

# East PTO Meeting

19 January 2023 / 6:00 PM / East School Multipurpose Room

## Attendees

Kelly Newton, Jenn Columbus, Gia Morris, Margaret Adams, Jonathan Hawes, Amanda Donovan, Barbara Clear, Heather Geary, Nicole Dunn, Brooke Stulz, Lindsay Newell, Leah Lawrence, Maria Zade, Reena Patel, Lisa Carter, Darcy Molitor, Cristina Barletto, Skye Wiseman, Dawn Murray, Colleen Towle

## Notes

### Superintendent – HPS Budget Update (Please see attachment titled “HPS Budget 2 pager”)

- 3 budgets:
  - Level Services Budget – maintains most investments that have been made over the past two years; requires an operational override
  - Balanced Budget – Town is required to have a balanced budget that complies with current funding levels; this will require significant reductions
  - Unmet Needs – These are additional requests not reflected in either of the two above budgets
- School was prepared for \$2.5 million budget deficit scenario – school planned for those cuts in December. They learned last week that the town is at a \$7.5m deficit. HPS is approx. 65% of the town budget so that means a \$4.8 million reduction in costs for HPS.
- 85% of school budget is personnel – there is no way to cut \$4.8 million without cutting staff. Will likely fall on newer teachers and staff. Significant reductions across all the schools
- First question – how did this happen?
  - Municipal budget vs school budget, 9% increase in school budget (see attachment for breakout). Town is only allowed to raise revenue 2.5% plus tax new growth. Hingham has had a slowdown in new growth and therefore have to live within our means at 2.5%.
  - 2022 used 1x funds. Federal money, ESSER, unassigned fund balance to level off increase. They did it because everyone needed it during covid – the right decision at that time.

- 2023 budget doesn't increase much, but is carrying over the budget increases from past year. ESSER is pretty much dried up – trying to reserve remaining ESSER funds for the new reading program in elementary – extreme/important need right away.
- In order to level off and maintain, we need an Operational Override. Increased costs – fuel, heating, increased personnel, increased special education costs, in addition to amount being carried over.
- Second question she receives from parents: What can we do?
  - We need to share information on the budget and override now. Tell 5 friends about what we learned tonight
  - Important Dates:
    - Next Thursday (1/26) at 6pm– presenting to school committee what personnel cuts will be with the additional \$3.7 million
    - Feb 1<sup>st</sup> – principals at SC sharing the impact of the cuts to the schools
    - Feb 6<sup>th</sup>- Select Board meeting
    - Feb 13<sup>th</sup> **\*\*Important\*\*** – Budget Hearing – process runs its course through the town. Getting people to meetings and ballot vote needs to be 50% - same process at Foster.

#### Parent Q & A:

- Who has the final say on what amount of an operational override ultimately goes on the ballot? Select Board has final say of what goes on the ballot, \$7.5 million vs. more money to meet unmet needs, etc. Every \$1 million increase in the overall budget is approximately a \$100 increase in property taxes for the average property owner
- Other sources of funding?
  - On a State level, we don't yet know Maura Healy's view / how state funds will be used
  - On a Federal level, the next 2 years will likely not have increase in funds for education.
  - On a Town level, we don't have a culture of overrides in the community.
- Why was only \$1.1 million dollar in HPS cuts presented in the original reduced budget? Correct – that was the number previously and now next Thursday they will need to present \$3.7 million additional dollars to be cut.
- How transparent will HPS be about specific cuts? Completely transparent.
- Note from Dr. Adams: As you see things especially in social media – during the pandemic there was some hurt and harm in the community – if there are questions, PLEASE reach out the the administrators to get the correct information

- How will you derive the additional \$3.7m in cuts? There have been many discussions over the past few days to figure out what might have the lesser impact. No good choices – what you will see is the HPS team’s best thinking around this.
- Why did HPS get \$4.8m of the budget deficit? The original number for HPS was higher. HPS owns 65% of the municipal budget and therefore is getting 65% of deficit
- A note: Municipal employees cannot advocate – they can give information but cannot advocate. There is a group called “Invest in Hingham” that parents can follow
- Other ideas brought up for the discussion: Across the State, there has been a 14% increase on special education cost – parents can email our Local and State representatives to see if that 14% can be covered with funding.

**Principal Hawes – East Budget Presentation (Please see pages 72-76 of attachment titled “FY24-Budget-Presentation-1-12-2023)**

- “Level Services” budget means we aren’t adding anything. At East we need to add a Special Educator position, and therefore even with the potential for this higher budget, we will need to have reductions to fund that position.
- No pending retirements at East
- We will need to condense another grade down to 3 sections rather than 4 sections, like 5<sup>th</sup> grade is currently. The sections will adhere to the rules around class size – there is no worry there.
- Site specific reductions: First Level of Reductions
  - Coordinator of MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Support) / works across the elementary schools.
    - Who is going to do that? Principal Hawes, Dr. Donovan, Reading and Math specialists at each elementary school. No synergy across schools with this change.
  - Kindergarten Para – 3 people will work across the 4 sections
  - Writing specialist – big part of mcas is writing – constructed responses. Important across the district. There will be NO writing specialist across the district if this position is cut.
- Site specific reductions: Second Level of Reductions
  - Reading/Math Interventionist
  - K-5 Science Specialist (this person is spread across all 4 elementary schools)
  - Special education administrative assistant
- Team members have been informed in the reduction. The position is the wording used, not the specific person.

- 6 reductions impacting East already – full time educators (some are spread across all of the elementary schools). Next week with the additional budget cuts required there will be 5 more, upwards of 15 staff members impacted.
- Discussion on what the PTO can do to help with morale and show support

## **TREASURER UPDATE - EAST PTO BUDGET**

- APPEAL – If you participated in appeal and have a company that will match, they can do so after the fact.
  - Make tax ID more readily available? Its on the corporate match sheet. Can we promote this more? Highlight in next newsletter? Team to discuss.
  - Participation is not at 100% (Last year participation ended up around 80%, we are currently at 74%). An idea of second round appeal, but will first reach out to families that have not donated. Grade-level enrichment emails went out in December and January.
  - We haven't hit participation goal in the last few years – why we work on a deficit. Bring back the thermometer. Grade level parties. East Coast printing for a sign – checking on budget for this.
  - We have exceeded the dollar amount budgeted for so that is a win!
  - Other Ideas:
    - Advertise appeal with QR code at Sweetheart Dance
    - HaRbor Media – PTO appeal impact at East and send video around to the school. Public service to so no cost to do this

## **UPCOMING ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS**

- BOKS starting on 1/30 – sign up sheet went around
- Community service – Valentine's cards for seniors party 2/7 3-4pm (call harbor house to request residence names)
- Sweetheart dance – 2/9
- 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Social – 2/9

Respectfully Submitted,

Jenn Columbus

East School PTO Vice President