

**HADLEY SCHOOL COMMITTEE
HADLEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
HADLEY, MASSACHUSETTS
March 26, 2012**

6:30 PM

Hopkins Academy Music Room

PRESENT: Chair: Ms. Robie Grant, Vice Chair, Mr. James Michalak. Members Present: Mr. Thomas Waskiewicz, Ms. Linda Dunlavy and Ms. Molly Keegan. Student Representatives: Lauren Robinson
Also present: Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Nicholas Young, Dee Rex, Secretary, Richard Trueswell of TV5

Others Present: Heather Blajda, Diana Bonneville, Kathy Boyden, Heather Ciaglo, Connie Douglas, Susan Duncan, John Dyjach, Terri Earle, Andrea Elson, Gary Elson, Humera Fasihuddin, Ruthann Fitzgibbons, Kent Haake, Jo-Ann Konieczny, Christine Markowski, Cathy Niedziela, Scott Payne, Brenda Pelissier, Christine Pipeczynski, Nina Pollard, Fran Ryan, Mary Schmith, Christine Selig, Elaine Tudryn, Jeff Udall and Michelle Wojtowicz.

CALL TO ORDER: Chair, Ms. Robie Grant called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

MOTION: (Michalak/Waskiewicz) move to approve the minutes of the February 13, 2012, special meeting as presented. **VOTE:** Unanimous.

PUBLIC COMMENTS – NONE

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Grant announced that at the April 23, 2012, Regular Meeting, the School Committee will have an academic presentation on Hopkins' Drug Education Curriculum.

Ms. Grant would like to ask the committee for a change in the May meeting. The fourth Monday in May is Memorial Day and can we change the meeting to May 21, 2012. Everyone agreed the meeting will be on May 21, 2012.

PRESENTATION

This is Jim Michalak's last School Committee meeting as a member. He has served on the School Committee for the last 9 years. Tom Waskiewicz spoke of all of Jim's accomplishments as a Committee member and thanked him for all of his dedicated service. Dr. Young presented Jim Michalak with a plaque for his three-consecutive terms with the Committee.

FY'13 SCHOOL DEPARTMENT BUDGET

Dr. Young talked about where we are with the budget leading up to the May Town Meeting. The FY12 budget has a gap that we have been monitoring closely this year coming from school choice and grant funding of \$639,106. What that means is that we started this school year, July 1, 2011, with an operational deficit. We started the school year with an understanding that the deficit would be covered through school choice account funds, essentially the school reserves. There will be no money left over from FY12. We are going to spend out of reserves more than \$600,00.

The FY13 budget that starts on July 1, 2012 and goes through June of 2013, is a budget that calls for a level services budget, which maintains programs and positions as we understand them all to be at this moment in time. We have a budget that called for \$6,439,501 and that was as of February 2012. Now we are into March and we have had in the course of the past 30 days that more students have expressed an interest in going to Smith Vocational School. As we look at our practice, it has always been, we budget for all the students that have applied. There is an additional \$64,000 that has been added to our total since

last meeting. This brings our total to \$6,503,501. There are a couple of comments that I just want to underscore. We have not accounted for pre-purchase money for FY13 and FY14 in the starting point figures. We account for that in the fall. This figure does not account for COLA adjustments or new positions with the exception of a new SPED paraprofessional that we have talked about for months. That is a requirement to fill SPED mandates.

There was an article that ran very publicly in the paper about where the conversation was going on about appropriations. I believe that the figure being tossed around right now for conversation piece is \$5,550,000. This is the money that is being appropriated by the town. The difference between the \$6,500,000 and the \$5,550,000 from the Town is \$953,501. The projected grants that will be used to offset our operating costs is \$316,000. That leaves a difference from what is needed versus what we are going to receive of \$637,501. There are four courses of action we can take.

1. Possibility that there may be additional funding from the Town of Hadley at the fall town meeting.
2. Spend incoming school choice funds, we receive about \$400,000 annually. Then we can dip into the school choice reserves, the remaining balance. We expect the reserves to fall somewhere between \$600,000 and \$725,000 as of June 30, 2012. We have a huge variance in architectural estimates for what the roof project is going to cost. If we were to try and fill this gap entirely with incoming and available school choice funds, the particular balance would be somewhere between \$300,000 - \$400,000 as of June 30, 2013. We are currently spending more in school choice than we are bringing in. If you overspend in any particular year, then you set yourself up for a shortfall in future years.
3. Reduce services and personnel to account for the shortfall.
4. Strike a balance between school choice reserves and budgetary reductions for FY13 as a way to minimize what some of those future challenges will be in FY14 and FY15.

There are several things in flux. The budget conversation drags on for several months because as each month passes we get additional information as a piece of the puzzle, i.e., more students wanting to attend Smith Vocational this year. I will expect there is going to be some variance in the next 30-60 days. If we got to a point where a minimum number of layoffs were required under different scenarios, the law has the School Committee having all the way to June 15th for notification of contracted personnel. There is also a clause around fiscal contingencies. It is always the last thing that is on anyone's mind during the budget season, the idea that you have to entertain reductions. There is a window here where there are other possibilities here that can and should be explored.

What is the net school spending for the town? It is somewhere around \$5,275,000. It is the required minimum that the town has to give us. How many children are going now to Smith Vocational? There are 21 students attending. The other factor with the vocational students is whether or not they are receiving SPED services, that is a big additional expense. How many students apply for Smith Voke and how many actually go? The last couple of years maybe one student per year that applies does not end up going.

The other challenge we have is our numbers incoming for Kindergarten next year, the census had 42 students. The number now is 46 or 47 and that is prior to full registration. The staffing pattern currently has us at 2 Kindergarten Teachers. If that number creeps up to the upper 40s in the next 30-60 days after registration, that is going to become a nail biter come June.

Molly Keegan reminded everybody, in terms of the town funding, that this is currently the Selectboard's recommendation to the Finance Committee for review. They are proposing the appropriated amount of the \$5,500,000 with an I.O.U. to get us up to the requested amount of \$5,800,000. Molly and Robie went into the review explaining the Smith Vocational line item and the SPED line item tend to be the wild cards for us. Those are the areas of big swings in our budget that we cannot control. We were looking for them to fund that upfront and then we were willing to offer that money back if it was not spent. The problem that the Town is having is that they are at a point that they cannot give that money upfront. At this point in their budget, they are only willing to commit to the \$5,500,000, but they would be willing to give us the extra in the fall. The problem with that is there is no guarantee that free cash will be generated in excess of their other obligations that would even allow us to access that money. When will there be a finance committee recommendation? No one has heard anything about a finance committee recommendation. There was \$1,000,000 in free cash at the end of last year. They do not expect that high of an amount this year.

Tom Waskiewicz suggested that the School Committee go to the Selectboard and the Finance Committee and just laying out the needs we have and try to build up our base. If we go with the I.O.U. plan and get through this year, we are still going to have that base next year and the base we are going to be looking for will be substantially higher. They are going to have to work awfully hard before they can accept that. I would rather transition them along with us and bump us up. I am going back to that school choice, about 13-14 years, when we said that we would not use the money for mainstream budgeting. Had we not done that, I can't help but believe that our baseline would be higher. The amount that the Town would be supporting us with would be around \$500,000 to \$600,000 higher. It would have to be, otherwise, our school would not be functioning. Molly asked Tom where would the money have come from. Tom said it would have come gradually, it would have been incrementally increased. I would suggest that we just lay it out that in order for us to run a level services budget and to maintain the excellence we have with academics and extra-curricular that we just have to have an increase from the Town in order to get there.

Robie said that they told them that they are only putting off the pain. If this happens this year, it is only going to make it worse for what we need from the Town next year. It was made perfectly clear that we need \$5,800,000. Anything below that is just a stop gap measure and we will have to rob Peter to pay Paul. Tom said that we are just asking for a level funded budget. Tracy Kelley asked if they would consider putting the \$5,800,000 on the Town Warrant. Nothing is off the table. The Committee is just trying to get the point across and let the process work.

How many students do we actually going school choice versus how many we are bringing in? We have 77 students coming in and about 40 that are attending other schools and we have about 20 that are attending charter schools. Do we spend more per pupil than we bring in? There is a couple of context points to be made here.

1. It is not apples and apples. The special needs students tend to throw off the balance.
2. Incoming students go into a school choice revolving account under the control of the School Committee. Students that are going (this is where we get into net school spending piece, where the Town has an obligation to cover education, not only to Hadley Public Schools, but all the students that reside in Hadley) so they cover the students that are out going. They get credit for those expenditures.

At any give time, it is true that Choice in and Choice out we are a winning district. If we have Choice and Charter with the current makeup of the special needs students, the balance is tipped away from us in terms of favor. The State defines us as a winning School Choice district because we have more students coming in than we have going out. Chris Pipczynski what if the tide turns and we have more students leaving because (the things we have always been able to offer is small classrooms, personal instruction and that we have always provided for our students). But you are saying that that is not going to be possible. We may even have a layoff. Robie Grant and Dr. Young objected. Robie Grant responded that they have been very careful not to mention that. We have no intention of touching the teaching staff, let's be clear about that. Dr. Young said that those are all fair points that have constantly been made here and have been constantly made with the Town. There is not question that school systems need to remain competitive in order to remain viable in this competitive market place. Because of that, there is even that much more care that is given to how to approach this process in a way that would minimize reductions that would have direct impact on student services. Robie Grant said that this year we really tried to educate the Finance Committee and the Selectboard about the competitive environment that the schools exist in. I think that they really weren't aware where money came in and money went out and what happens to the Town's Cherry Sheet when people leave the district. We have spent the last year trying to educate them on "not to starve the schools; to keep us competitive for the future of the schools." People should not be alarmed when we talk about having to have some reductions that it is not going to affect the classroom experience. We will be looking for reductions everywhere, but not affecting the classrooms. Tom Waskiewicz suggested that we start using a more positive conversation about the budget. Invest in our education, invest in our students, invest in our sons and daughters. Molly Keegan spoke of having set in on the Selectboard meetings, the easy way for them to deal with the budget deficit they were facing was to scale back one line item. The biggest line item was the schools. I think that it was they did. I agree with Robie. I was surprised, having been on the Finance Committee as long as I was, when a couple of the members said "That doesn't seem right." I think they get it and this is a great opportunity to put a positive on it and for us to work with the Town right now and figure out a viable solution that does not put this on the back of the school. I think the most important thing right now is that we will get through FY2013. We need to be

focused two, three, four years out. Tom Waskiewicz stated that we need to have a baseline for SPED and for Smith Vocational students. I think we need that \$300,000 - \$400,000 cushion that we are talking about. Tracy Kelley said that the School Committee has been battling this for the last 3 to 4 years and we have taken cuts every year. Molly thinks that we need to be working together. Dr. Young stated this is just an update at where we are this moment in time. This is an attempt to be transparent as we go step by step through this process. This may not even be settled by the May Town Meeting.

SCHOOL CHOICE PROGRAM FOR 2012-2013

There is a law that the School Committee vote annually to retain the choice program.

MOTION: Molly Keegan SECOND: Jim Michalak VOTE: Unanimous

2012-2013 SCHOOL CALENDAR

Dr. Young stated that each year we bring the school calendar to the Committee for a vote. There is a contractual requirement in the Teachers Contract for teachers that they have to agree to return before Labor Day spelled out in the contract.

MOTION: Tom Waskiewicz, SECOND: Jim Michalak, VOTE: Unanimous

OPERATIONAL - REVIEW BIDS

We talked about it last time and we had a quote from The Management Solutions for \$6,000. Linda Dunlavy solicited a quote from Melanson Heath, who is auditing the Town and the schools this year. The quote was \$12,600. Robie Grant got in touch with MASBO, who is the MA Association of School Business Officials, and for the past 3 years they have had a program doing operational reviews. They have done 40-50 of them. Their quote was \$4,800. They will come in and do a self-assessment with the Superintendent, come in for 2 days and interview all the cost centers, i.e.; the principals, athletic director and they go over all the accounts. They then will make recommendations. Robie sent a link to the Committee members from MASBO on their review of Arlington. I thought it was just what we were looking for at a very reasonable price. The DESE sends them to schools when they are in trouble. They are not available until mid-June. Robie suggested going with the lowest bid.

Jim Michalak wanted to know why all of a sudden do we need this help with our district. The way this started out was we were going to look at this, review it and listen to them. Now we are moving forward on it and in these financial times we really don't need it. Robie said that this is why we need it. If we can find anyway to streamline things and have efficiencies, it will save us money. Molly stated that if we are looking at potential cutbacks in our budget and we don't want to do anything that is going to impact the direct classroom experience, I think we have an opportunity through attrition. Carol Trane and Dr. Young are leaving and the timing of June is worrisome. I think it poses an opportunity, if we can go through administrative functions and if we can do anything that is efficient and save time so we don't have to fully replace that body. I have no idea right now if we really need to do that or not. If there were some opportunities to scale back, eliminate redundancies, automate things, outsource something, it would be a great opportunity to make that sort of a decision from a staffing standpoint to potentially not have to hire a full-time person or be able to get away with a part-time person for that slot. Jim Michalak said that we are trim as it is. We have everything in order, the finances are in order and we are watching where every dime and nickel goes. We will be getting another superintendent and who knows where their expertise is going to be. Linda Dunlavy thinks this is a perfect time to do it because Nick is leaving and we know what exactly he was doing for us and we will know what we need as we search for our next superintendent. Nick said that it is the School Committee's decision as to whether they want to do an operational review or not. I would just like to say that I am proud of the fact that we have had a full audit for several years in a row that has continued to reinforce our internal procedures. It is a very tight budget in Hadley. There is not a lot of wiggle room. We have just spent a considerable amount of time with the administrators and some representatives from the teachers' union looking at places where there would have to be some reductions. There were not a lot of points that were not pain points. Tom would like to have the operational view after the new superintendent arrives. Linda Dunlavy disagrees. I think it will give the new superintendent a summary of how things are being done now and hopefully, some ideas of how things could be more efficient. Having that summary is a very nice thing to give to a new superintendent. My concern is knowledge walking out the door of an institution. What we are trying to capture is merely, what have we been doing. Maybe we could do this more efficiently, maybe there is an accident waiting to happen because there was a hole in our procedures that we did not even realize. This is no reflection on the individuals doing the job.

Tracy Kelley spoke of for the last two meetings you have had Managements Solutions do two presentations. It is the first time we are hearing about having two more quotes. I am really concerned about the process and how we came to the point here for this. I don't necessarily disagree that an operational review is a positive thing for our organization. I do think that there is value to it. But, we have tried to put the cart before the horse in this case. According to the processes and policies of the School Committee, everything is backwards. Dr. Young said that under the Procurement Law, whether it is \$1,000 or \$10,000 you still need three quotes that are signed. According to 30B they strongly recommend that each vendor's quote is based on a scope of services description. Each of the vendors should be supplied the same written scope of services. Scope of services came from what was presented by the Management Consulting group to find additional quotes that would be comparable. Tracy Kelley stated that it is not really ideal to have a company that is submitting the a develop the scope of services. What the Committee really needs to do is develop a Scope of Services and send it out to the companies that we are interested in and gather the information back. Molly Keegan said that we should note the Mrs. Kelley's discomfort level with the process. Tom Waskiewicz seconded that degree of discomfort. It is not a level playing field. If we were searching for a superintendent or any management firm like we are doing, you do not bring in one candidate and look at what's on their mind and then talk to other candidates on the phone and say okay which one do you like. The prudent thing would be is to start all three candidates with the same basic level of job description and needs and let them convince us that they are the best one for the job. Dr. Young stated that if the School Committee were comfortable with this and the chair would comfortable sharing the Scope of Services, we can set a specific date and have the written quotes submitted by the specific date. Then we would have reconciled all the different points of view and the School Committee would have the information to proceed forward as they wished.

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY (Second Reading)

Our lawyer has looked at the suggestions from the teachers' union and he added a sentence in the first paragraph and added language to paragraph four. The information was not distributed in the packet for this meeting. We will table this until next month. Dr. Young still feels cautious about watering it down. One of the concerns I have is that this is not the place, that I personally be would anything but very conservative, when it comes to drawing clear boundaries between what is acceptable communication between adults and children. I really think that the language we were initially offered from the School Committee's Association was stronger and had clear boundaries and parameters. Linda Dunlavy disagreed with that. She did not like it because she thought it was too fuzzy. This will be discussed further next month.

HOPKINS 350TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Jim Michalak emailed Robie and asked her what are the Committee's plans for being involved with the celebration. Ms. Grant contacted the Hopkins Academy alumni and they have their own committee that is working on the celebration and it is under control. Tom Waskiewicz volunteered to keep the Committee up to date on the plans for the Hopkins 350th Anniversary Celebration.

HOPKINS DEAN OF STUDENTS POSITION

A school committee member requested that we discuss the position of a Dean of Students at Hopkins Academy. Tom Waskiewicz and Jim Michalak stated that local citizens have been asking approached them about reinstating the role of a Dean of Students. The person that talked to Tom said it would be another pair of eyes on the situation from another perspective and it was as much pro-active as it was disciplinarian. Dr. Young described the Dean of Students position as essentially a vice-principal by different terminology, doesn't require certification and is a lower compensated position. It does not include supervision of teachers so it is strictly focused on students. We have had this position before. Dr. Young said that it could be a stipend position or some fraction of a full-time position. Certainly there are capable staff that could rise to do this kind of work within the ranks. Linda Dunlavy asked if the School Committee could get some written job description and a stipend amount so we can have that information for contract negotiations. Dr. Young and Ms. Bonneville will discuss this and bring back info to the April meeting.

SOLAR POWER LETTER

Dr. Young explained that there is an organization that would like to enter a power selling agreement with the district focused on the Elementary School and set up Solar Cells and sell power back. There would have to be a reason why they would be a definitive savings. There would have to be a bidding process to give everyone equal opportunity. They keep sending us literature and I wanted to bring it to the

Committee's attention. Linda Dunlavy said that the Hampshire Council of Governments just did a competitive bid for this kind of thing. If we are interested, Linda would suggest we first look at what they have already bid. She will give an update at the next meeting.

SUPERINTENDENT TRANSITION PLANNING

Dr. Young has submitted his resignation and his last day of work will be June 30, 2012. I have spoken to our attorney, the executive director of MASS and they have advised us to hire an interim superintendent, form a search committee and conduct a search. We have missed the best season for hiring a superintendent. The best time is to start looking in the fall. If we form a search committee, that gives us time to communicate with the community and let them come in and talk about what qualities and what qualifications they want to see in the next superintendent. I think it is a great way to bring our community together and assess where we are and where we want to go forward. Fred Dupere, our attorney, suggested that for hiring an interim superintendent that we get a list from MASC, which I did. There are a number of folks that live in western MA and if you would like, we can begin to contact them and ask them if they would have any interest. The attorney said that what would be acceptable is for us to pick 3 or 4 names and have them come in to interview and then hire an interim. Tom's concern is that we should have a current employee take on the position as interim superintendent. Molly said that we should consider all options before we proceed. Jim asked if anyone had contacted anyone to be the interim superintendent. No one has been contacted. Dr. Young said that we have received calls for the position of interim superintendent.

Tracy Kelley asked if the hiring process for an interim is the same as when we looked for a new principal. We are not required to advertise.

OTHER

NEXT MEETING

April 23, 2012 @ 6:30PM

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Tom Waskiewicz made a motion to move to enter Executive Session for the purpose of strategy planning with respect to collective bargaining with Unit A and Unit C; and further state, that conducting the aforementioned business in an open session will have a detrimental effect on the public body's negotiating position.

The Committee will not reconvene in regular session at the conclusion of the Executive Session.

MOTION: Dunlavy SECOND: Michalak

ROLL CALL VOTE: In Favor: Waskiewicz, Michalak, Dunlavy, Keegan and Grant.

ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION: (Waskiewicz/Keegan) move to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 PM. VOTE: Unanimous.