

## School layoffs drop from 42 to 12

### METHUEN

Supplemental state budget, city funds restore 30 positions cut

**By Teddy Tauscher**

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METHUEN — One week after layoff notices went out to 42 teachers and other staff members in the public school district, local officials are now saying only 12 educators will actually be losing their jobs.

The city is slated to receive an additional \$3 million in aid from a supplemental state budget that was passed by the Legislature on June 18 and now awaits Gov. Maura Healey's signature, according to a joint statement from the city and school district.

The news follows months of tense budget meetings during which School Committee members were faced with signing off on potentially crippling staff reductions.

"This is the outcome we've been working toward with urgency and focus," Mayor D.J. Beauregard said. "Thanks to strong collaboration with our state delegation and a commitment to double down on investments in education at the local level, we're not only closing a budget gap – we're restoring stability to our schools and ensuring that educators remain in the classroom, where they belong. We greatly appreciate the continued partnership and support of the Healey-Driscoll administration, Senator Payano, Representatives Hamilton, Reyes, and Paulino, and, of course, the Methuen City Council and School Committee."

However, even with the new funding seven teachers, two administrators and three unaffiliated workers will lose their jobs. According to local officials, the school budget issues are not unique to the city and are born from

rising costs in transportation and out of district special education, as well as state aid that officials said had failed to deliver on promises.

However, on Friday top local officials had a positive message.

"Our legislators listened and responded to the urgent need surrounding increased special education costs for tuition and transportation," Superintendent Brandi Kwong said. "The appropriations in the FY25 supplemental budget that increase reimbursements for both FY25 and FY26 will significantly reduce the number of layoffs in the Methuen Public Schools and bring our dedicated educators back to the classroom. We are so grateful."

The additional state aid is specifically slated for special education costs.

Meanwhile through various transfers the city will be spending a combined more than \$3 million in free cash, alongside the redirection

**SEE LAYOFFS, PAGE A2**

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## Layoffs

Continued from Page A1

of \$320,000 in meals tax and billboard revenue to keep the schools afloat.

State Rep. Ryan Hamilton, D-Methuen, had already previously secured a \$100,000 earmark to help the district pay for special education.

“Every student deserves access to the resources they need to succeed, and this funding will help ensure that our educators and support staff have the tools necessary to meet those needs. Investing in special education is investing in equity, opportunity, and the future of our community,” said Hamilton.

The City Council will discuss the city’s budget on Monday, June 23, with a final vote expected on Wednesday.

If adopted, most laid-off educators will begin receiving formal recall notices as early as Friday, June 27.

“Ensuring that Methuen students have the educators

they need in the classroom has been a top priority,” said State Sen. Pavel Payano D-Lawrence.

“Alongside the Methuen delegation, my office has worked hard to help deliver additional support to address the budget gap. We will continue to do everything possible to protect our educators and advocate for our students and our community.”

While the cash will shore up holes for next school year, local officials have warned that the city will still need to find additional revenue sources rather than continuing to spend reserves on operating costs.

Some councilors have floated the potential of increasing revenue through allowing cannabis dispensaries to open in Methuen.

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