



**LOWELL SCHOOL COMMITTEE**  
**Henry J. Mroz Administration Office**  
**155 Merrimack Street**  
**Lowell, Massachusetts 01852**

**John J. Leahy**  
**Mayor and Chairperson**

## **Finance Subcommittee Meeting**

**Tel: (978) 674-4324**

**Fax: (978) 937-7609**

**Andre P. Descoteaux**  
**Vice-Chairperson**

**Wednesday, April 29, 2020**

**Zoom - Virtual Meeting**

**4:30 p.m.**

**Hilary Clark**  
**Michael Dillon Jr.**  
**Robert J. Hoey Jr.**  
**Connie A. Martin**

Subcommittee Members Present:

Chairperson Connie Martin, Andy Descoteaux  
and Robert Hoey

School Committee Members Present:

Mayor Leahy, Hilary Clark, Jackie Doherty and  
Mike Dillon

School Department Personnel Present:

Dr. Joel Boyd, Superintendent of Schools  
Billie Jo Turner, Chief Financial Officer  
Dr. James Hall, Chief Operating Officer  
Latifah Phillips, Chief Equity & Engagement  
Officer  
Robin Desmond, Chief Academic Officer  
Dr. Linus Guillory, Chief Schools Officer

---

**This meeting is being held remotely in accordance with the Governor of Massachusetts' March 12, 2020 order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law G.L. 30A, Section 20.**

Chairperson Martin called the meeting to order at 4:40 p.m. The following agenda item was discussed:

### **1. FY21 Budget**

Ms. Martin asked Superintendent Boyd to address the Subcommittee and informed the public that the meeting will be ending at 6:15 p.m. and if all areas of this presentation that need to be discussed have not been covered another Finance Subcommittee meeting will be held.

Mr. Gerry Nutter registered and addressed the Subcommittee.

Superintendent Boyd addressed the Subcommittee and spoke about COVID-19 and the impact it has had and stated that the district is just two (2) months away from transitioning from one (1) fiscal year to another and we have many uncertainties as we move forward. He spoke about the four (4) scenarios that was provided to the Committee in the PowerPoint presentation and stated that despite these variables there is a pressing need to move forward. Superintendent Boyd recommended that the district vote on a level service budget for FY21 and not interrupt the momentum we for the following reasons:

1. What the district has achieved thus far prior to the COVID-19 closure.
2. To leave a modest degree of flexibility in case it gets worse.
3. To leave options available to capitalize in case the revenue projections improve.
4. To be transparent with the community we serve.
5. And most importantly to minimize the most detrimental effects of this uncertainty especially for our most vulnerable learners.

Superintendent Boyd also spoke about the numerous questions he has received.

1. Why are we contemplating four (4) scenarios.  
He stated that there are two (2) key factors:
  - To be responsible and not to create financial difficulties later and the need to maintain flexibility given the uncertainty of what can happen. He said by doing this we can be fair to our employees and still be able to invest responsibility if our situation improves. It's about being responsible and flexible as this uncertain time allows.
2. Why plan for less revenue than we were given.
  - We continue to look for the best, but there are several indications that we will not be receiving the amount of revenue that was originally planned.

Ms. Turner then addressed the Subcommittee about the four (4) scenarios that are in the PowerPoint presentation. Chairperson Martin asked Ms. Turner to address scenario three (3) and (4) due to the fact that one (1) and two (2) are highly unlikely. Ms. Turner continued and spoke about the strategic initiatives that the district would have been able to do with the original investment the district would have received. She stated that all three (3) collective bargaining agreements are scheduled to expire on June 30<sup>th</sup> and stated that none of the totals present here account for any potential raise and that every 1% of salary increases requires an investment of \$1.3 million dollars in salaries. She then stated that Scenario 3 is the Governor's proposed budget with 50% less of the Student Opportunity Act (SOA) and the city cash increase. She shared the below breakdown:

SPENDING:

\$163,023,947 FY20 Chapter 70  
\$ 16,359,201 FY20 City Cash  
\$179,383,148 FY20 Funding

### REDUCTIONS TO SPENDING

\$6,391,678 50% Proposed FY21 Chapter 70 Increase  
\$ 323,912 50% Proposed City Cash Increase

\$6,715,590 Total Additional Funds

The above figures results in \$6.7 million cut from original SOA

Ms. Turner then spoke about the spending plan for Scenario 3 which included the following:

- \$2,074,000 School Site Budgets (additional teachers, Assistant Principals, Career Counselors, etc).
- \$2,000,000 Technology Investment (cost to implement 1 to 1 program for remote learning).
- \$1,400,000 Reduction in Force (reduce fourteen (14) central office positions to allow schools to maintain additions.
- \$1,615,591 Purchase Technology (pre-purchased technology investments with current year savings.

Ms. Turner then addressed Scenario 4 with 0% SOA and city cash increase. She stated that this scenario is possible, but based on current projections still appears unlikely. She stated that this scenario would result in \$0 new dollars despite fixed cost increases which would thus require significant cuts. This scenario would require us to cut \$6.5 million from the current year budget to cover step increases and health insurance increases. This scenario would require a further reduction in force on top of those outlined in slide fourteen (14) which would have a detrimental impact on core services and necessitate union discussions. Ms. Turner spoke about the analysis of current year savings impact on next year.

Ms. Martin asked about the technology requests and if they could be broken out so the Committee could get a collective number and see what we could use the cost saving money for.

Ms. Turner stated that she will provide that to the Committee.

Mr. Descoteaux asked if we are cutting fourteen (14) positions at central and increasing our technology needs how as a district we can support that.

Ms. Doherty said that she will be most concerned around cuts for student support and mental health. She believes the trauma we are going through now is only going to get worse and when we look at those positions we need to look at these positions and figure out how we are going to maintain them. Ms. Doherty stated that she believes at this time we need to vote for scenario 3.

Mr. Hoey believes we should plan for the worst and will also vote for scenario 3.

Mayor Leahy agrees that we need to plan for the worst and hope for the best and doesn't believe we should rush this budget. He stated that he believes that the City is not looking to take any funds back as long as we use them wisely and that it is not the intention of the City to look for any rollover money.

Ms. Clark agrees with Ms. Doherty and stated that we should vote on scenario 3 at this time.

Superintendent Boyd stated that we have announced a hiring freeze with the exception of the Head of School at Lowell High School and asked the Committee to remember that we are speaking about positions and not people.

Mr. Dillon spoke about his concerns about laying off people and hiring new positions and asked the administration to conserve our staff as much as possible.

**Mr. Hoey made a motion to direct the Superintendent to plan for a level service budget (scenario 3) and take all necessary steps to prepare for the possibility of such, while aiming to minimize detrimental impact to students and staff; seconded by Mr. Descoteaux. 3 yeas APPROVED**

Ms. Doherty asked if we could get some guidance from the City regarding the budget timeline and asked if he has spoken with the City Manager.

Superintendent Boyd stated that he spoke to the City Manager and that she's presently not going to call for a declaration of an emergency financial crisis and is looking at what other opportunities exist as well. Superintendent Boyd added that his staff is prepared to get the budget book to the Committee on Friday.

**Mr. Descoteaux made a motion to accept the report as a report of progress; seconded by Mr. Hoey. 3 yeas APPROVED**

**Mr. Descoteaux made a motion to adjourn at 6:04 p.m.; seconded by Mr. Hoey. 3 yeas APPROVED**

Respectfully submitted,

Billie Jo Turner, Chief Financial Officer  
for Dr. Joel Boyd, Superintendent and  
Secretary, Lowell School Committee

BJT/mes