

May 29, 2002

I. CALL TO ORDER

Finance and Facilities Chairperson, Mary Jo Rossetti, called a Finance and Facilities Committee of the Whole Meeting of the School Committee to order in the superintendent's conference room at 181 Washington Street at 5:40 p.m., to discuss the FY03 budget.

II. ROLL CALL

School Committee Members Present: Mr. Sullivan, Ms. Bauer, Ms. Cardoso, Ms. Harris, Ms. Murray (arrived 5:52 p.m.), Ms. Rossetti, Ms. Taylor, and Alderman White.

Mayor Gay was absent.

Central Administrators: Dr. Albert F. Argenziano, Superintendent of Schools, Ms. Marie B. Ferrari, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Administration, Mr. Anthony C. Caliri, Human Resources Manager were also present along with approximately five members of the audience.

III. FY03 BUDGET DISCUSSION

Dr. Argenziano provided an update since the last meeting of the Finance and Facilities Committee. He discussed parts of the 2002-2003 Budget Analyses that was previously given to members. He talked about the staff reductions due to insufficient sections in the K-8 programs. He explained he was doing as much as he can regarding the reduction of the total number of people and as mentioned at the last meeting, most of these sections will allow us to maintain decent class size. There is a Kindergarten Enhancement Grant that we may be eligible for and this would allow us to add an integrated kindergarten at the West Somerville Neighborhood School, which would be regular education and special education. Adding this to our total number of Kindergartens means we would have eighteen, making this a cycle of two across the board at West Somerville Neighborhood School. Dr. Argenziano stated that the grant allows \$12,000.00 per kindergarten and he is about 90% sure that that money will be forthcoming which would be in the amount of \$216,000.00. This would offset the two million dollars in cuts if we receive that grant, and would reduce our total number of reductions. He explained the money is not salaries, it is operations. Dr. Argenziano further explained that by leaving Phase I alone and moving into Phases II and III, he would like to add the kindergarten at West Somerville Neighborhood School, a sixth grade at East Somerville Community School and potentially the redirect program. Over the course of the year Dr. Argenziano would like to put three positions back kindergarten to eight and three positions back in grades nine to twelve. As far as Phase III goes, nothing has been done with the non-teaching reductions. The Superintendent mentioned that conversations he has been having with our legislators informs us that we are being level funded. Representative Patricia Jehlen sent a letter to Dr. Argenziano this afternoon asking that he distribute it to the members, which he did. The letter was about the House being able to level fund Chapter 70, additional assistance, and lottery funds for the city. The members took a minute to read the letter and discussion took place.

The next item discussed was information Dr. Argenziano handed out regarding net school spending for the last seven years (1994 through 2001). The listing included State Aid Revenue, Tuition, City of Somerville Expenses, Net School Spending and the percentages of the net school spending.

III. FY03 BUDGET DISCUSSION (cont.)

Lengthy discussion took place and questions the members had were answered by Dr. Argenziano and Mrs. Ferrari.

Members asked about the cuts at the high school regarding the English Department. Dr. Argenziano advised that one is the Reading Department and one is the English Department. He explained he is holding on the English position because the number of failures that students who do not go to summer school may impact the numbers in September, therefore, that one is being held as a potential fourth position to the high school. The concern is to get the number of people down to below ten, possibly eight. There is no definite number yet, when there is that will be provided. Mr. Anthony C. Caliri, Human Resources Manager, explained in detail the process of how these cuts came about. Lengthy discussion followed.

At a previous meeting Ms. Rossetti had asked Dr. Argenziano for the city budgets for the past four years. He provided to members, this evening, a report which included a four year breakdown of budgets for the city.

A Public Budget Hearing is scheduled for Thursday, May 30, 2002 at 7:00 p.m. in the Board of Aldermen Chambers at City Hall. Also, Alderman White reported that he called a special meeting of the Board of Alderman regarding the budget. This meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 6, 2002, 6:00 p.m. in the Board of Aldermen Chambers.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:55 p.m., by voice vote.

Dr. Albert F. Argenziano
Secretary