

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE AGAWAM CITY COUNCIL

Minutes dated June 8, 2020

Meeting was called to order by Council President Johnson at 7:00pm.via remote telephone conference and for the first time since COVID-19 quarantine, several councilors in person sitting 6-10 feet apart as required by Governor Baker. Per Governor Baker's order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 20, the public is not allowed to physically access this meeting. Members of the public can access the meeting on Cable Access Channel 15 and on the town website as soon as practicable.

Item A. Roll Call

ROLL CALL – 11 PRESENT, 0 ABSENT

Roll Call was taken with the following councilors both physically and remotely present: George Bitzas, Cecilia Calabrese, Paul Cavallo, Christopher Johnson, Gina Letellier, Dino Mercadante, Robert Rossi, Rosemary Sandlin, Gerald Smith, Anthony Suffriti and Mario Tedeschi. With eleven present, there was a quorum. Council President Johnson explained details of how he will proceed with the remote meeting. He will alphabetically call upon each councilor for comment during the discussion portions of each item. He reminded everyone to please use the mute button when not speaking as it would help improve the quality of the audio recording.

Item B. Moment of Silence and the Pledge of Allegiance.

There was a moment of silence and the Pledge of Allegiance led by Councilor Rossi.

Item C. Workshop Review of the FY21 School Budget

Council President Johnson introduced Mr. Steven Lemanski, Superintendent of Schools who gave the following introduction speech:

Good Evening Councilors. Developing the FY21 School Budget has presented several additional challenges which were not factors in previous years. These challenges include redistricting the four elementary schools to ensure enrollment equity; incorporating preschool students into the newly aligned neighborhood schools; and providing uniform services at all four elementary schools in order to be ready for the proposed September 2021 transition date. In preparation for this proposed redistricting and preschool initiative, the voices of the community and those of our elected officials were major contributors in our thought process. Typically, the school budget process begins in December. However, once a vote to adopt the neighborhood school model was taken, we began meeting in October to plan for the proposed 2021 changes. The coronavirus presented additional difficulty when planning the FY21 Budget. Consequently, adjustments had to be made from the previous budget workshop that took place in March. We also anticipate additional adjustments due to a possible decrease in revenues, which will affect school budgets statewide. Any additional budget decrease may require cuts, which will impact delivery of instruction to Agawam's students. Although the future is unknown, we are moving forward by utilizing information provided to us by the state. As you know, resolving the over 20-year problem of finding adequate housing for our preschool students has been an on-going task for our district. When it became apparent that building costs for a new preschool were not financially feasible for the town, our administrative team offered several options to residents and the School Committee. The overwhelming response was to incorporate preschool students into our existing four elementary schools. This option not only would provide a solution for the present overcrowded conditions at our preschool facility, but also would allow the town's youngest learners to receive needed instruction in an environment conducive to learning. Moreover, these neighborhood schools will provide families with the opportunity to have their children educated from preschool to grade four in the same building. As with all major undertakings, this option does not come without cost. Some of the physical barriers we must address in the next 2 years include building preparation, additional classroom materials and furniture, and age appropriate playground structures. In addition, proper staffing will be necessary at each elementary school. If we are truly to become a district that offers neighborhood elementary schools, these schools must be

equitable in all ways such as providing the same special education services to students at each building. Consequently, the FY21 School Budget has been prepared with looking to reallocate positions through retirements and to restructure some positions. Due to the coronavirus' impact on the overall economy, the FY21 School Budget is slightly lower than the 2.25% that was introduced at our first budget meeting in March. However, we believe that this requested budget will allow the district to go forward with redistricting and restructuring its schools and, more importantly, will provide the community with true neighborhood schools. The proposed FY21 School Budget has no elimination of programs, no increase in existing fees, and no new additional fees. In addition, this budget includes additional "fixed costs," such as contractual salary increases; degree changes, stipends, an increase in special education tuitions; an increase in athletics, and an increase in building-based budgets. In order to be fiscally responsible, areas of the budget were reviewed for possible reductions. These identified areas for reductions included a decrease in the district-wide budget, a decrease in Special Education transportation, a decrease in the information technology budget, and a decrease in out-of-district tuitions. I would like to extend a special thank you to all the building principals, directors, central office staff, Mayor Sapelli, City Treasurer Laurel Placzek, and the School Committee's Budget/Finance Subcommittee chaired by Anthony Bonavita and members Carmino Mineo and Shelley Reed for their assistance, time, and thoughtful input into the development of this proposed FY21 School Budget. I would also like to thank the City Council's School Budget Subcommittee, chaired by Paul Cavallo, for their interest and thoughtful input in the review of the FY21 School Budget.

Budget Highlights:

Significant and continued educational progress has taken place in the Agawam Public Schools. The following budget highlights support the goals that have been established in our district's *Strategic Plan*:

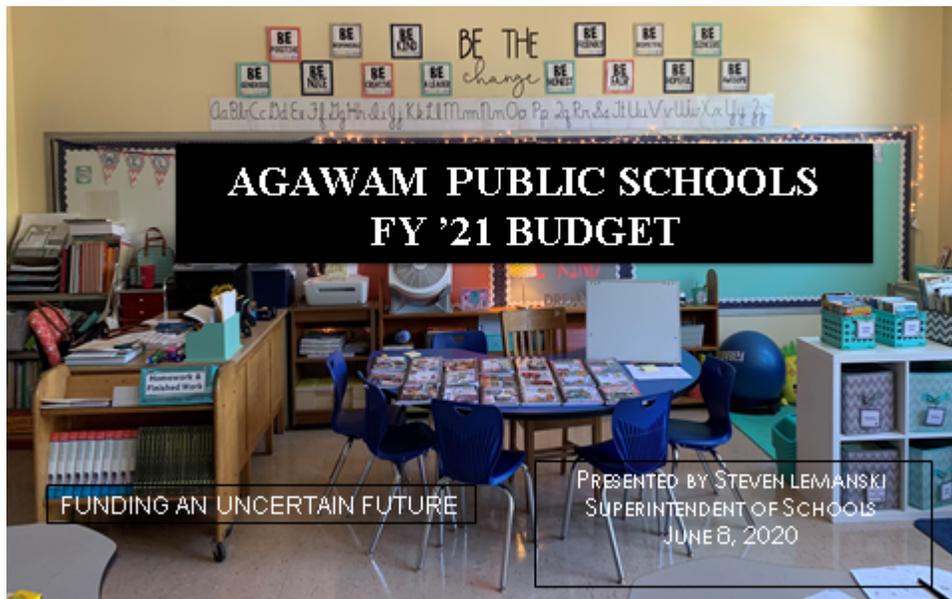
- Due to retirements, two full-time teaching positions were eliminated
- Maintain all existing programs and services
- Continue to explore alternate funding sources to reduce district-wide expenses
- Enhance existing School & Safety Security by developing a Reunification Plan, and continuation of ALICE Training
- To provide for and use appropriate technologies to maximize the efficiency of teaching and learning
- Maintain appropriate student/teacher ratio
- To recognize and support varied learning styles and differences to maximize individual potential
- Provide quality & affordable in-house professional development for staff

Summary:

In conclusion, Agawam Public Schools continues to respond to the challenges of educating our children. These challenges include meeting unfunded state and federal mandates, yet remaining fiscally responsible. I'm pleased to report that we have confronted these challenges and have developed creative, innovative solutions, which we believe will sustain our efforts to provide the children of this district with a quality education. We are proud of the significant educational progress that our district has achieved and are looking forward to bringing new and exciting programs to the classroom. In addition to having a talented, professional staff that is dedicated to increasing student achievement, we have a Mayor, School Committee, and City Council who fully support the town's schools by providing the necessary funds to improve student learning and achievement. As a result, Agawam Public Schools continues to be recognized as one of the premier school districts in the Commonwealth. Please be advised that, once approved and the coronavirus health guidelines have been relaxed, the FY21 School Budget will be available for public viewing at the Agawam Public Library, in the City Clerk's Office at Town Hall, in Central Office, and on our website at www.agawamed.org. In the meantime it can be viewed on Cable Channels 12 and 15, as well as on the district website. Superintendent Lemanski then provided a summary of the proposed FY21 School Budget noting that the FY21 Budget increase of 1.93%

FY'20 Total Approved Budget	\$46,153,111
CBA increase of 2% in salaries include: longevity, steps, degree changes, stipends. Overall reduction of 4.6 FTEs (EL Paraprofessionals, 1 Elementary Librarian, & 2 Teachers)	\$732,969
TOTAL SALARY INCREASE	\$732,969
Increase in Special Services Tuitions	\$402,208
Increase in Building-Based Budgets	\$15,750
Increase in Athletics	\$13,500
TOTAL INCREASE TO BUDGET	\$1,164,427
Decrease to Special Services Transportation	(\$74,085)
Decrease to Information Technology Budget	(\$40,000)
Decrease to District-Wide Budget	(\$3,000)
Decrease in Out-of-District Tuitions (Non Special Services)	(\$149,612)
TOTAL DECREASE TO BUDGET	(\$266,697)
Actual Requested Budget Increase	\$897,730
FY21 Requested Budget	\$47,050,841
FY'20 Approved Budget	\$46,153,111
FY21 Budget Variance	\$897,730

Superintendent Lemanski then went through each of the slides in the presentation as follows:



Superintendent Budget Message

FY'20 Total Approved Budget	\$46,153,111
CBA increase of 2% in salaries include: longevity, steps, degree changes, stipends. Overall reduction of 4.6 FTEs (EL Paraprofessionals, 1 Elementary Librarian, & 2 Teachers)	\$732,969
TOTAL SALARY INCREASE	\$732,969
Increase in Special Services Tuitions	\$402,208
Increase in Building-Based Budgets	\$15,750
Increase in Athletics	\$4,739
TOTAL INCREASE TO BUDGET	\$1,155,666
Decrease to Special Services Transportation	(\$74,085)
Decrease to Information Technology Budget	(\$40,000)
Decrease to District-Wide Budget	(\$3,000)
Decrease in Out-of-District Tuitions (Non Special Services)	(\$149,612)
TOTAL DECREASE TO BUDGET	(\$268,697)
Actual Requested Budget Increase	\$888,969
FY'21 Requested Budget	\$47,042,080
FY'20 Approved Budget	\$46,153,111
FY'21 Budget Variance	\$888,969



FY' 21 Funding offsets to the budget

- Before and After School-Total \$233,000
 - Playscapes \$175,000
 - Insurance \$58,000
- School Choice-Total \$335,000
 - Professional Development \$80,000
 - Textbooks \$25,000
 - Retirements \$250,000
- Title II- Total \$9,447
 - Lead Teacher \$9,447
- Title IV -Total \$24,715
 - Lead Teacher \$24,715

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FY' 21 Unknown expenses due to crisis

- Transportation- only 12 students per bus
- Additional devices and hot spots
- Redesigning classrooms
- Sanitizing stations
- Plexi glass for offices
- PPE and signage
- SPED compensatory services
- Social Emotional



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WHAT WILL IT COST TO REOPEN SCHOOLS?

This document estimates some of the expenses school districts may incur in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and as they plan to reopen for the 2020-2021 school year. These calculations assume the statistics of an average* school district with 3,659 students, 8 school buildings, 183 classrooms, 329 staff members, and 40 school buses (transporting at 25% capacity, or 915 students, to comply with recommended social distancing guidelines).



ADHERING TO HEALTH MONITORING & CLEANING/ DISINFECTING PROTOCOLS

- Hand sanitizers for students in classrooms
\$39,517
- Disinfectant wipes for classrooms (four/day per classroom)
\$16,833
- No-touch thermometer (one per school)
\$640
- Oximeter (one per school)
\$360
- Electrostatic disinfectant sprayers
\$33,600
- Deep cleaning of school after a confirmed case
\$26,000



HIRING STAFF TO IMPLEMENT HEALTH & SAFETY PROTOCOLS

- Additional custodial staff for increased cleaning/disinfecting of schools and buses to prevent spread
\$448,000
- Ensuring at least one FT/PT nurse in every public school
\$400,000
- Ensuring one aide per bus to screen student temperatures before boarding
\$384,000



PROVIDING PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

- Gloves for custodial staff (five pairs/day for two custodians per school)
\$1,440
- Daily disposable masks for in-school staff.
\$44,415
- Disposable masks for students who do not bring masks from home (est. 30% of students)
\$148,190



PROVIDING TRANSPORTATION & CHILD CARE

- Resume before/after school childcare programs (with social distancing and cleaning protocols)
\$168,750
- Fog machines and cleaner for buses (7 machines)
\$55,860
- Hand sanitizer for buses
\$10,534

TOTAL ADDITIONAL EXPENSES AN AVERAGE* DISTRICT MAY INCUR TO REOPEN: \$1,778,139

*Costs will vary by district depending on many factors, including regional/market price as economy of scale (i.e., larger districts may have access to lower unit costs because they can buy in higher volumes), and the availability of labor and goods necessary to comply with recommended social distancing and cleaning protocols. Model assumes 25% transportation capacity to adhere to social distancing guidelines. (Bus fleets would need to quadruple in size to safely transport 100% of students under COVID-19 circumstances, which is financially unfeasible for districts.)

This list of costs is not intended to be exhaustive but illustrates how the overall cost of school operations will substantially increase to safely reopen as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. For more information on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on K-12 education, please contact ASBO International & AASA.

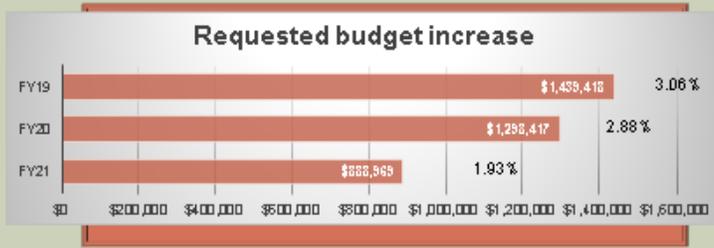


External References:
 *Now What? Navigating K-12 Reopening, A Collaborative Planning Process? National Council on School Facilities, Working Document, May 2020.
 *School Bus Driver Pay Rises as Shortage Worsens, Thomas M. Mahony, School Bus Fleet Magazine, November 2018.
 *Total School Districts, Student Enrollment by State and Metro Area, Governing The Future of States and Localities, eRepublic, Accessed June 2020.

FY' 21 Unknown losses in revenue

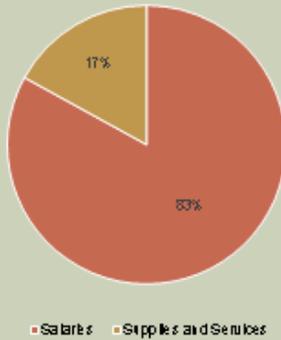
- Food Service
- Before and After school
- ECC
- Sports
- Extra curricular activities/Clubs
- Building use

School Budget Increases

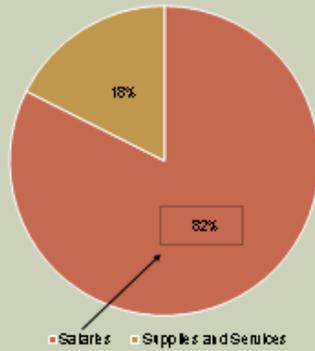


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FY' 20 Expenses



FY' 21 Expenses



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Council President Johnson then went alphabetically asking each councilor if they had any questions for Superintendent Lemanski.

Councilor Bitzas began by congratulating the School Department and administration for submitting a clear cut, great budget. He was happy to see that no teachers were being laid off. He is concerned with the handout from the state about what it may cost to reopen the schools this fall. Councilor Bitzas comes from a family of teachers including him and values the importance of education. Council Vice President Calabrese commended them on a modest increase given the current circumstances. She questioned the issue of having twelve children on a bus but noted we need to do whatever the state mandates. Councilor Cavallo commented that the figure to reopen the schools is a big figure if we have to add that and hope the state and Governor Baker provides assistance. The real challenge will be the reduction of students per classroom and asked if we would have to hire additional teachers in that case. He believed it was an excellent budget. Councilor Mercadante stated it was a well thought out budget. He also noted that the \$1.78 million potential additional cost to reopen the schools would be 22% less or reduced by at least \$400,000 as we already have nurses in each school but the number is ominous however he will support it. Councilor Rossi also said it was a well thought out and prudent budget. There most likely will be problems down the road but we need to do whatever we can as he believes we have not seen the worst of it. Councilor Letellier told Superintendent Lemanski that she can't imagine how challenging this has been for him and his administration to handle all of this. She then asked where the funds went for unused paper, electricity, supplies, transportation, athletics, etc. – and her point was hoping that these unused funds could be used to add back in the elementary librarian position that was cut. Superintendent Lemanski noted that this librarian services several schools and this position needs to move forward to a different type of position that would cover redistricting and moving of Early Childhood into the elementary schools. Superintendent Lemanski mentioned they would not need to order paper for next year. They probably saved \$10,000 on utilities and about \$17,000 on athletic transportation. He stated that they really did have their eyes on the future when planning this budget. Councilor Sandlin also thought it was a great budget considering everything we are going through and the unknown future of everything. She too was concerned with the 12 students/24 students on buses and asked if they had looked into the number of students counted as bussers but whose parents drop them off at school. Superintendent Lemanski said they have noticed a decline in the number of bussers and due to the current uncertainties they believe that number will increase. Interim Superintendent Sheila Hoffman will be sending out a survey to school parents for their plans for the fall. They are definitely having these conversations. Interim Superintendent Hoffman is also creating task force working groups this summer to review these types of changes. Councilor Sandlin asked if worst case scenario, students do not go back to school in the fall, what type of upgraded technology would be needed to control/monitor attendance of both teachers and students. Superintendent Lemanski said they have already been included in technology figures and they are looking into a lot of this. He mentioned they loaned out 500 laptops and have to be prepared for damages and unreturned devices. The teachers' computers all have to be the same. Their professional development days will be geared toward remote learning and or blended learning. There are a lot of conversations being had at the local and state level. Superintendent Lemanski also mentioned that we should hear from the State in mid to late June regarding what the fall should look like but Interim Superintendent Hoffman is already having meetings with her active working groups. Councilor Sandlin would like them to continue with PE and Arts in whatever program they come up with. She also mentioned that in the estimate handed out for potential money needed to reopen in the fall that many of those numbers looked like Boston figures so she would imagine the amount would be much less. Councilor Smith asked about the reduction in class numbers and if they anticipated students going between online and at home learning. Superintendent Lemanski said there have been conversations about a lot of 'what ifs' and yes we are factoring in those as well. Councilor Smith also asked about available federal funding to assist with the reopening of schools. Superintendent Lemanski said they are looking into any and all federal assistance that could be out there. Councilor Smith thanked him for the excellent budget. Councilor Suffriti said most of his questions were answered at the sub-committee level but noted that this budget has been stripped down to the bare minimum. He said we obviously have to anticipate the unknown throughout the year and he expects they will be coming back to the Council for adjustments. He congratulated Superintendent Lemanski on his retirement and joked he is definitely going out with a bang. Councilor Tedeschi also stated most of his questions were answered. His only concern was the cost to reopen. As a company that currently does commercial disinfecting, he thought the estimate was also quite high but he's sure they will get estimates for the most cost effective way to handle everything. Councilor Tedeschi also asked if any PPEs were purchased with this year's current budget. Superintendent Lemanski stated that in the FY20 Budget the following PPEs were purchased: 2500 masks, 2000 bottles of wipes and 3000 16 oz hand sanitizers. They were immediately concerned with outfitting the offices to keep them open. They are also

looking into shields for the offices. Council President Johnson thanked Superintendent Lemanski and wished him the best for a long and happy retirement. That concluded the presentation.

Item D. Public Hearings

1. (PH-2020-4) TR-2020-40 - A Resolution adopting the Fiscal Year 2021 Annual Operating Budget for the Town of Agawam (Mayor Sapelli)

If you wish to provide testimony during the Public Hearing on TR-2020-40, you may do so by dialing 1-978-990-5187 and using access code 8476635. Calls must be made at 7:30pm to provide testimony. This Public Hearing will be live-streamed on the Town's website at www.agawam.ma.us and also be televised on Cable Channel 15.

Council President Johnson declared the Public Hearing open at 7:44pm. William Clark of 126 High Meadow Road was on the phone to speak. He stated that the Mayor did what he needed to do and kept the tax levy within the one percent as suggested by the Governor. He said there are so many changes to come so encouraged everyone to be patient. He asked the Council to help the Mayor to connect with our state legislators to make sure Agawam gets as much money as possible. He said it was a good budget and asked the Councilors to wake up and do their jobs. Council President Johnson declared the Public Hearing closed at 7:49pm. Our next meeting on June 15th will be where we act on the budget.

Item E. New Business

1. TR-2020-47 - A Resolution authorizing the reservation and appropriation of funds from the Community Preservation Fund (CPA)

Next Agenda.

Item F. Any other matter that may legally come before the City Council

Councilor Tedeschi mentioned the parade of AHS students on Tuesday and encouraged everyone to go out and support the graduates. He was excited to attend graduation on Saturday. Councilor Suffriti congratulated the Class of 2020. Councilor Rossi also congratulated the Class of 2020. He will be out of town or he'd be there to watch them graduate. He mentioned that a child left a painted rock at him home and what a thoughtful gesture that was. Several of us mentioned we received them as well. Councilor Mercadante also congratulated the Class of 2020 and looks forward to seeing them walk across the stage in this unique graduation. Councilor Letellier was sad she has a previous engagement and cannot attend graduation. She noted she was disappointed to hear the Perry Lane Park was not opening this summer. She asked for the Parks & Receptions Director to try to come up with different ways to engage these kids who have been stuck in the house for months. She said hundreds of people depend on that camp for daycare as well. Council President Johnson said we would check with the Mayor on that. Councilor Cavallo congratulated the Class of 2020. Council Vice President Calabrese echoed all the graduation sentiments. She thanked Mr. Lemanski on a wonderful career. She agreed with Councilor Letellier on doing *something* at Perry Lane Park this summer and requests that the administration rethink this. Councilor Bitzas was happy that the town was doing the Parade of Graduates and he'll be there cheering them on. He feels so bad that these students have missed so much. Council President Johnson also congratulated the graduating class. He joked that they should look forward to their reunions as they will have a lot to talk about!

Item G. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was moved and seconded around the house. Meeting adjourned at 7:55pm.

Please note that this remote meeting will be recorded and be available on the town's website (www.agawam.ma.us) as soon as practicable