

TOWN OF WINCHENDON



Finance Committee

Telephone (978)-297-5419

**Tri-Board Meeting
Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee, and School Committee**
September 16th, 2019
Town Hall 2nd Floor Auditorium

Board of Selectmen Members Present:

Audrey LaBrie, Chair
Barbara Anderson, Vice-Chair
Michael Barbaro
Amy Salter
Richard Ward

Keith R. Hickey, Town Manager
Joanne Goguen, Town Accountant
Linda Daigle, Executive Assistant

Finance Committee Members Present:

Tom Kane, Chairman
Maureen Ward, Vice-Chair
Douglas Delay
Keith Kent

Finance Committee Member Absent:

Charles C. Corts

School Committee Members Present:

Greg Vine, Chairman
Larry Murphy
Roann Demanche
Felicia Nurmsen
Seth Signa
Joan Landers, Superintendent

List of Documents Presented at Meeting:

- Proposed Fall Town Meeting Schedule
- Superintendent Landers Presentation of Winchendon Public Schools 2019-2020 Turnaround Plan
 - Turnaround Planning in Our District Sept. 16, 2019 Presentation
- Toy Town and Memorial Elementary Turnaround Plan, Academic Year 2019-2020
- Murdock Middle School Turnaround Plan, Academic Year 2019-2020
- Murdock High School Turnaround Plan, Academic Year 2019-2020

7:00PM: Chairman Greg Vine called the School Committee meeting back to order.

Chairwoman Audrey LaBrie called the Board of Selectmen meeting to order.

Chairman Tom Kane called the Finance Committee meeting back into session.

All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Vine thanked everyone for coming and handed the meeting over to Superintendent Landers for her presentation of the District's Turnaround Plan. Jonathan Landman, Director of Curriculum and Instruction for the District, introduced himself. He stated he came on board with the District in January and now has a permanent role as of July 1st. Thad King, Principal of Murdock High School, introduced himself and Jessica Vezina, Principal of Murdock Middle School introduced herself.

NEW BUSINESS:

1.1. Presentation of School's Most Recent Turnaround Plan:

Ms. Landers stated Memorial and Toy Town Elementary developed a plan together in the spring. Murdock Middle School and Murdock High School developed their plans independently and the District Leadership Team collaborated to develop a district-wide plan. This school year they are going to go through a strategic planning process with an outside consultant. She stated it's very important to create a cohesive vision of school and listen to everyone's suggestions. She spoke of convening leadership teams, collection of data sets with "root-cause" analyses, reflection on how to monitor and assess progress, refinement, and honing of plans by smaller teams.

Mr. Landman spoke about the four turnaround practices. He said Memorial School was not required to submit a turnaround plan but the other three were by the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education. They also provided guidance on how to develop these plans offering four different practices.

The turnaround plans are constructed around these four practices:

Practice 1: Leadership, shared responsibility, and professional collaboration

Practice 2: Intentional practices for improving instruction

Practice 3: Student-specific supports and instruction to all students

Practice 4: School Culture and Climate

Ms. Nurmsen asked how the four strategies were measured and how to know when to change course. Mr. Landman replied that each team in the four buildings would collect data, analyze, and make course adjustments as it goes. The turnaround plan process requires schools to develop a comprehensive array of data points that are tracked throughout the year. There are over 110 different annual goal benchmarks measured, most of which are required by the state. The plans are posted on the website for the public. In Section 7 of any of the plans, is the monitoring benchmarks detailed. Ms. Nurmsen commented, "as long as process doesn't get away from progress." Mr. Landman said it's a big challenge for the systems to monitor all of it effectively and are working on a way to move the work forward.

Ms. Landers talked about the school's Vision Statement. Different Vision Statements have emerged from each of the schools during their turnaround planning process. She expects the Vision statement to be revised or replaced during the strategic planning process. She read what she felt to be a very powerful statement taken from the School's Vision Statement: "The Winchendon Public Schools actualize the

promise of education.” That’s the school’s responsibility to provide all students opportunities for social, emotional and academic success ensuring each graduate is equipped with the skills, knowledge and habits necessary to persevere and realize their unique potential.

Mr. Landman then spoke about the District-Wide Picture: Three “Big Bets” which are the following:

1. Establish organizational structures, which support distributive leadership, data-driven planning, collaboration and adult learning
2. Strengthen Tier 1 Instruction
3. Strengthen the consistency and effectiveness of our practices in support of our most at-risk learners

The presentation continued with the Superintendent and Mr. Landman providing more details of each of the four Turnaround Practices outlined below:

Practice 1: Leadership, Shared Responsibility and Professional Collaboration:

1. Establish consistent, collaborative teaming structures to be implemented across each school
2. Support building principals’ success as turnaround leaders

Practice 2: Intention Practices for Improving Instruction to all Students:

1. Assist building-level teams in improving instructional practice through the use of data
2. Collaborate to calibrate on and communicate a common vision of effective teaching; align instructional feedback to the vision
3. Support targeted efforts to establish standards-aligned curriculum
4. Introduce common assessments and data review protocols to inform instructional planning.

Practice 3: Student-Specific Supports and Instruction to All Students

1. Establish task force to review and revise existing Student Support Team (SST) protocols and tools
2. Convene guidance team to increase clarity regarding what student data to share, and how to do so to enable staff to effectively support students
3. Monitor and support effectiveness of schools’ data inquiry cycles
4. Conduct an external review of current student services operations and practices; strengthen practices to ensure that students with disabilities are receiving effective instruction and appropriate services

Practice 4: School Culture and Climate

1. Establish task force to revise faculty, parent and student handbooks
2. Support efforts to promote a growth mindset across all grade levels
3. Take steps to elevate perceptions of the potential of our district, schools, community, families and students and find ways to better communicate our strengths and our potential to one another and the community

Ms. Landers felt the last point, #3, was extremely important and wanted to hear what the students wanted from the school system. Students have presented at School Committee meetings and at the opening day of school. Ms. Nurmsen commented that it was not just what they wanted from the school system but from the community as well. Students are very proud to be members of the school district and they want their community to be proud of them. The community should be very proud of them and should show them more appreciation and pride. Ms. Landers agreed and said there was a lot to be proud of in Winchendon and should communicate that working together.

Community Engagement & Strategic Planning: Inviting the Input of the Boards:

Ms. Landers said she would love to hear from the Boards regarding their ideas of how to best engage the community in a discussion about the future of the schools.

Mr. Vine said he had been on the school committee for four and a half years appreciated the comprehensive Turnaround Plan. He thanked the administrators and everyone that helped put together the Plan. Mr. Barbaro also acknowledged all the work the staff put into making the Turnaround Plans. The biggest challenge he sees is getting parents involved who are already so busy and suggested maybe looking at some Saturdays for meetings. LaBrie added there might be alternatives to getting residents physically present at the meetings with today's technology for communication.

Mr. Kane congratulated all for the work they had done for the comprehensive plan and commented it addressed the right things. He was particularly impressed with the attention to developing more professional collaboration. He believed it was key to improving schools in figuring out how to allow teachers to work together. There will be ups and downs but he had faith in the blue print they put together.

Dr. Ward echoed what Mr. Kane said saying it was a great example of the rigor being asked from the teachers and students. She stated there would be bumps in the road, but with the support of the Boards, teachers, and each other she had faith in the plans.

Ms. Landers asked her support team, Mr. King, the High School Principal and Ms. Vezina, the Middle School Principal, to talk about their initiatives and plan. Ms. Vezina, stated the Middle School was entering their third year of the Turnaround Plan. She said there have been ups and downs but everyone in the school worked together and persevered. She has lived in Town her entire life, has graduated from Murdock High, and was very proud of their improvements in the last few years. The Middle School was flipped upside down and started from scratch two years ago. She was very excited about what they have been seeing and what the kids have been accomplishing. They have been continuing that in sixth grade, upping their expectations for the kids to reach. Mr. King noted it was his second year at Murdock High School and was excited for the great initiatives they have in place. One of the concerns was the success rate of freshman with some of them not making it into their sophomore year. They kicked off the freshman scholar program at the beginning of the school year. Freshman students learn how to be successful high school students and so far it has been a great success. Mr. King then spoke about the setup of the dual enrollment program where students could receive college credits for high school courses. They have been working with Worcester State College where professors come in and offer a different level of rigor in taking those classes. Another practice started this year was virtual High School to broaden the offerings they might have. It is an online situation with a live teacher and assignments being given. There are a lot of positive things going on at the high school this year and they are really excited about seeing the outcomes this year.

Ms. Anderson addressed the community engagement aspect and believed it's important the kids know their community is proud of them but there is limited number of venues for the Town. She stated she liked going to football and basketball games but never knew when the home games were. She also mentioned a community involvement program at the school, so when events like Earth Day come up, the public would see kids taking part in a community event.

Ms. Landers thanked the Boards/Committees for having them and thanked her staff and leadership team for all their hard work.

1.2. FY19 Year End Update:

Town Manager, Keith Hickey, made the Committees aware that the Town Accountant and her staff closed the FY19 books last week. Auditors from Roselli and Clark Associates were conducting the final yearend audit. He didn't expect any surprises and felt they ended the year very successfully. He contacted the state to certify Free Cash for FY2019 in the amount of \$1,355,999. He reminded the committee members that they had Free Cash carried over from last year in the amount of \$285,886. He anticipated Free Cash to be certified later in October in the amount of \$1.642 million dollars and credited this to the whole team, the school and the town, who were working very well together.

1.3. Special Town Meeting October 28, 2019:

Mr. Hickey announced the Fall Town Meeting was scheduled for October 28, 2019. The warrant opened this morning and closes next Monday at noon. He planned on proposing warrant articles for the Fall Town Meeting, most of them centering on the Town's portion of the repair costs for Central Street. The State Department of Transportation would be paying for most of the reconstruction project of Central St. for 2021. There were some easement expenses the Town needed to absorb and some engineering work that needed to be done. He would like to see the replacement of the 100 plus year old water and sewer lines under Central St. during the construction project. He anticipated the Town's local expense incurred with the Central St. project would be over \$700,000 based on those items. The state's portion was over \$4,000,000. He would be discussing it at the Selectmen's meeting on Monday and for the use of Free Cash that is available. He would like to maintain the balance of \$288,000 carried forward from last year as an emergency without having to dip in the Town's Stabilization Account. Free Cash would be certified before the Oct. 28th Town Meeting.

Ms. LaBrie asked what the amount in stabilization was currently. Mr. Hickey replied that he was not sure off the top of his head and could provide the information to all three boards in the morning.

Mr. Barbaro commented that in the four years they have been sitting here, they have come out on the positive side. All of the Departments were very cost effective at times when they needed to be. The last four years they have been able to put together enough money to pay off the Town's debt and maintain projects throughout this community. He thanked Mr. Hickey, his administration, and the other Departments to help turn the finances around and be fiscally balanced.

Mr. Hickey acknowledged that his four years here, the Board of Selectmen have given him and his staff the support when crazy ideas or suggestions have been brought up or very difficult issues with tough decisions have come before them. He was sure the Superintendent had the same sentiments for the School Committee. He also had relied on the Finance Committee for their guidance and communication. He felt very satisfied that the people he works with in this community on a day to day basis love this community as much as the residents do and are why they have been able to work through the horrendous fiscal challenges a few years ago. He thanked Mr. Barbaro for his kind words but noted he was only as good as the people around him and feels very fortunate to be in the position he is in.

2. OLD BUSINESS: None.

3. COMMENTS: Mr. Kane announced the Finance Committee was still looking for two new members if anyone was interested to contact the Town Moderator Coral Grout and express their interest. He

appreciated the kind words of the Town Manager and echoed them saying they really do have a collaborate approach in fulfilling their responsibilities to the Town. Mr. Hickey announced the Public Works Department had been working on replacing sidewalks along Grove and Lincoln. He stated Grove was done and Lincoln Ave. would be torn up and repaved next week. He apologized that both roads were not done prior to school starting as he initially said. There were some scheduling issues with the paving contractor. Front St. would be paved tomorrow as well from School St. to Hill. There would be additional Chapter 90 supplemental appropriation in October and he would have additional suggestions later on in the year.

4. ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Barbaro motioned to adjourn the Selectmen's meeting, seconded by Ms. Salter. The board unanimously voted aye to adjourn the joint meeting with the Board of Selectmen at 8:00PM.

Ms. Nurmsen motioned to adjourn the School Committee meeting, seconded by Mr. Murphy. The board unanimously voted aye to adjourn the joint meeting with the School Committee at 8:01PM

Mr. Delay motion to adjourn the Finance Committee meeting, seconded by Dr. Ward. The board unanimously voted aye to adjourn the joint meeting with the Finance Committee at 8:01PM

The meeting adjourned at 8:01PM.

Respectfully submitted:



Brianna Roberts, Finance Committee Recording Secretary

Tom Kane, Chairman

Maureen Ward, Vice-Chair

Charles C. Corts

Douglas Delay

Keith Kent