

Cohasset Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday February 8, 2023

Virtual Meeting-Zoom Video Call

7 pm

Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, Section 20(b), following Governor Baker's declaration of a state of emergency in the Commonwealth arising from the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Advisory Committee will meet virtually utilizing remote technology. All votes will be taken by a Roll-Call Vote.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Rob Hillman at 7:18 pm., Present – Mike Barclay, Present- Fran Collins, Present- Ellen Maher, Present – Mary McGoldrick, Present - Meg Wheeler, Present – Rob Hillman

Mrs. Astino joined at 7:21 pm. Mr. Kennedy joined at 7:29 pm.

Absent: Mark Maggi

Guest: Superintendent of Schools Dr. Patrick Sullivan, Assistant Superintendent of Schools Dr. Leslie Scollins, Cohasset Public Schools Director of Finance & Facilities Susan Owen, Cohasset School Committee member Lydia St. Onge.

Chair Hillman welcomed the representatives from the School department, apologized for the late start (technical issues) and thanked them for their efforts in supporting the engagement with the Advisory Committee in such a timely manner.

Mrs. McGoldrick requested Dr. Sullivan to lead the presentation with the highlights of the requested FY 24 School Budget. Mrs. Owen and Dr. Sullivan presented in tandem.

- Rollover costs coming in at .37% increase due to retirements (2 confirmed, 1 anticipated) and SPED costs reductions due to students aging out.
- All 5 bargaining units received same COLA of 2%, 2.5% and 3%.
- Column changes must be submitted Sept 1 and Feb 15 and step changes are automatic and not merit based (question from Mr. Collins)
- Staffing requests primarily driven by MCAS data showing where the needs are
- Adding a second Pre School program is driven by need (substantial waitlist every year)
- Library ESP position in the past has been filled by volunteers
- Custodian needed at CMHS per results of previous building assessment
- AI3 study indicated need for security people to watch cameras / doorways / check access; this is an increase in responsibilities for existing staff member

- Budget includes one-time investment in Math Curriculum grades 6-12 and Arts Curriculum K-12, and additional needed educational supplies and materials. Professional development for both new curriculums will come from Asst. Superintendent PD budget (question from Mrs. McGoldrick)
- Budget coming in at +4.04% with \$50,000 reduction in Kindergarten tuition as Cohasset is one of a handful of remaining schools that charge tuition for full day kindergarten.
- Fully funding Kindergarten drives the budget to +5.16%. Mrs. Owen commented that she thought that Chapter 70 might fully fund K in FY 25 if the district moves to free full day.

Conversation ensued regarding FTEs, which are funded by budget, by grants or by revolving. SPED grants have increased even with a decrease in Title 1 (Federal Grant for elementary based on the district's enrollment of students eligible for Free & Reduced Lunch).

Mrs. Owen responded to Mrs. McGoldrick's question about fee structure review in that she reviews all fees annually and makes proposals based on neighboring districts and the market.

Mr. Collins recalled the district added a 2nd grade teacher last year due to enrollment and now is looking to add a 3rd teacher as that class moves up and he wondered what happens with that 2nd grade teacher. Dr. Sullivan responded that the incoming 2nd grade class is bigger than the outgoing 2nd grade class.

Mrs. Maher commented that there is no accounting for any attrition in the enrollment numbers even though history shows that CPS loses students from grade 8 to 9.

Chair Hillman commented that adding 8.5 FTE, which is approximately \$500,000 is forever especially once professional status is attained. Has or does the School Committee consider sunsetting these positions in 3 years? He commented that the school budget at 4% or 5% is higher than Town Revenue which will likely come in at 3%, perhaps even 2.5%. Dr. Sullivan commented that all positions requested are valid and the need is really dominant, and the data supports it since Covid. Mrs. McGoldrick drew attention to the fact that the School left 6 budgeted ESP positions unfilled this year due to a review by the Director of Student Services who ascertained that they did not need to be filled.

Mr. Barclay requested a review of the MCAS data and inquired how the comparative districts were selected. Dr. Sullivan advised that Cohasset frequently gets compared to neighboring South Shore towns and Dover-Sherborn was a district in Cohasset's DESE DART profile. Mr. Barclay requested a per pupil spending comparison. Mr. Collins inquired about class size and would increasing class sizes pull back on the spending? Dr. Sullivan commented that there are some contractual obligations with the Cohasset Teachers Association and that the community in many cases is driving for smaller class sizes.

Mrs. St Onge advised the School Budget Public Hearing is March 1 and the School Committee will vote on the budget on March 15.

Chair Hillman thanked the Dr. Sullivan, Dr. Scollins, Mrs. Owen and Mrs. St.Onge for attending. The collaboration this early is helpful and appreciated. The school personnel departed at 8:45 pm.

The committee continued further dialogue regarding the schools. Enrollment, class size, basic foundational skills classes, block scheduling were all discussed.

There is a public hearing on Zoning By-Law on February 27 and then more community socializing in March. Mrs. McGoldrick to request the School Facilities Committee to meet with us on February 15 to discuss the \$2,000,000 ask for a feasibility study.

Town Manager Chris Senior joined the meeting: he advised that Police, Fire and Public Works budgets are ready for review. The draft warrant presently has 29 articles, 9 of which so far are zoning.

Mr. Senior to get Police, Fire budgets, draft warrant and South Shore Vo-Tech article to committee for review.

Chair Hillman requested a motion to adjourn at 9:21 pm which was made by Mrs. Astino, seconded by Mr. Barclay. Roll Call: Aye-Jeanne Astino, Aye-Mike Barclay, Aye-Fran Collins, Aye-Patrick Kennedy, Aye-Ellen Maher, Aye-Mary McGoldrick, Aye-Meg Wheeler, Aye Rob Hillman.