

**JOINT MEETING
BROOKLINE SCHOOL BOARD
BROOKLINE FINANCE COMMITTEE
JANUARY 13, 2021
MEETING MINUTES**

A Joint Meeting of the Brookline School Board and Brookline Finance Committee was conducted on Wednesday, January 13, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

Kenneth Haag, Chairman, presided:

School Board Members Participating: Erin Sarris, Vice Chairman
Karen Jew, Secretary
Rebecca Howie
Alison Marsano

School Board Members Absent:

Finance Cmte. Members Participating: Brian Rater, Chair
Matthew Mailloux, Secretary (arrived at 6:27 p.m.)
Dennis Comeau (arrived at 6:27 p.m.)

Finance Cmte. Members Absent:

Also Participating: Andrew Corey, Superintendent
Gina Bergskaug, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction
Bob Thompson, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services
Kelly Seeley, Business Administrator
Daniel Molinari, Principal, Richard Maghakian Memorial School
Patricia Bouley, Principal, Captain Samuel Douglass Academy

Due to the COVID-19/Coronavirus crisis, and in accordance with Governor Sununu's [Emergency Order #12](#) pursuant to [Executive Order 2020-04](#), this Board and Committee are authorized to meet electronically.

As stated on the agenda, the meeting was aired live via Zoom. Telephone access was available for members of the public wishing to provide comment; 1-929-205-6099 US (Meeting ID: 985 5861 3716/Passcode 078704).

Each member of the Board and Committee was asked to state, for the record, where they were, why their attendance in person was not reasonably practical, who, if anyone, was with them, and whether or not they were able to hear the proceedings.

Kenneth Haag

Stated he was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, he was alone in the room he was in, and could hear the proceedings.

Erin Sarris

Stated she was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, she was alone in the room she was in, and could hear the proceedings.

Karen Jew

Stated she was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, she was alone in the room she was in, and could hear the proceedings.

Rebecca Howie

Stated she was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, she was alone in the room she was in, and could hear the proceedings.

Alison Marsano

Stated she was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, she was alone in the room she was in, and could hear the proceedings.

AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS

Superintendent Corey requested the agenda be amended to include discussion of the Deliberative Session, and Board action around election of a District Clerk.

**MOTION BY MEMBER MARSANO THAT THE AGENDA BE ADJUSTED AS REQUESTED
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER JEW**

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Rebecca Howie, Karen Jew, Alison Marsano, Erin Sarris, Kenneth Haag
5
Nay: 0

MOTION CARRIED

CORRESPONDENCE/RESIGNATIONS/NOMINATIONS

Superintendent Corey noted the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Advisory Committee has been meeting regularly. The intent is to bring information before the Board for discussion at its next regularly scheduled meeting. He thanked committee members for their work and community members for providing input.

During its recent meeting, the Hollis School Board reflected on the SAU renovation project deciding to put the project on hold, at this time. It is likely that discussion will continue at the SAU41 Governing Board level in the February or May timeframe.

Superintendent Corey spoke of receiving a communication regarding the recent events in Washington, D.C., and one of the District's teachers. As an Administration they began an investigation when notified of the situation. He requested the Board allow the Administration to complete the investigation as the process agreed to in the Collective Bargaining Agreement. Once completed, the Administration will report back to the Board.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Brookline School Board [December 16, 2020](#)

The following amendments were offered:

- Page 3, Line 22; insert “commented” following “Superintendent Corey”
- Page 3, Line 26; replace “dust” with “dusting”
- Page 3, Line 37; insert “thanked” following “Chairman Haag”
- Page 4, Line 2; insert “of increase” following “trend”
- Page 5, Line 23; insert “of” following “part”

**MOTION BY MEMBER HOWIE TO APPROVE, AS AMENDED
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER JEW**

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea:	Rebecca Howie, Karen Jew, Alison Marsano, Erin Sarris, Kenneth Haag	5
Nay:		0

MOTION CARRIED

PUBLIC INPUT

Eric Pauer, 12 Westview Road, Brookline

Spoke of the information around test scores noting page 70 addresses an overall score range of 1-4, which he did not see used in the rest of the graphs. He was uncertain what a 2 means; met or nearly met standard versus a 3, achieved standard. He questioned and was informed the information would be addressed during the discussion period.

PRINCIPALS’ REPORT

Patricia Bouley, Principal, Captain Samuel Douglass Academy (CSDA) reminded the viewing audience that Monday, January 18, 2021 is Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (holiday). In-person learning resumes on Tuesday, January 19, 2021.

Remote learning for the District has gone well. Teachers have reached out to parents when needing to ensure students are constantly connected with their teachers.

Principal Bouley commented on the recent activities that have occurred congratulating the students who came in 1st and 2nd in the spelling bee, and the new Librarian who worked diligently to put a program together. The PTO provided a virtual magic show that had over 100 participants.

Through February 12th the Richard Maghakian Memorial School (RMMS) will be participating in the Jump Rope for Heart (virtually), which is now called the Kids Heart Challenge. Fundraising efforts are sought to provide heart healthy support. On February 11th, at 7:00 p.m. Principal Bouley will be doing a Read Aloud for RMMS and at 8:00 p.m. for CSDA.

Enrollment has been steady. At CSDA, 1 family moved out of the district and 3 families moved in (updated Principal Report attached).

Asked, Assistant Superintendent Thompson stated symptom monitoring has continued in remote learning. There has been 1 additional case in the Brookline schools since we left for the holiday break. We do have an increased number of students that are quarantining. The trend that has been seen is a family member testing positive resulting in entire families needing to quarantine. That will continue to be monitored.

Member Marsano questioned if families have been diligent about doing the symptom monitoring during the time of remote and was told they are. The schools are following the same process where if a parent forgets to complete the form, a reminder call is made.

Chairman Haag questioned while having roughly a month out of school, should a question around travel be considered prior to returning to in-person. Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug commented they looked at the questions asked to determine if it made sense to re-word them and include travel, even from the start of the school year. It did not seem to fit in well with the daily symptom monitoring. We are relying on families to be truthful about their travel, and to the best of our understanding they have been.

Superintendent Corey stated it is the intent to re-open on Tuesday, January 19, 2021. He thanked the transportation company noting meals have been delivered during this time of remote. The cafeteria workers have been in-house working, custodians have been disinfecting, and our teachers have been delivering a very solid remote learning experience. He thanked families for the continued cooperation and support.

He spoke of the start of winter sports, and there being no cases to date. He thanked Brian Bumpus and Mike Thompson who have overseen those protocols.

DISCUSSION

- Proposed FY22 Budget

Superintendent Corey remarked the Public Hearing is being conducted remotely as it provides the flexibility should the Board choose to go with a virtual Deliberative Session and Annual Meeting and then a vote. Should the decision be made for a virtual Deliberative Session, a notice would be sent out to all taxpayers in Brookline (mailed by January 22nd). The information session would be February 1, 2021. The Board would discuss the warrant articles and receive information from community members. Because of being a virtual meeting (unable to discern if public members participating are Brookline residents), there would not be the ability to increase or decrease numbers, but the Board could decide what warrant articles to put forth or remove.

A virtual Annual Meeting would be on February 8, 2021. The Board would bring forward the articles and provide a presentation. On March 1st, the Warrant Articles would be posted and made available to voters. The traditional voting day would be March 9, 2021, at CSDA.

Whether going with a traditional meeting or a virtual meeting, on March 9th, the schools in Brookline would be remote.

The Board could decide to run a traditional in-person Deliberative Session the schedule for which has already been published. The difference being that format allows the community to decide whether to change any of the articles.

Superintendent Corey spoke of the Tax Cap, which would have been impacted in a negative way with the budget discussed last month. State aid (supplemental) is in flux and is not guaranteed to be received. Should it not arrive, the originally proposed budget would not meet the tax cap approved by the voters. To that end, an adjustment has been made to the proposed budget. The Board can determine whether to move forward with the budget that will be presented tonight or go to a traditional meeting and see how the voters would like to proceed.

Legal counsel has stated it to be the responsibility of the Administration to put forth a budget that meets the tax cap. It is not the Board's responsibility to vote to recommend that budget.

MOTION BY MEMBER HOWIE TO RECESS UNTIL THE CONCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC HEARING ON THE PROPOSED FY22 BUDGET
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER SARRIS

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Rebecca Howie, Karen Jew, Alison Marsano, Erin Sarris, Kenneth Haag

5

Nay:

0

MOTION CARRIED

The meeting recessed at 6:27 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 8:08 p.m.

Brian Rater

Stated he was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, he was alone in the room he was in, and could hear the proceedings.

Dennis Comeau

Stated he was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, he was alone in the room he was in, and could hear the proceedings.

Matthew Mailloux

Stated he was participating electronically from Concord, NH, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, he was alone in the room he was in, and could hear the proceedings.

DISCUSSION (Cont'd)

- Data Presentation

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug provided a presentation (copy included as part of agenda packet). Last spring, the State of New Hampshire cancelled State testing due to the pandemic. Late in the summer, in the middle of re-opening plans, the District was made aware of the requirement to complete fall testing (to replace the spring testing) and told the data would be helpful to the District; would be able to refine curriculum and adjust instruction based on the information. The fall (Interim) testing is not the summative testing, which is what we typically do in the spring.

This interim testing also tested prior year skills; fourth grade students took an interim test to assess 3rd grade skills; but did so in October. This spring, fourth grade students will complete summative testing for 4th grade material.

State-wide data was not provided. With regard to performance, in English/Language Arts (ELA) (grade 3 skills), 4th grade students scored 65%, grade 4 skills at 78.9%, and grade 5 skills at 72.9%. Those are relatively stable in comparison to our typical performance with the grade 3 skills being slightly lower than typical. For math, the percentages were 51%, 77.6%, and 49.4%. Current grade 4 and grade 6 students did see a dip from where they traditionally perform.

Across the entire SAU, math seemed to be impacted more in the time of remote learning than ELA. As far as math time, the elementary students received 60-75 minutes/day for instruction with a lot of individualized instruction provided. When we are in -person there is flex time, extra help from the teachers and specialists in the area of math. That is true all the way up to CAVBlock in the High School.

Overall student scores for assessment range from 1-4. Students who receive a 3 or 4 on a summative assessment are deemed to be proficient. Students earning a 1 or 2 are not proficient. Individual standards within the content are evaluated on a performance distribution of 1, 2, or 3; 1 is below standard, 3 is achieved the standard comfortably and 2 is met or nearly met the standard. Twos have to be further divided up and eventually pushed over to the proficient or the not proficient range.

When looking at how our students performed on individual standards, what was helpful with the interim assessment as opposed to the summative, is the ability to drill down question by question, student by student. You can look at one student and their performance and see how they responded to every single question, if wanting to get them from the 2 to a 3.

Looking at the ELA individual standards, we are looking at the language standards and reading standards for informational text. Looking at the fall language standards, the blue bar represents the current grade 4. This particular area was a relative weakness for that particular cohort whereas reading standards for informational text was an area of strength for all of our grade levels. Reading standards for literature and speaking and listening standards; once again there was a relative weakness for the current grade 4 students. This provides the opportunity to pay additional attention this year and provide additional support to the students in those specific standards.

The final individual standard for ELA is writing. It is graded by a computer, which sometimes produces invalid scores. Specifically, we teach our students to turn the question around when responding, so we are writing in complete sentences and utilizing the prompt to assist us. Sometimes that confuses the computer and appears as though the student has copied, nullifying the score. Looking at the results, it is less telling. However, if you

look at individual rubrics within the writing standards, we have relative strengths in conventions and organization. The area for improvement would be providing relevant evidence.

Looking at math, reviewed is Measurement, Data & Geometry (6th grade weakness). These standards were covered when we were not present. Some of them we did not get to last spring for some of our students. As a result, that was an area that was a bit more challenging for our students when they returned after 3 months off for the summer to be taking that test. That is where the 6th grade students start; the areas that we did not cover in grade 5 because of remote learning.

For Number and Operations and Fractions, it was a particular weakness for our current 4th grade students. Once again that is a topic that is covered right before the end of the school year.

Number & Operations in Base Ten is a relative strength for all grade levels and shows we have really good number sense across the board, and we do a very consistent job. We are also pretty strong in Operations & Algebraic Thinking.

Another way to look at the information is to track performance over time. A chart was displayed looking at ELA. It is not an apples-to-apples comparison. In 2016, the district did a paper version of the Smarter Balanced test, in 2017 it was a computer/adaptive Smarter Balanced test; scoring mechanism completely different and the student experience with taking a computer adaptive test was new. In 2018, it was the computer/adaptive Statewide Assessment System, different test. Between 2018 and 2019 are the only two years where the same test was taken from year to year. In 2020, we are not taking a summative assessment, we are doing an interim assessment. In Math we see a little bit of dipping this year. Our math instruction really relies on that close personalized instruction that is easier to achieve in the classroom working sometimes one-on-one or in small groups with the teacher.

Cohorts are tracked over time although challenging as this year we only tested 4th, 5th, and 6th grade students because we tested them for 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade skills. The current 7th grade students are in the COOP and those students' scores are mixed with the students from Hollis. It is difficult to look at that individual cohort and measure it against their prior performance as Brookline students.

The class of 2027 are the current 6th graders and 2028 the current 5th graders. If you look at ELA, the 6th grade students are stable over time; 72%, 64%, 72.9%. Current 5th grade students are 65% and 78.9% - improvement. In math there is greater stability with the 5th grade cohort than there is with the 6th grade cohort.

Once again, we are looking at the individual standards and addressing them in the classroom, potentially with some MTSS paraprofessionals in the future. When we look at cohorts over time, we look for consistency, identify any particular outliers for a given year, can drill down with the interim assessment to look at outliers within specific questions to see if potentially the wording is what was challenging for a group. We also look to see if there were significant changes to enrollment in any particular year, and this year we want to reflect on possible gaps created in remote learning during the springtime.

Chairman Haag spoke of the gap in math (fractions) and questioned if the dip was in the March-June units. Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug stated they are looking at individual standards, but then drilling down to the individual questions. Fractions we do not just start in grade 3, but that is a unit that was taught in the spring when we were in remote learning. It was taught but the extent to which we taught it the way we typically do was very different. The same is true for the measurement and data for the current grade 6 (last spring). It was not surprising to see that those were areas that were a little more challenging for our students.

This data provides one piece of the puzzle. There is so much more especially in the middle of a pandemic where we must really take into consideration the social emotional wellbeing of our students and just the day-to-day interactions. If we can provide that stable environment for our students, then the learning comes after.

Vice Chairman Sarris commended the fact that amid everything that is going on, the Administration is staying the course for the community as well by taking this data and synthesizing it as best you can. It is not an apples-to-apples comparison, but it is putting data out there for consumption. This is the year you have every excuse to just bypass that and many people would not even notice. The fact that, on top of everything else, you are putting this out there and providing the information is incredibly important and speaks not just to identifying the needs, but to the fact that you recognize the need to keep proceeding as normal as possible.

DELIBERATIONS

- To see what action the Board and Finance Committee will take regarding the proposed warrant articles for the Fiscal Year 22 Budget

Article 2

To see if the Brookline School District will vote to raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling **\$9,867,097**. Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be **\$9,857,075**, which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the school district or by law or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only. Majority vote required to pass.

Estimated Net Tax Impact - \$10.41/\$1,000

**MOTION BY MEMBER MARSANO TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 2, AS PRESENTED
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER HOWIE**

ON THE QUESTION

Finance Committee Chair Rater questioned the chart that identified the calculation for the BSD tax rate as 13.1% and how that reconciles with the tax cap of 8%. Ms. Seeley remarked what is not as obvious in the chart is that the tax base is factored into it. You are dividing what we are anticipating the tax base to be (1.5% increase) into the total tax effort.

Finance Committee Chair Rater stated the difference in the tax base accounts for the difference between the 13% difference versus the 8%.

Member Marsano spoke of information pulled from the 2019 Annual Report; the FY19 total tax rate was supposed to be \$10.90. For FY20, before the grant monies were received, was supposed to be \$11.28. The FY21 estimate was \$10.48. Chairman Haag noted for FY22 the originally proposed budget was \$11.17 and with the tax cap it is at \$10.94. It is a good data point.

Member Jew asked for clarification a vote for this article is the 8% tax cap budget and a vote against it would trigger a Deliberative Session in person. Chairman Haag stated the Deliberative Session is a separate discussion. Whatever the Board comes forward with will be on the floor, and if we have an in-person Deliberative Session, the article could be changed as part of that meeting.

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug stated the Board is required to vote to put the tax cap budget on the warrant. The Board can take a separate vote to recommend or not recommend.

Member Marsano asked for clarification, when voting to recommend this it really comes across as we are really recommending either this tax cap budget or the default budget. Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug stated when you recommend a budget, there is no story that goes with it. The only language on the warrant identifies the vote of the Board. Folks who have not listened to this discussion or the Deliberative Session will have to develop their own conclusion.

Vice Chairman Sarris stated her recollection if the article is altered during the Deliberative Session, the Board votes again on whether to recommend the article. Whatever we vote here will stand until the Deliberative Session unless there are no changes.

Chairman Haag questioned the timing required for the hiring of an MTSS Paraprofessional contemplating use of the Contingency Fund. Superintendent Corey stated there to be the potential for that to occur. There is the need for hiring associated with retirements, and there may be salary differentials associated with the new hires. There could be changes in insurance coverages, etc. We are talking about tonight's reality. Six months from now we may have enough in the budget to fund those two MTSS Paraprofessionals.

Member Jew stated appreciation for the ability to adapt with the technology specialist and realize the need for that position. She commented on use of REAP Grant funding on a lot of the technology and questioned if programs like Donors Choose could be used.

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug stated she would defer to Ms. Seeley on the Donors Choose, but in terms of the REAP Grant funds, we do have specific activities or items that are eligible for it. When we discussed the REAP Grant over the summer when we needed to reduce class size to bring students into the building and ensure the physical distancing, they identified that position is not necessarily eligible under REAP Grant while computer technology is. With every discussion, we must consider the available funding sources. The Administration reviewed the budget line by line to determine where cuts might be made. This is the recommendation we came up with in terms of what would cause the least impact for our students.

Ms. Seeley commented any go fund me page has liability associated with it. It also takes some of the control out of our hands as we try to make everything consistent and ensure something does not favor one teacher or one area more than another. We prefer to use our own donor system, which goes through my school bucks. Anyone can make donations to the school that way. Perhaps we have not done a really great job of advertising that. That gives the district and the administration a lot more control over how we get those funds.

Member Marsano suggested the PTO be looked to as a mechanism for getting the word out about that. Ms. Seeley stated the roadblock is in the coordination of those efforts.

Vice Chairman Sarris questioned at what point the Board would discuss the Deliberative Session. Superintendent Corey stated he provided an overview, and the intent was to bring it back as a topic. What he has heard from the Board is the desire to discuss virtual versus in-person at some point during deliberations and take a vote on that.

Vice Chairman Sarris commented she felt that to be an aspect that could inform some of the decisions they were looking to make.

Superintendent Corey stated he has heard the concern raised by the citizens on the \$158,679. He greatly respects that and appreciates the willingness to put together an in-person meeting. When looking at the budget,

he proposed cuts that would be real if they must be made. Though the RMMS tech position is valuable, leaps and bounds have been made from where we were because we were forced to do that. He is comfortable with that. We may see a need in the future that requires it to come back because we are looking at a different skillset. He is also comfortable with allocating the \$850 for the projectors to the REAP Grant. The MTSS positions have value. There was one position in the current year's budget that we chose to allocate differently based on COVID. That position will come back as an MTSS. There will be 1 in the budget. The two we are talking about removing would be the 2nd and 3rd MTSS positions. Chairman Haag brought up the fact that the contingency fund is \$40,000, roughly the cost of those two positions. When looking at the overall budget, he also looks at it from the lens that some of that revenue is also disappearing from the COOP budget. Although we are talking about Brookline tonight, there will be a potentially larger share of tax effort for the COOP budget because of the loss of revenue.

Superintendent Corey stated his recommendation is first around safety; for \$40,000 he does not personally believe it is worth bringing people out. He has the contingency budget, will have staff turnover (happens every year). He believes that at a minimum he will likely be able to fund at least 1 of those MTSS positions and having 1 already coming back into the budget would provide for 1 at each building.

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug has and will continue to do an exceptional job of identifying our concerns academically. Knowing the concerns provides him the biggest single benefit of having time. We are talking 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th grade students. There are multiple years to address those deficiencies. We will know them when they go to the COOP. We also have an unbelievable teaching staff that will address quite a few of them between now and the end of the year. That was an interim assessment. Please know it was an interim assessment with masks on, in a whole new environment, 6' away from any of their peers in an environment that was totally new for kids. He is uncertain how valid the data is, but it is data and can be used.

He can fully support the Board approving the tax cap budget knowing that they will try to find the \$48,000 in the operating budget. If unable, he would come to the Board and request the funding through the contingency. Also, if Article 9 should pass, the Board would have the ability to retain up to 2% from the UFB. The Board would also, via public hearing, have the ability to then allocate some of those resources to fund the positions.

As much as he appreciates the support and understands people would show up, and he believes he could pull off an in-person meeting relatively safely, he does not believe it is the right time. We do not need to have an event that becomes a spreader event that puts us all in remote.

They will look to find the money, and if unable, they will continue to look for solutions. Just because we do not have MTSS does not mean we cannot offer a smaller stipend to an individual or a variety of things to address these competencies. He would not want to put the Board in a position where it felt obligated to do this in-person piece when he believes the budget with the tax cap provides the ability to move forward, and they will find a solution to the MTSS Paraprofessionals.

Chairman Haag stated appreciation for the input. He fully endorsed the statements made.

Finance Committee Chair Rater stated his negative reaction to the comments was the use of the Contingency Fund for personnel. In his mind, that is not what the Contingency Fund is intended for unless it happens to be related to special education. He also has serious concerns about the final warrant article (2%); with the concept and especially with utilizing it to fund a position.

Chairman Haag stated his personal feeling the contingency is the area to address a shortfall where there is a significant school need. Contingency to him is for times when there is a shortfall; a public hearing would be conducted, and the funds used where needed.

Member Marsano stated her understanding of the point that it falls into the operating budget. Chairman Haag stated the positions are not fully loaded. He is not advocating for a staff person. Finance Committee Chair Rater remarked contingency is for something unexpected that comes up, e.g., boiler replacement. If spending that money at the start of the year paying a salary, then we do not really have a contingency for something unexpected. He wished to emphasize that what the Superintendent prefaced his comments with was his confidence they could find additional funding within the operating budget. Contingency is the Plan B.

Superintendent Corey stated he could respect that, and he does have a Plan A for the operating budget. His priority would be to get a 2nd position (about \$25,000). His greater point is that he does not believe we should be bringing people out over \$49,000.

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Brian Rater, Matthew Mailloux, Dennis Comeau, Rebecca Howie, Karen Jew, Alison Marsano,
Erin Sarris, Kenneth Haag

8

Nay:

0

MOTION CARRIED

The School Board recommends 5-0

The Finance Committee recommends 3-0

Article 3

To see if the school district will vote to raise and appropriate a sum of up to **\$75,000** to be added to the previously established SCHOOL FACILITIES MAINTENANCE EXPENDABLE TRUST FUND, this sum to come from the June 30 unassigned fund balance (surplus) available for transfer on July 1, 2021. No amount to be raised from taxation.

Estimated Net Tax Impact

- No rate increase in FY22. The Unassigned Fund Balance is the sum of unspent taxes and revenues. Expending \$75,000, that could potentially be returned as revenue, **equates to foregoing a potential rate reduction: \$0.72/\$1,000**

MOTION BY MEMBER SARRIS TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 3, AS PRESENTED

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER HOWIE

ON THE QUESTION

Member Marsano questioned if the SAU budget should appear earlier on the warrant. Superintendent Corey stated the SAU budget is not funded through a UFB so the order in which it appears is not a concern.

Chairman Haag spoke of the public input provided around usage. He stated an understanding of the remarks regarding this year's usage. We do have a five-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). There are some significant expenditures in the out years that require planning for. He stated his support of the allocation because of the desire to be able to continue to plan for future expenditures to avoid spikes in the budget from year to year.

Finance Committee Chair Rater stated he has always supported a maintenance fund and the progression of the CIP. However, he does have a concern this year given receipt of the one-time funding last year, which resulted in the tax rate going down. It will go back up to where it was prior. That could be a big impact on people. He will not support this or the special education fund allocations this year to try to soften that. That would be the only reason why he would not support the articles.

Member Marsano remarked she understands where Mr. Rater is coming from, however, knowing the situation with the roof at RMMS, boilers at RMMS, etc., she is supportive of the allocations to address the CIP. We are taking cuts this year and making those sacrifices so it is not as though we are being completely insensitive to the current situation. Funding these articles is to protect the interest of taxpayers going forward.

Finance Committee Chair Rater stated agreement with the statements made. It is a tough situation and difficult to find what the proper balance is.

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Matthew Mailloux, Dennis Comeau, Rebecca Howie, Karen Jew, Alison Marsano,
Erin Sarris, Kenneth Haag

7

Nay: Brian Rater

1

MOTION CARRIED

The School Board recommends 5-0

The Finance Committee recommends 2-1

Article 4

To see if the school district will vote to raise and appropriate a sum of up to **\$25,000** to be added to the previously established SPECIAL EDUCATION EXPENDABLE TRUST FUND, this sum to come from the June 30 unassigned fund balance (surplus) available for transfer on July 1, 2021. No amount to be raised from taxation.

Estimated Net Tax Impact

- No rate increase in FY22. The Unassigned Fund Balance is the sum of unspent taxes and revenues. Expending \$25,000, that could potentially be returned as revenue, **equates to foregoing a *potential* rate reduction: \$0.02/\$1,000**

MOTION BY MEMBER MARSANO TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 4, AS PRESENTED MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER SARRIS

ON THE QUESTION

Vice Chairman Sarris remarked the presentation identified the anticipated expenditure for this year to be zero, but the commentary that went with that is Student Services is telling us there are a lot of needs. She asked for clarification. She is aware that student need, because of COVID, is significant this year. She does not know what that translates to. She questioned if an increase is being seen in the number of students being identified for special education.

Assistant Superintendent Thompson stated the answer to be yes. However, when we were in remote learning it was very difficult to evaluate students for special education. What we saw when returning to the in-person environment is the number of special education referrals, because of the spring and concerns of remote learning, went up. Part of that was due to the backlog. There were a number of unanticipated expenses that are currently in the Brookline budget. We did have to add a position to CSDA this year for special education because of student need. When those situations come up, he works with the Business Office and Amy Rowe to be able to locate funds within special education. Often, that is through IDEA and other grant opportunities. There is always a possibility of having to go to the trust. Out-of-district placements are very expensive and when we have to bring specialized programs into the district, there are significant costs.

Chairman Haag commented on the feedback provided around the issue of contingency. It sounds as though the needed funding can be found, and he is respectful of the point of the use being more for catastrophic uses versus funding. He questioned the will of the Board relative to moving the contingency article up ahead of the special education trust article this year.

Member Marsano stated she would not be opposed to that. Member Jew stated agreement. Member Marsano stated she would still like to see the \$25,000 go towards special education if possible.

Superintendent Corey suggested positions be taken on the various articles, and if the Board decides to change the order, that position could be taken.

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Dennis Comeau, Rebecca Howie, Karen Jew, Alison Marsano, Erin Sarris, Kenneth Haag

6

Nay: Brian Rater, Matthew Mailloux

2

MOTION CARRIED

The School Board recommends 5-0

The Finance Committee recommends 1-2

Article 5

To see if the school district will vote to establish a contingency fund for the current year for unanticipated expenses that may arise and further to raise and appropriate a sum of up to **\$40,000** to go into said fund. This sum to come from the unassigned fund balance (surplus) available for transfer on July 1, 2021.

Estimated Net Tax Impact

- No rate increase in FY22. The Unassigned Fund Balance is the sum of unspent taxes and revenues. Expending \$40,000, that could potentially be returned as revenue, **equates to foregoing a potential rate reduction: \$0.39/\$1,000**

**MOTION BY MEMBER MARSANO TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 5, AS PRESENTED
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER HOWIE**

ON THE QUESTION

Finance Committee Member Mailloux commented on the injection of Federal funding through the most recently passed stimulus bill noting the CARES Act had \$30 billion allocated. In the most recently passed bill, Congress appropriated \$82 billion. Based on the estimate that Brookline received roughly \$20,000 from the CARES Act, he would project the District would receive about \$54,000 through this Federal funding. There are some restrictions, but it is a very broadly defined category. He would encourage the Board to look towards those funds, which are slated to arrive, rather than appropriating \$40,000 to contingency.

Chairman Haag questioned when those funds are slated to arrive and was told it is believed they would remain available until September 30, 2024. That would have to be verified. They would be rolled out within 30 days of the law taking affect. They would need to be distributed to the states and the states would act from there.

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Brian Rater, Dennis Comeau, Rebecca Howie, Karen Jew, Alison Marsano, Erin Sarris, Kenneth Haag

7

Nay: Matthew Mailloux

1

MOTION CARRIED

The School Board recommends 5-0

The Finance Committee recommends 2-1

Article 6

Shall the voters of the Brookline School District adopt a school administrative unit budget of \$1,953,257 for the forthcoming fiscal year in which **\$361,236** is assigned to the school budget of this school district? This year's adjusted budget of \$1,918,864 with \$354,875 assigned to the school budget of this school district will be adopted if the article does not receive a majority vote of all the school district voters voting in this school administrative unit.

Estimated Net Tax Impact - \$3.48/\$1,000

**MOTION BY MEMBER MARSANO TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 6, AS PRESENTED
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER JEW**

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Dennis Comeau, Brian Rater, Rebecca Howie, Karen Jew, Alison Marsano, Erin Sarris, Kenneth Haag

7

Nay: Matthew Mailloux

1

MOTION CARRIED

The School Board recommends 5-0

The Finance Committee recommends 2-1

Article 7

Shall the school district accept the provisions of RSA 198:20-b providing that any school district at an annual meeting may adopt an article authorizing indefinitely, until specific rescission of such authority, the school board to apply for, accept and expend, without further action by the school district, unanticipated money from a state, federal or other governmental unit or a private source which becomes available during the fiscal year?

MOTION BY MEMBER MARSANO TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 7, AS PRESENTED

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER JEW

ON THE QUESTION

Member Marsano questioned if this article is presented in a single year or if it would come forward again. Superintendent Corey stated Article 8 has traditionally come up every year. This Article 7 is new language suggested by legal counsel that will eliminate Article 8 and portray a much clearer picture of the ability of the Board to accept funds from sources that become available. This is mainly in response to the CARES Act being new funds this year. We had to conduct a separate vote to accept those funds. This new wording would allow for acceptance of those funds in the future without having to go back to the Board for a specific vote.

Asked if the warrant would have to be renewed every year, Ms. Seeley referred to the language that states this authority would be in place “indefinitely, until specific rescission of such authority”. Superintendent Corey stated this would give the board the ability, indefinitely, to accept funds that become eligible for school districts.

Finance Committee Chair Rater stated the Finance Committee would not be taking a position on the article as it is not a financial impact. Superintendent Corey noted the Administration consulted legal counsel on this matter for another district. The Finance Committee can take positions on non-monetary articles if choosing to. Finance Committee Chair Rater stated, unless a member of the Committee felt otherwise, he would recommend not taking a position.

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Rebecca Howie, Karen Jew, Alison Marsano, Erin Sarris, Kenneth Haag
5

Nay:
0

MOTION CARRIED

The School Board recommends 5-0

Article 8 (Contingent Article)

If Article 7 passes, this article is unnecessary: to see if the school district voters will authorize the Brookline School District to access future year state and federal special education aid funds in the event that special education costs exceed budget limitations.

**MOTION BY MEMBER MARSANO TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 8, AS PRESENTED
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER JEW**

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Matthew Mailloux, Dennis Comeau, Brian Rater, Rebecca Howie, Karen Jew, Alison Marsano,
Erin Sarris, Kenneth Haag
8

Nay:
MOTION CARRIED

*The School Board recommends 5-0
The Finance Committee recommends 3-0*

Article 9

To see if the school district will vote to authorize, indefinitely until rescinded, to retain any unused portion of the year-end unassigned general funds, from the preceding fiscal year in subsequent fiscal years, provided that the amount of year-end unassigned general funds does not exceed, in any fiscal year, 2.0 percent (can be up to 5.0%) of the current fiscal year's net assessment under RSA 198:5.

**MOTION BY MEMBER MARSANO TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 9, AS PRESENTED
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER HOWIE**

ON THE QUESTION

Member Marsano questioned the mechanism for rescinding the authority. Superintendent Corey stated it would be an article on the warrant placed there by either the Board or a citizen petition. Asked if it would require a simple majority, Superintendent Corey stated his belief it would not require a super-majority.

Finance Committee Chair Rater asked for clarification, on the mechanism for expending the funds. Superintendent Corey stated the School Board would be required to conduct a public hearing and state the reasons for the expenditures. Input received would be utilized by the Board in making the decision. It is intended to be used in emergencies. Previously, it required approval of the School Board, Budget/Finance Committee, and BOE.

Finance Committee Chair Rater commented it seems like the form that this was originally was very much like a contingency fund. Now that it just requires a public hearing and a vote of just the School Board it does not feel like a contingency fund anymore. He is concerned with it being used to supplant the budget, and not return UFB to lower the tax rate.

Chairman Haag agreed commenting the other funding sources are more transparent.

Ms. Seeley noted if not doing this, the Board could be faced with a great deal should it suffer some catastrophic expense. The public hearing could stop the willy nilly spending there is fear of. In Hollis, it was used when that exact thing happened; one year it was for an elevator and another for a boiler. That was the only way they could have repaired those two items. It was more restrictive in how approval was obtained, but the School Board did not stop to make that happen. Had we not received the CARES Funding, Hollis and the COOP would have survived with their contingency and their retained fund balance, where the Brookline School District would have had to pay for hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of COVID related expense.

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug commented back when she was on the COOP School Board, the high school elevator failed the day before opening, and the balance had to be used to fix that near overnight if we were to open school. Ms. Seeley stated that to be correct. It is because of the other districts having that retained fund balance that the Administration brought the request forward.

Superintendent Corey remarked he felt obligated to put this out there because if you do not have this type of fund you would have potentially had to go into the negative and then you would have a special meeting to approve a deficit appropriation.

Member Marsano questioned if the District would move away from the contingency fund if this were in place. Ms. Seeley stated that direction could be taken. The other districts currently have both, which made more sense when the retained fund balance was more restrictive.

Finance Committee Chair Rater spoke of being conflicted; we have not had one and have never needed one. At the same time, always in the back of his head has been the worry of large unexpected special education expenses. He is concerned with it being used for non-emergency purposes in the future.

Superintendent Corey stated during his 8 years in the district, they have not utilized the fund in Hollis or the COOP. He does not believe a contingency fund has been used during his tenure. When looking at this as a long-term safeguard for taxpayers he believes it a good move to make. Finance Committee Chair Rater questioned the will of the Committee regarding taking a position. The Committee agreed a position would be taken.

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Dennis Comeau, Rebecca Howie, Karen Jew, Alison Marsano, Erin Sarris

5

Nay: Matthew Mailloux, Kenneth Haag

2

MOTION CARRIED

Finance Committee Chair Rater Abstained

The School Board recommends 4-1

The Finance Committee recommends 1-1-1

**MOTION BY MEMBER MARSANO TO MOVE THE CONTINGENCY FUND ARTICLE AHEAD OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION EXPENDABLE TRUST FUND ARTICLE
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER HAAG**

ON THE QUESTION

Vice Chairman Sarris commented the Special Education Trust is more restrictive, but at the same time, she believes that Trust is broad and there is a lot of potential need for that.

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Alison Marsano, Kenneth Haag	2
Nay: Rebecca Howie, Karen Jew, Erin Sarris	3

MOTION FAILED

- To see what action the Board will take regarding the Board's position on moving from a Finance Committee to a Budget Committee

**MOTION BY MEMBER HOWIE TO SUPPORT MOVING FROM A FINANCE COMMITTEE TO A BUDGET COMMITTEE
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER MARSANO**

ON THE QUESTION

Member Jew stated she is not in favor of a budget committee. A good portion of the summer was spent diving into this issue to see if peer towns and schools had significantly different outcomes based on their structure of a budget committee or finance committee. Part of that research was interviewing members of budget and finance committees. There were some great things that budget committees brought to their towns as far as really taking an advocacy role and an education piece that is above and beyond maybe what we are doing right now. The Selectboard can change the Charter of the Finance Committee to add those pieces in to make it more robust and give it a little bit more of that education piece, but the data did not really indicate that a budget committee would slow the tax impact to a town or a school district.

At the meeting they had, Finance Committee Chair Rater brought up the point of the Business Administrator having two masters in Hollis and two masters at the COOP and then this would just be another master in Brookline. She believes the Administration and the school board has historically done a great job in keeping the tax rate low. She is not supportive at all.

Member Marsano spoke of concerns with the way the budget committee is suggested to be selected; out of the group of people that show up for the meeting as opposed to running in an election for a term; we would be entrusting people who have never run a school district to suddenly have knowledge of the finances and budgeting for a school district. Through the data that was presented, she does not see any benefit to going in that direction.

Chairman Haag spoke of sharing the concerns mentioned. There are concerns around this requiring more work on the part of the Administration. A review of the data seems to be a ringing endorsement that our process is working. He is not supportive of the action.

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: 0

Nay: Rebecca Howie, Karen Jew, Alison Marsano, Erin Sarris, Kenneth Haag
5

MOTION FAILED

Finance Committee Chair Rater noted the Finance Committee would discuss the matter separately.

**MOTION BY MEMBER COMEAU THAT THE FINANCE COMMITTEE ADJOURN
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER MAILLOUX**

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Dennis Comeau, Matthew Mailloux, Brian Rater

3

Nay: 0

MOTION CARRIED

- To see what action the Board will take regarding **Policy DAF – Federal Grants**
 - 1st Reading 11-18-20
 - 2nd Reading 12-16-20

Given its 3rd reading;

**MOTION BY MEMBER JEW TO ACCEPT THE THIRD READING AND ADOPT POLICY DAF –
FEDERAL GRANTS
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER SARRIS**

ON THE QUESTION

No changes have been recommended since the time of the last reading.

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Rebecca Howie, Karen Jew, Alison Marsano, Erin Sarris, Kenneth Haag

5

Nay: 0

MOTION CARRIED

- To see what action the Board will take regarding **Policy EFD – Wellness**
 - 1st Reading 11-18-20
 - 2nd Reading 12-16-20

Given its 3rd reading;

MOTION BY MEMBER HOWIE TO ACCEPT THE THIRD READING AND ADOPT POLICY EFD – WELLNESS

**MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER JEW
ON THE QUESTION**

No changes have been recommended since the time of the last reading.

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Rebecca Howie, Karen Jew, Alison Marsano, Erin Sarris, Kenneth Haag

5

Nay:

0

MOTION CARRIED

- To see what action the Board will take regarding appointing Alana Justice as the School District Clerk

MOTION BY MEMBER MARSANO TO APPOINT ALANA JUSTICE AS THE SCHOOL DISTRICT CLERK

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER HAAG

ON THE QUESTION

Superintendent Corey commented on having a great candidate, and one who is very active in the school system. She has come forward, and he believes she intends to run for the position.

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Rebecca Howie, Karen Jew, Alison Marsano, Erin Sarris, Kenneth Haag

5

Nay:

0

MOTION CARRIED

The Board expressed its gratitude to Ms. Justice for volunteering to serve in this capacity.

Superintendent Corey requested confirmation the desire of the Board is to move forward with a virtual Deliberative Session.

Chairman Haag stated his support agreeing with the concerns stated around health and safety of the residents. Member Jew stated agreement.

MOTION BY MEMBER MARSANO TO ELECT TO APPROVE THE ALTERNATIVE ANNUAL MEETING FORMAT PURSUANT TO HB 1129, CHAPTER LAW 8, SESSION YEAR 2020 FOR THE 2021 SCHOOL DISTRICT ANNUAL DELIBERATIVE SESSION AND VOTING

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER JEW

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Rebecca Howie, Karen Jew, Alison Marsano, Erin Sarris, Kenneth Haag

5

Nay:

0

MOTION CARRIED

Superintendent Corey noted there to be two Petition Warrant Articles. One requests the listing of the tax rate on the ballot for each of the warrant articles and the other to form a study committee to look at whether the district should expand to grades 7 and 8 thus eliminating sending Brookline students to the COOP School District for middle school. The required public hearings will be scheduled.

Asked when the public hearing would occur, Superintendent Corey stated a review of the calendar would be done to make that determination. The hearings would be conducted virtually.

NON-PUBLIC SESSION

**MOTION BY MEMBER MARSANO THAT THE BOARD, BY ROLL CALL, GO INTO NON-PUBLIC SESSION PURSUANT TO RSA 91-A:3 II (a) THE DISMISSAL, PROMOTION OR COMPENSATION OF ANY PUBLIC EMPLOYEE AND RSA 91-A:3, II (c) TO DISCUSS A MATTER, WHICH IF DISCUSSED IN PUBLIC, WOULD LIKELY AFFECT ADVERSELY THE REPUTATION OF A PERSON, OTHER THAN A MEMBER OF THE BODY OR AGENCY ITSELF
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER HOWIE**

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Rebecca Howie, Karen Jew, Alison Marsano, Erin Sarris, Kenneth Haag

5

Nay:

0

MOTION CARRIED

The Board went into non-public session at 9:39 p.m.

The Board came out of non-public session at 10:12 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION BY MEMBER MARSANO TO ADJOURN
SECONDED BY MEMBER HOWIE**

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Kenneth Haag, Rebecca Howie, Karen Jew, Alison Marsano, Erin Sarris,

5

Nay:

0

MOTION CARRIED

The January 13, 2021 Joint Meeting of the Brookline School Board and Brookline Finance Committee was adjourned at 10:11 p.m.

Date _____ Signed _____