

DANVERS SCHOOL COMMITTEE

REGULAR MEETING

February 12, 2024

School Committee Members Present:

Alice Campbell, Secretary

Eric Crane

Joshua Kepnes

Gabe Lopes

VOTED: Adjournment – Mr. Kepnes moved to adjourn the regular meeting at 7:35 p.m. Mr. Lopes seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Regular Meeting Call to Order

Mrs. Campbell called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance and the Danvers Public Schools Mission statement were recited. Mrs. Campbell inquired whether the meeting was being recorded by audience members and announced that the meeting was being broadcast on DCAT.

II. NEW BUSINESS

A. DPS Budget Workshop:

Superintendent Bauer thanked the Committee for allowing the budget workshop to be presented in this new manner. He explained to the Committee that the ESSER funding will no longer be in existence as of September 30th. Many of the positions that were afforded through this funding now need to be put into the budget. Most of the challenges when developing the budget were the transportation and out of district placement costs. Mr. Crane asked if the amount budgeted contained the figures for the EA program. Mrs. Wermers stated that the EA program is being funded separately from the Department of Ed. We are waiting for next year's figures from the state. Mr. Bauer had each department present their portion of the budget.

Technology: Mr. Sullivan, Technology Director, addressed the Committee on the needs of the technology department. Non-salaried requests include increased funding for licenses, funding for new Chromebooks for the high school and staff laptops (they have reached the end of their useful life). The department is also working in collaboration with the Town's IT department for capital requests - grade 1 classroom updates, middle school first floor updates and High School updates. Mr. Lopes suggested to Mr. Sullivan that he include in his presentation the cost savings for automating some of the services (registration, update student information) into his presentation.

Elementary: The elementary principals were present to provide an overview of the needs at the elementary school level. The asks of the schools are to keep in line with the support of students both academically and social emotionally. Julie Posternack, Elementary Curriculum Director, explained the need to increase the supply budget which has not been increased in over 10 years. There has been a significant increase in the per pupil expenses. In addition, in order to support the increase in students they are requesting 5 additional staff which are currently being funded by the ESSER grant to be moved into the budget. Mrs. Campbell asked if there were any other positions being funded by the grant that also need to be moved into the budget. Julie explained that these are the critical positions that need to be moved to the budget. Mrs. Campbell asked about the population increase at the elementary level. Mr. Kepnes asked if this was due to the EA program. Mr. Bauer explained there are many factors leading to the increase

in students.

HRMS: Principal Colantuoni and Ellyn Feerick, Curriculum Director, explained that their focus for next year is to strengthen the foundational routines, systems, and structures they have established this year. As with other departments the middle school is looking to move ESSER positions into the budget along with a new ELA curriculum program, i-Ready assessments, a new science curriculum pilot and an increase in digital subscriptions. Mr. Crane asked what criteria dictates higher quality materials as opposed to what we have in place now. Ellyn explained that the curriculum guidelines are set by DESE. Mr. Crane asked what the Hall Monitor and Opportunity Room Coordinator do. Mr. Colantuoni explained that the hall monitor was present to make sure things run smoothly during transitions and during the lunches. The opportunity room is a room where students can go when they need a break from traditional learning or are being disruptive in a class and they receive instructional support. It is also an alternative to in-home suspension. Students are in the room and are engaged in learning. Prior to the opportunity room, students were sent to the office where there was often no administrator to keep an eye on them and there was a loss of instructional learning.

DHS: Principal Federico presented his overview of the budget to the Committee. There are no non-salaried increase requests. He explained his salary increases are due to positions moving from ESSER to the budget. Adam is looking to keep the TLC Instruction Tech and Behavior Tech positions. Mr. Kepnes asked if keeping these positions is geared towards behavior? Mr. Federico explained that specialized positions like these help to stabilize the environment.

Special Education: Superintendent Bauer presented the overview for this department. Dan presented the proposed plan to move forward Student Services vision of specialized programs into four of the elementary schools. In doing this, this will help to decrease the number of students being outplaced. If the funding is approved, it may also help to bring some students back into the community from out of district placements. Mr. Lopes expressed the benefit of bringing students back to their home schools and in creating a sense of community. Mr. Crane expressed his gratitude for trying to keep a handle on the out of district expenses. It is detrimental to the budget.

The Committee commended Mr. Bauer with the presentation of the proposed budget. Mrs. Campbell stated it is helpful to hear from the individuals as to what their wants and needs are. Mr. Kepnes agreed it was a great process this year. Mr. Crane thanked everyone for their collaborative effort.

The next meeting will be held on March 4, 2024 at 6:30 p.m

Respectfully submitted,
Mrs. Alice Campbell, Secretary
Danvers School Committee