

**Minutes of the Public Forum in Spanish
of the Salem School Committee
Monday, November 24, 2025
211 Lafayette St, Salem
In-Person Meeting**

Members Present: Mayor Pangallo, Vice Chair Cruz, AJ Hoffman, Beth Anne Cornell and Veronica Miranda

Others in Attendance: Superintendent Stephen Zrike, Deputy Superintendent Carbone and Assistant Superintendent Pauley

Members Absent: Amanda Campbell and Mary Manning

Call of Meeting to Order

Vice Chair Cruz called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm and informed the public that the docket contains the public participation procedure and how to access English as well as Portuguese interpretation.

Opening Updates

Superintendent Zrike provided background information about the various programs at the schools as well as the budget deficit. Camila Salazar, Director of Financial Operations presented the slides regarding the reconfiguration updates. Superintendent Zrike continued with the presentation of the slides.

Public Forum

Vice Chair Cruz provided guidelines for public comments.

Yenny Andujar, Bentley Academy Innovation School Parent

Ms. Andujar said that she was in favor of Scenario 2 where Bentley would move to Saltonstall so that the dual language program can be expanded.

Kelly Quinn, Bentley Academy Innovation School Adjustment Counselor

Ms. Quinn said she has had the privilege to learn a second language and is proud that Salem Public Schools is having this forum in Spanish as it shows commitment by the school district to not only include but also to center and elevate the voices of Spanish speakers. Ms. Quinn noted that the lack of a bigger group tonight is not a lack of commitment by our families and staff but a lack of opportunity as tonight was the first time the School Committee has been offered in Spanish. Ms. Quinn added that any space for the dual language program should continue to ensure a "wall to wall" model. The dual language program is not just a Bentley but a district program. Ms. Quinn stated that the current space at Bentley does not allow for expansion of the program. Ms. Quinn also mentioned the need to look into the start time, hiring of staff and improved facilities to ensure equitable access. Ms. Quinn continued that the dual language

programs support enrollment and retention of students, since the local and charter schools do not have this option. Ms. Quinn concluded that the dual language program creates a sense of belonging and the need for the district and school committee to maintain and strengthen its commitment to dual language is not only consistent with stated values as a district but also guarantees that they are put into practice.

Closing

Vice Chair Cruz closed the public forum portion of the meeting.

Adjournment

Member Cornell made a motion to adjourn at 6:47 pm. Member Miranda seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by,

Shirley Dorai

Executive Assistant to the School Committee & Superintendent



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Elementary Reconfiguration Updates

November 24, 2025



What is Happening?

Right now, Salem schools are facing major funding issues.

- It costs more than ever to run schools, however we did not receive enough funding from the state.
- Funding for our schools comes from the city and state.
 - Salem Public Schools staff create a budget request based on program needs.
 - The City identifies the percentage increase for the School Department; most of SPS funding comes from the city of Salem.
 - The School Committee approves the budget & sends it to City Council for final approval.
- Last year, expenses were more than our budget, leaving us with a budget gap of \$4.9M; we needed to cut 56.5 positions.



What is Happening?

- Next year, we expect to be \$4.5M to \$5M short.

One of our biggest problems is “Chapter 70” funding.

- This is the main source of state funding.
- Chapter 70 is a formula based on student enrollment, demographics, & a city’s ability to pay for its schools. The formula has not kept pace with increasing costs.
- Salem does not receive as much money as we need, & we pay more than cities similar to us.

The District needs to find ways to reduce costs and to offer ALL students high-quality education.

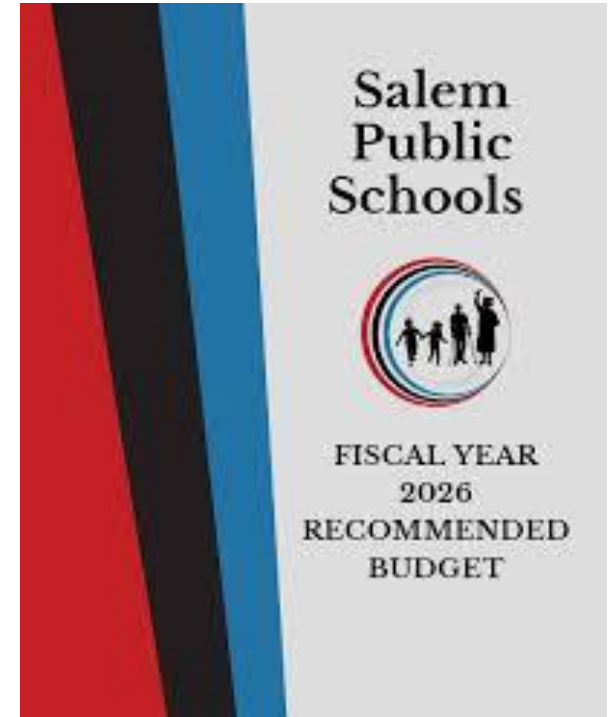


What Are Our Options?

SPS has several ways to address the budget, but none of them are easy.

Options could include:

- Reducing district staff
- Reducing non-classroom positions in schools
- Increasing class sizes
- Increasing caseloads for staff serving multilingual learners and students with disabilities
- Closing Pre-K classrooms
- Reducing/sharing special programming like art and music
- Reducing transportation
- Merging (or “reconfiguring”) elementary schools



What Are Our Options?

None of these options alone would fix the budget.

- However, a combination of options could make a large impact.
- The district needs to consider options that help the budget now and in the future.

We are also advocating for more Chapter 70 funding. See slide 30 in the appendix for more information.



Why Reconfiguration?

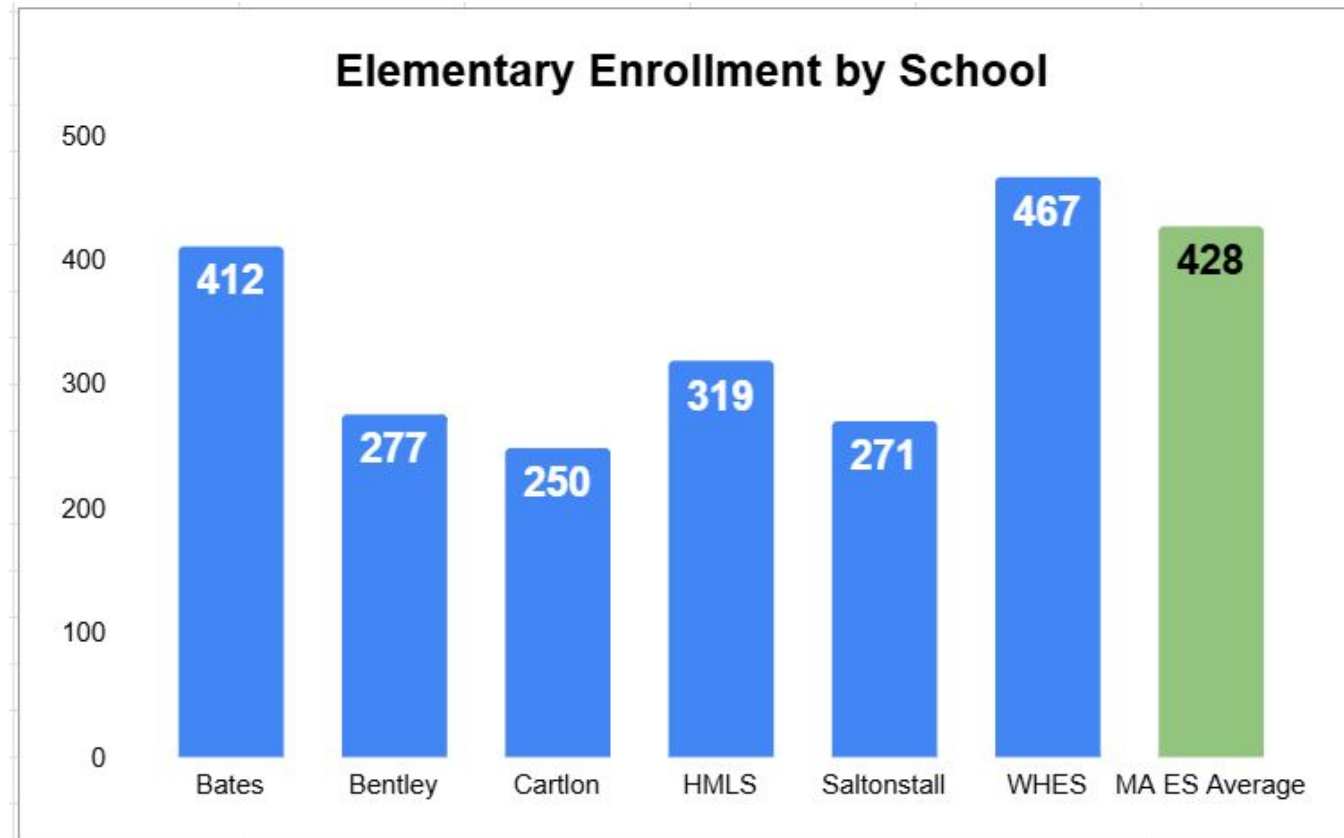
SPS is asking the School Committee to consider “reconfiguring” elementary schools.

- Salem has more school buildings than most other towns/cities of our size.
 - School buildings are very expensive to operate. For each building, we need to pay for utilities, repairs, non-classroom staffing, and more.
- We have over 200 empty seats across our elementary schools.
- We also have enough unused classrooms to fit another 1,300+ students.



Comparisons

- The average size of a MA elementary school is 428 students
- Districts with between 3500-4500 students in MA have on average 7.5 schools



Our Goals

We understand that conversations about the budget and school reconfiguration are very hard.

- Nobody at SPS wants to cut costs or cause disruption for kids or families.
- However, if we don't act, we won't have enough money to run our schools.

As we look at the budget, we are committed to the following goals:

- To elevate the **learning experience** of every student
- To advance our core value of **equity**
- To ensure long-term **financial sustainability**
- To **engage with parents, school staff, and the community** to find the best possible solution.



Reconfiguration Scenarios

Scenario 1

Saltonstall & Horace Mann merge at Horace Mann building
Saltonstall building is repurposed rather than closed

Scenario 4

Carlton & Saltonstall schools merge at Saltonstall building
Carlton building offline or becomes early childhood center

Scenario 2

Saltonstall & Horace Mann merge at Horace Mann
AND
Bentley moves into Saltonstall building
Bentley/ECC building becomes early childhood center

Scenario 5

Carlton & Horace Mann merge at Horace Mann building
Carlton building offline or becomes early childhood center



What We're Hearing

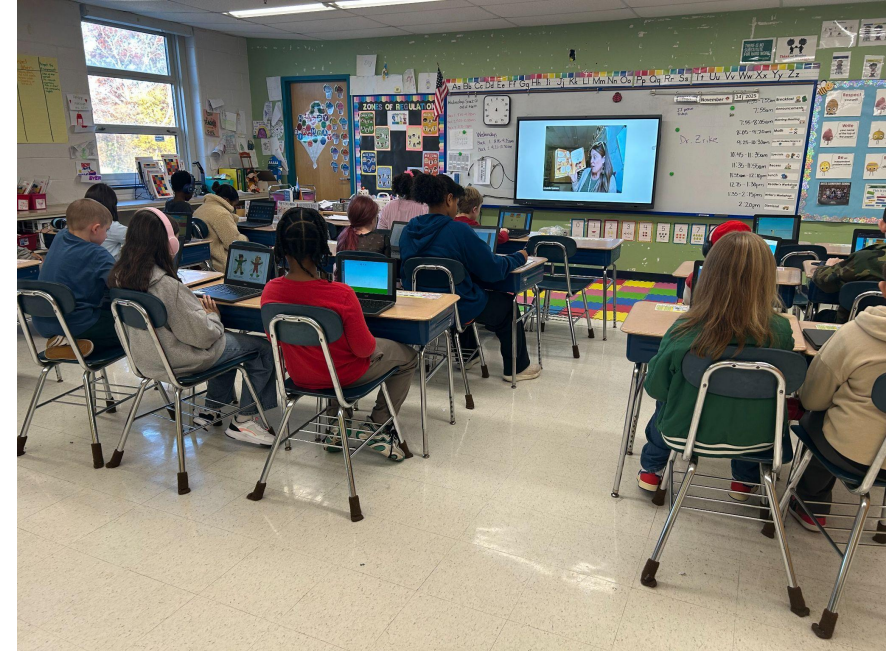
The main themes and questions we are hearing about are as follows:

- Traffic
- Class size
- Larger elementary schools consolidation
- Learning models
- School choice options
- Timeline
- Transition



What Happens Next

- School Committee listening sessions
- Scheduled to discuss and vote at December meetings. Decide on—
 - one of the options recommended
 - another option
 - or no change



What Happens Next

- Transition team to oversee merger
- Series of transition events
- Commit to specific resources needed to assist with transition
- No changes to any services for students on IEPs/504 plans affected by mergers
- Commit to maintain unique traditions
- Metrics to monitor outcomes



Final Reflections

- Forum at Horace Mann on **Tuesday, November 25 @ 6:30 pm**
- Continue to respond to questions via reconfiguration@saalemk12.org and meet with families, staff and community organizations
- Slides 14-39 (**appendix**) are from the presentation that was delivered at the first Community Meeting on 11.17.25





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Elementary Reconfiguration Updates

November 17, 2025



Reconfiguration Scenarios

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Reflections

- Goals:
 - Elevate the learning experience for every student
 - Advance our core value of equity
 - Ensure long-term fiscal sustainability
- Scenarios ruled out dispersal of students
- Commitment to engaging the public with data, reasoning, and opportunities for discussion

Themes in Feedback

- More information about the SPS projected deficit
- What are the alternatives to school mergers?
- Traffic
- Class size and building utilization
- Benefits from larger elementary consolidation
- Supporting students, staff and families through a transition



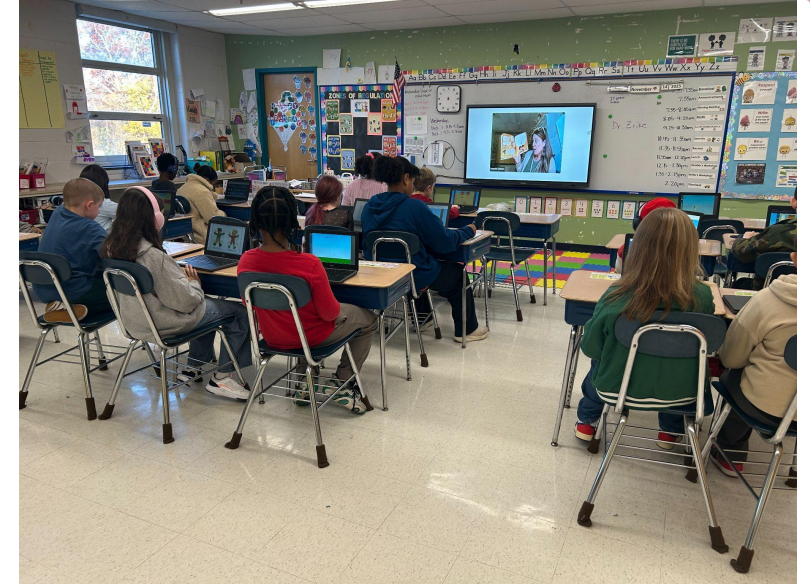
Traffic Concerns

- Start and end times would need to be staggered between HMLS and SHS.
- Traffic study conducted in Dec. 2024 matches the number of students who are projected to access the site if there is a merger.
- HS project will adjust traffic patterns
- More analysis and consultation is necessary to develop a plan that reduces congestion.

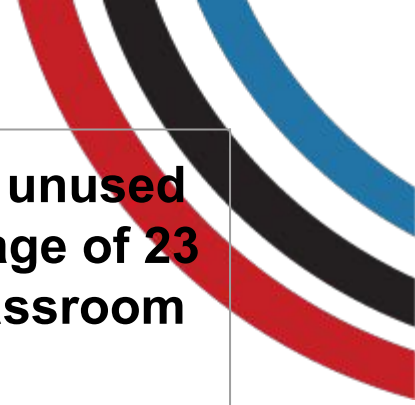


Class Sizes

- The ‘minimum full’ capacity is smaller than the current assignment practice.
- The ‘maximum full’ capacity reflects the contractual maximum.
- Currently, we are not projecting an increase in elementary class sizes with our merger scenarios.
- We are not suggesting merging/altering substantially separate classrooms.



Overall Elementary Utilization and Capacity



	Current Enrollment	Empty Seats in Existing Classrooms	Estimated # number of unused classroom spaces across elementary schools	Total number of unused seats at an average of 23 students per classroom
K-5	1,901	218	60	1380

***Total # of available elementary seats- 218 + 1380= 1598 available seats**



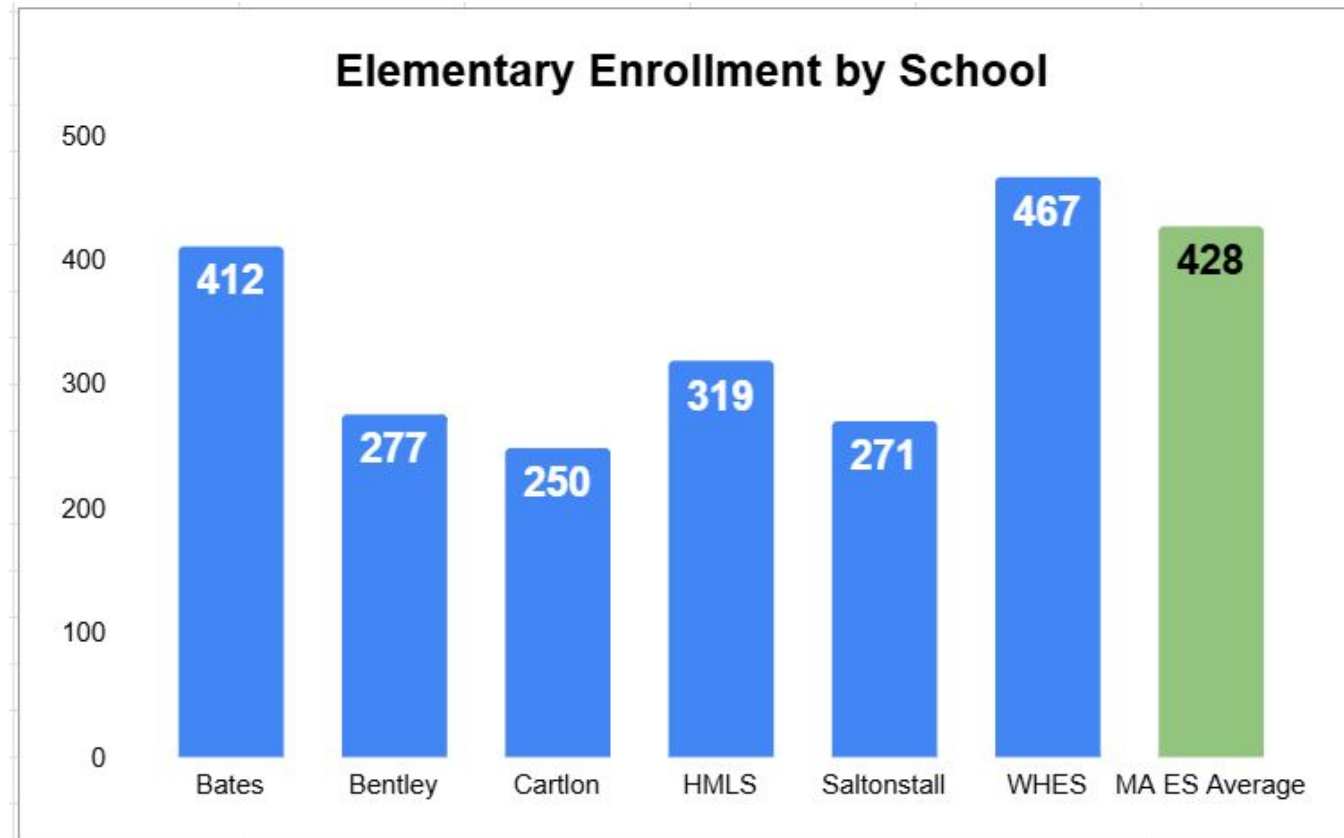
Benefits of Larger Elementary Schools

- Increased educator collaboration across grade levels
- Ability to strategically assign students
- Service providers and specialists do not need to travel, providing stronger connection to each community
- Resource efficiency allows for investing in more robust programs at each school for students
- Smaller footprint for the central office
- Capital \$s allocated across fewer buildings



Comparisons

- The average size of a MA elementary school is 428 students
- Districts with between 3500-4500 students in MA have on average 7.5 schools



If the School Committee Votes to Merge a School

Supporting Families and Students

- Transition team to oversee merger
- Series of transition events
- Commit to specific resources needed to assist with transition
- No changes to any services for students on IEPs/504 plans affected by mergers
- Commit to maintain unique traditions
- Metrics to monitor outcomes
- Prioritize families from merging school who want to make alternative assignment choices

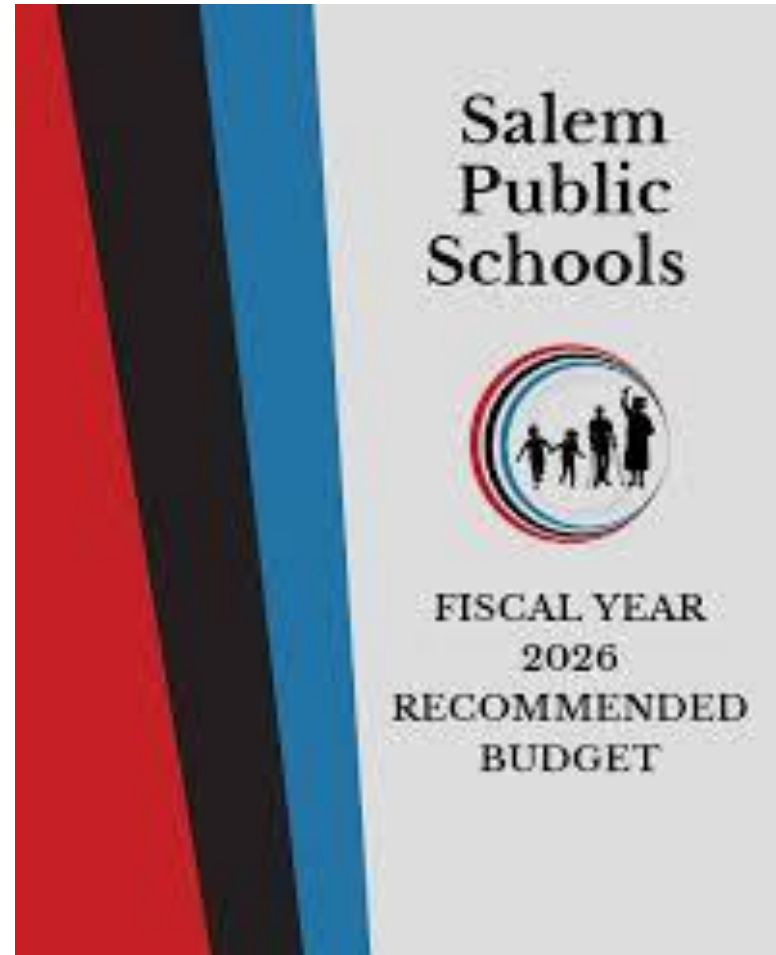
Supporting Staff

- The majority of staff will have a role in the merged building.
- All staff with professional status will continue to have a role in SPS
- We will work to find a role for any staff member in good standing without professional status somewhere in SPS.
- We will engage in 1 to 1 planning conversations with affected staff

For planning and effective implementation a decision by end of December is highly preferred



Budget Context



Reminder: FY26

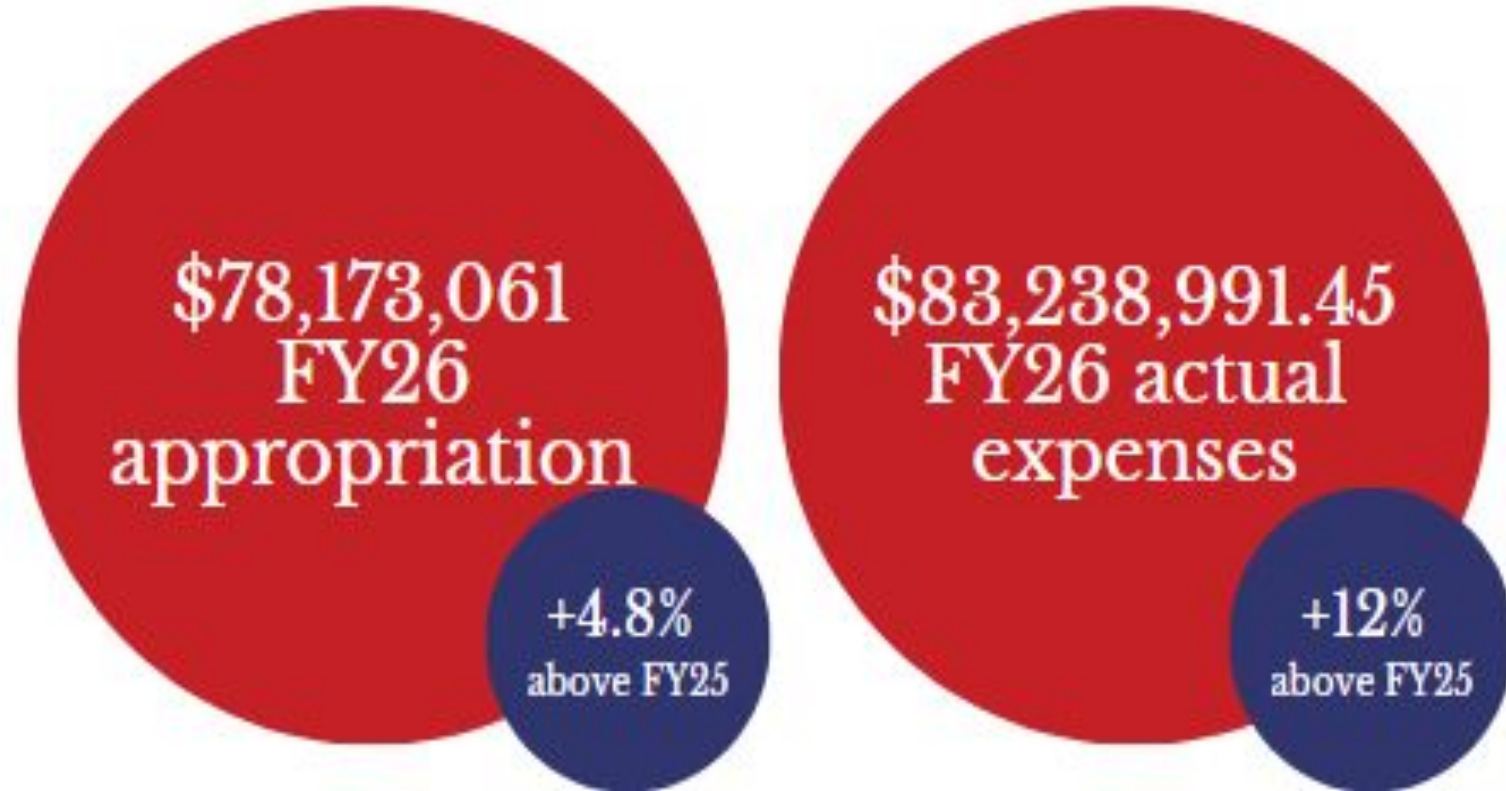
- ❑ 4.8% increase (+\$3,580,445.57)
- ❑ Complicated architecture
 - ❑ Looked for efficiencies
 - ❑ Using recurring revenue to reduce expenses
 - ❑ Position reductions & Non-Personnel reductions
 - ❑ 56.5 positions are being eliminated



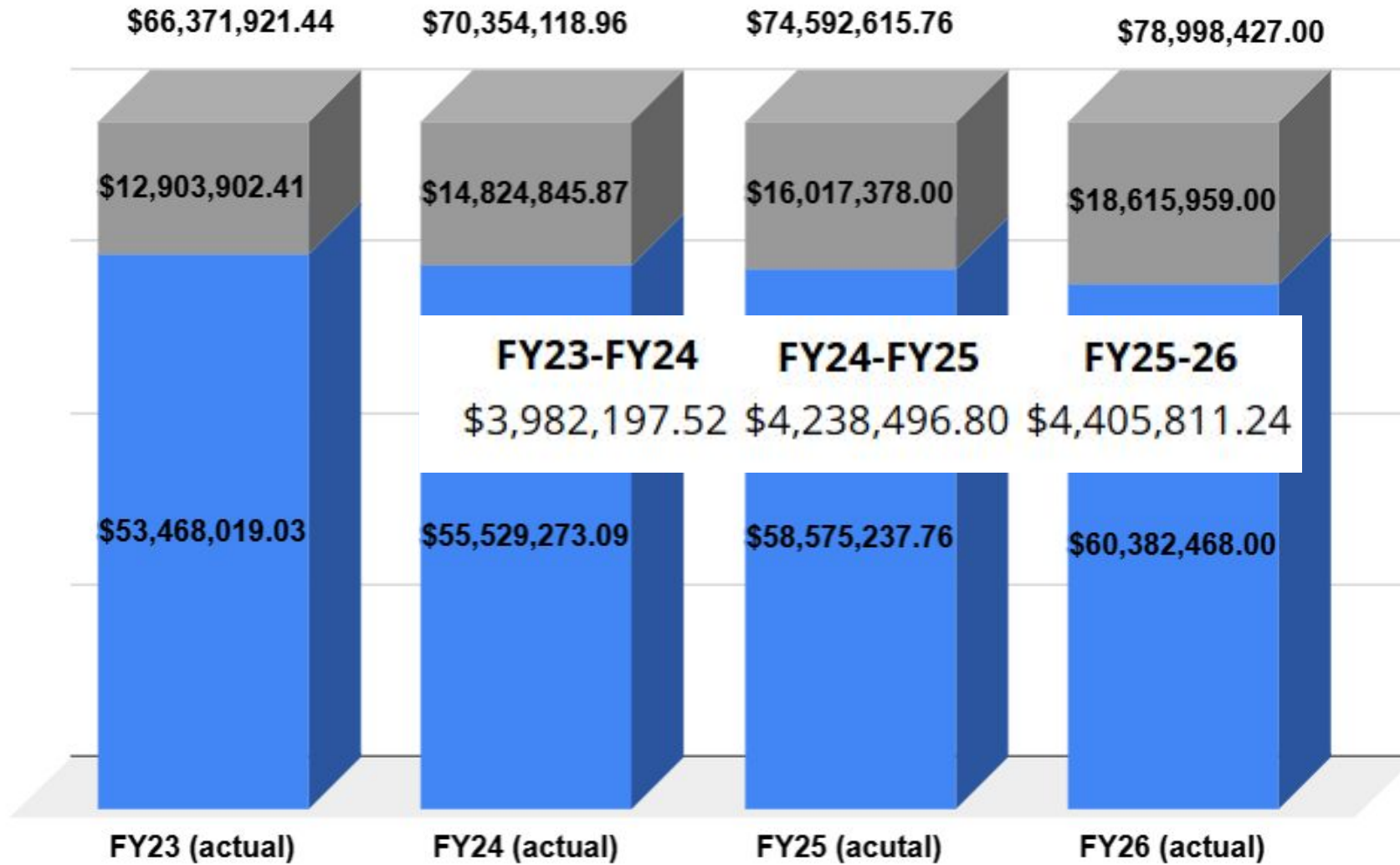
\$78,173,061

Appropriation vs. Actual Expenses

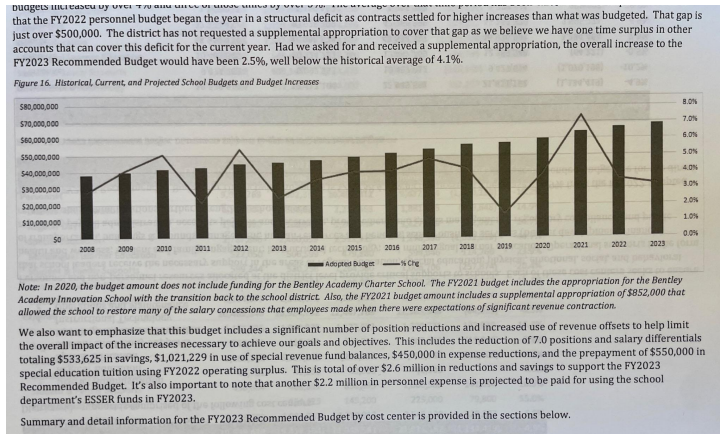
- ❑ Before reductions & offsets, Personnel & Non-Personnel costs will be ~\$4.9M above the appropriation
- ❑ +6% above the appropriation



Personnel, Non-Personnel & Total, by Fiscal Year



Budget Context: It's Complicated



FY25: Balancing the Budget

Salem Public Schools FY25 Budget Book | 20

27

Direct Appropriation

\$74,592,616

This includes

- state aid



Salem Public Schools has a **structural budget gap**, between operating costs (personnel and non-personnel expenses) and our annual direct appropriation from the city & state. This gap is over \$3 million.

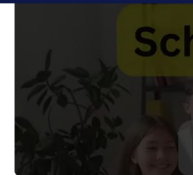
THE CODCAST

Municipal budgets at the breaking point

by COMMONWEALTH BEACON STAFF
3 days ago



'Challenging year': Large number of Mass. school districts laying off teachers, cutting programs



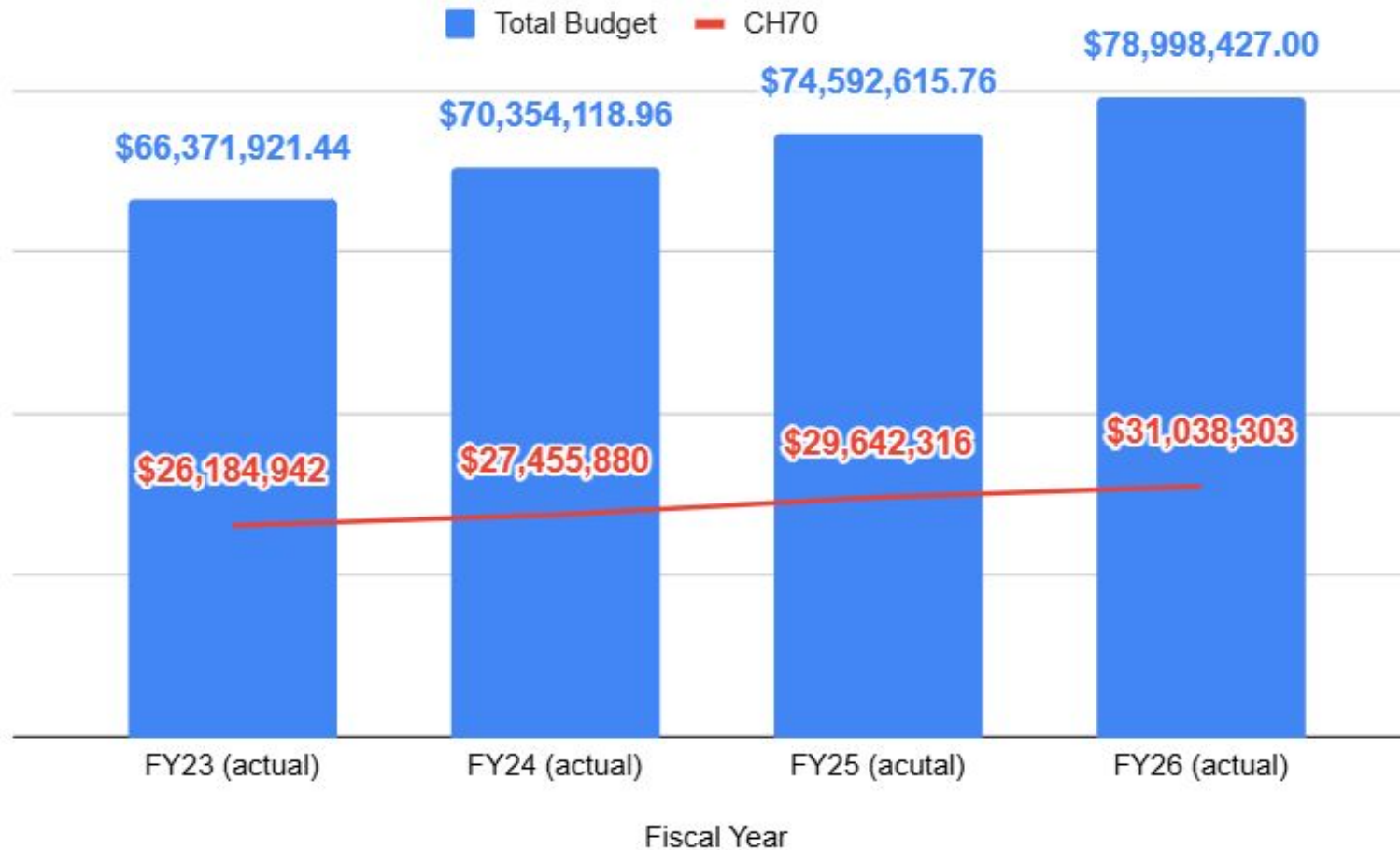
'Most challenging year': Large numi



Elevate Learning • Empower Educators • Center Belonging • Strengthen Our Foundation

Where does SPS funding come from?

SPS Budget Appropriation & CH70



Salem's expected local contribution is among the highest for Gateway Cities

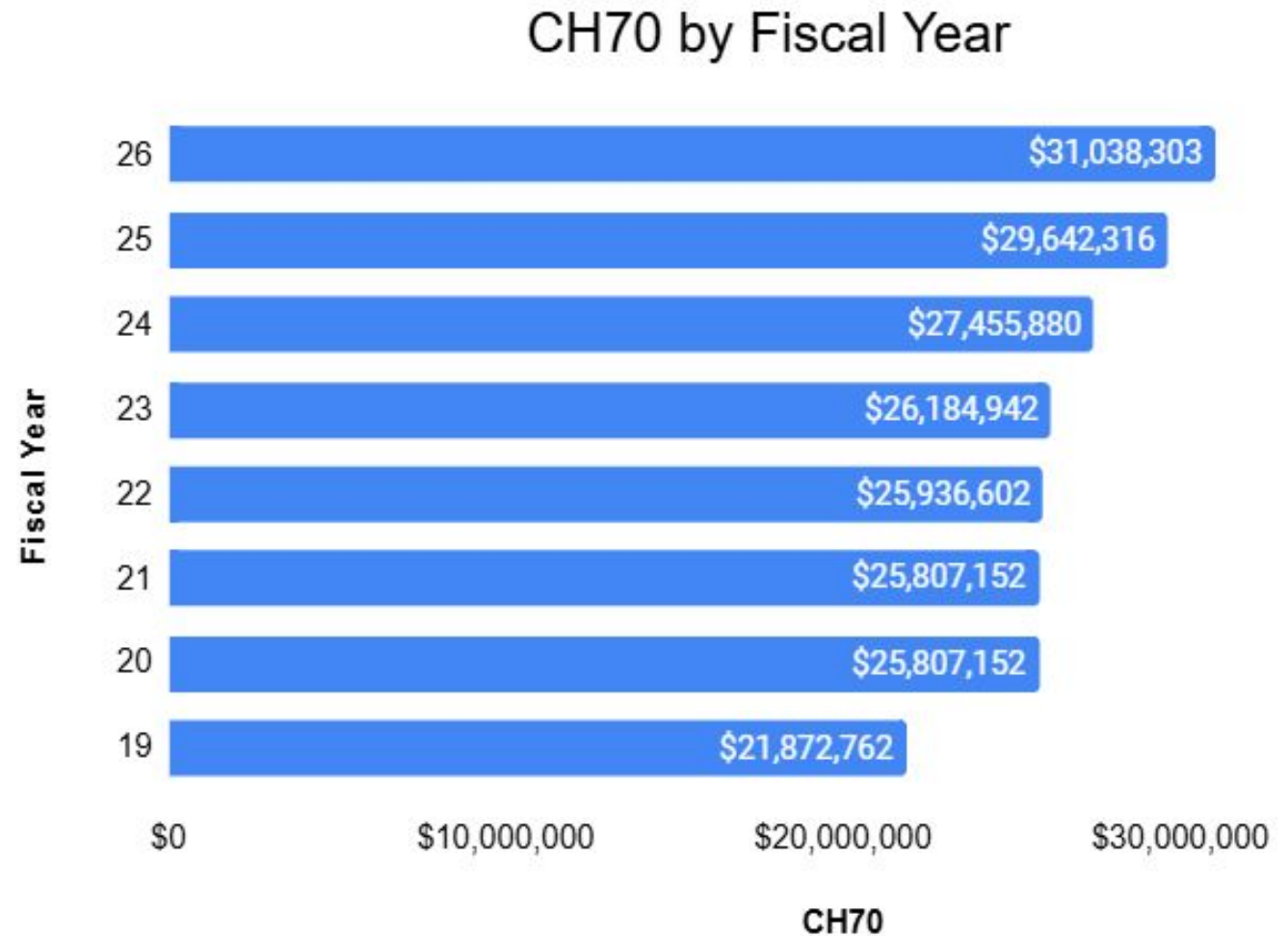
- Maximum local contribution is 82.5%
- For the 26 Gateway cities, target local share ranges from 14.93% (Springfield) to Barnstable & Quincy (82.50%)
- Salem's target local share is 71.46% (185% of the average)
 - 10% decline in target state aid share in the last three years

Town	Target Local Share
Springfield	14.93
Lawrence	15.33
Holyoke	18.7
New Bedford	21.35
Fall River	22.05
Chelsea	22.56
Brockton	23.05
Lynn	23.4
Lowell	25.37
Fitchburg	27.27
Everett	28.14
Worcester	29.38
Chicopee	29.53
Taunton	36.86
Pittsfield	37.29
Leominster	40.33
Revere	40.87
Haverhill	44.15
Westfield	46.61
Methuen	46.8
Attleboro	48.91
Malden	53.22
Peabody	67.82
Salem	71.46
Barnstable	82.5
Quincy	82.5



CH70 & Salem

- 2019: Student Opportunity Act & it was identified that Salem would receive less
- Salem leaders have been actively trying to address the CH70 formula
- CH70 commission is now evaluating the formula



What We Know/Assume about next year:

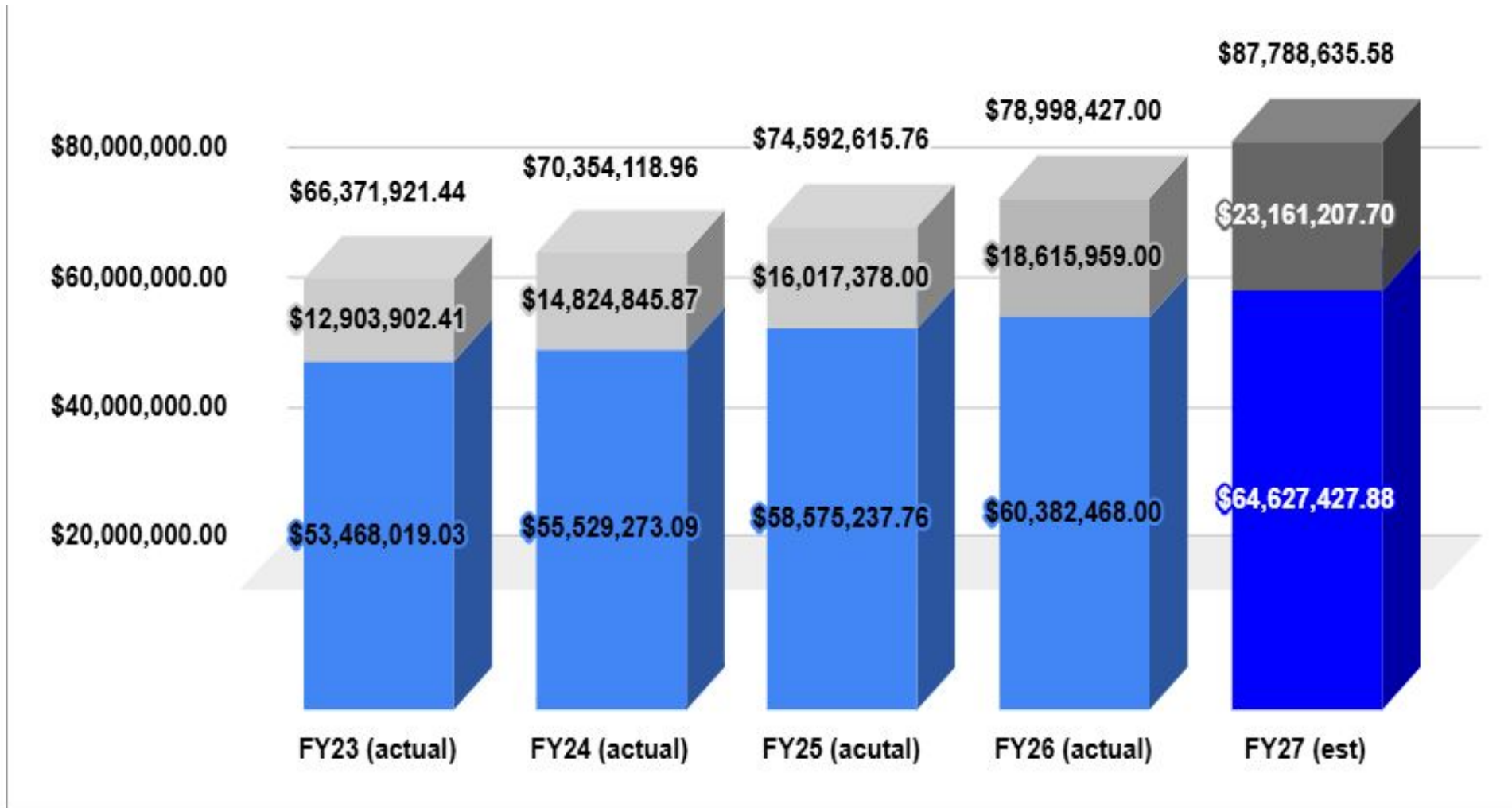
- STU, PSRP, SAA salaries
- 3.5% increases to most non-personnel lines
- Budget increase will be consistent with budget increases in FY25 & FY26

What we don't yet know:

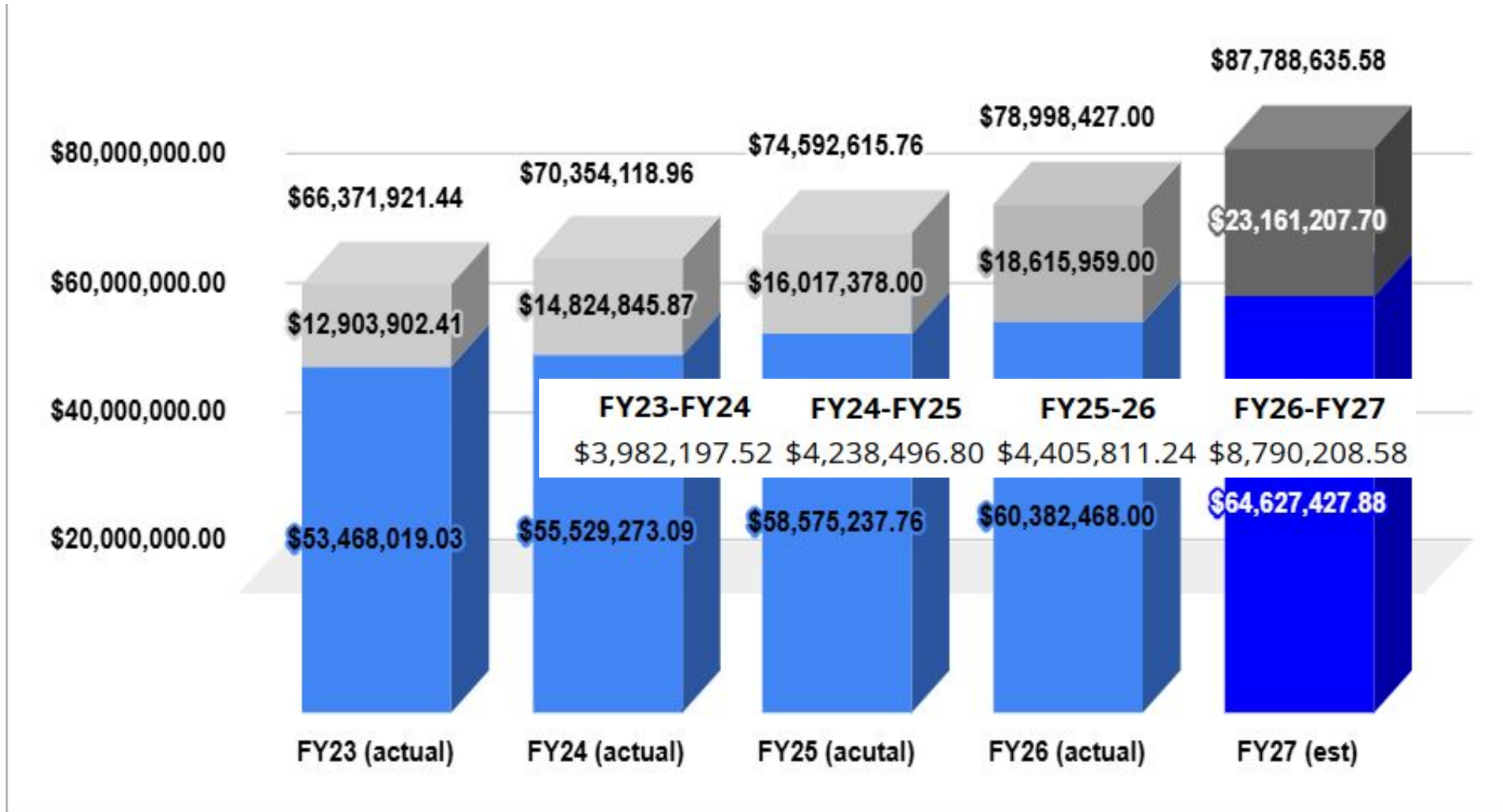
- CH70 for FY27 (January)
- AFSCME salaries (negotiations this year)
- Increases to major cost drivers:
 - Special Education OOD tuition
 - Transportation– Regular Day & Homeless
- What shifts/expansion will be needed for Special Education
- Federal funding changes
- Inflation/cost increases



Personnel, Non-Personnel & Total Budgets



Annual Budget Increases



FY26 and FY27: Actual & Est.

	Personnel	NonPersonnel	Total
FY26 (actual)	\$60,382,468.00	\$18,615,959.00	\$78,998,427.00
FY27 (est)	\$64,627,427.88	\$23,161,207.70	\$87,788,635.58

Assuming a typical or (slightly higher than typical) budget increase, the estimated gap will be ~\$4.5-~\$5 million

+\$8,790,208.58



What drives our costs?

Intentional Choices:

- Paying competitive wages to staff (recruitment & retention)
- Average salary increases (step & COLA) in FY26 were significant & overdue:
 - SAA: +5%
 - STU: +10%
 - PSRP: +15%
- Operating costs from maintaining 8 buildings

External Factors: Rising costs

- Rising utilities costs
- Rising costs for out-of-district placements
- Rising costs for transportation



What have we done to close budget gaps?

- Annually offset gaps (ESSER, reserves, revenue, prepayment);
- Reduce positions 4 years in a row (56.5 positions in FY26);
- Expand in-house capacity to better meet student needs:
 - 2018: 19 Special Education programs
 - 2025-2026: 31
- Actively seek grant funding: in FY25, 50 FTEs fully/partially funded by grants;
- Participate DESE/ERS learning cohort to look for research based & effective budgeting strategies.



No great options for closing \$4.5-\$5M gap:

Gap in FY26 was \$4.9M, resulting in 56.5 position cuts (including vacancies, retirements, & voluntary departures)

Options this year:

- Reduce district-level staff (\$235,000)
- Reduce school level admins & non-classroom positions (\$1,136,166)
- Increase class size up to the contract limit (25) (\$884,264)
- Reconfigure High School schedule (\$700,000)
- Increasing caseloads for MLs & Students with Disabilities (~\$175,000)
- Sharing elementary specialists across schools (\$340,000)
- Close PreK classrooms (\$279,480)
- Reducing non-required stipends (\$550,000)
- Reduce non personnel expenses (\$345,248)
- Reduce transportation (~\$375,000)
- Merge schools (\$1,300,000)



Next steps: the FY27 Budget Process

What we know

- SPS has had a structural deficit that has necessitated cuts for the last 4 budget cycles
- Costs are rising
- SPS will have another sizable gap in FY27
- There will be budget cuts

What we are modeling?

- What is the minimum number of cuts that can be made?
- What non-personnel cuts can we make (e.g. non-mandatory transportation)?
- How to make the most of our resources to deliver the highest quality education to all students?



Final Reflections

- Provide childcare at Horace Mann on **Tuesday, November 25 @ 6:30 pm**
- Working on scheduling a Spanish speaking forum
- Continue to respond to questions via reconfiguration@saalemk12.org and meet with families, staff and community organizations



**Acta del foro público en español
del Comité Escolar de Salem
Lunes, 24 de noviembre de 2025
211 Lafayette St, Salem
Reunión presencial**

Miembros presentes: Alcalde Pangallo, Vicepresidente Cruz, AJ Hoffman, Beth Anne Cornell and Veronica Miranda

Otros asistentes: Superintendente Stephen Zrike, superintendente adjunta Carbone y asistente del superintendente Pauley

Miembros ausentes: Amanda Campbell y Mary Manning

Convocatoria de la reunión

El vicepresidente Cruz dio inicio a la reunión a las 6:00 p. m. e informó al público que el orden del día incluye el procedimiento de participación pública y cómo acceder a la interpretación en inglés y portugués.

Actualizaciones de apertura

El superintendente Zrike proporcionó información general sobre los distintos programas de las escuelas, así como sobre el déficit presupuestario. Camila Salazar, directora de Operaciones Financieras, presentó las diapositivas relativas a las actualizaciones de la reconfiguración. El superintendente Zrike continuó con la presentación de las diapositivas.

Foro público

El vicepresidente Cruz proporcionó directrices para los comentarios públicos.

Yenny Andújar, madre de un alumno de la Bentley Academy Innovation School

La Sra. Andujar dijo que estaba a favor del escenario 2, en el que Bentley se trasladaría a Saltonstall para que se pudiera ampliar el programa bilingüe.

Kelly Quinn, consejera de adaptación escolar de la Bentley Academy Innovation School

La Sra. Quinn dijo que ha tenido el privilegio de aprender un segundo idioma y se siente orgullosa de que las Escuelas Públicas de Salem celebren este foro en español, ya que demuestra el compromiso del distrito escolar no solo de incluir, sino también de centrar y elevar las voces de los hispanohablantes. La Sra. Quinn señaló que la falta de un grupo más numeroso esta noche no se debe a una falta de compromiso por parte de nuestras familias y nuestro personal, sino a la falta de oportunidades, ya que esta noche era la primera vez que el Comité Escolar se ofrecía en español. La Sra. Quinn añadió que cualquier espacio para el programa de lenguaje dual debe seguir garantizando un modelo “de pared a pared”. El programa de lenguaje dual no es solo un programa de Bentley, sino un programa del distrito. La Sra. Quinn afirmó que el espacio actual en Bentley no permite la ampliación del programa. La Sra. Quinn también mencionó la necesidad de estudiar la hora de inicio, la contratación de personal y la

mejora de las instalaciones para garantizar un acceso equitativo. La Sra. Quinn continuó diciendo que los programas bilingües favorecen la matriculación y la retención de alumnos, ya que las escuelas locales y concertadas no ofrecen esta opción. La Sra. Quinn concluyó que el programa bilingüe crea un sentido de pertenencia y que la necesidad de que el distrito y el comité escolar mantengan y refuercen su compromiso con el bilingüismo no solo es coherente con los valores declarados como distrito, sino que también garantiza su puesta en práctica.

Cierre

El vicepresidente Cruz clausuró la parte del foro público de la reunión.

Clausura

Miembro Cornell presentó una moción para levantar la sesión a las 6:47 p. m. miembro Miranda la secundó y así se VOTÓ. La moción se aprobó por unanimidad.

Respetuosamente presentado por,

Shirley Dorai

Asistente ejecutivo del Comité Escolar y del Superintendente



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Actualizaciones de la reconfiguración de las escuelas primarias

24 de noviembre de 2025



¿Qué está pasando?

Ahora mismo, las escuelas de Salem se enfrentan a grandes problemas de financiación.

- El funcionamiento de las escuelas cuesta más que nunca; sin embargo, no recibimos suficiente dinero del Estado.
- Nuestras escuelas se financian con dinero estatal y municipal.
 - El personal de las Escuelas Públicas de Salem elabora una solicitud de presupuesto basada en las necesidades del programa.
 - La ciudad identifica el porcentaje de aumento para el Departamento Escolar; la mayor parte de la financiación de SPS proviene de la ciudad de Salem.
 - El Comité Escolar aprueba el presupuesto y lo envía a la Alcaldía para su aprobación definitiva.
- El año pasado, los gastos fueron superiores a nuestro presupuesto, lo que nos dejó con un déficit de 4.9 millones de dólares; tuvimos que reducir 56.5 puestos.



¿Qué está pasando?

- El próximo año nos faltarán entre 4.5 y 5 millones de dólares.

Uno de nuestros mayores problemas es la financiación del "Capítulo 70".

- El Capítulo 70 es la principal fuente de financiación estatal.
- Es una fórmula basada en la matrícula de estudiantes, la demografía y la capacidad de una ciudad para pagar sus escuelas. La fórmula no ha seguido el ritmo del aumento de los costos.
- Salem no recibe todo el dinero que necesita, y pagamos más que ciudades similares a nosotros.

El Distrito necesita encontrar formas de reducir costos y ofrecer a TODOS los estudiantes una educación de alta calidad.

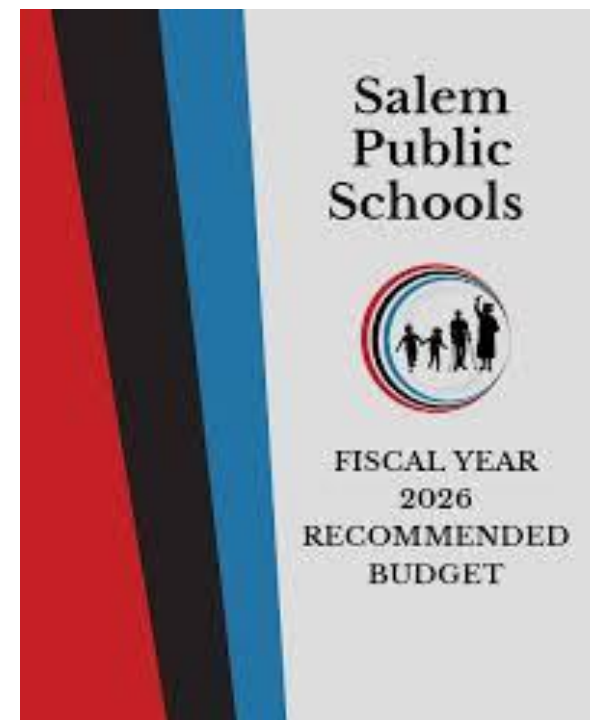


¿Qué opciones tenemos?

La Escuelas Públicas de Salem tiene varias formas de abordar el presupuesto, pero ninguna de ellas es fácil.

Las opciones podrían incluir:

- Reducción del personal del distrito
- Reducción de puestos que operan fuera de los salones de clases en las escuelas
- Aumento del número de estudiantes por clase
- Aumento de la carga de trabajo del personal que atiende a estudiantes multilingües y con discapacidades
- Cierre de salones de clases de preescolar
- Reducir/compartir programas especiales como arte y música
- Reducir el transporte
- Fusión (o "reconfiguración") de escuelas primarias



¿Qué opciones tenemos?

Ninguna de estas opciones por sí sola arreglaría el presupuesto.

- Sin embargo, una combinación de opciones podría tener un gran impacto.
- El distrito necesita considerar opciones que ayuden al presupuesto ahora y en el futuro.

También abogamos por una mayor financiación del Capítulo 70. Para más información, véase la diapositiva 30 del apéndice.



¿Por qué la reconfiguración?

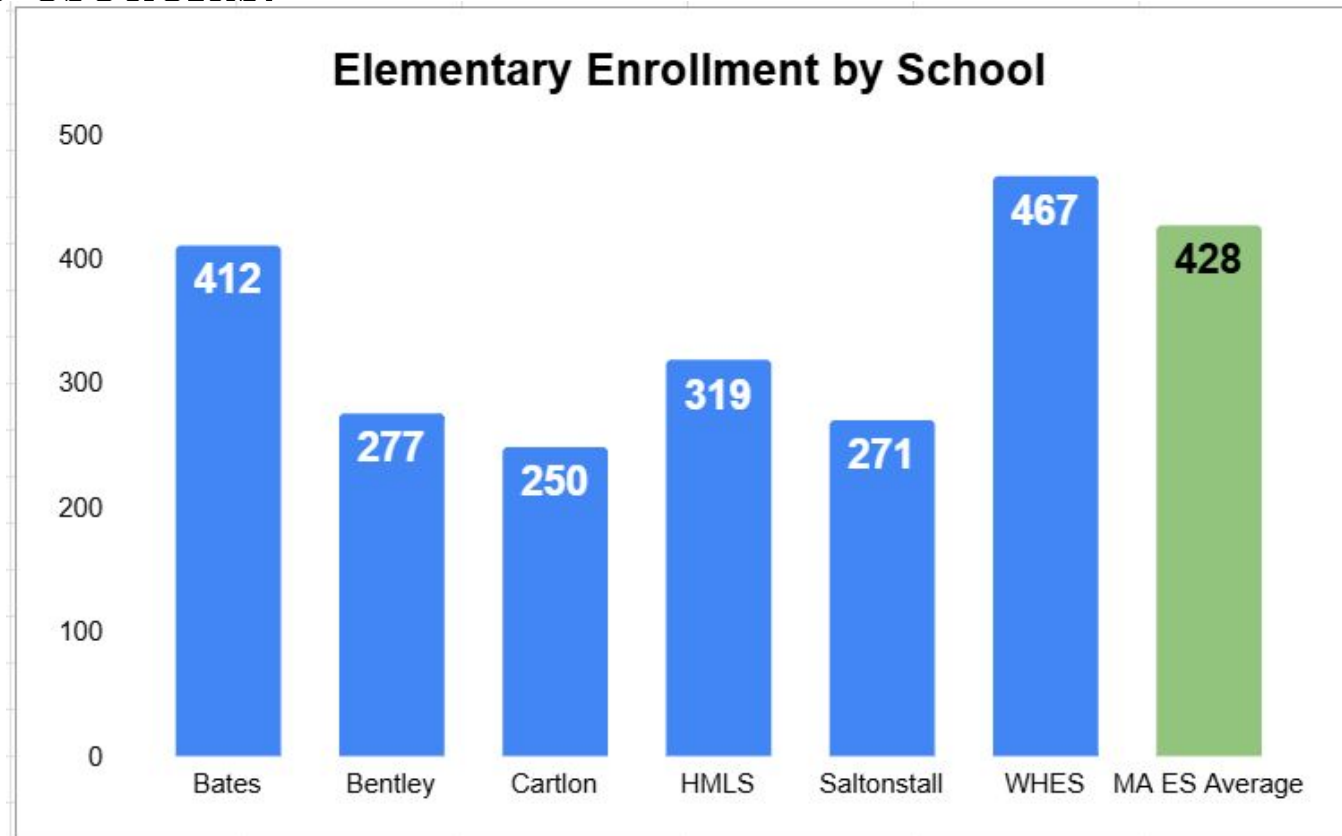
SPS pide al Comité Escolar que considere la posibilidad de "reconfigurar" las escuelas primarias.

- Salem tiene más edificios escolares que la mayoría de las ciudades de nuestro tamaño.
 - El funcionamiento de los edificios escolares es muy caro. Para cada edificio, tenemos que pagar los servicios públicos, las reparaciones, el personal no docente y mucho más.
- Tenemos más de 200 cupos vacíos en nuestras escuelas primarias.
- También tenemos suficientes salones de clases sin utilizar para dar cabida a otros 1.300 estudiantes o más.



Comparaciones

- El tamaño promedio de una escuela primaria en MA es de 428 estudiantes
- Los distritos que tienen entre 3,500 y 4,500 estudiantes en MA tienen un promedio de 7.5 escuelas.



Nuestros objetivos

Entendemos que las conversaciones sobre el presupuesto y la reconfiguración de las escuelas son muy difíciles.

- Nadie en SPS quiere recortar gastos ni causar trastornos a los niños o las familias.
- Sin embargo, si no actuamos, no tendremos dinero suficiente para hacer funcionar nuestras escuelas.

Al examinar el presupuesto, nos comprometemos a alcanzar los siguientes objetivos:

- Elevar la **experiencia de aprendizaje** de cada estudiante.
- Impulsar nuestro valor fundamental de **equidad**
- Garantizar la sostenibilidad financiera a largo plazo
- Para **comprometerse con los padres, el personal de la escuela y la comunidad** para encontrar la mejor solución posible.



Escenarios de reconfiguración

Escenario 1

Saltonstall y Horace Mann se fusionan en el edificio Horace Mann

El edificio Saltonstall se reutiliza en lugar de cerrarse

Escenario 4

Las escuelas Carlton y Saltonstall se fusionan en el edificio Saltonstall

El edificio Carlton se separa o se convierte en un centro de educación infantil

Escenario 2

**Saltonstall y Horace Mann se fusionan en Horace Mann
Y**

Bentley se traslada al edificio Saltonstall

El edificio Bentley/ECC se convierte en un centro de educación infantil

Escenario 5

Carlton y Horace Mann se fusionan en el edificio Horace Mann

El edificio Carlton se separa o se convierte en un centro de educación infantil



Lo que hemos escuchado

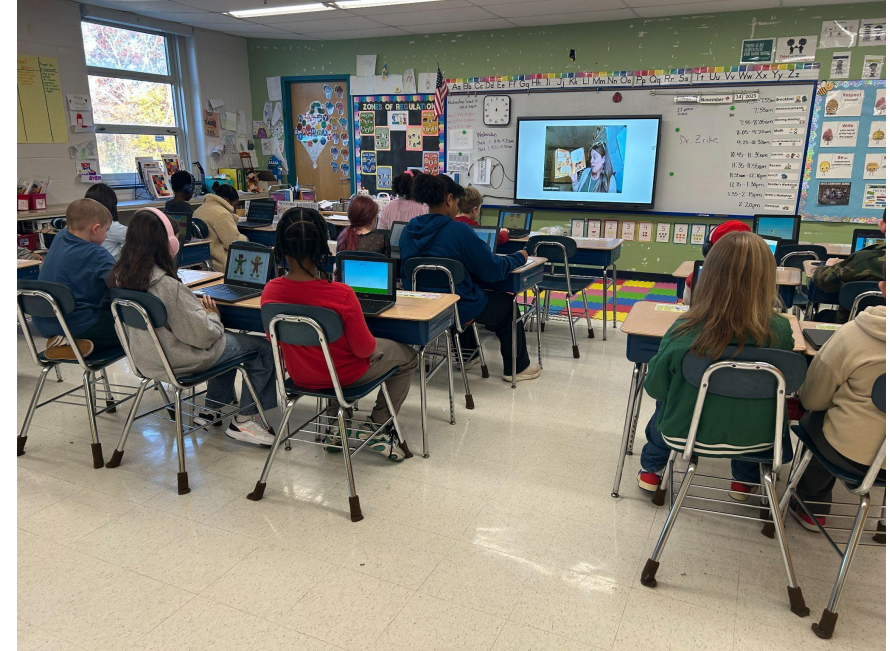
Los principales temas y preguntas que se nos plantean son los siguientes:

- Tráfico
- Tamaño de las clases
- Consolidación de las escuelas primarias más grandes
- Modelos de aprendizaje
- Opciones de elección de escuela
- Calendario
- Transición



Que sucederá a continuación

- Sesiones de escucha del Comité Escolar
- Programa para debatir y votar en las reuniones de diciembre. Decidir sobre—
 - una de las opciones recomendadas
 - otra opción
 - o ningún cambio



Que sucederá a continuación

- Un equipo de transición supervisará la fusión
- Se llevará a cabo una serie de acontecimientos de transición
- Comprometerse con los recursos específicos necesarios para ayudar a la transición
- No hay cambios en los servicios para los estudiantes con PEI/planes 504 afectados por las fusiones.
- Comprometerse a mantener tradiciones únicas
- Métricas para supervisar los resultados



Reflexiones finales

- Foro en Horace Mann el Martes, 25 de noviembre a las 6:30 pm
- Seguir respondiendo a las preguntas a través de reconfiguration@saalemk12.org y reunirse con las familias, el personal y las organizaciones comunitarias.
- Las diapositivas 14-39 (apéndice) son de la presentación que se hizo en la primera Reunión Comunitaria el 17.Nov.25





SALEM
PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Where belonging leads to opportunity.

Elementary Reconfiguration Updates

November 17, 2025



Reconfiguration Scenarios

Scenario 1

Saltonstall & Horace Mann merge at Horace Mann building
Saltonstall building is repurposed rather than closed

Scenario 4

Carlton & Saltonstall schools merge at Saltonstall building
Carlton building offline or becomes early childhood center

Scenario 2

Saltonstall & Horace Mann merge at Horace Mann
AND
Bentley moves into Saltonstall building
Bentley/ECC building becomes early childhood center

Scenario 5

Carlton & Horace Mann merge at Horace Mann building
Carlton building offline or becomes early childhood center



Reflections

- Goals:
 - Elevate the learning experience for every student
 - Advance our core value of equity
 - Ensure long-term fiscal sustainability
- Scenarios ruled out dispersal of students
- Commitment to engaging the public with data, reasoning, and opportunities for discussion

Themes in Feedback

- More information about the SPS projected deficit
- What are the alternatives to school mergers?
- Traffic
- Class size and building utilization
- Benefits from larger elementary consolidation
- Supporting students, staff and families through a transition



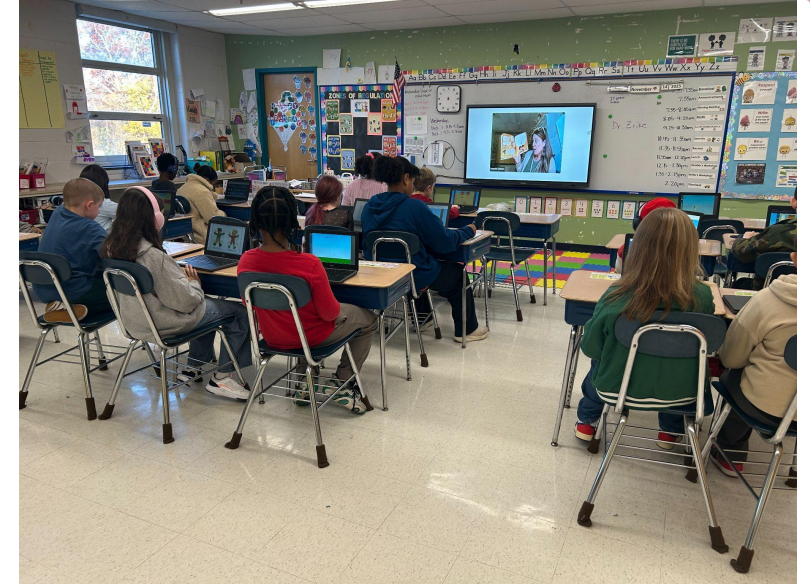
Traffic Concerns

- Start and end times would need to be staggered between HMLS and SHS.
- Traffic study conducted in Dec. 2024 matches the number of students who are projected to access the site if there is a merger.
- HS project will adjust traffic patterns
- More analysis and consultation is necessary to develop a plan that reduces congestion.

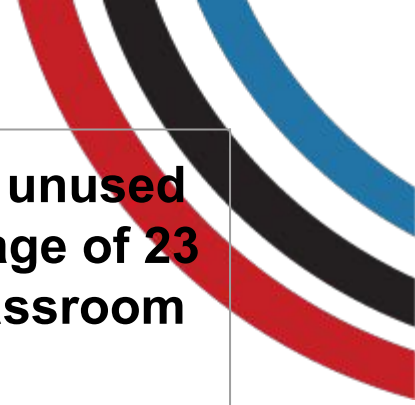


Class Sizes

- The ‘minimum full’ capacity is smaller than the current assignment practice.
- The ‘maximum full’ capacity reflects the contractual maximum.
- Currently, we are not projecting an increase in elementary class sizes with our merger scenarios.
- We are not suggesting merging/altering substantially separate classrooms.



Overall Elementary Utilization and Capacity



	Current Enrollment	Empty Seats in Existing Classrooms	Estimated # number of unused classroom spaces across elementary schools	Total number of unused seats at an average of 23 students per classroom
K-5	1,901	218	60	1380

***Total # of available elementary seats- 218 + 1380= 1598 available seats**



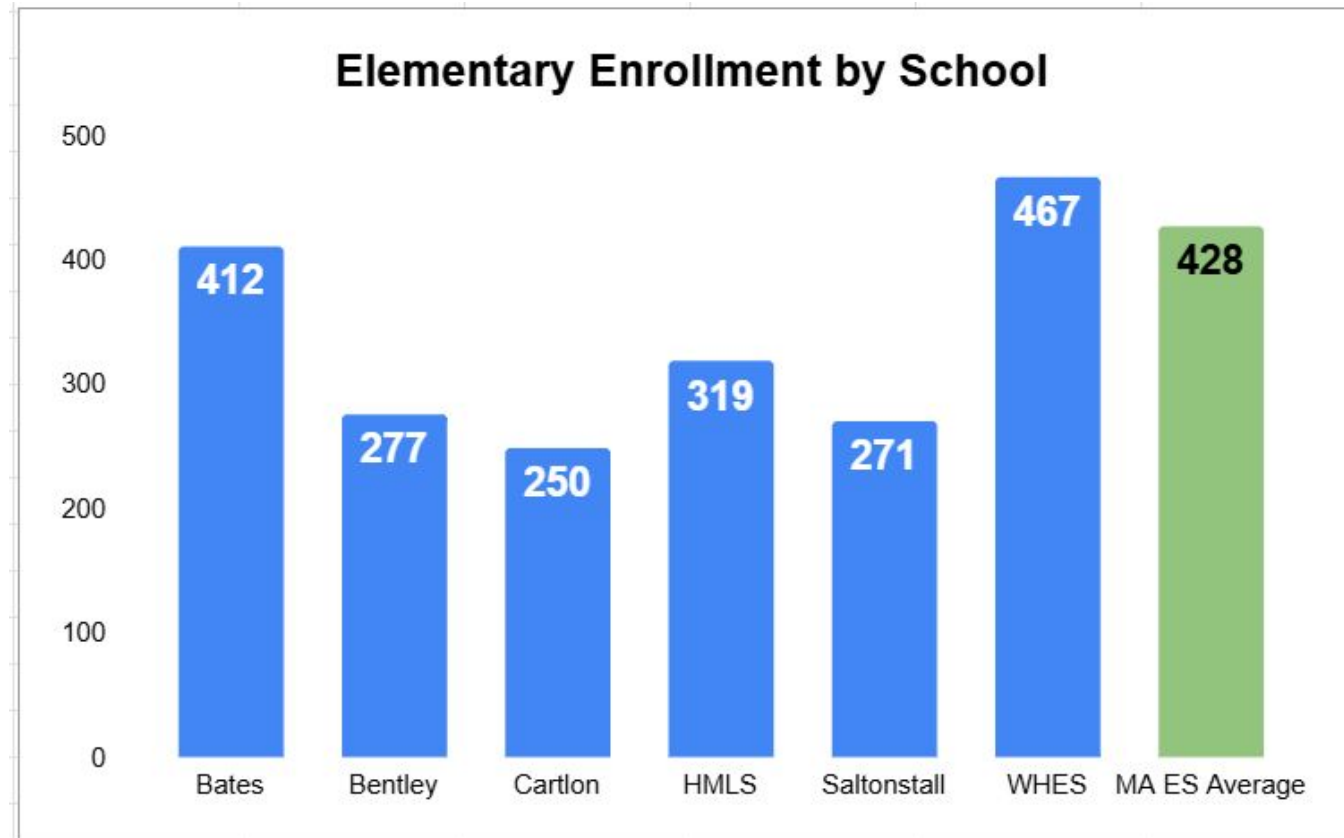
Benefits of Larger Elementary Schools

- Increased educator collaboration across grade levels
- Ability to strategically assign students
- Service providers and specialists do not need to travel, providing stronger connection to each community
- Resource efficiency allows for investing in more robust programs at each school for students
- Smaller footprint for the central office
- Capital \$s allocated across fewer buildings



Comparisons

- The average size of a MA elementary school is 428 students
- Districts with between 3500-4500 students in MA have on average 7.5 schools



If the School Committee Votes to Merge a School

Supporting Families and Students

- Transition team to oversee merger
- Series of transition events
- Commit to specific resources needed to assist with transition
- No changes to any services for students on IEPs/504 plans affected by mergers
- Commit to maintain unique traditions
- Metrics to monitor outcomes
- Prioritize families from merging school who want to make alternative assignment choices

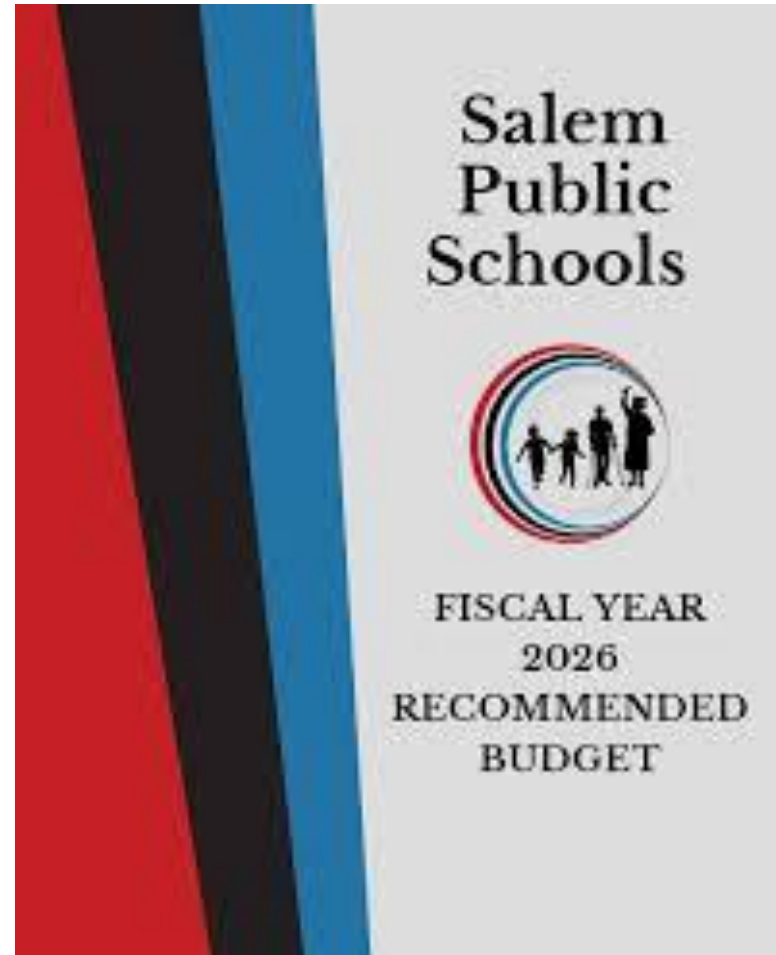
Supporting Staff

- The majority of staff will have a role in the merged building.
- All staff with professional status will continue to have a role in SPS
- We will work to find a role for any staff member in good standing without professional status somewhere in SPS.
- We will engage in 1 to 1 planning conversations with affected staff

For planning and effective implementation a decision by end of December is highly preferred



Budget Context



Reminder: FY26

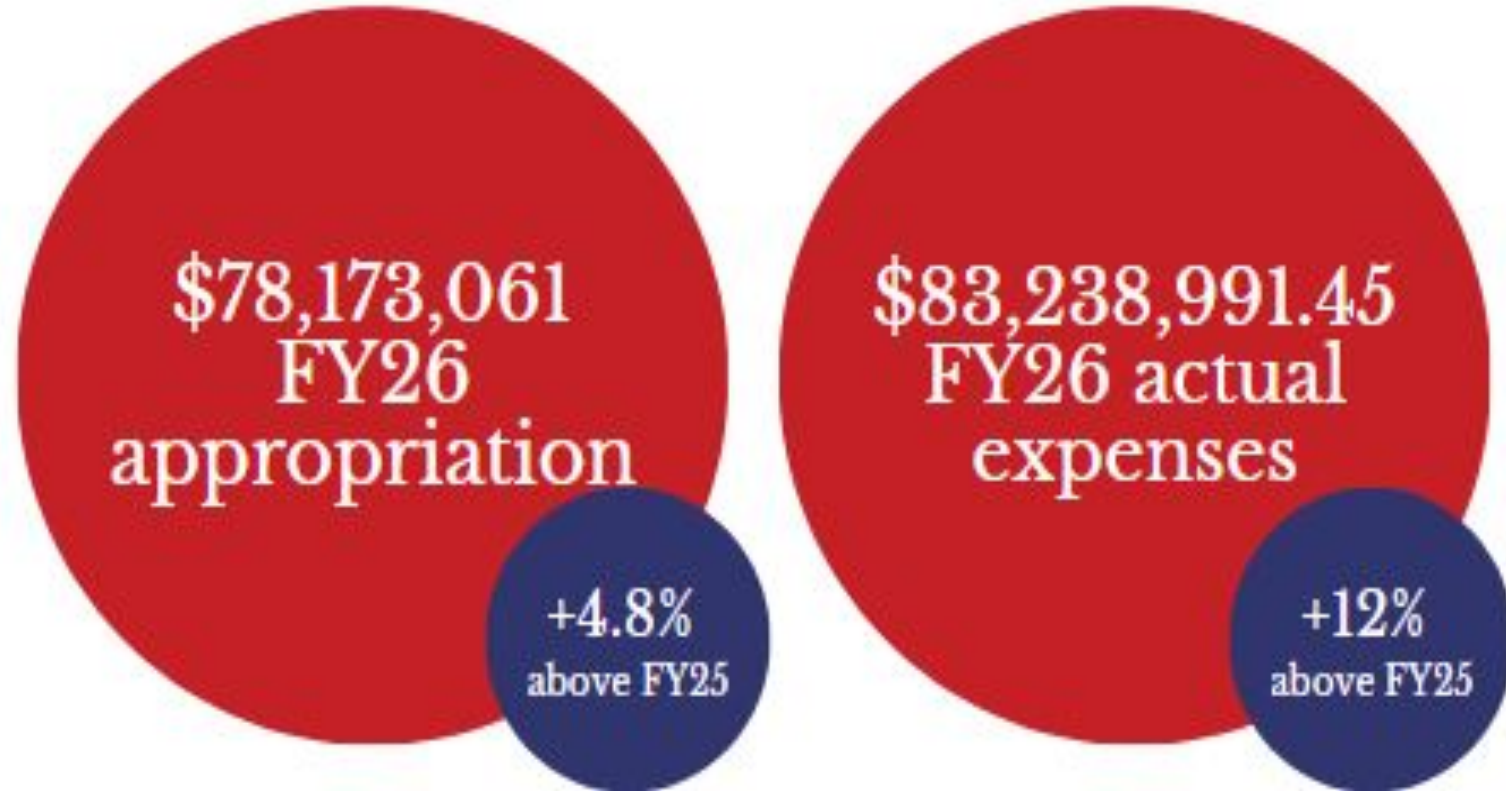
- ❑ 4.8% increase (+\$3,580,445.57)
- ❑ Complicated architecture
 - ❑ Looked for efficiencies
 - ❑ Using recurring revenue to reduce expenses
 - ❑ Position reductions & Non-Personnel reductions
 - ❑ 56.5 positions are being eliminated



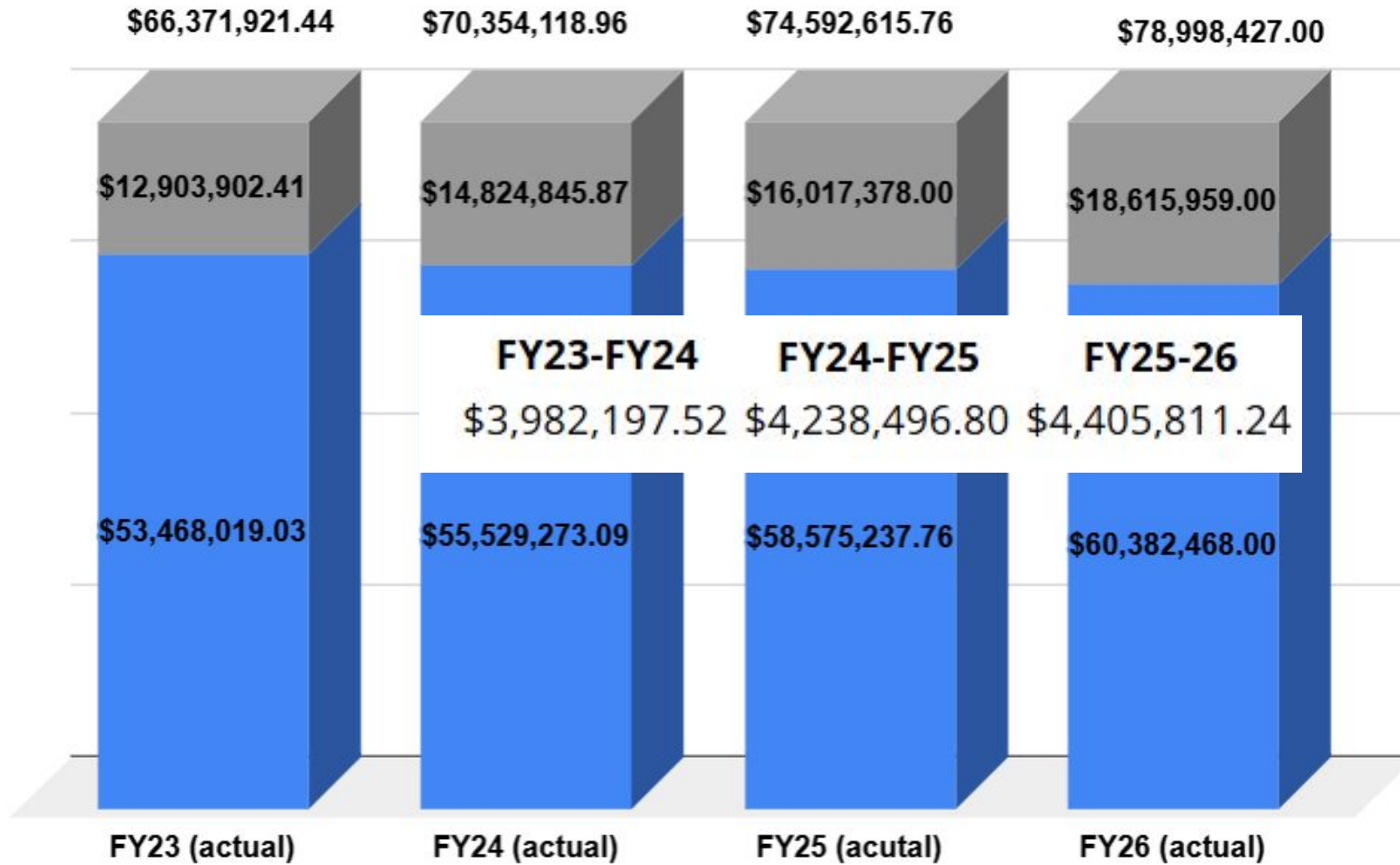
\$78,173,061

Appropriation vs. Actual Expenses

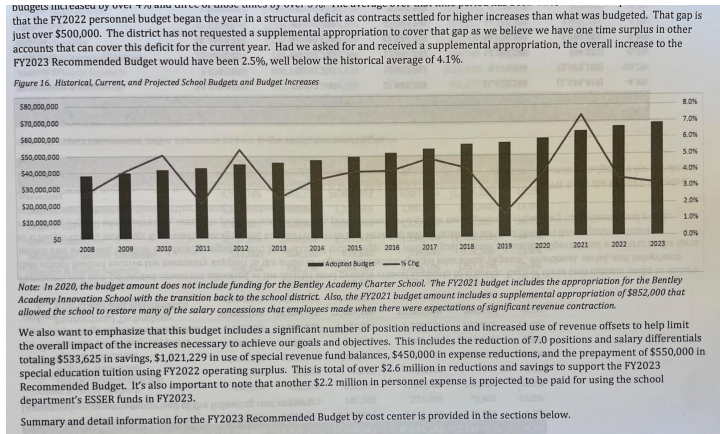
- ❑ Before reductions & offsets, Personnel & Non-Personnel costs will be ~\$4.9M above the appropriation
- ❑ +6% above the appropriation



Personnel, Non-Personnel & Total, by Fiscal Year



Budget Context: It's Complicated



FY25: Balancing the Budget

Salem Public Schools FY25 Budget Book | 20

27

Direct Appropriation

\$74,592,616

This includes

- state aid



Salem Public Schools has a **structural budget gap**, between operating costs (personnel and non-personnel expenses) and our annual direct appropriation from the city & state. This gap is over \$3 million.

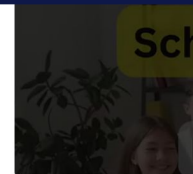
THE CODCAST

Municipal budgets at the breaking point

by COMMONWEALTH BEACON STAFF
3 days ago



**'Challenging year': Large
number of Mass. school
districts laying off
teachers, cutting
programs**



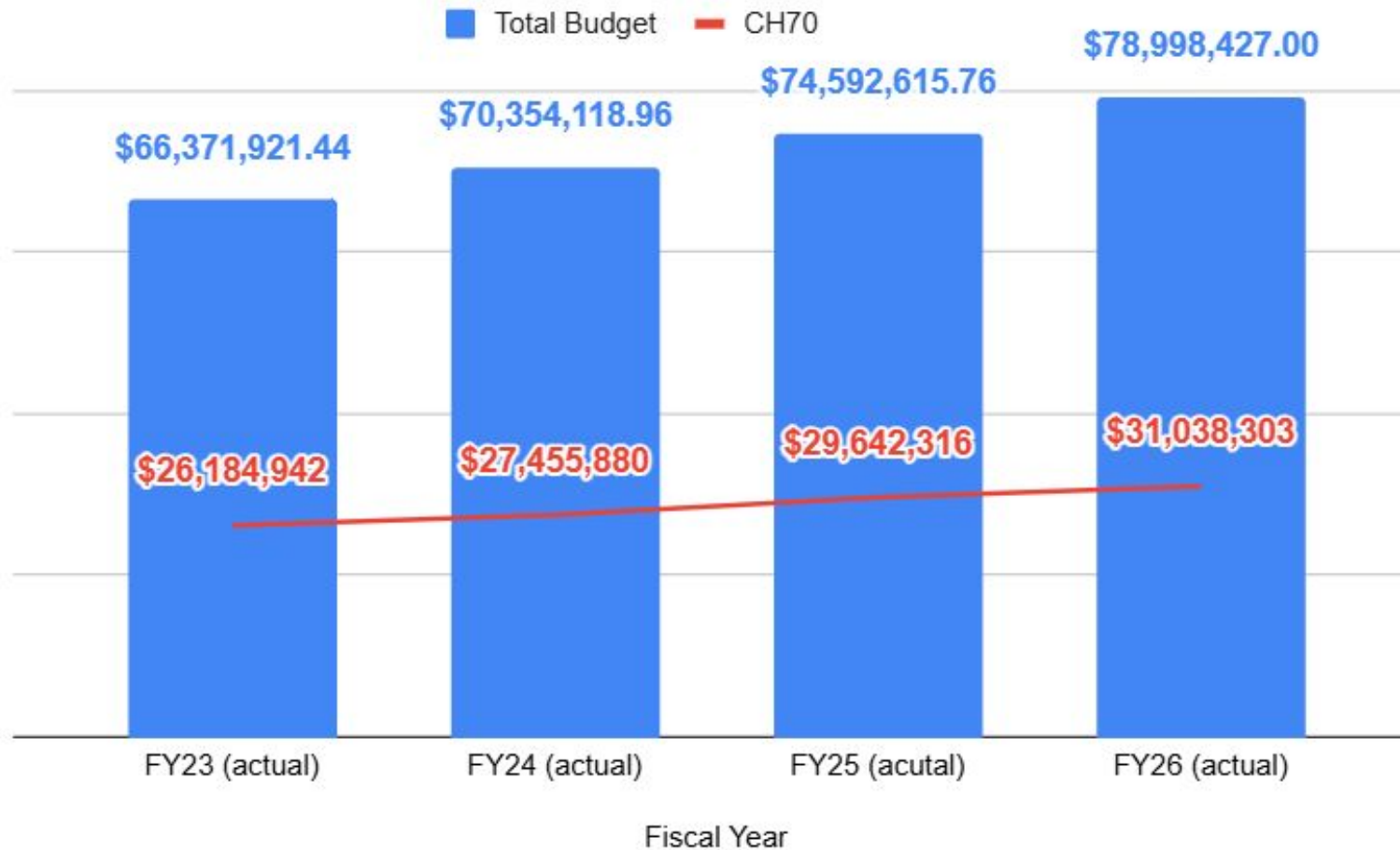
'Most challenging year': Large numi



Elevate Learning • Empower Educators • Center Belonging • Strengthen Our Foundation

Where does SPS funding come from?

SPS Budget Appropriation & CH70



Salem's expected local contribution is among the highest for Gateway Cities

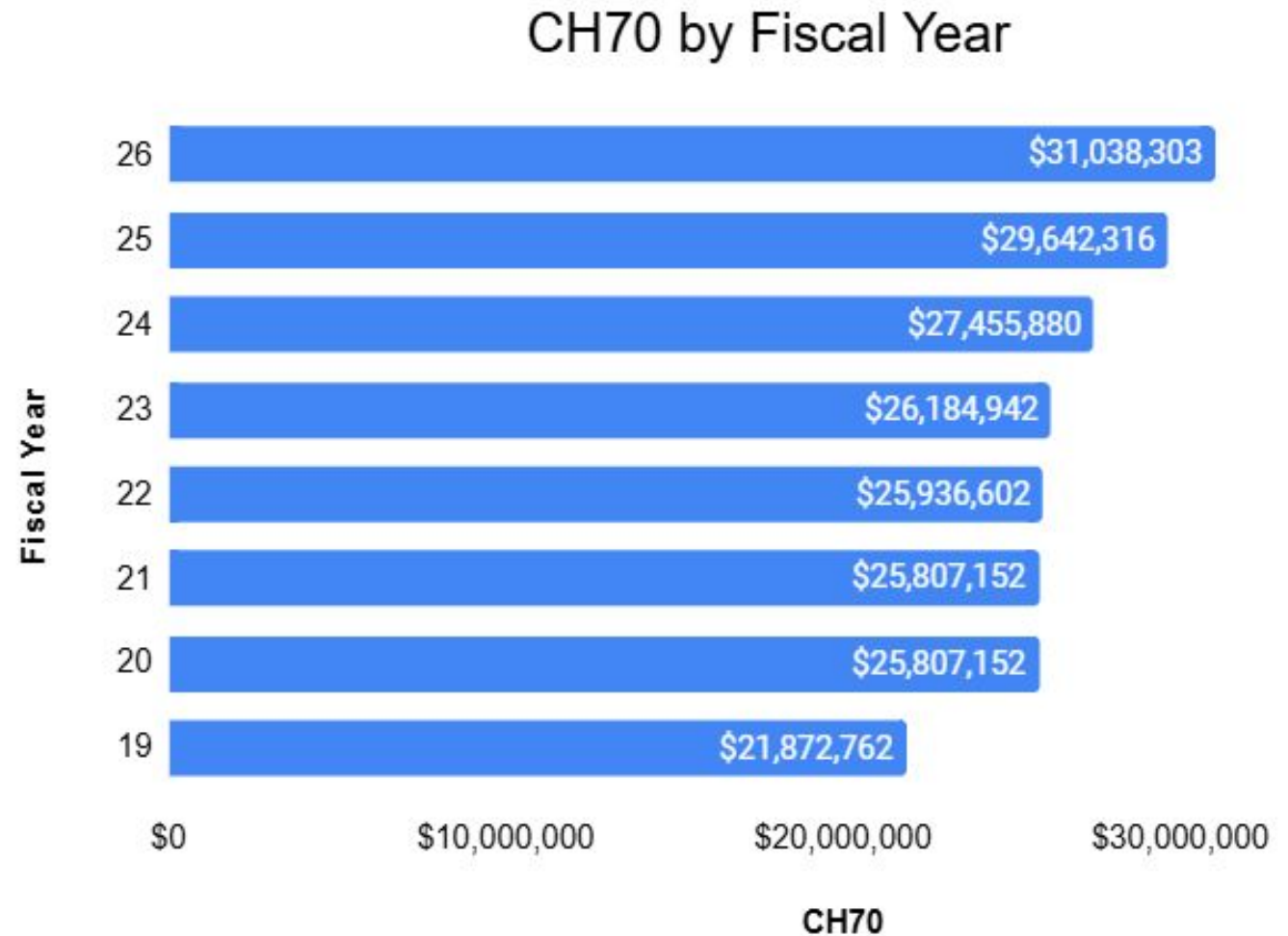
- Maximum local contribution is 82.5%
- For the 26 Gateway cities, target local share ranges from 14.93% (Springfield) to Barnstable & Quincy (82.50%)
- Salem's target local share is 71.46% (185% of the average)
 - 10% decline in target state aid share in the last three years

Town	Target Local Share
Springfield	14.93
Lawrence	15.33
Holyoke	18.7
New Bedford	21.35
Fall River	22.05
Chelsea	22.56
Brockton	23.05
Lynn	23.4
Lowell	25.37
Fitchburg	27.27
Everett	28.14
Worcester	29.38
Chicopee	29.53
Taunton	36.86
Pittsfield	37.29
Leominster	40.33
Revere	40.87
Haverhill	44.15
Westfield	46.61
Methuen	46.8
Attleboro	48.91
Malden	53.22
Peabody	67.82
Salem	71.46
Barnstable	82.5
Quincy	82.5



CH70 & Salem

- 2019: Student Opportunity Act & it was identified that Salem would receive less
- Salem leaders have been actively trying to address the CH70 formula
- CH70 commission is now evaluating the formula



What We Know/Assume about next year:

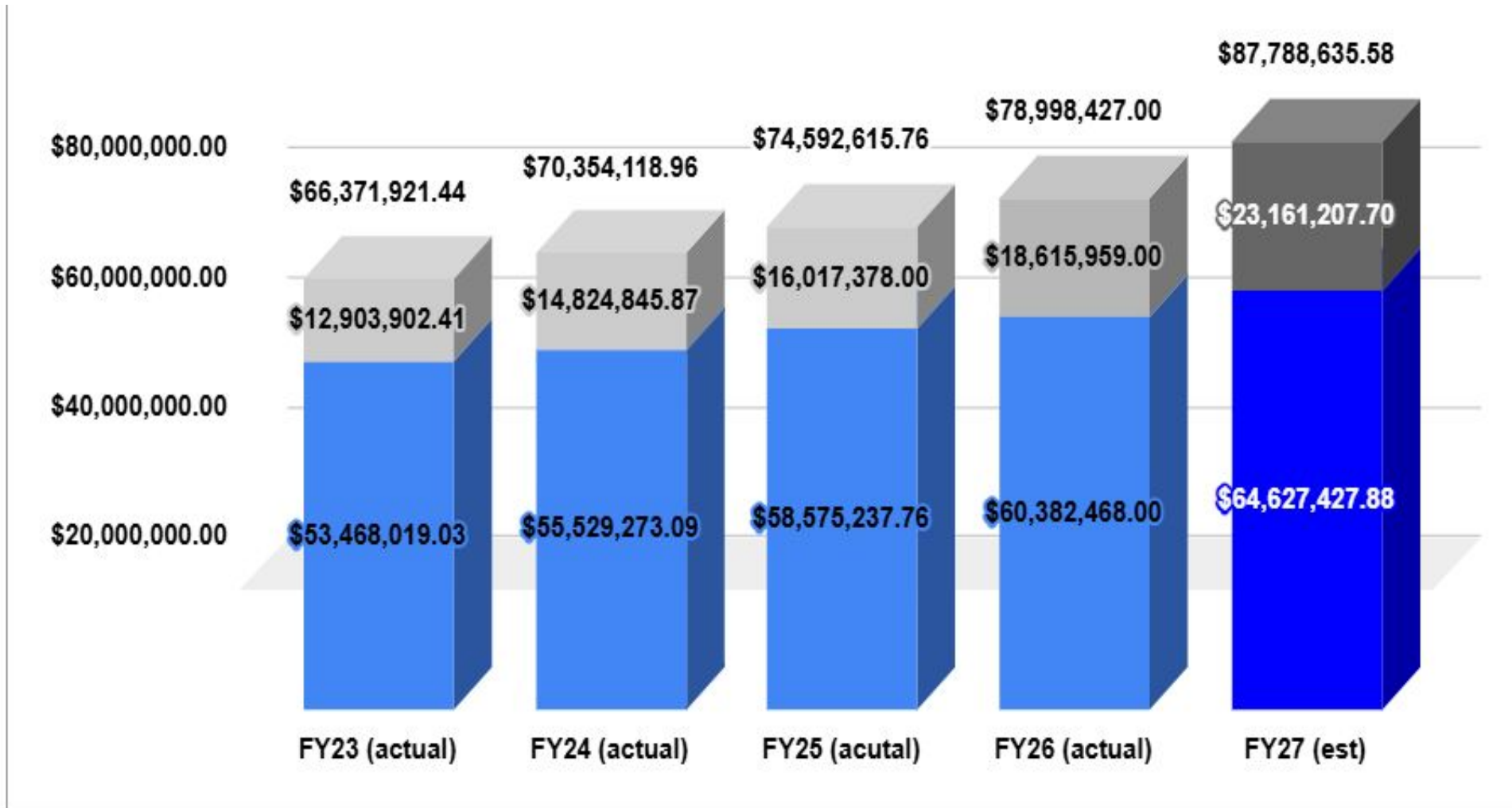
- STU, PSRP, SAA salaries
- 3.5% increases to most non-personnel lines
- Budget increase will be consistent with budget increases in FY25 & FY26

What we don't yet know:

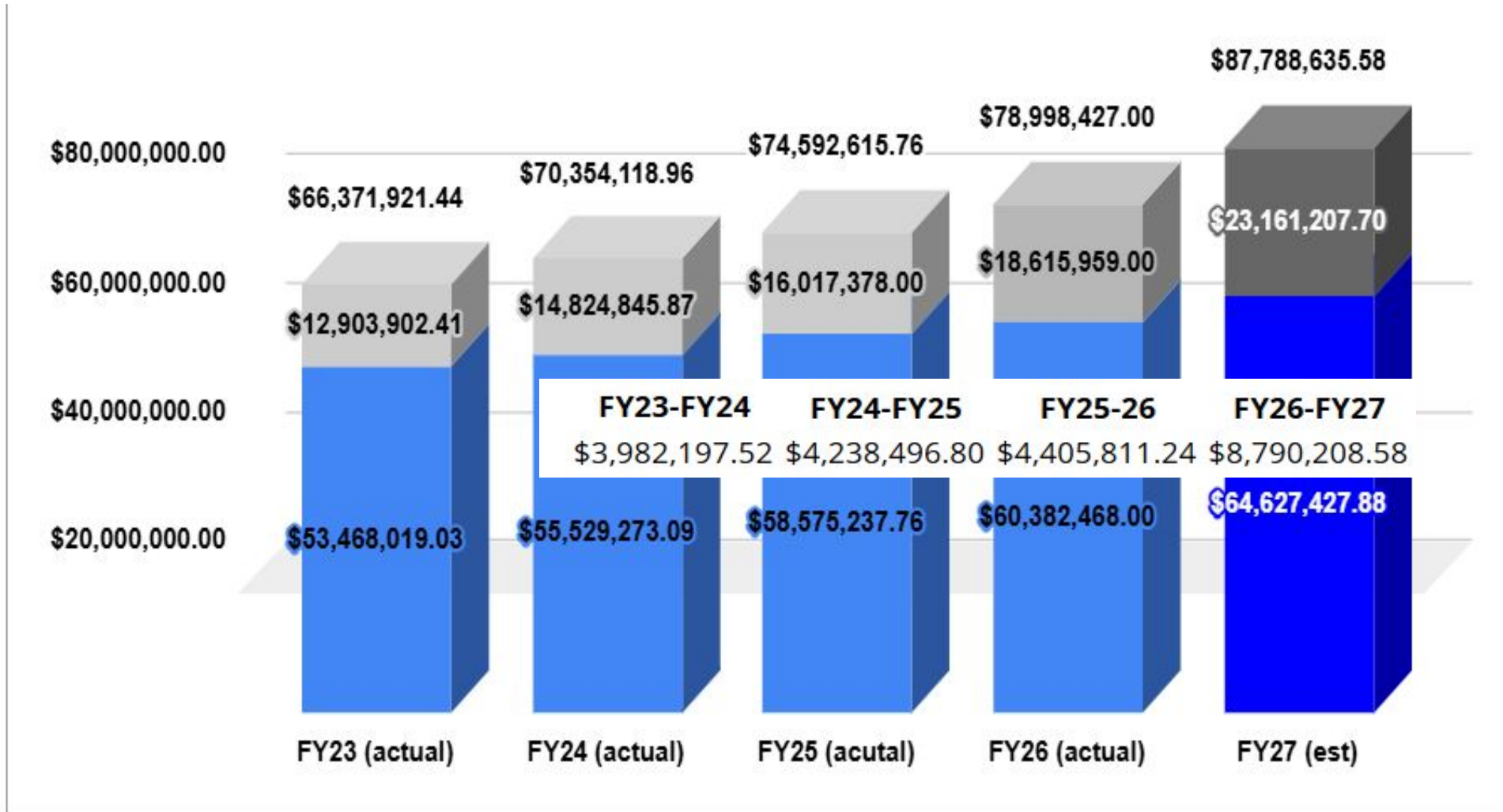
- CH70 for FY27 (January)
- AFSCME salaries (negotiations this year)
- Increases to major cost drivers:
 - Special Education OOD tuition
 - Transportation– Regular Day & Homeless
- What shifts/expansion will be needed for Special Education
- Federal funding changes
- Inflation/cost increases



Personnel, Non-Personnel & Total Budgets



Annual Budget Increases



FY26 and FY27: Actual & Est.

	Personnel	NonPersonnel	Total
FY26 (actual)	\$60,382,468.00	\$18,615,959.00	\$78,998,427.00
FY27 (est)	\$64,627,427.88	\$23,161,207.70	\$87,788,635.58

Assuming a typical or (slightly higher than typical) budget increase, the estimated gap will be ~\$4.5-~\$5 million

+\$8,790,208.58



What drives our costs?

Intentional Choices:

- Paying competitive wages to staff (recruitment & retention)
- Average salary increases (step & COLA) in FY26 were significant & overdue:
 - SAA: +5%
 - STU: +10%
 - PSRP: +15%
- Operating costs from maintaining 8 buildings

External Factors: Rising costs

- Rising utilities costs
- Rising costs for out-of-district placements
- Rising costs for transportation



What have we done to close budget gaps?

- Annually offset gaps (ESSER, reserves, revenue, prepayment);
- Reduce positions 4 years in a row (56.5 positions in FY26);
- Expand in-house capacity to better meet student needs:
 - 2018: 19 Special Education programs
 - 2025-2026: 31
- Actively seek grant funding: in FY25, 50 FTEs fully/partially funded by grants;
- Participate DESE/ERS learning cohort to look for research based & effective budgeting strategies.



No great options for closing \$4.5-\$5M gap:

Gap in FY26 was \$4.9M, resulting in 56.5 position cuts (including vacancies, retirements, & voluntary departures)

Options this year:

- Reduce district-level staff (\$235,000)
- Reduce school level admins & non-classroom positions (\$1,136,166)
- Increase class size up to the contract limit (25) (\$884,264)
- Reconfigure High School schedule (\$700,000)
- Increasing caseloads for MLs & Students with Disabilities (~\$175,000)
- Sharing elementary specialists across schools (\$340,000)
- Close PreK classrooms (\$279,480)
- Reducing non-required stipends (\$550,000)
- Reduce non personnel expenses (\$345,248)
- Reduce transportation (~\$375,000)
- Merge schools (\$1,300,000)



Next steps: the FY27 Budget Process

What we know

- SPS has had a structural deficit that has necessitated cuts for the last 4 budget cycles
- Costs are rising
- SPS will have another sizable gap in FY27
- There will be budget cuts

What we are modeling?

- What is the minimum number of cuts that can be made?
- What non-personnel cuts can we make (e.g. non-mandatory transportation)?
- How to make the most of our resources to deliver the highest quality education to all students?



Final Reflections

- Provide childcare at Horace Mann on **Tuesday, November 25 @ 6:30 pm**
- Working on scheduling a Spanish speaking forum
- Continue to respond to questions via reconfiguration@salemk12.org and meet with families, staff and community organizations

