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Scott D. Houseman-Chair
Julie R. Flowers
Matthew J. St. Hilaire

FINANCE AND PROPERTY / CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES

Monday, June 12, 2023, 6:30PM

City Council Chambers, 3rd Floor, Beverly City Hall, 191 Cabot St.

Houseman called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

Committee Members present: Julie Flowers, Matthew St. Hilaire

Committee Members absent: Scott Houseman

Councilors present: Hannah Bowen, Steven Crowley, Kathleen Feldman, Estelle Rand, Todd Rotondo, Brendan Sweeney

Councilors absent: None

Order #144-Mayor's FY2024 Budget - Department Budget Sessions

Health – Laura DelleChiaie

DelleChiaie gave an overview of the department. DelleChiaie stated the department focuses on regulations, but she would also like to see it offer more services to the community that would directly make an impact on the individual. DelleChiaie stated she would like residents to see the department as a resource and establish that community relationship. DelleChiaie said she hopes the move back to a redesigned city hall would allow for their department to have a customer-facing counter and she would also like to see a social worker in the health department. It would be great to bridge those gaps.

Flowers asked where staffing stands for the positions in the department.

DelleChiaie stated a second sanitarian was hired. It had been over a year of Joe doing most of those inspections on his own. We want to make sure residents are getting complaints resolved in a timely manner, which was a challenge with the lack of staffing. The mayor approved a third sanitarian with ARPA funds, so we have three full-time sanitarians. Now we can have some concerns or complaints resolved within 24 hours.

Flowers asked if the ARPA-funded position will be a long-term position.

Mayor Michael Cahill stated over the next year we will look at that third position. It may be that we see the need proven. A strong case could be made that three full-time sanitarians is right sized for the community. Mr. Burke tried to hire. He went through that process during a difficult hiring time, so we had some temporary help.

Bowen asked about the rodent control line.

DelleChiaie stated the department is working on how to address concerns going forward. The smart boxes are helping, but ultimately we need education to keep food off the ground. As of February, there were 28 boxes implemented and over 140 catches. We have been updating our GIS map for activity/areas of concern. We need to deal with both the city component and resident component.

Public Schools – Dr. Sue Charochak

Charochak stated some of the goal areas are creating conditions that promote equity, rigorous and consistent curriculum, innovative practices, and operations and management practices. FY24 priorities are social emotional/mental health coming out of the pandemic still, curriculum/teaching and learning, improving operations and communication. Factors impacting the FY24 budget are contractual obligations, enrollment, resourcing high quality curriculum materials, department funding requests, special education increases (OSD

tuition rates), and health insurance increases. This is a level-service budget. Charochak reviewed some of the shifts in staffing and touched on ESSER grants for the ongoing impact of COVID-19.

City Council Budget Analyst Gerry Perry gave a few thoughts based on his FY24 budget memorandum that was sent out on May 25. This is a 4.77% increase, using about 47.6% of all FY24 revenue. This is pretty much a level budget. The addition in FTEs [full-time employees] is nothing compared to other years. Healthcare was a real challenge this year, as well as the special education costs. There is not a large expansion this year.

Flowers asked about the City Connects program and services, generally in the schools, as well as the challenges students and families are facing.

Charochak stated, in particular, we are looking in the area of mental health. We look at what school services are offered and what community services we can help families access. It's a really challenging time to access support. We have shared resources and opportunities with Salem and have built partnerships with agencies. We know what services students in our schools are receiving, and efforts aren't really being duplicated which has been helpful.

Flowers asked Charochak to elaborate on ESSER funds and the upcoming challenges when those funds close out.

Charochak stated with ESSER [Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief], the school department is working hard to make sure to not leave a cliff open in a couple of years. For example, there are eight FTEs on ESSER in FY24. After that, those eight positions are either going to need to be funded through a different grant program or they won't be funded; they won't roll into the appropriated budget. At the same time, we don't want to restrict services for students if reading services are still needed. We don't want to not use the money for the time that it's still available. It's a really tricky balance. The next couple of years will be challenging. There are a lot of unknowns there.

Flowers asked about the 14% increase in special education tuition and how that relates to the circuit breaker.

Charochak stated the school department worked really hard over the last few years to build the circuit breaker up. The OSD [Operational Services Division] increase is \$775,000 for Beverly. Charochak stated she is hopeful for there to be some reimbursement from the state, however what will happen is we will have to dip into the circuit breaker reserves. With the circuit breaker there is \$49,000 that has to be met first, and then the next year we would get reimbursed for up to 75% of anything that goes over. A single out of district placement can be anywhere from \$160,000-\$420,000. That's where that circuit breaker money comes in, and we rely on having that availability. We are trying to get that reimbursed at 90%.

Rand asked about the outlook for hiring paraprofessionals and aids. Rand asked if there are any considerations for expanding the support for that role by adding steps and lanes or more training.

Charochak stated the schools have gone in the direction of training. Paras have been one of the most challenging positions to fill. We hire paras who work for a couple years in that role and then become teachers, so there's a lot of turnover for some. There is also a subset that has been around awhile. Transportation is even more challenging to hire for right now.

Rand asked if pay has increased for those positions. Rand disclosed that she herself is a paraprofessional in another school district.

Charochak stated paras are part of the union, so that is part of negotiations and contracts. We have developed a parent to para program and a para to teach program to support those who are interested.

Rand asked when looking at the budget where people would see the reflection of how the department is supporting students that are struggling to stay in high school.

Charochak stated there are a few different programs. We are investing heavily in helping students explore pathways. One is through the Essex Tech After Dark partnership to explore career options as well as a

partnership with Salem High School. There are no vocational options per se at Beverly High School, but we are digging into that work of creating opportunities for students.

Bowen asked Charochak to speak a little about equity and inclusion principles and how that is reflected in the budget particularly around staffing and recruiting as well as on the student side.

Charochak stated as far as recruiting, we have really expanded out. We follow up with and provide mentorship with teachers who come into the district who may be the only person of color in their building. Dr. Morgan is amazing as our Director of Opportunity, Access, and Equity. He works with an affinity group of North Shore teachers. With students, we continue the work that we are doing. This year we had a superintendent's ambassador cabinet of diverse high schoolers that met about monthly, and it was really eye-opening to have firsthand discussions. We are working very proactively.

Sweeney stated in looking at the DESI website, Beverly is on the low end for per student spending but towards the top for MCAS scores. MCAS scores did drop notably from 2019, which has happened in many communities due to the pandemic. Sweeney asked if there was anything else Charochak would like to add about what the district is doing to make sure students are gaining as much as possible.

Charochak stated it does seem that scores have rebounded at least in district data. It's really hard to imagine missing two and a half years of school. This has been a good year for kids to be back and learning. We are feeling confident that we have done great work to catch up. We have to watch our third and fourth graders and see how they are doing. We are going to have to look at our budgets in the next couple years, since we are on the lower end of per pupil spending. Our enrollments are steady and not dropping.

Perry stated he had talked to Paul Manzo, an Essex Tech district school committee member, relating to vocational education. Beverly is seeing a 25.4% increase in vocational education costs. The school is going from 140 students to 170 total in September. Approximately 30 Beverly students are graduating this year, and approximately 60 students will be entering for the freshman class. There will be a similar scenario next year. The next year, Manzo is anticipating an additional 30 students from Beverly. We have to prepare for that next year. In FY25, they are planning on 200 students enrolled.

Charochak stated Beverly had 59 students accepted at Essex Tech this year. We are beginning in 6th grade with a field trip for career explorations. Beverly does not have a vocational option for students other than Essex Tech. Beverly school elementary enrollments are up. Essex Tech is very aggressively expanding their offerings. Some communities are trying to cap it. We are fourth of the sending communities; there are three communities that are sending more students than Beverly sends. That seems to be where Beverly falls with the Northshore Consortium as well. Fortunately, we are a very desirable choice community, so that brings in students. We are prohibited from expanding in areas that would be in competition with the tech school unless there is a seat problem or high workforce demand. Things may change depending on if state legislation goes through to switch to a lottery system.

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded. A vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 7:41pm.