

March 24, 2003

I. CALL TO ORDER

Finance Chairperson, Katrina Murray, called a Finance and Facilities Committee of the Whole Meeting of the School Committee to order in the committee room at city hall at 6:35 p.m., to discuss FY04 Budget Presentation and Child Molestation Insurance Coverage.

II. ROLL CALL

Present were Ms. Cardoso, Ms. Harris, Ms. Bauer, Mr. Sullivan (arrived 6:50 p.m.), Ms. Taylor, Mr. Murray, and Ms. Rossetti.

Mayor Gay and Alderman O'Donovan were absent.

Dr. Albert F. Argenziano, Superintendent of Schools, Ms. Marie B. Ferrari, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Administration, Mr. Anthony C. Caliri, Human Resources Manager, and Dr. Steven F. Jenkins, District Administrator for Student Services were also present, along with approximately eight members of the audience.

III. Child Molestation Insurance Coverage

Dr. Argenziano explained to members that the school department is currently requiring service vendors to carry child molestation insurance, as was suggested by the previous City Solicitor back in November of 1999. It is becoming increasingly difficult for vendors to secure this insurance because it is either too costly or unavailable for them to purchase and so vendors are not bidding on contracts. Ms. Ferrari, recently requested from Ms. Lisa Mead, City Solicitor, a legal opinion regarding the requirement that service vendors obtain insurance coverage for child molestation. Ms. Mead responded in a letter to Ms. Ferrari that as it now stands, vendors who interact with children in the Somerville school system must secure child molestation insurance coverage and list the City of Somerville as an additional insured on their certificate of insurance. It is Ms. Mead's opinion that the School Committee, not the School Department, is authorized to change this requirement.

Also discussed was the state law that requires anyone who works with children to be CORI checked. Ms. Ferrari explained that when we hire outside vendors, they are required to sign a statement that says all of their people have been CORI checked, or in certain instances, the School Department does the check, itself. Brief discussion followed and Dr. Argenziano and Ms. Ferrari answered questions asked by school committee members.

MOTION: Ms. Bauer made a motion, seconded by Ms. Rossetti, that we no longer require individual vendors to obtain child molestation insurance. The motion was approved by voice vote.

IV. FY04 Budget Presentation

Before discussing the FY04 budget presentation, Dr. Argenziano explained to members that the handout they received tonight is a simplified budget listing operations, which is 16% of the whole budget; the biggest part of the budget is salaries, which is 84%. He informed members that as of today, we do not know what the bottom line figure is; what he is presenting to the committee this evening is a \$50,200,000. FY04 budget request. He explained the breakdown as follows:

IV. FY04 Budget Presentation (cont.)

FY04 Budget Request: \$54,000,000.
 FY04 Budget Reduction: \$ 3,800,000.
 FY04 Salary Reduction: \$ 3,183,000.
 FY04 Operations Reduction: \$ 617,000.

FY04 Budget Request (3/24/03) \$50,200,000.

SUMMARY OF PROJECTED CUTS 2003-2004 BUDGET

Category	FTE's	Ave. Sal.	FTE times Ave. Sal.
*Teachers	44	\$36,000	\$1,584,000
Para's	23	\$12,500	\$ 287,500
Aides	5	\$12,500	\$ 62,500
Clerical	4	\$28,000	\$ 112,000
Custodian	2	\$30,000	\$ 60,000
Adm.	4	\$71,250	\$ 285,000
Salary Reductions			\$2,391,000
**Severance	22	\$36,000	\$792,000
TOTALS	104		\$3,183,000

*8 Elem. Reg. Ed. 14 TBE (12 Elem. 2 HS) 7 Elem. Spec. 3 SPED 12 SHS
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**12 Elem. Reg. Ed. 1 TBE (HS) 2 Elem. Spec. 2 TBE Spec. 5 SHS
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Note: FTE variance is due to lower ave salary projections

The Superintendent informed the committee if we have to cut another 1 million, 1.5 million, 1.6 million (anything beyond the \$50.2 million figure) there is very little we can take from operations so a high percentage of that number will come from our organization. Lengthy discussion followed. Basically there should be approximately 100 less people in our organization and Dr. Argenziano let the committee know, even at that figure, we still want to maintain the 19, 20 to 1 teacher/pupil ratio, we want to maintain the quality, and the neighborhood schools, everything possible will be done to not touch any of our buildings.

Next the committee members referred to the Somerville Public Schools Fiscal Year 2004 Budget book. Discussion took place on some of the revolving accounts. Ms. Ferrari and Dr. Argenziano answered questions and addressed any concerns the members had.

IV. FY04 Budget Presentation (cont.)

Dr. Argenziano informed the committee members that at the request of Mr. John McGinn, he provided them with a “what if” list if there were more reductions and at the February 24th Finance and Facilities meeting the Superintendent asked if he could hold off until the end of March to determine if in fact we came up with any cost we hadn’t looked forward to receiving and at this time we haven’t. Because we do not have a meeting before April 7th, at this point in time, Dr. Argenziano as he said he would, let the committee know that he feels we will make it with no cuts for the last 57 days of the school year.

Before the meeting’s end, Ms. Murray referred to a memorandum received from Mr. John McGinn regarding the sale of city owned land and asked for member’s input. Ms. Murray stated she was the only one who voted against selling the Conwell School building and explained it was her feeling that for an immediate sale, which is what the members felt necessary to do, there might be more profitable buildings among the city list that could be looked at. Brief discussion followed. The Superintendent informed the committee that at the request of Alderman William White, Chair of the Committee on Finance, he will be meeting with the Board of Aldermen on April 1st, and suggested that for those members who are interested, to also attend the April 1st meeting.

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:52 p.m., by voice vote.

Dr. Albert F. Argenziano
Secretary