

**Groton-Dunstable Regional School District
School Committee
Groton Finance Committee
Groton Select Board**

**March 22, 2023 - 7:00pm
Meeting Minutes Approved 4/29/23**

School Committee Members Present:

Rosanna Casavecchia, Yasmeen Cheema, Rafael Glod, Jeff Glod, Brian LeBlanc, Lacey McCabe, Fay Raynor

Administration Present: Dr. Laura Chesson, Superintendent; Kristin DeFranciso, Ass't. Superintendent; Sherry Kersey, Director of Finance & Operations

Finance Committee Members Present: D. Manugian, C. Doody (Vice Chair), M. Linskey, M. Sulprizio, G. Green

Others: Kristyn MacInnis, SEPAC Representative; Joseph Wang, Student Representative, Patricia Dufresne (Groton Town Accountant)

School Committee called to order: 7:00 PM

Groton Finance Committee called to order at 7:00P.M.

Groton Selectboard did not have a quorum at 7:00 PM.

Documents Available at Meeting: GDRSD Budget Update 3/22/23 (see link below)

https://core-docs.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/asset/uploaded_file/2198/GDRSD/2881678/March_budget_update.pdf

Questions/Comments

GDRHS students came to speak on behalf of A. Rosenfeld, Business Teacher/DECA Advisor and a World Language teacher who are part of some cuts being made to the FY24 budget. Mr. D. Twomey also returned to speak again on the importance of eliminating Kindergarten tuition so all students can equally attend Kindergarten full time without worrying about the cost.

In response to some of the public comments, Chair LeBlanc explained that fiscal realities create difficult decisions but the SC has worked hard to make the best decisions possible for the staff.

Student Representative - Joseph Wang

This was Joseph's first time representing GDRHS. He is the President of the Senior Class and GDRHS representative to the School Committee. Joseph gave a report on current athletic events, club activities, and fundraisers. He also reported that the DECA group returned from their state

conference competition with record qualifying numbers in GD history. Two qualifiers placed in the top 12 in their events.

Joseph asked that as the student rep, could he ask questions regarding the cuts to the budget to be better informed to answer questions students may have. He explained what the talk is at the HS amongst students. Some students have created petitions to save teachers, because these cuts are very personal to them and students would like to have some information clarified. Dr. Chesson explained certain costs as well as the process of how the budget is built. Joseph wondered about how the HS will remain competitive with some of the other top high schools. The Chair spoke about the use of data from Market Basket comparisons and the advice of Superintendent Chesson and her administration.

Vote to Approve Meeting Minutes

The Chair entertained a motion to approve the meeting minutes dated March 8, 2023 as presented in the packet.

So Moved - R. Glod

Second - L. McCabe

Discussion - J. Kubick asked that the minutes be amended to include the word “million” to the figures posted on page 3 - \$1.6 deficit and \$1.4 deficit.

J. Kubick made an amendment to the main motion, to add the word million after the items that need it in the second paragraph.

Second - L. McCabe

All in Favor - 7-0

Motion Approved

Motion to approve the main motion on the minutes that are now amended-

All in Favor - 7 - 0

Approved

Good News

Dr. Chesson shared an email that was sent out to parents from MS Principal Wendy Salvatore. The email was in regard to 8 Middle School World of Difference students who attended and ran an activity about identity at the 18th Annual Women in Educational Leadership Network Conference. Ms. Salvatore spoke about how articulate and mature these students were in conducting this activity with the educators in attendance. The attendee’s raved about the students as well.

Vote to Approve Warrant

J. Kubick made a motion to approve 2 payroll warrants totaling \$2,201,556.94 and 5 Accounts Payable warrants totaling \$746,893.34 for a grand total of \$2,948,450.28.

Second - R. Glod

Discussion - None

Roll Call - Y. Cheema, yes; R. Glod, yes; L. McCabe, yes; B. LeBlanc, yes; J. Kubick, yes; F. Raynor, yes; R. Casavecchia, yes

Motion Approved 7-0

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Chesson reviewed the timeline of budget modifications and early reductions showing the changes of salaried and non-salaried budget items in detail as well as a review of enrollment over time with class sizes at each school. She also reviewed the response to the School Committee's request of necessary reductions to balance the budget which would include the elimination/reduction of teaching, secretarial, coordinator, and librarian positions. Since January the insurance increase came in at 5.9% vs. a planned 15% increase, and the Town of Groton agreed to help absorb \$400,000 of the deficit. Since January a new outline of reductions for consideration was shown (.5 Tech teacher at SU, 1 AP HS teacher, elementary librarian to be replaced w/ para, a reduction of days from 261 to 204 for 2 building secretaries, elimination of dept. coordinator stipends at the MS, a reduction of a 1-WL, 1-ELA, 1-SS teacher at the HS, and 1 HS guidance counselor) totaling \$484,966. Dr. Chesson reviewed the impact to each school over the loss of each of these positions. The last portion of the presentation included answers to questions regarding what percentage of the budget is spent on athletics, how the GDRSD spending compares with our "market basket" districts, expenses incurred in special education, the cost of staffing and of Special Education Programs - reviewing partner programs such as New England Center for Children (NECC) at a cost of \$280,000 per program (there are programs at WU, MS, and HS), which allows the district to save \$800K - \$1M.

Ms. Kersey, Director of Finance & Operations reviewed what was up for consideration by the SC this evening.

March 8 Voted Operational Budget	\$48,760,281
Reduction in Health Insurance	-\$476,107
March 22 Proposed Reductions	-\$484,966
March 22 Updated Operational Budget	\$47,799,208
<i>(the certified budget will be the operating budget PLUS capital)</i>	

Groton Assessment Analysis

	March 8	March 22	Difference
Operating Budget	\$26,800,655	\$25,937,716	-\$862,939
Capital Assessment	\$542,257	\$542,257	\$ 0
Debt Assessment	\$465,796	\$465,796	\$0
Total Assessment	\$27,808,708	\$26,945,769	-\$862,939

Change in Minimum Required Contribution	-\$120,413
Reduction in Health Insurance (\$476,107 @ 77.26%)	-\$367,841
Reduction in Positions (\$484,966 @ 77.26%)	-\$374,685
Total Assessment Reduction	-\$862,939

Dunstable Assessment Analysis

	March 8	March 22	Difference
Operating Budget	\$7,909,345	\$7,742,721	-\$166,624
Capital Assessment	\$188,281	\$188,281	\$0
Debt Assessment	\$130,148	\$130,148	\$0
Total Assessment	\$8,227,774	\$8,061,150	-\$166,624

Change in Minimum Required Contribution	\$51,924
Reduction in Health Insurance (\$476,107 @ 22.74%)	-\$108,267
Reduction in Positions (\$484,966 @ 22.74%)	-\$110,281
Total Assessment Reduction	-\$166,624

Dr. Chesson added in her review, that whatever the SC decides this evening then moves to be voted on at each of the town meetings. If either town decides that an override is necessary it would then have to be voted on by each town and then go to the ballot box in 45 days. This means that there may not be a decision on the final budget, and its implications, until a late June/early July timeframe.

The Vice Chair of Groton Finance offered that they have not voted on an override but would be meeting Wednesday, March 29th to hopefully finalize the budget which would then go to the Selectboard.

School Committee members took this time to offer their opinion on the list of potential reductions.

B. LeBlanc entertained a motion to direct the Budget & Finance Director to prepare a new budget motion which would add \$411,740 to the existing budget motion.

So Moved - L. McCabe

No Second

Discussion moved to Kindergarten tuition.

F. Raynor made a motion that the tuition for Kindergarten be set at \$4200 this year.

Second - R. Glod

Discussion - None

Roll Call - Y. Cheema, yes; R. Glod, yes; L. McCabe, yes; B. LeBlanc, no; J. Kubick, yes;

F. Raynor, yes; Rosanna Casavecchia, no

Motion Approved 5 - 2

B. LeBlanc entertained a motion to direct the Budget & Finance Director to prepare a new budget motion which would add \$111,740 to the existing budget motion.

So Moved - L. McCabe

No Second

J. Kubick made a motion to take the existing budget motion and add \$310,000 to it.

Second - F. Raynor

Discussion - clarification on who decides how the money is spent. Members feel the elimination of the extra secretarial hours, 1.0 AP, and Swallow Tech position should stay on the reductions list. Library specialist, Dept. Coordinator stipends, at least 2 teaching positions at the HS are important, according to J. Kubick. Chair LeBlanc respectfully disagrees with this motion, feeling it doesn't present any long term strategy towards reducing fees, and the budget situation is only going to get worse.

Roll Call - Y. Cheema, yes; R. Glod, yes; L. McCabe, yes; B. LeBlanc, no; J. Kubick, yes; F. Raynor, yes; Rosanna Casavecchia, yes

Motion Approved 6 - 1

Designees to the Groton Selectboard Meeting on Monday, March 27, 2023

Fay Raynor and the Superintendent, will attend to speak on behalf of the SC.

Motion for FY'24 Groton-Dunstable Regional School District Budget and Assessments (motion was started by the Chair but turned over to the Vice-Chair)

J. Kubick moved that the total appropriation for the Groton-Dunstable Regional School district for the fiscal year July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024 be set at \$49,139,746 as presented by the following functions:

1000 (District Leadership and Administration):	\$ 1,296,176
2000 (Instructional Services):	\$ 25,969,719
3000 (Other School Services):	\$ 3,389,611
4000 (Maintenance):	\$ 3,259,464
5000 (Fixed Charges):	\$ 10,751,584
7000 (Fixed Assets):	\$ 1,116,538
8000 (Debt Retirement and Service):	\$ 596,800
9000 (Programs with Other Districts):	\$ 2,759,854

Second - R. Glod

Discussion - None

Roll Call - Y. Cheema, yes; R. Glod, yes; L. McCabe, yes; B. LeBlanc, no; J. Kubick, yes; F. Raynor, yes; Rosanna Casavecchia, yes

Motion Approved 6 - 1

J. Kubick moved that member towns be assessed in accordance with the Education Reform Law and the terms of the Agreement and amendments thereto as follows:

Groton Operating	\$ 26,177,213
Groton Capital	\$ 542,257
Groton Debt	\$ 465,796
Groton Total	\$ 27,185,266

Dunstable Operating	\$ 7,813,224
Dunstable Capital	\$ 188,281
Dunstable Debt	\$ 130,148
Dunstable Total	\$ 8,131,653

Second - R. Glod

Discussion-None

Roll Call - Y. Cheema, yes; R. Glod, yes; L. McCabe, yes; B. LeBlanc, no; J. Kubick, yes; F. Raynor, yes; Rosanna Casavecchia, yes

Motion Approved 6 - 1

New Business

Y. Cheema made a motion to have the student handbook as a discussion point for the agenda in April.

Second - L. McCabe

Discussion - Dr. Chesson recommended that the SC allow the attorney's complete their work on these documents first and then they come back to the SC in June.

Motion withdrawn by Ms. Cheema.

Y. Cheema made a motion to discuss handbooks in June.

Second - R. Glod

Discussion - None

All in Favor

Motion Approved

Additional items from the agenda will be discussed at the next scheduled meeting on April 12th.

The Chair entertained a motion to vote to enter into Executive Session for the purpose to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares in accordance with M.G.L. Ch. 30A, Sec a-3 (Unity A and Unit D) and not to return to regular session.

So Moved - J. Kubick

Second - R. Glod

**Roll Call - Y. Cheema, yes; R. Glod, yes; L. McCabe, yes; B. LeBlanc, yes; J. Kubick, yes;
F. Raynor, yes; Rosanna Casavecchia, yes**

Motion Approved 7-0

Meeting Adjourned at 10:34 PM

Jo Ann Sivazlian, Secretary

Documents shared:

Agenda

Extended Day Financial History

March Budget Update

Minutes - 3.8.23

Superintendent's Update

Warrant