



# LINCOLN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**BUCKNER M. CREEL**  
**ADMINISTRATOR FOR BUSINESS AND FINANCE**

August 25, 2016  
revised September 8, 2016

To: Lincoln School Committee  
Becky McFall, Superintendent  
From: Buck Creel, Administrator for Business and Finance  
Subject: FY18 Budget Guidelines

**Introduction** The preparation of the annual school budget remains one of the most important tasks undertaken by the School Committee and Administration. It is through the budget process that the District seeks community support for its priorities, educational programs and operational needs. It remains our goal to deliver high quality educational programs with the intent of every student achieving their fullest potential in academic, physical, social and emotional development.

The budget development process begins with a presentation of the Superintendent's Preliminary Budget to the School Committee, which, through a series of public discussions will become the School Committee's Proposed Budget for review by the Town's Finance Committee, and ultimately be presented to the Annual Town Meeting for approval. At the same time, a parallel process occurs on the same schedule for the development of a budget for approval by the School Committee for the operation of the schools at Hanscom Air Force Base, within the cost parameters of the contract with the federal government. Because the most significant cost to operate the District is the cost for personnel, and since both faculties are employed under the same collective bargaining agreements, it is critical that both budgets are developed in concert. Further, the organizational structure of the schools requires an alignment of both the Lincoln appropriation and the federal contract.

This memo outlines issues that the School Committee may wish to consider in forming its recommendation and guidelines for the Administration to follow in the development of the FY18 school budget.

**Process** Several years ago, the Administration introduced a refined process to address two issues. First, the relatively short window in which the budget is presented, reviewed, adjusted and approved prior to submission in January for consideration by the Annual Town Meeting creates a challenge which requires a thoughtful but streamlined process. Second, the early timing of our Town Meeting presents a challenge by requiring us to prepare a budget proposal at the start of the school year, at a time when the attentions of teachers, principals, and program directors are focused on beginning academics, and before the planned activities for the current year are underway, much less significantly completed.

To address these issues the Administration has undertaken a process to align the District's objectives and priorities and the School Improvement Plans through strategic goal planning. This creates a structure in which improvement initiatives, program development and program improvement efforts are planned in advance so that budgeting can be somewhat more predictable and helps focus available resources on agreed-upon initiatives. The other adjustment to the District budget process (which allows principals and teachers to focus more on the classroom) is the adoption of a method in which site-based management funds are budgeted on a per-pupil basis and provided to each school as a lump-sum for further allocation in the Spring, at a time when teachers and principals can make more informed decisions about proper allocations.

These site-based management (SBM) funds are used to support, sustain and enhance the regular academic operations of the schools. Uses of SBM funds include consumables, art supplies, small durable items such as calculators and pencil sharpeners, replacement/upgrade books for classroom resource areas, program supplements such as outside storytellers and performers, etc. SBM funds are not used for personnel salaries; facilities expenses such as equipment repairs or electric bills; operational support expenses such as copier maintenance contracts. While this strategy affects a very small portion of the overall budget (1.5%), it allows for more informed use of resources and more efficient budgeting. It is the Superintendent's recommendation that we continue with these adjustments with appropriate operational modifications to ensure that the process remains transparent and effective.

The administrative team, in collaboration with the School Committee, works to establish the District Strategic Plan. Several strategic objectives are identified, with strategic priorities further outlining how each goal will be achieved and measured. It is our recommendation that we continue to rely on these strategic objectives and priorities to guide decisions about resource allocation and budget requests.

Over the course of the last several budget cycles, we have achieved greater efficiency in the budget. Few, if any, opportunities for further large reductions without changing school programs remain.

Since FY03 the Administration has managed the school budget carefully and ended each year "in the black." This careful management, along with the generous support of the community, the contract with the federal government, collaboration with the Finance Committee on funding strategies for reimbursements (Special Education Circuit Breaker, Medicaid and E-rate), and the Administration's consistent attention to grant opportunities has allowed the District to offer a high quality educational experience for all of our students. We have reduced fees to allow more children to participate in special programs (athletics), created new programs funded through the budget (instrumental music, engineering technology, expanded foreign language), advanced efforts in curriculum development, provided a meaningful mentor program for new teachers and administrators and offered a broader-based professional development program for teachers. Finally, participating in the Capital Planning process supports the operational budget by funding large-scale technology improvements and large facilities projects through direct warrants on a periodic basis.

In spite of these efforts, the budget is affected by the current state of the economy in general and by the health of the Commonwealth and Town finances in particular. The School Committee and the Administration need to review the impact of these factors on available funds, to be sensitive to changing conditions and to look to the Finance Committee for guidance as appropriate.

**Budget Considerations** The Administration is in the process of preparing its FY18 Preliminary Budget for School Committee review. During the budget development process, we will view our decisions through the lens of our Core Values to ensure that the Preliminary Budget we present is internally consistent with the values we hold:

- Excellence and Innovation in Teaching and Learning
- Respect for Every Individual
- Collaboration and Community

We request that the School Committee discuss the budget process and consider the ideas listed in this memo in order to develop and approve guidelines for the development of the school budget.

Goal-focused guidelines

1. The budget is the primary way that the School Committee and the Town supports the District's educational vision, and our Strategic Priorities are the primary consideration when building the proposed annual budget.
2. Maintain class sizes which benefit student learning and adhere to the School Committee's Policy on Class Size and the requirements of the contract to operate the schools at Hanscom AFB. A review of projected enrollments using the District's cohort survival model will be presented with the Preliminary Budget, along with recommendations for changes in numbers of classrooms as required.
3. Ensure that improvement initiatives are aligned with the District's strategic objectives and priorities. Potential improvement initiatives will be presented, along with a discussion of funding required.
4. Maintain sufficient resources to sustain curriculum development initiatives.
5. Maintain the School Committee's commitment to provide high quality professional development and mentoring for new teachers and administrators. The orientation and integration of new faculty into effective teaching teams remains an important consideration and has been aided by the School Committee's support of the mentor teacher program.
6. Comply with the criteria set forth in the contract to operate Hanscom schools and maintain comparability to the Lincoln program. Several factors will affect development of the Hanscom portion of the budget:
  - a. Careful consideration of this guideline may be required in light of the ever-changing enrollment at the Hanscom schools; even though the housing project was completed in August 2011, we are still experiencing an impact on enrollment.
  - b. The Department of Defense (DoDEA) awarded a contract to the District in February 2012, so FY17 is the final budget year in which the price for various enrollment bands is known. DoDEA will probably issue an RFP for continued operation of the Hanscom Schools before December, while the budget is still under discussion. We will continue to develop the budget in coordination with the response to the RFP. Pending additional enrollment discussions, the administration recommends setting the Hanscom budget at the Band 3 (550-599 students) price.
  - c. Planning for FY18 should assume that the Hanscom Middle School will operate in the new school facility out of the construction warranty period which began in April 2016. This will require the estimation of operating costs, without any significant actual experience.
  - d. Planning will continue for the replacement of the Hanscom Primary School, with contract award anticipated by November 2016 and a construction start in January 2017. For school year 2017-2018, the Hanscom Primary School will operate in the temporary facility now vacant and being readied for their occupancy.
  - e. The portion of the Hanscom enrollment with special needs will continue to increase.
7. Carefully consider our role as stewards of Town and federal facilities, plan for sensible restorative and preventative maintenance, and consider historical spending patterns and current facilities assessments to develop maintenance budgets. This issue must be considered in light of the facilities projects under discussion at the Lincoln School and planned for the Hanscom schools.

#### Budget process-focused guidelines

1. Include core program costs in the base budget.

2. As appropriate, maintain level services, i.e., this year's program projected at FY18 costs.
3. Develop analysis of FTE allocations for special subject areas and staffing needs for existing programs and deploy resources, as necessary, in line with projected enrollments.
4. Review programs which include positions initiated or partially funded by expiring gifts, grants, fees and tuitions or recently adjusted programs and examine the financial implications for future costs.
5. Include considerations related to:
  - a. cost of living adjustments for non-bargaining group employees
  - b. contract negotiations with the Lincoln Teachers Association during the 2016-2017 school year.
  - c. a follow-on contract for bus service for the Lincoln School.
  - d. impact of projected increases in the cost of health benefits directly on the Hanscom budget and indirectly on Town finances
6. Carefully monitor usage of fuel and energy, review historical data and build projections in collaborations with the District's energy vendors and collaborative partners. Incorporate the long-term energy prices locked in during FY15.
8. Apply special revenue funds as agreed to with the Finance Committee.
9. Maintain METCO enrollment at 91 students if possible but budget for the anticipated enrollment.
10. Project level funding from grants, state aid and revolving accounts, e.g., tuition and fees. Recent experience continues to validate this guideline for the federal grants and some of the state grants as these fund amounts have remained relatively static. Include the impact of the termination of the Full-Day Kindergarten Grant.
11. Identify opportunities for savings through both bottom-up and top-down reviews of budget proposals.

**Timeline** Attached is a suggested budget timeline for the School Committee's consideration. Historically, the budget preparation process begins in early September, in advance of the Finance Committee's (FinCom) guidance, with preparation of the Superintendent's Preliminary Budget. The Administrative Council began its process in August and will meet prior to the next scheduled School Committee meeting. The presentation of the Superintendent's Preliminary Budget, currently scheduled for November 5<sup>th</sup>, kicks off the School Committee's active review of the proposed program.

The Administration hopes to receive the FinCom's guidance by October 15<sup>th</sup>. In past years, the cost to maintain level services (this year's program projected at next year's costs) has exceeded the budget amount provided by the FinCom guidance.

**Next Steps.** The Administration asks the School Committee to review these proposed considerations and the suggested budget timeline and provide us with your guidance for the FY18 budget preparation process.

# Lincoln Public Schools

## FY18 Budget Development Timeline

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### September

- 8 – Present budget guidelines memo and proposed timeline to School Committee
- 16 – Administrative Council deadline to submit improvement initiative proposals and contracted services amounts.
- 21 to 30 – Budget discussions: Central Office administrators with the Campus administrative teams, discuss improvement initiatives and special considerations, and review projected enrollment and classroom staffing.

### October

- 4 – Finalized budget recommendations to Superintendent

### November

- 3 – Present preliminary budget overview to School Committee
- 7 – Post preliminary budget information on District website
- 17 – Additional budget presentations to School Committee

### December

- 1 – Budget discussions with School Committee
- 7 [T] – First budget discussion with Finance Committee
- 15 – Budget discussions with School Committee

### January 2017

- 5 – Budget discussions with School Committee (**Budget Hearing with public notice**)
- 19 – Scheduled School Committee vote on budget proposal
- 25 [T] – Second budget discussion with Finance Committee

### February

- 9 to 20 – Develop Town Meeting presentation

### March

- 9 – Review Town Meeting presentation draft
- 25 – Town Meeting

### April

- 3 – Budget templates and site-based management funds amounts distributed for allocation



**TOWN OF LINCOLN**  
MIDDLESEX COUNTY MASSACHUSETTS

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LINCOLN TOWN OFFICES  
16 Lincoln Road  
Lincoln, MA 01773

To: All Budgeting Agencies, Town of Lincoln

From: Lincoln Finance Committee

Re: FY 2018 Budget Guideline

Date: October 17, 2016

The Lincoln Finance Committee met on October 17 to establish a budget guideline for Town agencies for Fiscal Year (FY) 2018. After a review of available funds, revenue projections, the Town's overall financial obligations, and the general economic situation as well as providing for fixed costs (such as pensions and insurance), the Finance Committee has set a budget guideline for the FY '18 non-override (base) budget that will permit a 2.5% increase in operating expenses, exclusive of fixed costs. Accordingly, each Lincoln budgeting agency is asked to submit a base budget that is limited to 2.5% growth as compared to the FY '17 budget as passed at Town Meeting in March 2016.

With respect to Lincoln Sudbury Regional High School, this 2.5% guideline does not include pensions and insurance.

This year's budget is under significant pressure from increases and uncertainties in health insurance costs. Your budget submissions should be similar in form to those prepared in the prior year. The Committee asks that the submissions indicate the key differences, if any, in terms of personnel, services, and programs between your FY '17 and FY '18 budgets. Given the continued uncertainty in the economy, the Town's existing debt burden, the Town's post-employment benefit liabilities and the potential future capital expenditures facing Lincoln, we ask you to compile your FY '18 budget without consideration of an operating override.

Following adjustments to include routine IT expenditure in the School and Town operating budgets, the guideline for the FY '18 budget "cash capital" is set at \$461,000. An additional \$205,000 is allotted to fund warrant articles that will appear as "Other Appropriations." These warrant articles include maintenance items from the Town, Schools, and Library. Requested amounts for all capital and maintenance warrant articles should have already been submitted to the Capital Planning Committee. Aside from capital and maintenance warrant articles, any budgeting agency, board, commission, or committee that plans to sponsor a warrant article that falls into the category of "Other Appropriations" should submit information at the same time as the base budgets, so that there is sufficient time for review of the request and for revisions, if necessary.

Capital items that are recommended for bonding or capital exclusions will be considered separately. The Finance Committee will work with the Capital Planning Committee and the Board of Selectman to minimize year-to-year changes in excluded debt and the median tax bill.

In order to meet the requirements of the budgeting process, we ask that you submit your base budget to the Town Finance Director no later than Monday, November 21, 2016. On Wednesday, December 7, 2016, the Finance Committee will convene its First Joint Budget Workshop for all agencies to review the budget proposals for the principal budgeting agencies. The meeting will be held in the multipurpose room on the ground floor of the Hartwell Building of the Lincoln Public Schools. Dinner will be provided from 6:30 to 7:00 pm, and the meeting will start at 7:00 pm. The Finance Committee will provide a brief overview of the financial situation of the Town. Each budgeting agency should limit its presentation to 20 minutes, so that there is time for discussion and so the meeting can conclude by 9:30 to 10:00 pm. Please RSVP, so that sufficient dinner can be provided.

The Second Joint Budget Workshop is currently scheduled for Monday, January 23, 2017 at 7:30 pm - location TBD.

The Finance Committee looks forward to a collaborative effort to develop a FY '18 budget that meets the needs of the Town. We appreciate the hard work, cooperation, good spirit, and careful consideration from many boards, committees, town employees and other individuals that are a necessary part of this process.