



Framingham PUBLIC SCHOOLS

School Committee

**Finance and Operations Subcommittee
Joint Meeting with City Council's Finance Subcommittee
Remote
September 28, 2021 @ 7:00 p.m.
Open Meeting Minutes**

PRESENT: Geoffrey Epstein (Chair), Beverly Hugo, Scott Wadland, Tiffanie Maskell

ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Executive Director of Finance and Operations Lincoln Lynch, City Councilors Adam Steiner, Michael Cannon, George King, Janet Leombruno, and Cesar Stewart-Morales, Acting CFO Jennifer Pratt, SIFOC Chair David Mawhinney

Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. He said this meeting was being held remotely and broadcast on the Government Channel. He read those in attendance, and how to participate in public comment.

Public Input on the Use of Federal American Rescue Plan Act Funds: Joint Meeting of the City Council Finance Subcommittee, School Committee Finance Subcommittee, and SIFOC Chair

City Councilors discussed the need for the Mayor to be present for this conversation as she has the ultimate decision on the funds.

Motion: To continue the hearing with the public until such a date that the Mayor can participate with the public.

Moved: Mr. Cannon

Seconded: Ms. Leombruno

City Council Finance Subcommittee Chair Adam Steiner said that the City Council's role is for acceptance of the funds and have a meaningful role in the conversation even if no legal role in how the funds will be used. Discussion on allowing those present to give feedback tonight and the Mayor will be able to comment on any items discussed tonight at a future meeting. SIFOC Chair David Mawhinney spoke to a previous SIFOC meeting that had representatives from the City Council, School Committee, and Mayor's Office and was open to the public. He said they are looking to schedule another meeting and also asked for the departments to send proposals to SIFOC ahead of the meeting, but the only department that has so far is the Mayor's Office.

The City Council Chair opened up the conversation to members of the public.

Sean Silk said that he would like to see the money to go to long term benefits for the City, such as a southside school, paying down the debt of the water sewer fund, creative ideas such as artwork or statues throughout the City to make it better place to live, or any possibilities of giving money back to taxpayers.

Betsy Soule said that she works for MetroWest Legal Services and they have been helping undocumented immigrant youth in Framingham get representation. She said that this was funded for the first four years, but it is time limited, and she would like to submit information on this program for consideration of potential funds to extend the project.

Gerry Bloomfield said that before the public can provide input they first need the required information on the parameters for what the ARPA funds can be used for as well as possible options provided.

Bill McCarthy said that he wanted to remind everyone that the school district received \$14 million in ARPA funds, separate from the \$28 million the City received. He said that there are a lot of restrictions on what the money can and cannot be used for, and there are government rules.

Kathie McCarthy said that it is important to work together, and the City Council needs to decide if they accept the ARPA funds, which are needed. She said that other departments, such as the school department, should make sure to send the requested summary to the SIFOC, and the School Committee and City Council should reach out to their constituents for feedback on how to use the funds.

Ms. Maskell spoke to the need for the Mayor to be present to give feedback on her plans to use the funds, and how the draft memo that the SIFOC Chair mentioned is now a public document and should be shared with all. Mr. Epstein spoke to the process that the school district used to plan for the \$14.4 million ARPA funds they received, including outreach to solicit feedback, multiple public hearings, that the Superintendent and Business Operations Office created a detailed plan for items that were related to COVID-19 damage or weaknesses exposed due to COVID-19. He noted that this did not include any items that were problems prior to COVID-19, and said that the water and sewer fund would be an example of that. He said that they provided a memo that included a spreadsheet showing all of the allocations and dollar amounts, and it was split between categories such as learning loss, HVAC ventilation upgrades, and other items such as playgrounds, health initiatives, and preschool. He said that one thing that was not addressed within the school department's ARPA funds, and perhaps should be with the City's ARPA funds, is internet access. He spoke to how internet access is an issue in the City that can be seen even through the results of the Mayor's survey, which was only available online and only reached 1% of the population of Framingham. Ms. Hugo spoke of needing to focus on large issues that affect students, such as housing and food instability and learning loss. Mr. Epstein suggested that the City follow a similar process that the school department took by providing information on what the funds can be used for and a proposed plan, and then ask for public input. Executive Director of Finance and Operations Lincoln Lynch said that they have applied for a technology grant in order to continue providing families with hot spots. City Councilor Cannon asked for collaboration on these types of grants, or process to obtain them, in order to see if that would be possible for other constituents in the City, such as for seniors.

City Council voted on the original **Motion**: To continue the hearing with the public until such a date that the Mayor can participate with the public.

Roll Call Vote: Unanimous 5-0-0 (Leombruno, King, Stewart-Morales, Steiner, Cannon)

Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn.

Moved: Ms. Hugo **Seconded:** Mr. Wadland

Roll Call Vote: Unanimous (4-0-0)

(Yes: Hugo, Wadland, Epstein, Maskell)

Meeting adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

Meeting Materials

Agenda

SIFOC Memo

Mayor's ARPA Survey

School Department ARPA Press Release, Spending Plan, and 9/1/21 Implementation Update