will be meeting to discuss a proposal from Equity Imperative to see if it would be an option for the committee's final equity training.

Approval of Minutes, Gifts, and Scholarships

Motion: To approve the creation of an account for a Francis Patruno Scholarship.

Moved: Ms. Hugo **Seconded:** Ms. Barnhill **Roll Call Vote:** Unanimous (9-0-0)
(Yes: Hugo, Gordon, Moshe, Freudberg, Sousa, Ottaviani, Maskell, Barnhill, LaBarge)

Motion: To approve the Open Session minutes of February 1, 2023.

Moved: Ms. Barnhill **Seconded:** Ms. Ottaviani **Roll Call Vote:** Unanimous (9-0-0)
(Yes: Hugo, Gordon, Moshe, Freudberg, Sousa, Ottaviani, Maskell, Barnhill, LaBarge)

Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn.

Moved: Ms. Barnhill **Seconded:** Ms. Ottaviani **Roll Call Vote:** Unanimous (9-0-0)
(Yes: Hugo, Gordon, Moshe, Freudberg, Sousa, Ottaviani, Maskell, Barnhill, LaBarge)

Meeting adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

Meeting Materials

Agenda

FY24 FPS Budget Presentation

FY24 DRAFT FPS Budget Book

NRT Framingham CDL Rate Increase Analysis

FY23 YTD

Request for Vote on Transfer of Funds from Salaries to Expenses Memo
Renew America Schools Grant through the Department of Energy Memo and Application
Warrants
Francis Patruno Scholarship Form
Draft February 1, 2023 Minutes

These minutes were approved by the Framingham School Committee in Open Session on May 3, 2023.

These minutes were sent to the City of Framingham for posting on June 5, 2023.