

January 31, 2012

Budget Lobbying Meeting

In attendance: Katie Faulkner, Maura O'Toole, Alison Bell, Kieran Fitzgibbon, Ben Williams, Lisa Foulger, Heshan Weeramuni, Susan Trotz, Genevieve Day, Carrie Fletcher, Jill Lazer, Guido Bartoloni, Lindsey Weeramuni, Don Wiest, Kelly Lawman

Also in attendance: - **City councilor John Connelly**, one of 4 at-large councilors and Chair of the Committee on Education

- He is still getting emails and phone calls from Curley community

Summary of how we got here got here for the councilor. When presented with the school's budget, the SSC decided we can't prioritize anymore. Knew it would probably result in staff cuts. SPC began campaign to restore funding.

John Connolly (JC): Is enrollment capped? No, ours went up. Capacity is 794. Projected enrollment is 824 for next year.

Lindsey Weeramuni (LW): Jeff doing good job, we work with him, we believe in school.

Actions resulted in meeting with John McDonough, CFO of BPS. We are still sending letters to school committee.

Summary of meeting: John arrived with 7 colleagues. This was a surprise. They asked us to tell them what we want. Curley response: No, you tell us what's going on. Our goal was to get info, why are numbers what they are. Curley hit hard because budget wasn't initially merged between the two schools.

JC: There is weight given for capacity in the funding. Theoretically, if you are at max capacity, formula should be working.

Carrie Fletcher (CF): History of budget. Was agreed each school would keep it's own budget. When BPS moved to weighted funding, that went away. There was a \$400K shortfall; we received a \$416K soft landing last year. There were not discussions with the Curley about how to deal with the transition with no soft landing money. Now we've lost \$212K.

Maura O'Toole: Can BPS show the numbers showing how much our ELL students get?

JC: The "ruse" is that BPS set the numbers by projections. Parents should line up reality with the projections.

Sue Trotz: Need to look at needs of the children.

CF: Weighted piece isn't flexible. Where is the other money in the district that is not in the "Budget"?

JC: There are special circumstances for some schools. The Mary Lyon is unique and has a heavy staffing model because it's fully inclusion. Would have lost \$1 mil from budget. Fenway HS, one of smallest HS, with 92% grad rate, they were enduring a \$400K cut because of the size. Mary Lyon was given 1yr soft landing and entered into period of "discussion" where they may get special status.

Maura: How do they decide what schools get to begin with? There are things they say we should have and then there is the reality of the budget. Why can't Menino come up with more money? "Circle of Promises" where is that money?

Kelly Lawson (KL): Where did the soft landing money come from? How does this compare to how much per student before?

Genevieve Day (GD): How many schools are negatively impacted?

JC: Overview of Budget Process

School committee buries City Council in data. "There is money there." "Charter schools not causing this problem."

Fiscal year is July 1-June 30. City budget includes BPS budget. BPS occupies 60% of budget. BPS only area that has a separate approval process. School committee only has power to increase the budget.(?) Committee has never gone against supt. wishes. SC votes on budget by 4th wed in March. If sc doesn't vote, budget is adopted. If approved, it gets wrapped into budget and delivered to city council. CC has until June 30 to approve city budget. Vote on capital, operating and then vote on school budget. CC will hold hearings from April to June including with bps. BPS come in for 15 hearing. CC rejects the school budget in second week of June and then negotiations begin.

Campaign to keep Boston libraries open was waged through the budget process.

Better if we band together with more schools. Find others that are losing essential funding.

Empowered parent community makes school committee take action. What we do matters. Keep lobbying the committee. Some do independent work. Claudio Martinez and Mary Taymer. Lobby lobby lobby.

Good that we're putting councilors on notice.

External Funding: everything that is not from city operating funds. Title I not included in budget. \$150million from federal funds, state funds, private money for funding specific programs. "Shouldn't feel like stealing money from another school."

LW: Our approach to date has been fact-based and respectful and firm, by choice. Trying to figure out how to tailor our message to continue to put pressure using our inside knowledge.

CF: Where is the other money? John McDonough saying that multi-building k-8s have more money. We have same issues. Can we get classified differently?

Heshan: Topic for 2/1 meeting. Cycle of families leaving, budget being cut, leading to more families leaving.

JC: Yes. Point out how good support services make the school successful. “What a school community should look like.” What that looks like when you lose money.

Maura: We are a true community school. We are what BPS says they want.

GD: We took on this big school. WE are doing great things and we need their support to continue. Weighted funding should help, but it isn't for the Curley.

JC: This shouldn't be happening at this type of school.

Maura: Point out our great art program. Cutting budget will make that harder.

Ben Williams: Use Supt. Johnson's language in talking points.

CF: Risk of talking about what we could lose. Don't want to suggest we lost specifics because BPS will say it was principal's decision.

LW: Need to emphasize that we are working with Jeff. We are doing what you (BPS) have asked us to do.

Sue T: Talk about the needs of our kid's. Some are not reading, hospitalized, have emotional problems. One guidance councilor is not enough.

JC: Talk about how internal kids are filling the AWC seats to show the success of the school, but don't focus on awc.

Don Wiest: What kind of coercion do we need to get something done? What is the stick? How do we motivate city councilors and the Mayor.

JC: The more pressure the better. Use public presence to show that you are not going away.

CF: Feel like we don't want to repeat ourselves.

JC: Pressure will still work. They want us to not come back and feel bad for asking for more money.

Kieran: What about Governor's state of the union address? What happens to the money he promised? JC doesn't know yet. So start lobbying state reps.

Maura: Are there plans to go to state of JP? Good thing to get on the radar.

CF: Who has merger agreement? Legally, what does it mean? Contract between whom??

Sue T: Should we go to other forums in other public places? Question to JC.

Heshan: What are the particulars for accreditation? State law. Can be found at ESEA website. Do you cut so much that you fail in your basic mission.

Sue: Not even close to losing accreditation. Not as much an issue with k-8 schools as with high schools.

LW: Challenge is to find other schools to partner with. Ask JC to send others our way.

Maura: We are the biggest K8 and we don't have enough budget?

Genevieve: It's just not working. I've seen it when things are working.

What are we asking for?

CF: We know there is money somewhere. Are we being too vague?

JC: Capital budget is about \$30 mil annually for bps.

Maura: Has anyone sat down to make sure we are getting what we are supposed to?

LW: Jeff has that information and is digging into it.

CF: Jeff says that things look like they are mapping correctly and is trying fix a few small things.

JC: School assignments: Trying to put together forum to discuss with parents. Looking for input. Artificial budget cap is to leverage pressure on the BTU. Committee is looking at "bumping." Let JC know the examples. BPS obscures it. There is also bumping where positions are eliminated.

Sue T: Bumping is strict seniority. There are many people without seniority that will lose jobs without bumping.

Kelly: Video of parents, staff and kids is in the works.

Heshan: Need translator. Spanish person speaks first. Effective if we could replicate the attendance. Set up phone tree.

Don: Model for video. Boston Public Market video. Video on a website with other info. Came with emails to Governor.

Maura: Need the mayor to hear us. Should engage Frank? Barnes. Chief of Accountability for BPS.

Heshan: Back to the “ask”. Ask for funding to be restored. Restore to levels before the merger. “Don’t cut us, refund us.”

Decision was made to cancel regular SPC meeting in favor of attending the School Committee meeting.