



Winchendon Public Schools

Date Approved/Released:

Date Approved/Held:

Mark Palmer

Budget Hearing

March 25, 2025 – 5:00 pm
2nd Floor - Town Hall Auditorium

Attendance:

K. Kast, D. Iannacone, Mike Barbaro, E. Marinelli, Marc Gosselin, Interim Superintendent, Liz Latoria, Business Manager

1. Call to order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Audio Disclosure:
4. FY26 Budget Hearing:

L. Latoria: Gave a brief overview of the current draft of the FY26 School Department Budget. Which included enrollment projections, overviews of the current FY25 proposed budget draft, estimated additional revenue sources, indirect costs, breakdown of the budget (where does the money go?), staff salary account details, staffing changes, answers to questions that were brought up from the meeting last week, how the school will use the override funds & impact of failed override.

Public Comment: Resident/Parent: Asks to clarify the three tiers that were presented at the last meeting and where we stood on that: Dr. Gosselin explains that since that meeting, they have to go with a more paired down version of the lowest level they presented at the beginning. Asks to clarify if the budget presented tonight is for the 1.9 override. Dr. Gosselin notes that it is for the 1.9 override.

She brings up concerns about busses and walkers, specifically the walkers being one mile versus 1.5 miles. L. Latoria lets her know that there are no changes to the busses and walkers in the presented budget.

She asks if they have considered bringing back the athletics fees to help fund it. Gosselin explains that they have had talks about that, but it has not been popular as fees may make students unable to participate.

Resident: Asks if the school is considering having two options on the ballot. K. Kast explains the process of the warrant article.

She explained her concerns about the cost the override will bring to the residents of Winchendon and she would like to know the plan going forward. K. Kast: Explains that the school committee only has oversees the school's budget. M. Barbaro: Explains more about why they couldn't be able to put more than one option.

Resident: brings up his concerns about the 2.9 override. He suggests cutting down the cost of transportation, consolidating buildings, and closing the Academy. K. Kast notes that the Academy is closed at the moment.

He also brings up his concerns about the projections. L. Latoria explains how the projections were calculated.

Asks the school committee if they could do first quarter now and then do a resolution later. K. Kast explains why they won't be able to do this.

Asks to clarify if their budget doesn't get passed what happens. Dr. Gosselin: Explains that there would be cuts to staff and athletics.

Resident: She wanted to bring up some things that have been on social media, such as people asking "where's the money?" "Why are we below?" "Why do we need an override?" She also talked about inflation and the price of taxes. She brought up her concerns about students leaving the district and her concerns about letting new businesses into the town.

M. Barbaro: Talks about the insurance rate increase, retirements increase, and the town's funds.

K. Kast: Explains who is part of the insurance and what is offered for town/school employees.

M. Barbaro: Talks about how the library and senior center are at risk.

Resident & Student: Notes that field trips/busses for Toy Town Elementary and Memorial do not come from the budget. The PTO budgets that. Notes that Jaffrey-Rindge School just passed a 3 million budget cut and lost all field trips, athletics, and PreK. It also cut 24 teachers and she is concerned that this can't happen for the district. Both note their concerns about the districts current class size.

M. Barbaro motioned to close the public hearing on the FY26 budget. Second by D. Iannacone. Vote is unanimous.

M. Barbaro motions for a ten-minute recess before they start their regular meeting. Second by D. Iannacone. Vote is unanimous.

5. **Call to Order:** K. Kast called to order the Winchendon Public Schools regular meeting into session at 6:26 p.m.

6. **Pledge of Allegiance**

7. **Audio Disclosure:**

8. **Old Business**

a. **Updated FY26 School Department Budget – Vote**

D. Iannacone moves to approve the updated FY26 budget as presented at the budget hearing. Second by M. Barbaro. Vote is unanimous.

M. Barbaro: Comments that the presented budget is minimal and won't solve the problems and is required by law. He hopes the community comes together and votes for the override so what was presented doesn't happen. E. Marinelli – Echoes what M. Barbaro said. They are here to advocate for students and educators. D. Iannacone – Also echoes what everyone said. Notes: What would be left if we stopped investing in the school and the town? Urges everyone to think long and hard about the ballot question that will be showing up.

K. Kast – has a question about the indirect costs, which L. Latoria clarifies. K. Kast also echoes what M. Barbaro said and doesn't want to see athletics or staff cut.

b. **MSBA update:** Dr. Gosselin: We have a due date for submitting a maintenance capital plan to them next week. Next, we would vote at the town meeting to appropriate the funds for the feasibility study to determine what it would cost to complete the project. The next phase would be securing contractors and hiring a construction manager. K. Kast will send an email to say they would like the earmarked versus the discussed options. She also discusses options for the town side.

- c. Subcommittee Reports: K. Kast: Notes that everything was said in the MSBA update except the Ad hoc committee. Mentions there is supposed to be a calculator on the town website and hasn't noticed that this was done yet. There was also supposed to be some campaign to get the word out about the override. Will send an email to Bill to clarify.
- 9. Superintendent's Report: This Friday, the tournament of plays is at the high school. He is going to Sturbridge tomorrow to continue work on the social emotional behavioral academy. He gave a brief presentation on the results of a study to look internally at the districts capacity and explain its capacity.

K. Kast: Request that the presentation to be on the school's website.

10. Public Comment: None

11. New Business: None

12. Future Agenda Items:

- a. Murdock Middle School Update:
- b. Regionalization
- D. Iannacone would like the backpack program listed on the future agenda items.
- M. Barbaro would like to add special education
- K. Kast would like to add the CPAC, Monty tech rep.

K. Kast: Wants to make a note that J. Caitlin has not been in attendance and has been allowed a personal leave. This will be sent out tomorrow to the other boards that will be resigning effective 3/31. She gave thanks to J. Caitlin during his time with the school committee.

13. Closing Member Comments:

- E. Marinelli – Notes about what civic duty is and what everyone has responsibility of civic duty.
- M. Barbaro – Discussed the mention a part time library and senior center that was mentioned in last night meeting.
- D. Iannacone – It's vital that we support the town, school, and future of the students.
- K. Kast – Wants to echo what everyone says.

14. Executive Session

15. Adjournment:

M. Barbaro motions to adjourn. Second by D. Iannacone. Vote is unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted:



Darcie Morin, Payroll & HR Generalist

Documents Attached: None