

Tuesday, Oct. 17, 2023

## Mayor's Newton Update



I am disappointed that the City Council last night did not approve my proposal to transform one-time funding into additional revenue, primarily for the operating budget of the Newton Public Schools and also for City operations. The plan would have created predictable, dependable funding for NPS well into the future.

Ten City Councilors voted to provide the funding; thirteen voted no. The “no” votes were for very different reasons - wanting less funding for NPS, wanting more funding for NPS, wanting flexibility annually on decisions for any funding, wanting to decide how the Newton School Committee would use the funding, wanting the funding for capital investments, and more.

Based on the comments from City Councilors last night, I can see that there exists no consensus among them on whether/how/when to provide additional operating funds for NPS, which is concerning.

The checks and balances of the executive and legislative branches in Newton are an extremely important aspect of our local government. These checks and balances also mean that there is no way for me as Mayor to provide NPS with additional operating funds without support from the City Council. I will continue to work with them to try and find a way forward that is sustainable and that a majority can support.

My years as Mayor and as a Newton School Committee member, the person proposing the City of Newton Budget and the allocation to the Newton Public Schools, have reinforced for me the need for additional funding for students even when considering that the national trend in declining student enrollment has materialized here in Newton.

My commitment to providing additional funds for Newton Public Schools can be seen in my actions as Mayor:

- I have ensured that Newton Public Schools each and every year receives at least a 3.5% increase in their budget (with the exception of the onset of the pandemic when we cut back on funding across the board, including to NPS; I made sure to add back in that \$1.5 million to NPS the following fiscal year).

- I provided during the pandemic \$24 million in one-time federal ARPA and CARES funds to NPS (on top of the federal funds NPS received directly) to allow our schools to not just stabilize, but to increase the support for the extraordinary needs of students.
- I proposed an operating override to provide the funds that our students require recognizing that a generation of students will need our help, that student needs will remain greater than they once were, and that inflation resulting from the pandemic has created significant budgetary pressures.
- I proposed to the City Council in late August that we transform a windfall of one-time funds into an ongoing stabilization fund to provide additional financial resources that Newton Public Schools need.

I will continue to propose ways to support NPS. The financial forecast we recently delivered to the City Council includes increasing the NPS allocation by 3.5% over current funding in the spring. Once we receive the bids on the Lincoln-Eliot project at the end of this month and understand the costs, I hope to be coming forward to the Council with proposed funding for one-time NPS needs. This funding will complement the work already done – the addition at Oak Hill Middle School and the renovated new home for Newton Early Childhood Program – and work underway for new/substantially renovated buildings for Lincoln-Eliot, Countryside, and Franklin and an addition at the Horace Mann Elementary School.

I will craft Budgets and funding proposals to support the many, many needs across our City from paving our roads to public safety to educating our children, while continuing to achieve the highest rating possible, a triple A, from our credit rating agency.

We are a financially stable city that lives within our means. We will continue to provide our community with services and programs, schooling and safety, even as we seek legislative consensus on our priorities.