

**COMMITTEE ON FINANCE,
SITTING AS A COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
JUNE 6, 2019 AT 6:30 PM
COUNCIL CHAMBER
WOBURN CITY HALL**

Voting Members:

Attending: President Michael Anderson, Alderman Joanne Campbell, Alderman Robert Ferullo, Alderman Mark Gaffney, Alderman Richard Gately, Alderman Lindsay Higgins, Alderman Darlene Mercer-Bruen, Alderman Edward Tedesco and Chairman Michael Concannon,

Absent: None

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Recreation Commission – Appearing was Recreation Director Rory Lindstrom and she stated that the budget has been level-funded, that the department completed a successful winter season, that the department has begun registration for pool passes and summer programs, that construction of the dog park at Ferullo Field will commence at the beginning of July 2019, that the dog park will take eight weeks to complete, that the new Clapp park is progressing and will be an asset to the community, and that the Clapp park will be approximately 95% complete by the end of June 2019. Alderman Mercer-Bruen stated that the Clapp project is stunning, that the park will be an active recreation area, and that she appreciates the work on the Leland Park restrooms. Director Lindstrom stated that the Clapp park will be for the residents and there will not be a lot of organized events, that no permitted groups will use the park, that parking is already limited at Horn Pond, and that Library Field activities have been going well. Alderman Gately asked how the salary of the Assistant Recreation Director increased from \$51,000.00 to \$73,000.00, Director Lindstrom stated that the salary increase was the result of union negotiations, and that the Assistant Recreation Director has been taking on a lot of responsibilities. Alderman Campbell stated that she commends the work at the Clapp park, that Director Lindstrom has been responsive to the concerns of neighbors during construction, and asked if the parking issues at Gonsalves Park will be addressed during the upcoming season. Director Lindstrom stated that one tournament was held at Gonsalves Field this year, that the parking protocols were sent out to the coaches, and that she visited the site and did not see any issues.

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School Department – Alderman Concannon stated that he has a family member who works for the School Department, that and under guidance from the State Ethics Commission he makes this disclosure, and that he is permitted to participate in this review. Alderman Tedesco stated he has a family member who works for the School Department and he makes this disclosure. Alderman Higgins stated that she has a family member who works for the School Department and makes this disclosure. Appearing was School Committee Chair Michael Mulrenan and he introduced School Committee Member Patricia Chisholm, Member Ellen Crowley, Member Joseph Demers, Member Frederick Metters and Member John Wells, and he stated that there are many initiatives and programs being offered throughout the school district. Superintendent of Schools Matthew Crowley stated that the city has tuition free all-day kindergarten, and no fees for school buses,

advanced placement exams, athletics or fine arts, that the cost for the services are not reflected in the budget but are built into the budget, that the Hurld-Wyman school communities came together well in the new school, that there are adjustment counselors at all of the schools, that 40% of the students are high need and may need additional assistance, that a new human resources position was created to assist the over 1,000 individuals who work for the school system, that the Title I Director oversees the Title I, II and II grants, that there is professional development for staff, that June 19th is the last day of this school year, that when there are changes in personnel the question is asked whether the work of the position can be reallocated or whether the position should be retained, that there will be many retirements from the system this year including one employee of 56 years, that the job of the system is to educate all students, that the Special Education (SPED) budget issues are faced by all communities, that the city is legally and morally responsible for educating all students, that the police and fire departments collectively total \$17,200,000.00 and SPED alone was \$18,400,000.00, that many issues with SPED revolve around out-of-district placement, that this is a State issue, that the schools are advocating the State pay for out-of-district transportation costs because they are an unfunded state mandate, that as a result of increased SPED and out-of-district spending the line item was increased significantly to support out-of-district expenses, that tuition can increase significantly even during the school year, that there will be a new Director of SPED, that they are looking to restructure the SPED department with one person responsible for the placement of students, that currently seven department heads place the students, that there are 86 out-of-district students, that having one person designated to handle the tasks will better track the students, that three paraprofessionals retired, that one teacher was hired in their place to increase the capacity to serve the students, that the School Department believes a great education experience should be provided in the city as best as resources allow, that out-of-district costs for a student could be \$51,000.00, that the Mayor asked for the creation of a stabilization account to have funds available for unexpected SPED costs, that the School Committee agreed to establish a stabilization account, that City Council approval would be required to expend money from the stabilization account which provides some oversight, that the School Committee presented a fiscally responsible budget that meets the needs of all students, that music and art programs will be restored at all of the elementary schools, that elementary school students will have music and art lessons at least once each week, that the budget includes a request for a computer systems manager, that the MCAS is now online, and that the School Department seeks a 5.5% increase in the budget which will meet the needs of the students and teachers. Alderman Gately stated that he appreciates some of the programs and reorganization by the Superintendent Crowley in his first year, that he understands the legal and moral obligation to teach all students, and that he believes the School Department did the best they could on the budget. Alderman Mercer-Bruen stated that there are challenges with SPED and out-of-district placements, that a stabilization account is a great step, that the trend the last three years with SPED got the city to the current position, and that it may be good to conduct an audit to find trends early. Superintendent Crowley stated that out of district students costs are as much as \$51,000.00, that the Mayor asked for the creation of a stabilization fund to have funds for unexpected SPED costs, that the School Committee agreed to establish a stabilization account for unexpected SPED costs, that the stabilization account will require City Council approval to expend the funds which provides some oversight, that the School Department presented a fiscally responsible budget that meets the needs of all students, that music and art programs will be restored at the elementary schools so that students receive music and art once each week, that the School Department is requesting

a computer systems manager be established, that the MCAS is now online, and that the School Department is seeking a 5.5% increase in the budget which will meet the needs of students and teachers. Alderman Gately stated that he appreciates some of the programs and reorganization Superintendent Crowley has brought in his first year, that he understands the legal and moral obligation to teach all students, and that he believes the School Department did the best they could formulating the budget. Alderman Mercer-Bruen stated that there are always challenges with SPED and out of district expenses, that a stabilization account is a great step, that the trend of the last three years brought the School Department to the current position, and that it may be good to conduct an audit to find the trends early. Superintendent Crowley stated that the School Department wants to work collaboratively with the City Council, and that looking for these trends could be beneficial. Alderman Mercer-Bruen stated that she believed there was already a School Department stabilization account. Assistant Superintendent Joseph Elia stated that there was a stabilization account in the sum of \$300,000.00 for Medicare one year. Alderman Mercer-Bruen stated that receiving quarterly updates on the SPED expenses might be helpful. Superintendent Crowley stated that the School Department is always open to quarterly meetings. President Anderson stated that the School Department does a good job but a 21% increase of \$3,000,000.00 for SPED expenses is a disappointment, that he understands a lot of work has been put into formulating the budget but he wants to receive quarterly reports on SPED expenses, that he is not certain he supports establishing a stabilization account, that this is the budget and the School Department has to live with it, and that having a stabilization account may make it too easy to get extra funds. Alderman Campbell asked whether there was any progress in getting the State to pay transportation costs. Superintendent Crowley stated that school districts lobby for the funds, that approximately \$300,000.00 extra was received in Chapter 70 funds, that poorer communities receive millions of dollars in Chapter 70 funding, that Woburn always funds its schools, and that the transportation costs for out of district students is an issue for all schools. Alderman Campbell stated that she supports the art and music programs each week for students as this is critical for their development, and that she supports the establishment of a stabilization account as it provides flexibility when as in the past year a number of new students come into the system and the budget is strained. Alderman Higgins stated that she wants to know what protocols can be used to deal with the SPED issues but the protocols should be used in other divisions of the School Department as well, that because of the size of the budget the School Department has the ability to be flexible, that recent improvements are important to the students and she does not want to lose this progress, and she asked whether any programs have been eliminated. Superintendent Crowley stated that no programs were eliminated. Alderman Concannon stated that the SPED issue has been addressed this year but despite those issues he appreciates the School Department being creative in dealing with budget issues the past several years, that as the Liaison to the School Committee he watches the School Committee make decisions to address issues facing the schools, that all of the improvements of the past are in the budget and the School Department is making more improvements, that there are factors outside the city's control that can be dealt with at the State level, that this is a great budget for the city, and that the students are served well by the budget. Alderman Mercer-Bruen stated that the budget issues this year did impact the city budget overall. PUBLIC COMMENTS: Jennifer Young, 42 Robinson Road stated that she is involved with the Reeves School PTO, that class sizes are increasing and interventionists are being cut back, that she questions whether this is losing progress, that there is a significant risk of losing progress, that while she believes a 5% budget increase sounds like a lot but it is not enough, and that there has not been enough

transparency in the past few months. Colleen Sheehy, 25 Hiawatha Road stated that she is involved with the Reeves School PTO, that the pre-school program moving to the Reeves School from the Shamrock School is an issue, that there is playground equipment at the Shamrock School which is not available at the Reeves School, that she is starting to have concerns that things are not moving in the right direction, and that the SPED program is important but the School Department has to assist all students such as gifted students. Kimberlee Johnson, 94 Middle Street stated that she is a teacher, that classes are going for a small class of first grade students with reading interventionists for students who are not SPED students and now there will be 23 students in the classroom and the extra support will not be available, that other communities have this support to help students who need additional help learning to read, and that not enough support is being provided. Alderman Mercer-Bruen stated that in response to a question as to whether any programs or support is being lost Superintendent Crowley responded no. Superintendent Crowley stated that part-time interventionists were in the schools this year, that the positions were in the budget a number of years, that he answered the question in the negative because the positions were not added last year, that the School Department reallocated the part-time interventionists by having a full-time reading specialist who will be a certified teacher in each school to meet those needs, and that there were usually two part-time interventionists in each school working nineteen hours per week. Assistant Superintendent Elia stated that the part-time interventionists worked fifteen to nineteen hours per week. President Anderson asked if there were two interventionists working fifteen to nineteen hours per week and now there would be once specialist working forty hours per week. Superintendent Crowley answered that this statement was correct. Alderman Tedesco stated that this would be an increase in service. Alderman Campbell stated that she was concerned about the comments made by the teacher concerning larger classes and the lack of support and how this would affect her classroom. Superintendent Crowley stated that he is not certain the interventionist was in the classroom every day, and that the Reeves School is not a Title I school but efforts are being made to bring it back to being a Title I school. Alderman Campbell asked if the students will be receiving less support than they should. Superintendent Crowley stated that he believes having one full-time specialist will meet those needs. Assistant Superintendent Wendy Sprague stated that blocks have been created depending upon the grade and what will best serve the students, and that the content specialists will be in the classroom 85% of the time and working with the teachers to create those programs. Alderman Higgins asked if the class sizes will be increasing. Superintendent Crowley stated that enrollment is decreasing in the elementary schools, that there are more teachers than enrollment would require, that the number of teachers is staying static, and that with new construction of residences in the city more teachers may be needed.

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Motion made and 2nd for a five minute recess, all in favor, 9-0. Alderman Concannon called the meeting back to order.

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Northeast Metropolitan Regional Vocational School – Appearing was Superintendent-Director David DiBarri and he turned the presentation over to Finance Director Jay Picone. Director Picone stated that the school has two goals which are minimizing the impact on the budget of member communities and providing an adequate level of funding for student learning, that the assessment increased less than 3%, that there was an increase of \$860,000.00 received in

Chapter 70 funding, that this funding was used to offset member assessments, that transportation receipts will be used to offset 2020 expenses, that there will be fiscal challenges in 2020, that the school building design study must be funded, that the emergency access road must be rehabilitated, that there is a \$48,000,000.00 OPEB future liability, that two positions were lost due to attrition, that there was a \$66,748.00 assessment increase for Woburn, that a majority of the increase is from the minimum required contribution based on the funding formula, and that enrollments are down in some communities and Woburn has a greater portion of the student body. Alderman Gately stated that it is important for the emergency access road to be built. Superintendent-Director DiBarri stated that approximately one-third of the students fit in the SPED category, and that there are about twenty SPED staff out of 300 staff members. Director Picone stated that the school has a graduation rate of 98%. Superintendent-Director DiBarri stated that some students were working on an automated hot dog cooking system, that the students were disappointed that the school year ended because they will not be able to work on the project to further automate the system until next year, that the school received a grant through the Governor's office to fund this work, that there is a program to allow prospective students to visit the school to see what is offered, that there is a waiting list at the school, that Saturday classes are offered to give students the chance to advance their acceptance to the school, and that Mayors and Town Managers have visited the school but they would like Aldermen and Finance Committee Members to visit the school as well. Alderman Ferullo stated that a lot of work is being done at the school, and that he visited the school once a month when he was Chief of Police. Alderman Mercer-Bruen stated that there was amazing work being done at the school.

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City Clerk – Appearing was City Clerk William Campbell and he offered a report entitled City Clerk Budget Presentation FY2020 to the City Council for review. Motion made and 2nd that the document be received and made part of the record, all in favor, 9-0. City Clerk Campbell stated that revenue generated from June 2018 to May 2019 was \$352,187.00, that this was an increase in revenue of \$51,006.00 or 17%, that there has been an increase in birth and marriage certificates due to Real ID requirements, that there has been an increase in certificates revenue of \$7,975.00 or 27% or 1,595 additional copies; that filing fees for special permits may need to increase to meet advertising costs, that there is an effort to create records storage at former Wyman School, that he is working with the Mayor and School Department to convert former Wyman School cafeteria into long-term storage for city records, that a vault company has visited and provided recommendations, that the school architect will be making preliminary determinations of needed changes, that there will be polling place changes, that the department is looking for new location for former Hurld School polling place, that the Hurld School is to the Joyce School 8/10ths of a mile distant, that the Joyce School is in Ward One but contiguous to both Ward Three precincts and could be used for voting allowed without special legislation, that the distance from the Hurld School to new Hurld-Wyman School is 1½ miles, that the Hurld-Wyman School is in Ward Three and contiguous to both Ward Three precincts, that the former Spence Farm Barn could be used for voting, that re-precincting will take place in 2021, that after the 2020 U.S. Census there could be significant ward line changes, that depending upon population changes some wards could have three precincts, that in the 1960s Ward 7 had three precincts while all others had one precinct, that since the 970s each ward has had two precincts each, that the City Charter mandates seven wards, that each ward must be of similar resident

population within 5% of each other, that no precinct may have more than 4,000 residents, that the Mayor and City Council ultimately approve the new precinct lines, that the sufficiency of staff personnel sufficiency is the same as other departments, that there is a planned six week staff absence currently, that if another staff member is out for any reason the department is down to three staff members, that the department has to respond to requests of the public and other city departments, that the staffing level makes it difficult to do longer more in-depth projects, that the department is always looking to create new systems of efficiency, that one future project would be scanning and posting more documents online, that the special permits could be scanned, that there are 1,583 special permits that could be scanned, that he is working on a ballot bill sponsored by Representative Richard Haggerty, that in 2018 statewide a total of 7,843,130 regular, early voting and absentee ballots were printed, that 3,268,183 more ballots were printed than there are registered voters, that 5,090,465 ballots were never used in the election, that the cost of unused ballots was \$763,569.75, that there would be a cost savings of \$487,992.00 by eliminating early and absentee ballots, that he wrote legislation sponsored by Representative Haggerty to have just one ballot style for all elections, that he met with Secretary of State's Director of Elections and will meet with House Chair of Joint Committee on Elections to discuss the bill, that the April 1, 2020 is U.S. Census day, that the Mayor will be appointing a 2020 U.S. Census Complete Count Committee, and that he will be looking for a wide range of representatives from the community such as PTOs, social groups, fraternal organizations, religious communities, new communities, and business community in the city.

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Motion made and 2nd that the FY2020 City of Woburn Budget be referred back for action, all in favor, 9-0.

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Motion made and 2nd to ADJOURN, all in favor, 9-0. Meeting adjourned at 8:14 p.m.

A TRUE RECORD ATTEST:

William C. Campbell
Clerk of Committees, Pro Tem