



Winchendon Public Schools

Date Approved/Released: 4/27/23

Date Approved/Held: _____

School Committee Chair: _____

WINCHENDON TOWN CLERK
RCUD MAY 1 2023 AM9:01

School Committee Meeting

March 16, 2023 - 6:00 pm

Town Hall, 2nd Floor Auditorium

Attendance:

Ryan Forsythe, Chair; Greg Vine, Vice Chair; Larry Murphy; Alicia Jordan; Karen Kast-McBride; Angelina Dellasanta, Student Representative; Thad King, Superintendent; Amanda Babinski, Director of Finance & Operations

1. Call to order

2. Pledge of Allegiance

R. Forsythe reads audio visual disclosure.

3. Public Comment: None

4. Consent Agenda:

a. Minutes:

R. Forsythe presents consent agenda. G. Vine moves to table the vote on approving minutes as they were not prepared. Seconded by L. Murphy. Vote is unanimous.

5. Superintendent's Report:

a. FY24 Budget Update

T. King states the public hearing for the FY24 budget is scheduled for March 27. A. Babinski discusses actual percentages for out of district tuition at collaboratives, leasing costs, Chromebook costs and salary line items. The district is still waiting on some indirect cost and revenue information from the town. We are seeing a substantial increase in our foundation budget. The preliminary FY24 Chapter 70 is actually \$6.5 billion. That is a \$586 million increase, which is 9.5%. The big driver of the Student Opportunity Act was that legislation was going to allocate more money for education so that we can realize that at the district level, depending on the needs. The Act established new hire foundation budget rates in five main areas, including benefits and fixed charges, guidance and psychological services, special education out of district tuition, English learners and low income students. It was determined that the former Chapter 70 formula was not keeping up with the inflation, so districts were struggling to pay health care costs, which was taking away from instructional costs. The foundation rates for this year's SOA rate changes is capped at 4.5% for inflation. Winchendon's low income foundation budget is 25% of its total budget. A summary from DESE showed the evidence based program areas that most districts are putting in their plans, and these areas

included implementation of high quality instructional material, including software and actual, tangible textbooks, inclusion and co-teaching, instruction addressing SEL and mental health needs, research based literacy programs, including focuses on PreK and K and interventions in early literacy, equitable and culturally responsive learning environments, acceleration academies, such as vacation week boot camps or before and after school tutoring sessions, intervention, extension of the regular school day and college programs like dual enrollment. One thing that has been discussed is Commissioner Riley's goal number three for school year 22-23, which was to cultivate safe and healthy learning environments. There was a huge focus on learning loss following the pandemic. Additionally, districts are required to have a certain percentage to assist with mental health needs and SEL, so our budget priorities for FY24 put a focus on supplement vs supplant, making sure that we are meeting all of the needs of our students, then adding in the extras. One of the ways the district is hoping to do that is by reserving trust contributions for student enrichment. Winchendon has also done a good job of allocating ESSER funds to address the needs of our students and only creating a handful of ESSER funded positions, which will be going away once ESSER funds are gone. The few positions we funded through ESSER were really addressing high need areas and social emotional and academic intervention, then implementing the SOA as intended.

G. Vine asks how many ESSER funded positions the district currently has. T. King replies that we have four or five, including nurses and social workers, which we thought would be temporary coming out of COVID, but what we are finding is that it's more of a permanent piece that we need to continue to sustain. This year, the district hopes to move those types of positions out of ESSER and into the general budget.

R. Forsythe asks if on the SOA categories listed, if appropriately funding underfunded school districts was missing as he thought it would be there. A. Babinski states that what he is alluding to is low income percentage. Districts that have those high needs subgroups are underfunded, and when they were calculating net school spending and required school spending for the year, it was cutting short what was actually needed. So a percentage that was used for low income rather than allocating money specific for each student that was identified as low income. The same with special education. They were taking a very small percentage of total enrollment and gave a set amount of money for 1% of student population, when some districts are on the low end of having 10%, others have 30%, and the average is 20%. T. King discusses the SOA Report due at the end of the year to report what things the district is doing to address the categories relative to the needs of students.

G. Vine asks for copies of the report. T. King agrees to provide it when it has been completed, likely sometime before the end of May. K. Kast-McBride describes the blog of Tracy Novick which offers a comprehensive rundown of where the SOA came from and how it all came together.

b. Early Childhood Literacy Center/School Reorganization Update:

The steering committees have been going through the buildings and looking at rooms and discussing configurations and where people will be in the buildings, as well as furniture needs. He has been speaking with the president of the WTA about paid days for packing. Progress is being made on this discussion.

6. Student Representative Report:

A. Dellasanta provides updates on student activities in the district. March 20-24, Memorial School will have a book fair. March 21 is World Down Syndrome Awareness Day/Crazy Sock Day. March 24-25 is the high school Tournament of Plays. March 29 is a half day and middle school spring pictures. April 17-24 is Spring Break. Murdock High Student Council had the privilege of attending the MASC Annual State Conference. Murdock also presented a workshop to MASC delegates on Wreaths Across America and its significance in our town. Three Murdock students were recognized at the event for demonstrating hard work and dedication to Student Council. The group also participated in the Polar Plunge. Murdock High School Student Council has been recognized as a Gold Council in Massachusetts. A bottle and can drive will be held on March 18 to benefit the Dominican Republic service trip. On March 31, two Murdock students will be attending the student government day at the Statehouse. Delegates will participate in different legislative session with students acting as senators, representatives and the governor. March 31, Toy Town Elementary will hold a talent show for students in grades 3-5. Kindergarten screenings will begin Wednesday, March 31. Registration can be completed by filling out the form online. Updates are presented for Murdock Middle and High School sports teams.

7. Subcommittee Reports:

a. Joint Committee on Cost/Revenue Sharing:

G. Vine discusses the difficulties the committee had in figuring out how to best share the revenues. T. King adds that after taking a vote, the committee decided weekly meetings are no longer necessary. He references the memorandum from the town manager and the superintendent of schools, which outlines the agreement made to increase to 105% net school spending by fiscal year 2028. He states that there is currently nothing entered in the budget presentation this evening for the override or solar as there has been no agreement as of yet. R. Forsythe thanks the members of the committee for their hard work. It was necessary to put into writing the terms in the letter as well as the future MOA so that new leaders in future years will understand how the revenue will be used. The town manager and the superintendent have made an agreement to create a Memorandum of Understanding specific to the items that remain undefined with this topic. K. Kast-McBride asks for clarification regarding paragraph three of the memorandum, where it states that the superintendent and town manager will make data supported adjustments to how the funding is allocated and whether this is referring to the money being allocated to the town versus the school department. T. King confirms the target is to get to the 5% over net school spending over the next five years, and it begins this year. We don't know where the revenue will come from exactly, but it could come from grants, but it will be outlined in an MOA as we move forward. There is a penalty if the town does not meet net school spending. We have not had a plan in place because the next year we might be underfunded, but we are moving toward putting a plan in place for the protection of everyone.

b. Calendar Committee:

L. Murphy states the calendar is almost done. A few tweaks have been made and a few more have been suggested. The committee hoped to have school start before Labor Day, and that has been achieved. Also, the committee has attempted to make each month roughly the same number of school days. The third goal was to get in the professional development days and the half days that were needed throughout the districts while not burdening families with a lot of half days at the same time. L. Murphy invites Stephanie Rondeau to approach and discuss. Discussion is had about adding Class Day and Graduation to the calendar. It is determined that Graduation should be added even though it could change. Discussion is had regarding the professional development days, three of which are in August to facilitate the reorganization and staff obligations and the fourth will be November 1. There are four professional development days in the contract and four on the calendar. There are fewer half day professional

development days on this calendar than there were on this year's calendar, but after a conversation with the superintendent, he felt strongly about having those days on the calendar. R. Forsythe suggests the committee takes some time to digest the calendar and wait until the next meeting to vote on it. G. Vine asks if instead of having professional development on the calendar, the district could send out a little narrative to the parents explaining what the professional development days are for and why it is important to the education of Winchendon students. T. King agrees. G. Vine moves to table the vote on the calendar until the next meeting. Seconded by K. Kast-McBride. Vote is unanimous. G. Vine asks how the snow days have affected the calendar for this school year. T. King explains that the last day of school is currently June 27 as the district has had 8 days for snow and for cleaning up the fallout from limbs and power outages.

8. New Business:

a. MCAS Conference Update:

K. Kast-McBride gives details on the Massachusetts Association of School Committees and School Superintendents Joint Conference that was held November 2-5. Eighty-seven delegates were present representing school districts across the state to discuss resolutions. The new board of directors is as follows: President elect: Mildred Lefay, Vice President: Jason Fraser, Secretary/Treasurer: Denise Hurst, and Stacey Reza is the new president elect effective January 1. Discussion is had about the resolutions and whether they passed. Details are given for the keynote speakers and the workshops that were at the conference.

9. Old Business: None

10. Future Agenda Items:

- a. School Choice
- b. DESE SOA Report
- c. Calendar Vote
- d. Budget Hearing on March 27

11. Closing Comments:

K. Kast-McBride thanks everyone for their hard work and the school for opening up for people for the warming center when the power was out. She gives a special shout out to the students who take part in the Tournament of Plays and the Toy Town Talent Show.

L. Murphy thanks everyone and is happy the district is moving in the right direction.

G. Vine echoes Mr. Murphy.

R. Forsythe thanks Angelina for the fantastic report and congratulates her on the award. He thanks the joint revenue committee and the calendar committee.

12. Adjournment:

G. Vine moves to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by K. Kast-McBride. Vote is unanimous. Meeting is adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted: Liz Latoria
Liz Latoria, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent

Documents Attached: Town-School FY24 Budget Determination

TOWN OF WINCHENDON, MASS.
WINCHENDON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



TO: Board of Selectmen
School Committee
Finance Committee

FROM: Superintendent King and Town Manager Sultzbach
on behalf of the Town/School Revenue/Cost Working Group

DATE: March 9, 2023

RE: FY24 Budget Input and Determination

The Winchendon Community,


A working group comprised of representatives from the Board of Selectmen, School Committee, and Finance Committee have been meeting weekly through February 2023 into March to discuss the dynamic of the sharing of revenues, costs, and resources in the Town of Winchendon. This includes investigating personnel and equipment efficiencies between the organizations. We recognize and are committed to the fact that our future successes are directly linked, and it is crucial that our groups continue to work together through budgetary challenges presented in modern times. All members of this group are in agreement that the Town is stronger when the Winchendon Public Schools are strong, and vice versa.


In this spirit, the group recognizes the financial trends over the past three years in particular have created a unique situation for the people of Winchendon. A renewed commitment from the Commonwealth has ramped up the funding of Ch.70 at a historic pace. Over the past three years, Net School Spending has increased in Winchendon by over 18% from \$17,036,655 in FY22 to \$20,130,691 in FY24. This is excellent news for our Schools, our students and our community. We recognize that as part of this good fortune, an unintended but significant financial burden has been created for the Town. Over the same three year period the required Town Contribution towards this figure has swelled by over 11%. Given the restrictions of Prop 2 ½ coupled with rising operational costs, this pace is not one the Town budget can absorb.

One area of flexibility is the 2014 Prop 2 ½ Override. To date it has traditionally been a given that these resources be used to increase the school budget beyond Net School Spending – a well-intended but nearly decade old policy that isn't necessarily reflective of the present financial reality. After much discussion, the group has agreed to authorize Superintendent King and Town Manager Sultzbach to make data-supported adjustments to how this funding is allocated in FY24, with the understanding that this Town/School working group will continue to meet and review this determination in future budget years. The long term goal is to increase School funding to 5% beyond Net School Spending, an endeavor that all parties support. This would be representative of about an additional \$1,000,000 beyond the existing override by FY28.

We will also continue to investigate cost savings or opportunities for inter-organizational efficiencies such as the combining of oversight between the Department of Public Works and School Maintenance Operations by creating a Director of Public Works & Facilities – an organizational melding that was supported by this group in a 4-0 vote. While supported, these concepts will be discussed in a broader sense by the full Board of Selectmen, School Committee, and Finance Committee as we move through the FY24 Budget Process.

Working Together,


Thaddeus King
Superintendent of Schools


Justin Sultzbach
Town Manager