

February 11, 2004

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Finance Chairperson, Charlene Harris, 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 7:05 p.m., to discuss the FY05 budget preview and the mid-year operations report.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Present were Ms. Bauer, Ms. Cardoso, Ms. Taylor, Ms. Foster, Ms. Bastardi, Ms. Harris, Ms. Rossetti and Mayor Curtatone (arrived 7:40 p.m.)

Alderman Provost was absent.

Dr. Albert F. Argenziano, Superintendent of Schools, and Ms. Marie B. Ferrari, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Administration were also present, along with twelve members of the audience.

**III. FY05 Budget Preview**

Ms. Harris welcomed everyone to this evening's meeting and then asked Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Argenziano, to begin by giving a presentation of the FY05 budget preview.

Dr. Argenziano distributed a FY05 Budget Preview to members of the school committee and the audience in order to follow along during the presentation. He began by mentioning, as he has in the past, how we continue to maintain our strong educational foundation, which includes: free, all day Pre-Kindergarten at the Capuano Early Childhood Center; free, all day Kindergarten throughout the city; small neighborhood schools; K-8 class size below 20 to 1; 9 – 12 class size below 20 to 1; 9 – 12 Advanced Placement Courses and Academic Decathlon; 9 – 12 outstanding vocational program of services; strong commitment to After School Programs; structured curriculum in line with State standards; and new Reading and Mathematics Series K – 8. These are the things we would like to keep in tact to the best of our ability. The Superintendent reminded the committee that the final FY04 budget amount was \$46.2 million. The spending plan was set at \$46.4 million and with Special Education reimbursement being less than anticipated, we began the year \$500 – 700,000. below our budget. Dr. Argenziano expressed his concern about maintaining and preserving what we have. He stated that our anticipated needs for FY05 are to be level funded at \$46.2 million and presented the following information, as a preview to future discussion regarding the state of the Somerville Public Schools in a financial way:

- FY2005 Budget Forecast Options – February 2004
- Employee Group / FY 2004 – FY 2005 Incremental Costs (Step Raises & % Increases)
- Updated Membership (1-27-04) including the Sheltered Immersion and the Special Education enrollments

**III. FY05 Budget Preview (cont.)**

To give the school committee an understanding of the direction headed if we were level funded (at percentages listed from 1% to 5%), the Superintendent provided members with a budget figure with that particular reduction, i.e.:

Level Funded	46.2M
1% Reduction	45.8M
2% Reduction	45.3M
3% Reduction	44.8M
4% Reduction	44.4M
5% Reduction	43.9M

After reviewing this information tonight with the school committee the Superintendent's recommendation would be not to go below \$1.7 million, which is the 1% level funded reduction.

Following discussion, Superintendent Argenziano presented the following three options to the School Committee:

- 1) The School Committee keeps everything as is, make no changes, vote and present a \$47.4 million budget to the City.
- 2) Reduce the budget by making a complete reduction across the board; take a percentage of our staff - administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, secretaries, etc. At an average cost of \$40 to \$45,000. this would involve approximately fifty people.
- 3) Dr. Argenziano explained that the committee and audience members will be able to determine how he reached this particular option (3), by referring to the sheet provided this evening, possible reduction sheet, along with the spreadsheet earlier discussed. He then presented the following, for possible reductions:

- o Leases at B & G Club, TAB Building \$435,000.
  - o PHCS moves: (Reductions)
    - Principal
    - Secretary
    - Paraprofessional
    - 2 custodians
    - 10 teachers \$700,000.
  - o Vocational Department
    - 2 Teacher reductions \$120,000.
  - o District Administration
    - 3 Reductions \$215,000.
  - o Egerly Reductions
    - 2 Staff Reductions \$ 80,000.
    - ½ Custodian Reduction 17,000.
- (T) \$1,567,000.

**III. FY05 Budget Preview (cont.)**

This option is what the Superintendent is recommending this evening as well as his recommendation for the school committee to respond within thirty days, in order to provide people with enough time (April, May and June) for planning.

Before responding to questions, the Superintendent discussed the plans worked on and the research done by administration over the past few months in relation to the Powder House Community School. Lengthy discussion followed and Dr. Argenziano responded to questions of school committee members and addressed any concerns they had. Mayor Curtatone also briefly discussed the city's financial situation and what can be expected in the months ahead. Members of the audience voiced their concerns and shared input with the Superintendent and School Committee members.

**IV. Mid-Year Operations Report**

A copy of the Review of Mid-Year Operations Expenditures for FY2004 was provided to members. Ms. Marie Ferrari, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Administration gave a summary of the report and advised that at the mid year, the school department has encumbered or spent \$8.2 million in operations costs. She briefly reviewed the departments listed and highlighted the majority of the expenditures for the first half of FY2004. Brief discussion followed and Ms. Ferrari answered questions asked by committee members.

**V. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m., by voice vote.

Dr. Albert F. Argenziano  
Secretary