

FY20 Franklin Public Schools Budget

By Dr. Sara Ahern, Superintendent

I want to keep the community informed about the FY20 school department budget including the development process and next steps.

The Administrative Team and the School Committee have been working for over two months to develop the current budget. On Tuesday, March 12, the School Committee approved a budget which is 5.68% increase over last year's budget at \$66,826,115. This budget includes "level service" plus some funding for a few additional areas we determined as "critical needs", including but not limited to adding adjustment counselors, some specialized program teachers, classroom teachers at FHS, and Kindergarten ESPs.

On February 5, at the [School Committee's legislative forum](#), information from the recently released Governor's budget was presented and discussed. A concerning financial picture was portrayed for Franklin, primarily because the expansion of the Charter school would draw additional tuition away from town revenue sources. We anticipated a funding gap, the magnitude of which had been unknown. Nonetheless, on Tuesday 3/12/19, the School Committee voted to support my proposed budget because they felt that it represented the best interests of the students in Franklin.

Two important discussions related to the FY 20 budget picture were held at the School Committee and Town Council meetings recently, as the FY 20 budget picture becomes clearer. While there is much uncertainty because the state budget still has many steps yet to unfold, we are expecting a very tight budget for FY 20 and beyond and the magnitude of the projected shortfall is still being analyzed. At this time, the projected shortfall is approximately \$2.3 million, and is outlined in the [Town Administrator's recent memo](#) to Town Council, School Committee, and the Finance Committee.

In my [memo](#) to School Committee, Town Council, and the Finance Committee, I outline the challenges we face in educating students today. The memo concludes, "It seems that the School Department's budget will not be fully supportable given the town's current fiscal climate, necessitating reductions. This was previewed during the budget development process as a gap that would need to be closed. Certainly no decisions have been made and there is still some uncertainty about state funding, but I believe I will find myself in a position of reluctantly recommending the following to the School Committee:

1. Reduction in expenses
2. Loss of positions and services
3. Examination of new revenues including fees and accepting school choice"

My understanding from other communities is that budgets are similarly tight, however that doesn't take the sting out of information like this. We will be keeping the community informed as more information develops throughout the rest of the budget development process.