

June 11, 2003

I. CALL TO ORDER

School Committee Chairman, Mary Jo Rossetti, opened the *Public Hearing* relative to the FY2004 budget in the Auditorium at East Somerville Community School, at 6:40 p.m., by voice vote.

II. ROLL CALL

Present were Ms. Cardoso, Ms. Harris, Ms. Bauer, Mr. Sullivan, Ms. Taylor, Ms. Murray and Ms. Rossetti.

Alderman O'Donovan and Mayor Gay were absent.

Also present were 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 approximately 60 members of the audience.

III. FY 2003 BUDGET DISCUSSION

Finance Chair, Ms. Murray, welcomed the audience to this evening's meeting and advised that Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Argenziano, would be giving an overview of the Somerville Public Schools FY2004 Budget, as it now stands, as well as information regarding the positions added back into the budget with the hope of receiving more money from the Mayor. Ms. Murray informed the audience, that at this time, the final bottom line figure for the school department budget is still unknown.

Dr. Argenziano provided a handout of the Somerville Public Schools Fiscal Year 2004 Budget and proceeded with an overview of the document for the audience. When preparations began back in January and February, the Somerville School Committee needed \$54 million in local appropriations to maintain programming at an equivalent level to FY2003. In FY2003, the School Committee approved an operating budget of \$52 million. The Superintendent went through the process, step by step, of how the budget was reduced and in FY2003, set at \$50.2 million - a \$1.8 million reduction from the original \$52 million. The Mayor, at a Finance and Facilities Committee meeting, notified the school committee that due to an \$11 - \$13 million hit the City had to take, the best she could offer the school department for a bottom line figure is \$46.2 million.

The Superintendent then talked about the FY2004 budget analysis explaining that the \$46.2 million core services budget is comprised of \$8,800,000 in Operations (19%) and \$37,400,000 in Salaries (81%). At the present time our operations are going from \$10.7 to \$8.8 million and almost 60% of our operations are special education transportation and tuition leaving a little over 40% for all of the buildings for supplies and materials. Salaries have been reduced to \$37,400,000. Dr. Argenziano expressed that throughout the reduction process and in preparing an organization, the school department and the committee has been focused on the main thing, that being free full day PreSchool, free full day Kindergarten, low class size grades 1-12, small school sites, structured/organized PK-12 Curriculum, new reading series, new mathematics series and day care after hours.

The Superintendent referred to and gave a brief outline of the addendum to the FY04 school budget. At the June 2, 2003 Finance Meeting, the school committee was concerned that \$46.2

III. FY 2003 BUDGET DISCUSSION (cont.)

million was insufficient to operate the public schools. At the June 3rd meeting members discussed establishing a supplemental budget, operations and salaries, for FY04 to be submitted to the Board of Aldermen. What the school committee voted that night was to exceed the Mayor's bottom line for the school department budget of \$46,200,000 to \$47,570,000. Dr. Argenziano gave a rundown of the additions listed and advised that this figure, \$47,570,000. is what the school committee planned to submit to the Board of Aldermen for their acceptance and approval of a bottom line figure for the school department budget.

Dr. Argenziano informed the school committee, this evening, that the school department is now assured of the Kindergarten Enhancement Grant allowing specialists in music, art, library and physical education for all Kindergarten classes. That line item discussed last week Art/Music Staff (2) can be taken off the listing, which would give the committee an additional \$80,000.00 for discussion regarding other options.

Following Dr. Argenziano's presentation, discussion followed. Ms. Murray invited members of the audience to share their comments. Twenty one people addressed the school committee with their concerns regarding the FY04 budget.

In closing, Ms. Murray informed the public that discussion will continue this evening at the scheduled Finance and Facilities meeting following this public hearing. At that time, the committee would discuss the changes/additions to the FY04 budget bottom line figure that the committee will be presenting to the Board of Alderman on June 16, 2003. She also reminded the audience of the following two meeting dates: June 16, 2003, Finance and Facilities Committee of the Whole Meeting at 7:00 p.m. in the committee room at City Hall; and June 19, 2003, FY04 Budget Public Hearing – (Board of Aldermen), at 7:00 p.m. in the auditorium at Somerville High School.

Ms. Murray thanked everyone for coming to the public hearing this evening and also for sharing their concerns and input with the committee and the Superintendent of Schools.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m., on a motion by Ms. Ms. Rossetti and Mr. Sullivan and approved by voice vote.

Dr. Albert F. Argenziano
Secretary