

May 13, 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 Auditorium at the East Somerville Community School, at 6:40 p.m., to discuss the FY04 budget.

II. ROLL CALL

Present were Ms. Cardoso, Ms. Harris, Ms. Bauer, Mr. Sullivan (arrived 7:19 p.m.), Ms. Taylor (6:50 p.m.), 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, and Mr. Anthony C. Caliri, Human Resources Manager were also present, along with approximately 116 members of the audience.

State Legislators present were Representatives Patricia D. Jehlen, Timothy J. Toomey, and Jarrett Barrios.

III. FY04 Budget Discussion

Ms. Murray welcomed the community and introduced the school committee members, and Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Albert F. Argenziano. She informed the audience that Representatives Patricia Jehlen, Timothy Toomey and Jarrett Barrios were also here this evening to speak with the audience.

Discussion took place regarding budgetary issues and the different levels of cuts which will have devastating effects on, not only the Somerville School system, but systems across the state, and what can be done to save these vital programs and services. After addressing the community, an hour long session followed while the representatives answered questions and responded to comments from the audience.

Ms. Murray then turned the meeting over to Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Argenziano and asked that he give an overview of the FY04 budget projections to the audience.

Dr. Argenziano began by explaining the process that he and his staff have been working on for the last four months in preparation for the opening of school. The main focus and what is important to the Somerville Public Schools has been low class size, full day Pre-Kindergarten, full day Kindergarten, and small schools, schools with no more than 500-600 students. Dr. Argenziano stated this is the strength of our system, this is what we are all about and regardless of what has to be cut, as Superintendent of Schools, he will not recommend dissolving these programs. He explained that there will be layoffs, but we are going ahead with the strength of what we believe in. Dr. Argenziano let the audience know that the biggest problem right now is, a bottom line budget figure has not been received from the city. There is four million dollars less of Chapter 70 funds coming to the Somerville Public Schools. He explained, as it stands now, he does not know from what figure that four million dollars would be reduced. He explained to the audience the 2003-04 budget reduction summary that has taken place over the last four months,

III. FY04 Budget Discussion (cont.)

and how the budget reduction plans have gone from \$50.2 million down to \$47.2 million. The Superintendent also talked about how the State has reduced money – there is less MCAS Prep money, less money for No Child Left Behind, Chapter 70, and Grants. He provided to the audience a handout and briefly outlined the reduction totals – the total number of people and the total money reduction loss, as it related to each bottom line figure:

\$50,200,000.	Total people	74 (6.6%)	Reduction:	\$3,183,000.
\$49,200,000.	Total people	87 (7.8%)	Reduction:	\$3,821,815.
\$48,200,000.	Total people	120 (10.8%)	Reduction:	\$4,683,415.
\$47,200,000.	Total people	135 (12.2%)	Reduction:	\$5,601,336.

The Superintendent mentioned he has not yet prepared a summary at \$46.2 million, which would mean approximately 150 less people. This is one of the reasons the school department took the severance package. We are trying to preserve the number of youth we have in our teaching staff.

In closing, Dr. Argenziano assured the public that with the school committee’s support, he will continue to recommend full day Pre-Kindergarten, full day Kindergarten, class size maintained in the low twenties, not closing any schools, keeping day care until 6:00 p.m. He advised he will try to maintain all the programs we now have but we will be doing this with somewhere between 130–150 less people.

When finished with his discussion, the Superintendent welcomed questions from the community. Nineteen members of the audience addressed Dr. Argenziano and school committee members.

Before adjourning, Ms. Murray reminded the community of the following meetings:

May 19th at 6:30 p.m. - Finance and Facilities of the Whole Meeting – Committee Room at City Hall.

June 4th at 6:00 p.m. - Public Hearing (School Department’s 2003-04 Budget) – East Somerville Community School – Auditorium

June 19th at 7:00 p.m. - Board of Aldermen’s Finance Meeting (Public Hearing on State Budget) – Board of Aldermen Chambers at City Hall.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m., by voice vote.

Dr. Albert F. Argenziano
Secretary