

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING January 16, 2024**  
**Joint Meeting with the Select Board and Finance Committee**

**6:00 PM 26 Court Street, Town Hall In person and Zoom**

Members present: Michelle Badger (Chairperson), Luis Pizano (Vice Chairperson), Dr Katherine Jackson (Secretary), Dr. James Sorensen, Kim Savery, Robert Morgan, Vedna Lacombe-Heywood

School Administrators Present: Dr. Christopher S. Campbell (Superintendent), Dr. Adam C. Blaisdell (Assistant Superintendent-Business Administrator), Erik W. Cioffi (Assistant Superintendent—Human Resources Director), Dr. Stacey A. Rogers (Assistant Superintendent Administration & Instruction).

Dr. Christopher S. Campbell, Superintendent of Plymouth Public Schools

BUDGET PRESENTATION Dr. Campbell's PowerPoint presentation included many details. Some are included in this report. See the minutes of this meeting for a full report.

Budget Approach for Prior 3 Years

Prior to the pandemic, at a Joint Board Meeting with the Select Board, a commitment was made by School Committee to reduce budgets by approximately 1% for 2-3 years after assuming all contractual obligations, to avoid an override for operational budgets. Very modest contracts were settled with bargaining units as well as all unaffiliated staff.

There have been Four Consecutive Years of Reductions

- FY21** Reduced original proposed budget by 1.9M\*
- FY22** Reduced original proposed budget by \$1,049,393
- FY23** Reduced original proposed budget by \$770,000
- FY24 'Fiscal Cliff Year'** Reduced original proposed budget by \$2,217,755 and reduced again by additional \$800,000

\*TM appropriated \$1.9M for school COVID expenses that was never used due to available CARES funding.

Budget Development Process

New Revenue Resources for Fiscal 2025: Property Taxes, New Growth, and Health Insurance Savings.

Town Guideline: Build FY25 Budget that would assume all funding needs without exceeding \$6,444,000 increase. Utilize remaining funds for potential contract settlements

Building Curriculum Lines Reflecting All Expenses

During the last 3 years, \$149,450 was saved among the various grades and disciplines. Also during this time Plymouth Public Schools were the beneficiary of state and federal grants that offset curriculum budget restrictions.

Proposed FY25 Budget \$119,934,770

The two main categories reflected Campbell's presentation: Salary \$91,409,096 (76%); Non-Salary \$28,525,6745 (24%). Total: \$119,934,770

Chapter 70 State Aid: FY19 to FY23 (Total and per% Increase):

- FY19 \$26,128,197 (0.94%)
- FY20 \$26,369,547 (0.92%)
- FY21 \$26,369,547 (0.0%)
- FY22 \$26,600,787 (0.88%)

- FY23 \$27,066,867 (1.75%)

State & Federal Grants FY20-FY24: Examples are Title I, Title II, Title III, Title IV, and Perkins; amount varies from year to year.

Significant Budget Drivers

- Existing Teacher Contract Advancements: \$1,300,000
- Loss of Reserve Account to Avoid Additional Reduction in Force \$800,000
- Staffing Previously Accounted for Through ESSER (Elem & Secondary School Funding Relief) \$780,146
- Supplies and Materials Previously Accounted for through ESSER \$417,600
- Agricultural School Tuitions \$322,236
- Special Education Services, Transportation, and Tuitions \$701,408
- Transportation / Crossing Guards \$496,520

Per Pupil Comparisons (FY22 Spending)

Transportation costs, per students, were compared based on comparable student population. The lowest cost, per student, \$397.07 (Chelsea); the middle cost per student is \$769.23 (Haverhill), and Plymouth is the highest @ \$1,227.97 per student. It was pointed out that the territory that had to be covered was higher than other schools, excluding regional schools. Overall, Plymouth is 38-309% higher per-pupil than comparably populated school districts.

Facility Challenges-years schools were built: Cold Spring (1951), Federal Furnace (1977), Hedge (1910), Indian Brook (1977), Manomet (1952), Nathaniel Morton (1913), PCIS (1972), North High School (2012), South High School (2017), South Elementary (1975), South Middle School (1999), West Elementary (1975), and Lincoln Street (administration building) (1892).

District Comparisons: Teacher Salary & Benefits: Local towns' salary average showing comparison to Plymouth:

- ◇ Bachelors 1 Avg. 55,393 (Plymouth -\$5,166)
- ◇ Bachelors Top Avg. \$94,828 (Plymouth -\$13,046)
- ◇ Masters 1 Avg. \$60,449 (Plymouth -\$6194)
- ◇ Masters Top Avg. \$101,416 (Plymouth -\$13,762)
- ◇ M+60 Top Avg. \$108,381 (Plymouth -\$7,500)

History of Contract COLAs (Cost-of-Living Adjustments): FY10 (0%), FY11(\*0%), FY12(2%), FY13(1%), FY14(1.5%), FY15(1.5%), FY16(2%), FY17(2.5%). FY18(3%), FY19(2%), FY20(2%), FY21(2%), FY22(2%), FY23(2%), (FY24(2%).

\*In addition to the 0% COLA, step advancements (based on year of service) were not advanced until the 91st day of the school year.

English Language Learners (ELL) Over Time: FY19 (120) to FY24 (412). This translates to a 343% increase since FY19.

Future Concerns & Priorities

- Reducing our need to contract transportation (Not eligible for reimbursement smaller regional school districts receive)
  - Increased needs to support English Language Learners (Instructional support, translation and interpretive services)
  - Facility improvements / capital needs (aging facilities)
  - Contract negotiations
  - Hiring and retaining staff

Questions: Following Campbell's presentation, there were questions and comments from members of the Finance Committee and Select Board. At times, the discussion became contentious regarding dollar amounts the School Department needed over the presented budget. When the budget was brought to the School Committee at a previous meeting, it was set aside for further discussion. Campbell answered questions, and then indicated that he and the School Committee would meet again to review the comments and suggestions made by the two boards.

Meeting Adjourned

Respectfully submitted,  
Donna Eddy, LWV Observer

*For your information: When the minutes of this meeting have been approved, they will be available at [Plymouth\\_ma.gov](http://Plymouth_ma.gov) website. Go to Agenda and Minutes, scroll down to and click School Committee. Look right and click the minutes icon. Readers may also click the agenda icon to find more attached file information about the agenda items.*