

**COMMITTEE ON LIAISON
MARCH 26, 2018 at 6:03 p.m.
COMMITTEE ROOM
WOBURN CITY HALL**

Voting Members present: President Richard Haggerty, Alderman Michael Anderson, Alderman Joanne Campbell, Alderman Michael Concannon, Alderman Mark Gaffney, Alderman Richard Gately, Alderman Lindsay Higgins, Alderman Darlene Mercer-Bruen.

Absent: Alderman Edward Tedesco

Also present: School Committee Chairman Joseph Demers,
Supt. of Schools Dr. Matthew Crowley

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Resolve to meet with the Chairman of the School Committee and the Supt. of Schools:
Motion made by Alderman Anderson and seconded by Alderman Mercer-Bruen to take Liaison Committee out of order from the posted agenda; approved, 8-0. President Haggerty said he is excited to get an update on what is happening in the schools, and that he wants to continue to build a connection with officials in the School Dept. through meetings like this one. Dr. Crowley noted this is the first time he has been before the Liaison Committee as superintendent. He said there is a School Committee meeting on Wednesday and he will provide a draft of a proposed budget that night. Dr. Crowley presented to the Committee a document entitled "Massachusetts School and District Profiles – Woburn." Motion made by Alderman Mercer-Bruen and seconded by Alderman Higgins to accept the aforementioned document and make it part of the permanent record; approved, 8-0. Dr. Crowley said the handout contains data about demographics in the Woburn school system. He said the most current data indicates there are 4,598 students, broken down by each school. Dr. Crowley noted the Hurld and Wyman elementary schools are going to merge, and there is excitement about the opening of the new school. Dr. Crowley noted the demographics in Woburn are changing. He said in 2013-14, only 3.8 percent of students were classified as ELL (English Language Learners) and in 2017-18 the ratio has risen to 7.4 percent. He said there has been an influx of students from Brazil, Honduras, El Salvador, India and Vietnam. He said the incoming international students are not equitably dispersed among the school population. For instance, the Linscott Elementary School has a high population of students from India, while the Reeves Elementary School does not. He said 41.2 percent of the ELL students are classified as high needs students. Dr. Crowley said many of the high needs students are from traumatic backgrounds and do not speak English, and that the School Dept. is trying to meet the needs of all students. Motion made by Alderman Mercer-Bruen and seconded by Alderman Higgins to accept and make part of the permanent record a handout from Dr. Crowley entitled: "Massachusetts School and District Profiles – Woburn; 2017 Official Accountability Data - Woburn." Dr. Crowley noted Woburn High is classified as a Level 2 school in terms of its accountability and assistance, as determined by the state Dept. of Education. He said the evaluative formula has been shifting away from MCAS testing to a version he called "MCAS 2.0." He said the School Dept.'s version of "March Madness" begins tomorrow with the start of MCAS testing in grades 3-10, except for Grade 9. He said the testing in grades 3 and 10 is program based, while the tests in grades 4-8 are computer-based. He said

the test should be about what the students have learned, not about how well they can turn on the computer. Dr. Crowley said this is the second year Woburn High has attained Level 2 status, after being designated Level 3 the year before. He said there was an assessment done in January for each school in Woburn, and the staff was asked to sort its priorities by the following topics: "Things Not to Change," "Things that need to Change," "Top 3 Skills Students Need," and "Top 3 Staff Needs." He said the list of items cited by various staff members was 42 pages long. He said among the things that need to change is social emotional support for students, especially those who are coming to school with various levels of trauma. Dr. Crowley said he is hoping to add more adjustment counselors to the schools to provide another layer of help. He said he gives a lot of credit to teachers at the elementary level who are performing different tasks in the social emotional realm. Dr. Crowley said those teachers are asking for training to deal with those types of issues. He said he wants to work with Chairman Demers and the School Committee to develop a 3-year personnel plan. He said the melding of the Hurld and Wyman schools may present an opportunity to look at some efficiencies in personnel and perhaps reallocate resources to support emotional and social needs. Chairman Demers said the School Committee is looking at different approaches with this year budget, which he said is slated to increase by 3.5-percent. Chairman Demers said the School Committee is already looking at a 3.5-percent increase in the budget without adding staff. Chairman Demers said school officials need to think creatively because the educational dynamics are moving swiftly. He said there are students with social and emotional challenges who have a hard time walking out of their parents' cars to school, and those are the students the adjustment counselors will try to reach. President Haggerty asked about the status of the Hurld/Wyman Elementary School project. Dr. Crowley replied the project is on time and on budget, with a completion time frame of late June. He said the staff is eager to get into the new building and will be able to do so in mid-August. Dr. Crowley said the building looks amazing and is beautifully-done. He said the classrooms are large and organized in pods so students can gather in small groups, as the school was designed with the idea the kids are going to be moving around and working in groups. Alderman Anderson said the building looks fantastic. Dr. Crowley said Hurld School Principal Eileen Mills and Wyman School Principal Kristen Maloney have worked with their respective PTOs to make a smoother transition to the new school. Alderman Gaffney asked if a teacher could be re-trained to become an adjustment counselor. Dr. Crowley replied an adjustment counselor needs to have an appropriate license, and if a teacher has a license, he or she can apply to become an adjustment counselor. Alderman Gately asked how many school psychologists are in the system. Dr. Crowley said there are three full-time school psychologists, and a few others that can be brought in on an as-needed basis. Alderman Gately acknowledged there are more students coming in with anxiety problems. Dr. Crowley said it is hard to witness. Alderman Gately said it takes a lot of time and money to accommodate the high-risk students, but it is an important part of the educational process. Alderman Gately said the School Resource Officer program seems to be working well. Dr. Crowley agreed the SRO program has helped the Woburn Police Dept. build relationships with students. Chairman Demers said Police Chief Robert Ferullo has worked phenomenally-well with the school staff and the rapport between the two departments has been mutually-beneficial. Chairman Demers said the administration at the high school has taken a pro-active approach with attendance to make sure more kids are staying in school. He said Truant Officer Michael Pandolph is also making sure kids are attending school. Dr. Crowley said the dropout rate has been reduced from 2.0 percent to 1.8 percent because of outreach. Alderman Higgins asked if there are any grants available for school safety, particularly grants that could allow for the hiring

of another SRO. Chairman Demers said it would be nice to have an SRO in each middle school. Alderman Concannon acknowledged there are fixed costs in next year's budget and that School Dept. does not have a lot of discretionary money. He agreed a good goal would be to fund more adjustment counselors, because there are students who are dealing with challenges that make it more difficult for them to learn. Alderman Concannon said it would behoove city officials to have a conversation about adapting to the next generation of technology and figure out whether the better venue for that type of instruction is the Woburn public schools system or the vocational schools, especially now that Northeast Voke is looking to build a new school. He said figuring that out will lead to greater spending efficiency. Dr. Crowley said computer science and STEM curriculum may stay in Woburn, but other programs may be open to reconsideration. Alderman Concannon said he does not want to spend a lot of money on duplicate programs at Northeast Voke. President Haggerty asked about the status of special education costs. Dr. Crowley acknowledged budgeting for special education is a moving target because students with special needs move in and out of the city at various times. He said there is a potential expenditure of more than six figures for a new special needs student. Dr. Crowley said the city may want to consider developing more in-district capacity for special education students, and he is trying to work with SEEM Collaborative to develop a program that not only keeps students within the district but also takes in students from other districts. He said there may be space at the old Wyman School for that type of program. President Haggerty said there was an account set up for special education costs and it might behoove the city to set aside a few dollars. Alderman Concannon suggested replenishing the account with Medicaid reimbursement dollars. Chairman Demers said the budgetary circuit breaker for special education is determined by the state Legislature. President Haggerty thanked Dr. Crowley and Chairman Demers for attending the Liaison Committee meeting.

Motion made by Alderman Higgins and seconded by Alderman Mercer-Bruen to adjourn; approved, 8-0. President Haggerty adjourned the meeting at 6:42 p.m.

Attest: _____
Gordon Vincent
Clerk of Committees