

# Stoneham Override Study Committee

<b>Date:</b>	August 20, 2025
<b>Time:</b>	7p
<b>Location:</b>	Stoneham Town Hall Hearing Room
<b>Present:</b>	Joe Joffe – Chair  Nick Stavre, Jackie Mahoney, Heidi Bilbo, Brendan Dowdle, Eric Scruggs, Cory Mashburn
<b>Absent:</b>	Stephen Terno – Vice Chair
<b>Guests:</b>	Dennis Sheehan – Town Administrator, Dr. Kristin DeFrancisco – Superintendent , Jaime Wallace – School Committee Chair, Dr. Kathryn Castonguay – Assistant Superintendent, Leia Secor – Town-Wide Budget Director

	<p><b><u>AGENDA</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Approval of Minutes from previous meetings - Vote Required</li> <li>2. Stoneham School Department Presentation and Discussion</li> <li>3. Structure of the Report - review written sections and feedback</li> <li>4. Upcoming meetings &amp; Upcoming business</li> <li>5. Other business - Non-Deliberative</li> <li>6. Adjournment - Vote Required</li> </ol>

<b>1.</b>	<p><b>Approval of Minutes from previous meeting - Vote Required</b></p> <p>The committee discussed and approved the 8/05 and 8/11 meeting minutes.</p>	<p><b>Mr. Stavre introduced a motion to approve the meeting minutes for the 8/05 meeting; Mr. Mahoney seconded; Ms. Bilbo abstained; all else in favor.</b></p> <p><b>Mr. Stavre then introduced a motion to approve the meeting minutes for the 8/11 meeting; Mr. Mahoney seconded; Mr. Mashburn abstained; all else in favor.</b></p>
<b>2.</b>	<p><b>Stoneham School Department Presentation and Discussion</b></p>	

A panel representing the department presented information about departmental staffing, demand for services, and budgetary data.

Some highlights were:

- Understanding of funding sources:
  - Federal funding sources include ESSA fund, IDEA Funding, Nutrition Funding, and ESSER Funding.
  - From the state schools receive funding from Chapter 70 Aid. The growth of this aid over time has not kept up with the actual costs of running the district. Chapter 70 funding level is not just a Stoneham challenge and is something that school leadership is advocating for changes to Chapter 70 formulas in the future. This is a long term issue and any solution to increase Chapter 70 aid is uncertain and even if there are reforms would likely be many years away.
  - There was also discussion that even if changes to Chapter 70 aid were to happen that alone would not be sufficient to address the budget gaps facing the district.
  - Stoneham also receives circuit breaker 71A funds for the implementation of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and out of district placements. Circuit breaker funds do not cover 100% of costs, the percentage that is not funded becomes an unfunded mandate.
  - The district has revolving accounts that can only be used for limited purposes.
  - The district regularly applies for grants, including Federal and competitive grants offered by the state. Grants can be challenging to qualify for and need staff resources to apply for the grant and administer the grant.
  - Rental income is used to offset utility costs currently and is not a significant source of revenue. The long term goal for rental income is to utilize this income for general building maintenance.
    - Rental sources include outside sports groups, outside drama clubs, and youth groups.
    - Rental fee schedule was recently updated and the new high school auditorium is being made available.
  - Athletic User Fees and Summer Clinics: Currently any revenue generated from athletic clinics is used to subsidize the athletic program, however the long term plan was to utilize this income for field maintenance. (Replacement of turf fields)
  - Pre-K Tuition: SPS is mandated by DESE to provide services and/or PK for those students age 3 and above who qualify. Our program is integrated and typical peers are assessed an annual tuition.
  - Advertising rules are in place as fields open at the high school and that is being contemplated.

- Unfunded mandates include: Special Education, Multi-Language Learners, McKinney Vento (Protection For Unhomed Students), Regular Transportation (Students Living 2.0 Miles Or Greater From School), Special Education Transportation (In District And Out Of District), Educator Mentor And Professional Development Programming, Unemployment.
- There was a discussion of funds received by Stoneham as a result of the Fair Share Amendment. The panel does not believe that the district is receiving significant funds as a result of the amendment.
- Current salary challenges:
  - The district has seven different labor groups: Cafeteria, Secretaries, ESP, Stipends, Custodians, Unit B (Stoneham Administrative Unit), Unit A (Teachers).
  - With the current- now expired contract, salaries for the ESP, Clerical, and Food Service unit were brought to market levels.
  - The Custodian Unit is the only unit currently working with a current contract, all other units' contracts have expired.
  - Unit A salaries are 30%+ out of market currently (this gap has grown from roughly 12% a few years ago). We are close to the bottom of market salary at the lowest step and bottom out in the rankings quickly as teachers achieve additional steps in their compensation.
- The gap in market salaries and current budgetary uncertainty are having significant impacts on staffing. Candidates for filling open roles are turning down job offers due to salary differences and current staff are leaving Stoneham for other districts to gain an increase in pay.
- Without adequate funding, students' education is directly impacted in the following ways: staffing instability, professional development constraints, reduced capacity for student support, interrupted continuity of services, increased workload for remaining staff, equity gaps widen, and long-term implementation delays.
- If we are not competitive with salary then we cannot leverage our grant opportunities that were meant to help with costs.
  - An example provided was: If we cannot hire a Speech and Language Therapist because of non competitive salary, we will need to provide the service through a consultant. This will render about a \$110,000 price tag instead of an \$68,000 dollar one (competitive salary). Costing the district an additional \$42,000 per year.
- Funding challenges can also mean that we need to use additional out of district placements which typically costs more than being able to support students in the district.
- There was a discussion of the return on investing additional resources into the school can mean retaining staff, providing professional development to changes in the classroom, and providing services within the district which should mean improved student outcomes.
- There was a request to get additional data regarding what the costs would be to bring each labor unit up to market salary.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● There were questions addressed regarding the staffing of SELC and how staff are counted when levels are reported.</li> <li>● There was a discussion on the construction of the new high school and how the debt exclusion works. The funds linked to the debt exclusion have to be used for construction and any unused funds or grants earned from the construction would be used to reduce the principal and interest tied to the debt exclusion.</li> <li>● The panel discussed demographic changes to Stoneham including the impacts on qualifying for Federal nutrition assistance at South and potential future enrollment needs as the town grows.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Mr. Mashburn then introduced a motion to take a 5-minute recess; Mr. Mahoney seconded; all in favor.</b></p>
<p><b>3.</b></p>	<p><b>Structure of the Report - review written sections and feedback</b></p> <p>There were no written sections to discuss at this meeting.</p>	<p><b>No votes needed</b></p>
<p><b>4.</b></p>	<p><b>Upcoming meetings &amp; Upcoming business</b></p> <p>The committee discussed agenda items, speakers, and topics for upcoming meetings.</p> <p>Some highlights were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The committee discussed having public comment at the next meeting.</li> <li>● The group talked over the writing process and potentially consulting department heads as needed.</li> <li>● The committee discussed adding in voting on central questions facing the committee to future agendas as standing items.</li> <li>● There was a request to get more details on general town costs and key cost drivers.</li> </ul>	<p><b>No votes needed</b></p>
<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>Other business – Non-Deliberative</b></p>	<p><b>No votes needed</b></p>
<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b>Adjournment - Vote Required</b></p>	<p><b>Mr. Mashburn then introduced a motion to adjourn; Mr. Dowdle seconded; all in favor.</b></p>