



**Town of Arlington, Massachusetts**  
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## **Budget Minutes 7/27/2009**

### **Budget Subcommittee of the Arlington School Committee**

**Minutes for Meeting of July 27, 2009, 8:00 a.m., School Committee Room**

**APPROVED August 26, 2009**

#### **Attendees**

*Committee Members* Joseph A. Curro, Jr., Chair  
Ronald Spangler

*Absent* Cindy Starks

*Administration* Interim Superintendent Kathleen Bodie  
Interim Assistant Superintendent Wallis Raemer

*Others* Richard Fanning, Finance Committee  
Vicki Ford  
Mary Cummings

#### **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 8:07 a.m.

#### **Public Participation**

The chair invited public participation. No members of the public wished to share any matters of concern during this portion of the meeting.

#### **Review of Minutes**

Mr. Curro pointed out an omission in the draft minutes of the June 17, 2009 meeting. He recommended that mention be made that there was brief discussion of the list of unfunded and underfunded mandates on local school districts that was compiled by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees.

***On a motion of Dr. Spangler, seconded by Mr. Curro, the minutes were unanimously adopted with the recommended change.***

#### **Recommendations Regarding Chief Financial Officer**

The chair distributed a number of salary surveys, demographic information, and list of districts searching for new business managers/CFOs, which were provided to him by Ms. Mazzarella.

Dr. Bodie opened the discussion by noting that the pool of openings is very limited. Of eighteen candidate applications received, only five are certified as a school business administrator. By contrast, Winchester had two times as many

applicants in their recent search.

An uncertified candidate could gain certification at the earliest in the spring. Certification is desirable, and hiring a candidate without certification would require a waiver.

In response to a question, Dr. Bodie reminded the subcommittee that just over \$91,000 has been budgeted for the position. Dr. Bodie felt that we would be best to target a range around \$100,000.

Dr. Spangler asked what the source of an additional \$9,000 would be, wondering if this might be achieved through turnover savings. Dr. Bodie stated that this would not be the case and that this funding would need to be achieved in some other way.

Dr. Spangler referenced a call, which he received from Finance Chair Al Tosti regarding the possibility of a budget director position to be shared between the schools and town. This is to be a potential area of consideration for the Town Reorganization Committee.

There was further discussion of the CFO position and salary range. Dr. Spangler suggested that we should look at a range that begins around the currently budgeted amount.

Ms. Ford wondered whether it might be possible to peg the salary to the budget in some manner. Ms. Cummings stressed how vital the position of CFO is and how necessary it is to attract a highly qualified candidate.

***Dr. Spangler moved to recommend a salary range of \$91,161 to \$104,000. Mr. Curro seconded the motion, which was adopted unanimously.***

#### **Discussion of Fiscal Year 2011**

Dr. Spangler asked the interim Superintendent about administrative discussions around the FY2011 budget that might have been held at the recent administrative retreat.

Dr. Bodie stated that she was targeting about \$2 million in reductions and expressed the concern that without some restructuring there would be significant inequities across grades and schools. She did not feel ready to discuss details, but suggested that this be placed on the agenda for the next Budget Subcommittee meeting.

Dr. Bodie stated that the Budget Subcommittee might want to think about holding a community forum to give people the opportunity to discuss what they value. She stressed the need to think strategically about how to roll out any restructuring proposals.

Ms. Cummings suggested that Stand for Children could help in putting together such a forum and stressed the importance of having Dr. Bodie talk directly to rank-and-file teachers.

Dr. Raemer wondered if other school systems were having these kinds of discussions so early in the school year. Dr. Spangler noted that there has been a previous series of Town and School forums to talk about values, and he stressed that any real discussion would need to be meaningful and direct.

Dr. Bodie suggested that we need to decide what rate of growth is acceptable. Dr. Spangler put forward the idea of "starting from scratch" to envision the kind of school system that we could build within existing constraints.

The interim Superintendent said that we are at the stage where cutting is very difficult. She stated that health care changes would alter the whole landscape. She felt that \$2 million is about the extent to which cuts can be made by merely paring the budget. Dr. Bodie said that there is still legislation pending which might be decided this fall and which could give Town Meeting more leeway.

Dr. Raemer worried that if Arlington gets too specific about proposed cuts in September and October, this could create a morale problem and cause teachers to start looking around. Dr. Spangler asked what we can do now to be in a position to make decisions further down the road .

Ms. Ford supported Dr. Spangler's suggestion to undertake a zero-based budgeting exercise and asserted that this recommendation did not appear to be very far apart from Dr. Bodie's thinking.

Ms. Cummings expressed support for the idea of a clever process. She mentioned that she had been reading a lot about charter schools lately and wondered if it might be possible to get an MASC response on recent charter school proposals.

#### **Next Meeting**

The date and time of the next subcommittee meeting were tentatively set for August 17 at 5:00 p.m. (*NOTE: The meeting was ultimately held on August 26, 2009.*)

#### **Adjournment**

***On motion of Dr. Spangler, seconded by Mr. Curro, the meeting was adjourned at 9:05 a.m. by unanimous vote.***