

**MENDON-UPTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Special School Committee Meeting

Virtual

Wednesday, July 20, 2021

Committee Present:

Sean Nicholson, Vikki Ludwigson, Kerry Laurence, Phil DeZutter, Dorothy Scally

Administration Present:

Joseph Maruszczak, Superintendent of Schools

Maureen Cohen, Assistant Superintendent

Jay Byer, Business Finance

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. by Kerry Laurence.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Approval of the Agenda

**MOTION:** On a motion of Sean Nicholson, seconded by Dorothy Scally, to add community comments to the agenda.

**VOTED:**

Sean Nicholson, yes

Vikki Ludwigson, yes

Kerry Laurence, yes

Phil DeZutter, yes

Sean Nicholson, yes

Approval of the Amended Agenda

**MOTION:** On a motion of Sean Nicholson, seconded by Phil DeZutter to approve the amended agenda.

**VOTED:**

Sean Nicholson, yes

Vikki Ludwigson, yes

Kerry Laurence, yes

Phil DeZutter, yes

Sean Nicholson, yes

**II. NEW BUSINESS**

*Discussion Regarding FY2022 MURSD Operational Budget*

Phil DeZutter stated at the last meeting there was a question of \$275K deficit and Dr. Cohen was going to discuss with leadership team what the cuts would look like.

Dr. Maruszczak outlined the current state of covering \$900K gap reviewed at last meeting:

• Summer School Expansion Grant	\$100,000
• SpEd/Transportation Savings	\$150,000
• Application of Previous Grants	\$ 90,000
• Application of ESSER3	\$230,000
• Non-Staff Cuts	\$ 61,500
Total	\$631,500

Thus, a total of \$268,500 of additional cuts would be needed.

A potential recertification model:

With application of additional regional transportation funding would result in an assessment to Mendon of \$721,260 and to Upton of \$1,384,190. Governor Baker signed the budget yesterday so the additional transportation is final. If there is an additional \$900,000 in cuts would further reduce the assessment to Mendon of \$320,593 and to Upton of \$881,038.

Cuts would be 6 FTE totaling \$273,169 to include: 1 FTE of Tech Support, 1 FTE of 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at Memorial, 1 FTE Instructional Coach Elementary, 1 FTE paraprofessional Miscoe, 1 FTE ABA Tech Memorial, and 1 FTE Soc St teacher Nipmuc

It was noted MLC changed for the communities in the final budget, thus numbers are a little different. Less than level services in order to come up with a compromise to resolve this and get back to the school year.

Kerry Laurence reiterated some of the cuts also represents not filling some positions and choices were made based on priorities. Adjustment Counselors and the Nipmuc Librarian positions will be hired/kept.

Vikki Ludwigson stated it is not restoring the 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher (due to retirement) will have an impact on class size. What are the impacts of other cuts? Dr. Maruszczak stated this adds to class size in certain places and would limit some of the electives but this is a conversation around compromise and what are the top priorities such as mental health. Based on School Committee conversations and Leadership team, the plan represents those discussions. Committee needs to understand the impact and coming to compromise in order to remedy the situation as soon as possible. Vikki Ludwigson thanked and wanted everyone to understand the impact

Sean Nicholson values the tech support and what they did for us during COVID is difficult as well as the social studies teacher. He noted the cut to 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher will impact class size.

Phil DeZutter stated there is no perfect answer and appreciates the work that has gone into this.

*Kerry Laurence asked for Community Comments:*

Will SI would remain in Mendon – Dr. Maruszczak based on this plan yes.

Michael Krager asked if adjustment counselor be paid out of other funding? Dr. Maruszczak stated ESSER 3 funds could be used with different options. Challenge to this is using the ESSER 3 funds is it is one-time monies so creating a deficit. This is a patchwork plan and there needs to be cooperation between the 2 communities and school district for FY23 and beyond.

Dr. Maruszczak noted he had a meeting with Senator Fattman. Senator Fattman is reaching out to the communities to see if there are capital expenditures where State federal funds could be used. Senator Fattman would like to continue that dialogue and funding for technology capital upgrade.

Krager – losing teachers vs the adjustment counselors. Kerry Laurence commented it is important for the counselors to be hired. This was a need before COVID and due to COVID, mental health is very important. Counselors will assist students who miss school to transition back into the system. This can be proactive so district is not losing students to out of district placements. Would like this to be a continue expense in the

budget. Dr. Maruszczak commented this is a crisis of a lifetime and added moving forward with the district to effectively communicate to the parents what is needed and it was extremely challenging to communicate the needs in the middle of a pandemic.

Shelley Cook – adjusted budget included stipends

This adjusted budget will be presented at joint town meeting and it is hopeful Mendon will approve the additional at Special Town Meeting. Phil DeZutter commented this is a comprised amount to see what Mendon can fund. There is not a firm commitment from Mendon to fund this at this point. These new numbers are due to additional funds the SC was not aware of previously

School Committee is hopeful the lower budget amount would allow Mendon to fund through a STM and not have to have a joint town meeting.

What is Mendon Selectboard timeline? Sean Nicholson stated a STM needs to be scheduled asap by Mendon Selectboard and have asked School Committee to move the joint town meeting one week later.

Mendon Selectboard is attending this meeting but this is School Committee meeting to discuss adjusted budget. Phil DeZutter commented Mendon Selectboard have a meeting scheduled tomorrow thus more information after that meeting.

Mendon Chair, Mark Reil commented meeting is posted but plan is to meet tomorrow to discuss options for Mendon.

Michael Kreger – Mendon discussed \$150k to fund and does School Committee have a plan to get to that number if needed. Kerry Laurence believes this budget is good faith to compromise with the Town of Mendon but is still funding priorities the School Committee believes is needed. Mike Kreger commented to Mendon Selectboard at meeting he believes School Committee did a good job and is supportive of this approach and hopes they find a way to support this number.

Asked the number of students needing mental health. Jay Byer noted there were over 1000 requests from Miscoe alone. Dr. Cohen commented transition program includes monitoring. Found current staff level could not meet the needs. Strong partnerships with outside suppliers and believes this will help.

#### *Potential Recertification of FY2022 MURSD Operational Budget*

Committee needs to discuss if they agree to recertify the budget at the amount of \$900k less. Sean Nicholson believes district should move forward. Phil DeZutter agrees this amount is good whether it is Mendon Town meeting or district meeting. Dorothy Scally states not best scenario but willing to move forward. Vikki Ludwigson not excited about making cuts but compromise is needed. Phil DeZutter reiterated Upton approved the budget and the cuts have impacts. Next year, budget needs to be discussed much earlier due to the same challenges.

Discussion regarding the date of joint town meeting. It was recommended to have this discussion at the next meeting to determine if adjustments are needed based on Mendon's Selectboard. 2 out of the 3 Mendon Selectboard at the meeting stated they are in favor of having a special town meeting.

Approval of the FY2022 Recertified Budget

MOTION: On a motion of Phil DeZutter, seconded by Sean Nicholson, to approve the following motions for the FY2022 Budget:

**Motion #1** To set the operational budget for the **Mendon-Upton Regional School District** for the **2021-2022** fiscal year at **\$39,090,339**, that consists of general operations within the levy limit of **\$38,299,298**, and debt service outside the levy limit of **\$791,041**.

**Motion #2** To assess the Town of Mendon **\$10,921,477** that consists of the following:

- |  |             |
|--|-------------|
| 1. Minimum Local Contribution                                | \$7,660,704 |
| 2. Non-Discretionary Charges (Transportation & Fixed Assets) | \$977,609   |
| 3. Discretionary Charges (Operational Additional)            | \$2,380,804 |
| 4. Long Term Debt Clough/Memorial School                     | \$314,941   |
| 5. Long Term Debt Miscoe Green Repair                        | \$70,164    |

**Motion #3** To assess the Town of Upton **\$13,510,372** that consists of the following:

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|--|-------------|
| 1. Minimum Local Contribution                                | \$9,498,117 |
| 2. Non-Discretionary Charges (Transportation & Fixed Assets) | \$1,226,199 |
| 3. Discretionary Charges (Operational Additional)            | \$2,986,201 |
| 4. Long Term Debt Clough/Memorial School                     | \$326,809   |
| 5. Long Term Debt Miscoe Green Repair                        | \$79,126    |

**Motion #4** To appropriate **\$13,805,182** from State Aid that consists of the following:

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|--|--------------|
| 1. Chapter 70 Funds                      | \$12,511,846 |
| 2. Regional Transportation Reimbursement | \$1,083,993  |
| 3. Charter School Tuition Reimbursement  | \$20,518     |

**Motion #5** To appropriate **\$853,309** from the following School District Sources:

- |  |           |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Vision SpEd Contracted Services     | \$75,000  |
| 2. Transfer-in from Revolving Accounts | \$150,000 |
| 3. Medicaid Reimbursement              | \$25,000  |
| 4. Debt Service Bond Premium           | \$3,309   |
| 5. E&D Appropriation                   | \$600,000 |

VOTED:

Sean Nicholson, yes

Vikki Ludwigson, yes

Kerry Laurence, yes

Phil DeZutter, yes

Dorothy Scally, yes

### **III. ADJOURNMENT**

MOTION: On motion of Sean Nicholson, seconded by Phil DeZutter to adjourn

VOTED:

Sean Nicholson, yes  
Dorothy Scally, yes  
Vikki Ludwigson, yes  
Kerry Laurence, yes  
Phil DeZutter, yes

Meeting adjourned at 7:59 p.m.  
Minutes by Kelly McElreath