

UXBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEEPOSTED UXB TOWN CLERK
2023 SEP 11 AM 9:08**August 1, 2023****Uxbridge High School Library****School Committee Members in Attendance:**

	Present	Absent
Mr. Barry Desruisseaux, Chair	X	
Ms. Arlene Liscinsky, Vice-Chair	X	
Mr. Ed Maharay, Clerk	X	
Mr. Ben Casper	X	
Mr. David Shinnick	X	
Mr. Aaron Lenart	X	
Mr. Michael Dion	X	

• Call to order

Mr. Desruisseaux called the meeting to order.

• Public Comment (6:00-6:01)

No public comment.

• Superintendent Update (6:01-6:23)

Dr. Baldassarre shared that the district had been awarded the 21st Century Learning grant. The grant is awarded to support the implementation of academically enriching programs when school is not in session (after school, during summer, and sometimes over school-year breaks). The programming will provide project-based learning directly related to the Massachusetts state frameworks. It will also include kinesthetic learning which Dr. Baldassarre explained is learning by moving around.

He stated that the amount awarded is \$564,750 for three years. (\$188,250 a year). The program will run at Taft during the school year (starting in September) from 3-5 PM for four days a week. It will also run for 25 full days over the upcoming summer. The program will allow up to 60 K-3 students to participate. The pool of students for school-year programming and summer programming can be different.

Priority admission to the program will be given to students who are:

- a. Socioeconomically disadvantaged
- b. Have special education needs
- c. ELL students

Dr. Dwyer and the Taft principal can work to choose other students based on certain qualifiers such as iReady scoring. Any remaining seats will be offered to other students.

Dr. Baldassarre said the district will amend its original application by the August 10 deadline to include a full-time coordinator versus the part-time coordinator it originally stated the program would have. The full-time coordinator is grant-mandated.

The district's community partner in the programming will be Whitin Community Center. Dr. Baldassarre said the program coordinator and recreational assistants will be managed by WCC because the grant director believes community buy-in and community support are echoed by a community partner leading the program. He said that the district's oversight of the program will be by himself and Dr. Dwyer. The Taft principal and the program coordinator will have day-to-day interactions with the program teachers.

Motion: *Mr. Dion made a motion that the Uxbridge public school committee votes to accept the 21st Century Learning grant in the amount of \$188,250. Mr. Maharay seconded the motion. The Committee voted 7-0 in favor of the motion. The motion passed.*

• Review certified teacher substitute pay to retirees (6:23-6:25)

Dr. Baldassarre asked the committee to consider extending the substitute rate of pay for certified teachers. Mr. Maharay asked if that would have any impact on the budget. Dr. Baldassarre said it would not.

Motion: *Ms. Liscinsky made a motion for the school committee of Uxbridge to extend the rate of pay for certified teacher substitutes to retired educators who were formerly licensed educators. Mr. Lenart seconded the motion. The Committee voted 7-0 in favor of the motion. The motion passed.*

• Strategic Plan (6:25-6:27)

Dr. Baldassarre said he had taken the recommendations from the previous meeting and made revisions to the proposed school website's strategic plan overview.

The plan will now include:

- a. Examples of ways progress tracking will be shared directly with the Committee, and with the public through the school website
- b. A methodology that will provide families, staff, faculty, and students with a feedback tool accessible directly from the school website.

He said that after the school committee approves the revision he would work with the technology director within the next two days to post the plan's cover page as well as the recently approved goals on the district website.

***Motion:** Dr. Baldassarre asked for a motion to approve the district design as presented. Mr. Maharay moved the motion. Ms. Liscinsky seconded the motion. The Committee voted 7-0 in favor of the motion. The motion passed.*

● Legal RFP (6:27-6:53)

Dr. Baldassarre shared his recommendations for new district legal representation. His recommendations are listed below.

Special education legal representation:

MLM Attorneys, Attorney Paige Tobin (\$230/hr)

Dupere Law Offices (firm would analyze historical costs and then provide a monthly retainer proposal)

General services legal representation:

Dupere Law Offices (\$1600/mo or \$250/hr)

Mirick O'Connell (\$245/hr, 2.5% annual increase)

*both firms will charge additional fees if the district has litigation in court

Dr. Baldassarre said if the choice was up to him he would choose MLM and Paige Tobin for special education services, and he said that for general services he felt the local firm (Mirick O'Connell) was the obvious choice but he appreciated that the school committee might prefer the budget stability of Dupere since they have a monthly fee potential.

Mr. Casper and Mr. Shinnick asked about the district's historical expenses with legal services. Mr. Aicardi said that the FY24 budget has \$30K budgeted for legal and that, historically, he saw that the district tended to fall in the \$20-30K range with annual expenditures.

***Motion:** Mr. Maharay made a motion to go with Paige Tobin and leave it up to Dr. Baldassarre who to go with of the other two, but if the second one is chosen [Mirick O'Connell] it is clear only the superintendent or the chair, or superintendent designee, can contact the firm.*

Mr. Desruisseaux asked if there was any discussion.

Dr. Baldassarre said he was comfortable going with Mirick O'Connell.

Mr. Casper said that since they had just received the recommendations, and the committee has the RFPs from the firms to review, but that they are not available to review here (at the meeting), he would not do a motion for legal that night so they can have time to review the folders. He asked if Dr. Baldassarre felt there was any upside to having one office provide both areas of legal services. Dr. Baldassarre said that if they went with Dupere there would be two separate retainers and he did not feel the district needs retainer-level special education services.

Mr. Shinnick said he wanted to revisit earlier comments about who can contact the district's attorney/s. He said he felt that that should be an expectation, rather than a formal policy. Ms. Liscinsky felt it should be more formal because the Committee acts as one voice, not seven, and having one voice helps to better organize the communication. Dr. Baldassarre clarified that a policy already exists that states that routine matters need to go through the superintendent or the chair and non-routine legal matters are to be brought to the full committee for deliberation. Mr. Casper felt that this was a conversation for another time since it was a policy issue and not on that night's agenda. Ms. Liscinsky disagreed. The Committee moved on from this topic at that time.

Mr. Desruisseaux proposed that the Committee plan on making their selections at the next school committee meeting (8/15).

****No vote was taken.**

● Warrant Article FATM (6:53-7:41)

Dr. Baldassarre provided a document to the Committee that outlined potential requests for the Committee to consider asking for at the fall town meeting.

He said that because of increases in special education students at PreK and at Taft, the district needs an additional \$406,859. This number includes staff and instructional-related services. They also need \$95K for a Pre-K coordinator. The overall request can be reduced by @\$84K which the district believes it would collect in new PreK tuition.

Dr. Baldassarre said that he has added a \$15K request for the Committee to also consider. That amount would be for modifications to an existing space in Taft that would make it a therapeutic classroom. He explained that this classroom would allow the district to conduct its 40-day assessments of its students versus sending them out of the district for those evaluations. He said

that the district currently has the expertise in-house to develop the program and to staff it. By doing its evaluations, he said that money the district had budgeted for transportation and assessment would be saved.

Mr. Casper questioned the inclusion of a potential shortfall in high school electricity. Dr. Baldassarre explained that Mr. Aicardi prepared the document to highlight all the areas of potential budget vulnerability that the district currently sees.

Dr. Baldassarre explained that what he would like is to create a supplemental budget based on the amount the Committee requests and then report their expenditures from that particular budget and that anything the district does not spend from that budget is returned to the town. He said that ultimately the Committee controls what is done with the money and it would be up to them in June 2024 as to what they wanted to do with any unspent funding.

Mr. Aicardi explained the breakdown of his financial spreadsheet as having three parts.

1. Pre-K (\$433,401):

- a. He explained that the amount the district is proposing to request is higher than what had previously been presented to the Committee because he had analyzed the district's use of the PreK revolving account to help offset the PreK expenses and said he believes that if they follow the old expectation of use, the account will have a zero balance in it at the end of FY24. He said that having nothing in that account for use in FY25 would place a high strain on the FY25 budget. He hoped that if the town gave the district the new recommended amount for PreK, the district could rebuild the PreK revolving balance in a way that they could use it as a source of revenue to apply toward the FY25 budget.
- b. He said the \$95K associated with the PreK coordinator is just a plug.

2. Grants (\$130,988):

- a. Entitlement grant shortfall (\$68,188): He said he wanted to make the Committee aware that the district will be receiving less money in certain entitlement grants than it had expected and budgeted for use. He showed shortfalls in Title I, Title II, and Title IV.
- b. Books (\$62K): He said that in the development of the FY24 budget, Dr. Dwyer had originally said that there was an ongoing curriculum review and wasn't sure they would be ready to make the move in FY24. Mr. Aicardi said that the district should be looking at how grants, particularly ESSER 3 could help cover the books this year as an alternative to asking for more money.

3. FY24 Potential general fund vulnerabilities (\$205K):

- a. Mentor stipends (\$40K)

- b. OOD special education (\$45K): a recurring theme that the district tends to spend more than it had planned
- c. Electricity (high school) (\$85K): The FY24 request was based on faulty numbers.
- d. Classroom renovation (\$15K): remodeling an office space to become a therapeutic classroom
- e. Special Education equipment (\$20K)

Mr. Aicardi said that concerning the general fund vulnerabilities, he was not convinced they should or has to ask for those amounts. He was optimistic that grants can knock off some of them as well as having the overall operating budget cover some of them as well. He emphasized that his intention was to let the Committee be made aware of some potential areas of vulnerability and not “take the general budget shortfalls as gospel.”

Mr. Aicardi said the clear focus should be on PreK and that the district still has a long time to tighten up the numbers. He re-emphasized that the transition from FY24 to FY25 with no PreK revolving funding will be very difficult.

Mr. Desruisseaux said he believes the Committee should be looking at presenting their request as three separate articles because if it is listed as one it will be difficult for the voter to understand.

Mr. Maharay said he wanted to talk to the town manager about whether they might consider raising the levy to cover the budget request as opposed to funding it with a stabilization transfer. He also proposed the Committee create three articles (PreK, grants, shortfalls in operating) but leave the numbers blank for the time being. Mr. Shinnick said the Committee would also have the option to pull any of the articles at a later time if they don't feel they are necessary.

Motion: *Mr. Maharay made a motion that we submit three articles for the fall annual town meeting, one for PreK expenses, one for shortfalls in grant funding, and one for shortfalls in the general operating budget. and what I would use for wording would be to see if the town will vote to transfer from available funds including, but not limited to stabilization, and/or to raise and appropriate funds required to adequately fund, [it would be] PreK, second one would be shortfall in grant funding, and shortfalls in the general school budget.*

Mr. Casper said he had no issue with putting them forward as placeholders but that there was additional studying that he felt needed to be done on certain areas of the requests. Mr. Shinnick said it was important that the district do its due diligence for the articles.

Ms. Liscinsky seconded the motion.

Ms. Liscinsky said she agreed they should present three separate articles for the purpose of general understanding.

The Committee voted 7-0 in favor of the motion. The motion passed.

Mr. Maharay asked the Committee if he could work with Dr. Baldassarre on the specific wording for the articles.

● **New Business (7:41)**

No new business

● **Old Business (7:41)**

No old business

● **Approve Minutes (7:41-7:42)**

Motion: *Mr. Desruisseaux entertained a motion to accept the minutes of July 25. Ms. Liscinsky moved the motion. Mr. Casper seconded the motion. The Committee voted 7-0 in favor of the motion. The motion passed.*

● **Adjournment (7:42)**

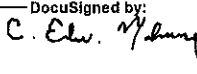
Motion: *Mr. Desruisseaux entertained a motion to adjourn. Ms. Liscinsky moved the motion. Mr. Maharay seconded the motion. The Committee voted 7-0 in favor of the motion. The motion passed.*

The meeting adjourned at 7:42 PM.

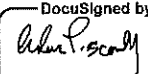
Respectfully Submitted,
Debbie Stark
Uxbridge School Committee Recording Secretary

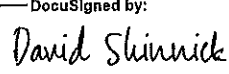
School Committee Members:

Mr. Barry Desruisseaux, Chair

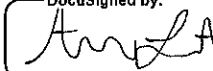
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Mr. Ed Maharay, Clerk

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Ms. Arlene Liscinsky, Vice-Chair

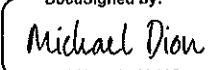
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Mr. David Shinnick, Member

Uxbridge School Committee Meeting Minutes
August 1, 2023

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Mr. Ben Casper, Member

Mr. Aaron Lenart, Member

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Mr. Michael Dion, Member