

TOWN OF WINCHENDON



Finance Committee

Telephone (978)-297-5419

Approved: / /

JOINT MEETING: Finance Committee & School Committee
Finance Committee Minutes
March 21st, 2019
Town Hall 2nd Floor Auditorium
109 Front Street, Winchendon, MA 01475

Finance Committee Members Present:

Thomas J. Kane Jr., Chair
Maureen Ward
Charles C. Corts
Charles (CJ) Husselbee

Absent:

Christian Orobello, Vice-Chair
Douglas Delay
Amy Salter

School Committee Members Present:

Gregory Vine, Chair
Dawn Fronte, Vice-Chair
Larry Murphy
Felicia Nurmsen

Joan Landers, Interim Supt. of Schools
Richard Ikonen, School Business Manager
Carolyn Hendricks, Assistant to the Superintendent

Absent: Roann Demanche

List of Documents Presented at Meeting:

- Notice of Joint Meeting/Agenda- Thursday March 21st, 2019
 - FY2020 Proposed School District Budget Presentation
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Chairman Greg Vine called the School Committee meeting to order at 6:30 PM
Chairman Tom Kane called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 6:30 PM

All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

FY2020 Proposed School District Budget: Mr. Kane stated this is the third finance committee meeting regarding the budget. The board first met with the town manager to learn about the proposed municipal budget. Last week the board met with Superintendent Harrity from Monty Tech to get an overview of their proposed budget. Tonight will be to discuss the proposed school budget. Mr. Kane invited Mr. Ikonen and Ms. Landers to begin the presentation.

Ms. Landers started by thanking the staff that helped with the school budget including: Mr. Kane, Mr. Hickey, Mr. Ikonen, and the entire leadership team in the audience. Ms. Landers recited the mission statement for the Winchendon public schools: "To enlighten, motivate, and educate all who pass through our doors. We will provide a safe environment that promotes an appreciation of diversity and preparedness for the future."

Strategic Objectives: *#1- Curriculum & Instruction:* Align curriculum and instruction to improve academic performance. *#2- Assessment & Data:* Use assessment and data to implement effective curriculum, instruction, and interaction to meet the academic and social-emotional needs of all students. *#3- School Climate & Culture:* Develop and maintain family/community outreach and communication.

Ms. Landers pointed out some statistics from the Winchendon public schools selected student populations (2018-19): 50.2% of the district are classified as High Needs, which is higher than the state average at 17.6%. The percentage of economically disadvantaged students is 40.9%, which is also higher than the state at 31.2%. Dr. Ward asked Ms. Landers to explain what "High Needs" is classified as. Ms. Landers replied they are students with special needs, living in high poverty, or foster care.

The statistics from 2016-17 of Winchendon public schools placement of students with disabilities: 232 students were enrolled in special education. Full inclusion- 59.1%. Partial inclusion- 24.1%. Separate Classes- 8.6%. Outside placement- 8.2%. Most students attend a 2 year public college after graduation and Winchendon also has a higher than state average of students that enter the military.

The budget requests and priorities were brought forth from the leadership team.

The high school requested a job coach and will be starting a program for the 18-22 aged population. A.L.L program teacher for the high school will also help with skills development for the 18-22 aged population. There is a need in Winchendon for a specialized therapeutic program so students can stay in their community and receive their education. Day school with tuition is being considered as an option to implement for students that live outside Winchendon. Cottage Hill closed their educational facility, which did a lot for the children in that facility and needs to be addressed. Mr. Kane asked if the tuitions would be state funded? Ms. Landers replied the sending district would fund them. Dr. Ward asked on average how long a child stays at Cottage Hill. Ms. Landers replied that it really varies, as it is difficult to find placement. Also, the Director of Instruction, Curriculum, and Assessment, Mr. Landman agreed to stay in his current position this year.

Memorial School requested an interventionist. The Middle School requested a 7th grade ELA & History teacher. The class size was calculated out to be 29 students. The staff will be reallocated and no funding is being requested but Ms. Landers wanted to inform the boards of the situation and change. Mr. Husselbee asked what the class size would be after reallocating the staff. Ms. Messina replied with about 20 students per class. A dean of students was added at the middle school and Ms. Landers has asked all the principles to be educational leaders, to get into the classroom and focus on curriculum and evaluation of the teachers.

There was a request for a custodian at the middle and high school building but unfortunately due to funding they were not able to fill that position this year. Discussions had taken place about adding an elementary therapeutic classroom but Ms. Landers felt more time was needed to plan and it will be discussed again in the future.

These changes were able to take place due to grant money and eliminating some positions within the district. M.A.P. testing has been implemented at Memorial school and will continue with Toy Town Elementary next year thanks to the Title 1 grant. The high school added a guidance program for students applying to colleges. The principal at Murdock requested more training for the teachers in advanced placement classes and to add virtual high school. The assistant business manager position was eliminated to cut costs and save \$40,000. Ms. Landers met with Mr. Hickey to implement streamlining the operations at central office. The librarian position at Memorial school was eliminated but a tech position will become available. Toy Town's library is getting updated by becoming a learning center to include technology.

The Capital Improvement Plan will be posted to the town's website after the meeting. One item being brought forward by Mr. Hickey is the retaining walls and Mr. Murphy already received a few estimates.

Mr. Kane asked if the budget reflected updating the security system. Ms. Landers replied it is reflected in the Robinson-Broadhurst grant. Dr. Ward suggested consulting with Monty Tech to have their students perform the installation and save on costs. The water filtration system at Memorial will be installed by the tech students, saving about \$30,000.

Budget Assumptions: Unrestricted local aid and Chapter 70 are based on present information from the state. Federal and state grant offsets are assumed to be funded at the same level as FY19. The Circuit Breaker program is assumed to be funded with a 70% reimbursement rate. Heat and electricity costs have been budgeted at the same funded level for the past three years. There is ongoing negotiation with para-educators, custodians, secretaries, and non-representative professionals.

Mr. Ikonen discussed the revolving funds, which include the circuit breaker program and school choice. The circuit breaker revenue is about \$247,000. Contracted services of \$100,000 were added for this year. School choice is projected to bring in \$257,000 with expenses totaling \$362,000.

Mr. Kane questioned the figures for the Circuit Breaker program and School Choice, as they did not seem to calculate correctly or are mislabeled. Mr. Ikonen clarified the \$75,000 figure for FY20 is the number they plan to utilize, not the actual revenue total. He and Ms. Landers addressed they would look into it and clarify the reporting.

Mr. Ikonen stated the grants have gone down this year. The projections were done at this year's level and compared to the historical trends.

The district's foundation budget increased by \$317,966 based on the Governor's Proposed House 1 Budget. Therefore, local contribution increased by \$208,578, and Chapter 70 aid increased by \$27,380. Required Net School Spending went up by the sum of local contribution and Chapter 70 aid, or \$235,958. The district's Chapter 70 funding is roughly 73% of the foundation budget or \$11,477,410. This funding with the required local contribution makes up the Net School Spending required for the education of our students.

Solar revenue was \$50,000, the Murdock trust awarded \$175,000, and the additional grants equal \$1.1M, resulting in a total of \$15,450,000 being utilized next year.

Dr. Ward asked about the enrollment by grade, as it totals 1,190 students and she was under the impression it was closer to 1,300. Ms. Landers replied it does not include pre-k and the total is 1,265. Dr. Ward also asked what the \$65,000 under turnaround assistant grant was used for. Ms. Landers replied there are different turnaround practices that they have to use the grant funding for. The turnaround assistance grant is used for any school in MA that is within the tenth percentile or lower. It allows the school to pay for contractual services for professional development, stipend the teachers work and stakeholders to work on their plan, and provides money to pay for substitutes, travel, and supplies as needed. The middle school receives \$45,000 due to being identified as a turnaround school. Toy Town and the high school both receive \$10,000, some of which will pay for A.I.R. to come and do classroom observations as they do at the middle school.

Dr. Ward asked about the plan for the \$190,000 Robinson Broadhurst grant. Ms. Landers replied the money would be used to update the front door/security at Toy Town, leasing Chromebooks, and consumable workbooks. The high school will start to offer a non-traditional dual enrollment program where professors from Worcester State will teach classes at Murdock with little to no cost to the students. Mr. Murphy asked if the 146 students going out on school choice had increased or decreased this year. Ms. Landers replied it had decreased.

Radios were purchased so the schools could communicate more efficiently especially after hours. A buzzer outside the school will be connected to custodian radios to safely keep the school locked after hours but allow better communication to anyone needing to enter the building.

In Murdock Trust, \$20,000 is being requested to repair the football and softball fields.

The calculators at the high school needed to be replaced and there is also money set aside for the students who wish to take the SAT's but cannot afford it.

Dr. Ward asked about the principal/staff and why their raise increases were all over the place. Mr. Ikonen replied it was a correction to the original proposed figures.

Mr. Kane thanked Ms. Landers and Mr. Ikonen for their thorough presentation.

Member Comments: None

Public Comments: None

Mr. Kane asked the Finance Committee to make a motion to adjourn. Dr. Ward motioned to adjourn and Mr. Husselbee seconded the motion. The Finance Committee unanimously voted aye.

The finance committee meeting was adjourned at 7:32PM

Respectfully submitted:

Brianna Roberts, Finance Committee Recording Secretary