

Councilor Matt St. Hilaire led members assembled in the pledge of allegiance.

Post Pandemic - Supports and Opportunities for our School Community

Dr. Charochak greeted and thanked everyone for joining together. She prepared a small presentation to explain Chapter 70 funding with some background information. Mr. Ayles will be explaining the city finances.

Dr. Charochak gave a review of the four (4) district goal areas that have been identified for Beverly Public Schools. She also explained the factors impacting the FY23 budget.

Ms. Sherburne reminded the members gathered that FY22 was \$65,376,407. The proposed FY23 budget includes city contributions and Chapter 70. We are waiting for the Houseways (TBD April 2022), Senate Budget (TBD May 2022) and Chapter 70 (TBD June 2022).

Dr. Charochak noted the increase of Chapter 70 funding and Governor's budget. She explained that this is a nice increase for Beverly. Dr. Charochak reviewed Chapter 70 funding to further explain why the increase and how the funding is quantified.

The Student Opportunity Act (SOA) is the legislation that shifts the formula for Chapter 70 funding. Some of the elements that cause the shift include: low income, English learners, and special education. The costs are distributed based on enrollment, inflation, wage adjustment factor, property value, income, and municipal revenue growth factor.

Beverly's Chapter 70 funding was based on enrollments as of October 1, 2021. The number of enrollments didn't shift; however, there was a shift in low income enrollment. The major increase of Chapter 70 funding was from the increase of low-income enrollments identified through direct certification. The percent of increase changed from 30.2% to 36.5%, low income students.

Mr. Bryant Ayles, Finance Director/ Treasurer, gave a quick recap of the impact of the pandemic on the city's finances. Mr. Ayles shared graphs displaying the building permits and food excise impacts. For FY23 budget revenues, they can be captured from new growth, motor vehicle excise taxes, meal and room taxes, state aid, building permits and smaller revenue sources. The \$6.28 million collected are to go to the proposed FY23 budget.

Mr. Ayles explained the known expenditure increases. These increases stemmed from city salaries, school salaries for existing employees, pension increases for city and school employees, health insurance for city and school employees, sanitation, Essex

North Shore assessment, and debt service. The total was \$4.1 million in expenditures.

Revenues minus expenditures is roughly \$2.1 million and will address operational and supply expenses, staffing, IT investments, paving, capital equipment replacement, additional school spending and other initiatives.

Mr. Ayles explained the city's long term liabilities including the pension obligations: the funding

ratio is increasing and is just shy of 70%. There is \$72.2 million of pension liabilities. We are on target to meet the liability in 2033. The Other Employee Benefit (OPEB) liability is increasing. This number is going up due to an increase of plan members (staff members having health insurance). Reserves are generated by transferring 10% to maintain balance to stabilize.

Mr. Rotondo requested that both presentations be forwarded to both city council members and school committee members.

Dr. Silva commented on technology being used to trim costs. Mr. Ayles shared that the central square is being used to coordinate databases and interoffice mail. It was a significant cost but saves time and costs. The city is looking to update accounting software to assist in streamlining. Dr. Silva asked if after implementation of new services does that impact a staff increase. Mr. Ayles answered that it alleviates some of the pressure on city staff but it is allowing for us to just tread water.

Mr. Housemann asked about the SOA being a six (6) year program. Dr. Charochak explained that it is a legislation that takes place over six (6) years. We are currently in year two (2). The special education transportation reimbursement is an example of how it is used. The reimbursement is rolled out with increasing percent of reimbursement annually over the four years. Dr. Charochak is hopeful the incremental increase will continue. The money comes from Chapter 70. Mr. Houseman thanked her for a clarification, but asked if this creates funding that will end? Dr. Charochak explained that the funding is not expected to stop. She is hoping to see this incremental increase into FY25. We will continue to see an increase in Chapter 70 based factors determined by the SOA. Mr. Houseman stated that Chapter 70 will continue at the amount and not drop off. Dr. Charochak answered that is the hope.

Ms. Visnick asked Mr. Ayles why we get so far behind on the major liabilities or is the cause of past administration? Mr. Ayles explained it was the pension development initially, and the liability grew over time. Legislation passed for municipalities to contribute, Beverly is on a more aggressive path. There is not yet a similar legal obligation to pay down the trust.

Ms. Bowen asked how the annual budget process is going to look different because of needs and additional funding to address needs. Mr. Ayles explained that the city has received numerous sources of funding to address the pandemic. That plays separately into the budget process because the funding grants. It is different on the school side because they are reliant on grants. Dr. Charochak explained that SOA and ESSER funding will be available until FY25. She has a responsibility that the budgets don't fall off in FY25. She identifies what factors are being funded by those grants and that they are being utilized at one (1) year or two (2) year expenses to address learning loss or learning needs. A matrix is used to determine what is going to the appropriated budget vs ESSER funding. Sanitation needs or physical adaptations to the building were grant funded. She is really tracking and managing the expenses.

Ms. Robinson mentioned the increase of health care costs, and wondered if different options will be provided? Mr. Ayles explained that every year insurances are researched. We are a self-insured city. We managed the plans and health benefits to provide preventable care. We keep eyes and ears on the industry to measure ourselves to the industry to make adjustments that are financially beneficial to the city without impacting the employees.

Mr. St. Hilaire commented on \$6 million revenue and \$4 million expenditures with \$2 million leftover. He noted no reference to the taxpayers. He wanted to see more on paving and roadwork. He asked Dr. Charochak about the \$4 million increase with 6% increase. What are some of the areas that the increase will be used for. Dr. Charochak answered that a good chunk will address social emotional needs with the increase of staffing, summer enrollment driven staffing, but it is due to the increase in enrollment.

Mr. Sweeney asked if Dr. Charochak uses the ESSER funding in addition to traditional revenue streams. Is ESSER funding included in the budget? She clarified the \$69 million is the appropriated budget and the ESSER is additional funding.

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Dr. Flaherty reviewed the Endicott Retreat that was attended by school leadership. She explained the top six (6) district practices and strategies to target the belief that "all means all." Dr. Flaherty shared the schedule for curriculum review and renewal to address changes in standards. She shared curriculum, instruction and professional development initiatives which include: hiring two directors of innovative practices. Dr. Flaherty explained what student supports are available in Beverly Public Schools.

Ms. Splansky reviewed the student support team process to ensure that all students are supported. She explained the increased number of evaluations across the district. The special education department has increased the number of specialists including BCBA's, SAC, outreach counselors, and contracted providers.

Dr. Andre Morgan explained and defined cultural proficiency. He shared what the district is doing including: engaging with community members, creating structure spaces to promote dialogue, district-wide staff development, restorative circles and cultural competency in strategic planning. He explained the BHS career pathways and the addition of a new course "My future and career success."

Ms. Erin Brown explained hiring and retention practices. They reached out to universities to create more partnerships in addition to ongoing relationships with Endicott College. A team was created to meet monthly to receive training and plan how hiring will move forward.

Ms. Rand asked about the district curriculum and its plan. Dr. Flaherty explained that each district must have one and it is available on the district website. Is ALEKS an example of accelerated learning? Dr. Flaherty explained that it meets students where they are at. It will give students practice to improve. Ms. Rand commented on the pathways program and likes it. In addition to that, she asked if there is dual enrollment with local universities? Dr. Charochak explained that dual enrollment is available course by course. Counselors know what is available. There is dual enrollment course with Endicott College, After Dark program with Essex North Shore, English learners program at NSCC. She further explained the course selection has been revamped.

Mr. Rotondo asked a data question to Dr. Charochak. He asked if there have been students

identified with learning lapses, are students playing catch up? Dr. Charochak explained one benefit is the elementary students were in-person. K-6 is easier to identify the data. What we have found is there are learning gaps with students, but instruction is still on grade level, pretests and benchmarks are being used in the acceleration model. We are looking to find ways to create a data matrix for social emotional learning. She thinks it may be another year of catch up in some areas. Dr. Flaherty added that the elementary schools saw less. The area of concern are students with high absenteeism. If they are present in school we will get to them, but need to address the students who are not attending school. Dr. Charochak explained that this year is just as tumultuous. In terms of education, this year moves forward but needs to take pause to adjust to each challenge and transition. She has caution as we move forward but she explains it's a rollercoaster of groundhog days reliving the first day of school over and over. We are assessing the efficiency of each process as we move forward. Dr. Flaherty adds that the biggest gaps are in social development especially at the elementary level learning how to play together. Sophomores are still acting like middle schoolers.

Ms. Visnick comments on how we are spending money. We know that every student experienced some level of trauma. Gaps existed prior to the pandemic. There was an audit to each line and how they relate back to Dr. Charochak district goals and values.

Councilor Feldman expressed her appreciation for the budget being driven by student needs. Students aren't the only ones who have experienced trauma Teachers and staff faced trauma too. Is there professional development to address the mental health of teachers and staff? Dr. Charochak explains that the Essex County Learning Committees provide workshops to sustain your own mental health. She explains it isn't the easiest answer, but concern is there. Ideas are being shared to regionalized services to assist teachers.

Dr. Silva asked what the high school absentee percent was during the pandemic. Dr. Flaherty answered 30% of students with 18+ days of absenteeism. It is tracked district wide and reviewed each month. Dr. Charochak added that includes the hybrid model. Dr. Silva asked if the absenteeism for in-person is higher. Dr. Flaherty said it was the opposite, more students were present in-person versus virtual. Dr. Charochak explained that chronic absenteeism is still a problem they are addressing. Dr. Flaherty explained it is not a unique Beverly concern.

Mr. St. Hilaire asked how we are paying for all the additional costs from the pandemic. Dr. Charochak explained that interventionist, curriculum expenses, those are one time expenses are put on ESSER funding. Mr. St. Hilaire asked if there is a total number for addressing COVID related expenses. Dr. Charochak estimated \$6 million through ESSER and the Cares Act, that is spread over multiple fiscal years.

Ms. Bowen asked to hear what ideas or requests for city resources to support families and the school community. Dr. Charochak shared the "chaos slide." Dr. Charochak explained that they are trying to build a multi-tiered system of supports. The goal is to create an organized approach for students to find support. Academically, there isn't a chaos slide. There is organized support of tiers and matrixes to guide curriculum and instruction.

Ms. Flowers asked Dr. Charochak about the balance of masks on/off for students and staff at all levels. Dr. Charochak explained the day the masks came off, 60% of students retained their masks about 80% of staff. Now 10% of students and staff retain masks. Some students were anxious because some middle schoolers have never shown their faces to their peers. There were some emotions about taking off the masks. It was about a four week process. There are members of the community who have been concerned; students continuing to wear masks are still supported. At the preschool, Ms. Splansky reminded that at the youngest level masks were not required. Some families are wearing masks if they choose. Ms. Flowers asked about sanitation at the preschool. Ms. Splansky explained that custodians are using systems that address high touch areas and sanitizing at the preschool level. Dr. Charochak said that our HVAC systems are monitored and we have been more vigilant with deep cleaning procedures.

Ms. Flowers expressed her appreciation for the presentation of the importance of educating the whole student including Dr. Morgan's "inside out" approach. She asks how do you balance the inequities of standardized testing? Dr. Charochak starts by reminding everyone that this year has not been smooth. Project based learning is based on standards set by the state.

Ms. Visnick recalled her experience chaperoning the 5th Salem Sound field trip that met standards that are tested on the MCAS.

A motion was made by Ms. Visnick to adjourn the joint meeting of the City Council and School Committee at 10:10pm. The motion was seconded by Dr. Silva. The motion passed by a vote of 6:0.

A motion was made by Mr. Houseman to adjourn the joint meeting of the City Council and School Committee at 10:10pm. The motion was seconded by Ms. Feldman. The motion passed by a vote of 9:0.

Respectfully submitted,

Kaarin Robinson, Secretary
Beverly School Committee