

**TOWN OF WINCHENDON  
JOINTLY HELD MEETING WITH  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN, FINANCE COMMITTEE and SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
Tuesday, April 11, 2017  
Town Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Auditorium  
109 Front Street, Winchendon, Mass.**

Selectmen Present:

Barbara Anderson, Chairwoman  
Audrey LaBrie, Vice-Chairwoman  
Austin Cyganiewicz  
Amy Salter  
Michael Barbaro

Keith Hickey, Town Manager  
Linda Daigle, Executive Assistant  
William Schlosstein, Town Accountant  
Debra Dennis, Recording Secretary

School Committee Members Present:

Danielle LaPointe, Chairwoman  
Larry Murphy  
Felicia Nurmsen

Steven Haddad, Supt. of Schools  
Rich Ikonen, School Business Manager  
Barrie Martins, Recording Secretary

Absent: Janet Corbosiero  
Dawn Fronte

Finance Committee Members Present:

Thomas Kane, Chairman  
Christian Orobello, Vice-Chairman  
Maureen Ward  
James Robichaud  
Tonya Dokulil  
Charles Corts

Absent : Robert Guenther

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List of Documents Presented at Meeting:

- Winchendon Public Schools Comprehensive District Review (attached)
  - Winchendon Public Schools District at a Glance (attached)
  - Proposed School Budget dated 4/20/17 for Fiscal Year 2018 (attached)
  - Draft Special and Annual Town Meeting Warrant (filed)
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The Joint Meeting was called to order by each Chairperson at 6:32 p.m. All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America. The meeting aired live on local cable access channel 8.

Announce audio/video recording disclosure: Mr. Greg Vine announced he would be recording the meeting this evening.

**NEW BUSINESS:** Chairman Kane said this meeting is being held tonight to bring the three Boards together to see if there are any issues or questions.

Update on Massachusetts Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Report-Superintendent Haddad said in the late fall DESE spent a week with them doing an assessment. They listed in the report the strengths, challenges and recommendations. Superintendent Haddad read the report. He said they found a lot of the things pointed out they are working on. He said the school did a self-assessment and they know they have a lot of work to do. Selectwoman LaBrie asked if there was any timeframe to check off the recommendations on the list. Superintendent Haddad said they are working real hard and plan to be a level two school in three years and a level one school two years later. He said they are making changes as they go. Mr. Larry Murphy said based on the recommendation of DESE, the Superintendent and administration, with the support of the School Committee, they are working on a strategic plan. The School Committee has committed to their set of goals and is trying to stay focused. He said the ultimate goal is student success. It's critical that they try to provide the necessary funds to complete the goals. Superintendent Haddad said in the strategic plan they have, they prioritized objectives. He said they have an action plan and he is confident they will move the district forward.

Update on School's FY18 Budget-Superintendent Haddad said they tried to put together a level service budget. They received less money this year than last year. He said one challenge is we are losing students and we can't keep making cuts. To keep students here we have to offer more. He said they need to make their district more attractive. He said they understood that they were going to put together a less than level funded budget. They put together three budgets. The first one is "Balanced" where they cut twelve teachers of which four that are retiring are not being replaced. Another budget is named "Improved" where they bring back all teachers and the third budget is called "What We Really Need" which is bringing back all the teachers and staff.

Superintendent Haddad said we have to support the students that need extra help. He said when they lose students, they lose funding. He said the cuts were made in the Middle and High School with most of them at the Middle School.

Superintendent Haddad went over the "District at a Glance" handout. He said in 2012 they had 1,479 students and in June of 2016 they had 1,291 students. It is difficult to move the district forward when more people move out of the district. He said they recommend going with the budget called "What We Really Need". He said they are going to need a 2 ½% override and is looking for support. Jim Robichaud said an override is going to be a tough sell. He said you have to reinvent yourselves or something. You had an override three years ago for \$300,000. Dr. Maureen Ward asked if they are still using Edvocate. Superintendent Haddad said they are using it for mandatory training. Chairman Kane suggested under the recommendations from DESE, the School Dept. should put recommendation number two on the front burner. With an override there is a concern that it buys you one year but you don't make much progress. You are going to have to shift priorities. He urged the School Dept. look at the long view perspective if we are going to sell an override. Superintendent Haddad said we did an analysis if we went for the override; it would cost each homeowner only \$93.00 a year. Chairman Kane said you have to let them know what they are buying to sell an override.

Draft Special and Annual Town Meeting Warrant for May 15, 2017 - Chairman Kane noted that they weren't here this evening to hold a public hearing on the warrant. We are here to see if there are any questions between the boards. Mr. Hickey said legal counsel hasn't completely reviewed the warrant and that the order of the articles is going to change. He said the attorney has recommended article four be changed significantly. The zoning items language has changed. Jim Robichaud asked if article seventeen and eighteen would have a dollar amount. Mr. Hickey said there will be dollar amounts.

Review Other Issues Relating to Town Meeting – There were no other issues brought up.

Request for FY17 Budget Transfers from the Town Manager - Chairman Kane said the Town Manager asked to pass this over. He said they have to wait until next month to take up the transfers.

**OLD BUSINESS:** There was no Old Business discussed.

**COMMITTEE/BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS:** Christian Orobello asked the School Committee if they are holding any other meetings on the school budget. Chairwoman LaPointe said their regular meeting is this Thursday. Superintendent Haddad said the public hearing will be on April 20<sup>th</sup> at 6pm at Town Hall. Christian Orobello asked if they should have had their public hearing prior to the warrant being closed. Superintendent Haddad said he believes they can make amendments to the articles at Town Meeting. Chairwoman LaPointe said our goal is to start this process next year much earlier.

Chairman Kane informed all that the Finance Committee will be holding their Public Hearing on April 25<sup>th</sup> at 7pm. Selectwoman LaBrie said the Board of Selectmen will be voting on the warrant articles on April 24<sup>th</sup>. Chairwoman LaPointe said we have a meeting scheduled for April 27<sup>th</sup> as well.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Ms. Jessica Vezina, Assistant Principal of Murdock Middle School, came forward. She said we are investing in our schools for the kids and the community. The ultimate goal is student achievement. She said we are preparing them for the future. They are learning social skills. She said most of the school budget cuts were made to the Murdock Middle School. These cuts affect the class size. With smaller classes the students are more engaged. It is expensive when we lose the students to other schools. She is asking people to ask themselves what's best for our kids.

Ms. Chris Ricard, a teacher for thirty years, came forward. She has seen what has been lost over the years. One of the biggest problems is students leaving the district. "Every time we lose a student, it's at least \$5,000 we lose." She said without an override, they will lose fifty more students.

Ms. Mary Aker, Interim Principal at Toy Town Elementary, came forward. She said she is proud to teach at Toy Town. The kids deserve everything we can give them.

Mr. Josh Romano, Principal of Murdock High, came forward. He said with the cuts we are seeing now that this could be the end of Murdock. With continued cuts over the next few years, there will be no other choice but to regionalize. He thinks the line has been drawn here and we need to fight to give our students a better life.

Mr. Rick Ward came forward. He asked why the school budget isn't posted on the website. He said it needs to go on the town website. He commented with the old Charter it states the budget has to be posted in the newspaper. In the new Charter, it states it should be posted on the public website. He said residents need to see it.

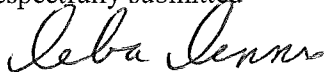
Mr. Kris Provost, the Director of Murdock Academy, came forward. He said we talk about legacy. The school is tethered to the community. He commented what happens to the school happens to the community. He said moving forward, after this override vote, they must invest in the schools and the community.

**ADJOURNMENT: A motion was made by Selectman Barbaro to adjourn; Selectwoman LaBrie seconded.**

**ANDERSON(Y)      LABRIE(Y)      BARBARO(Y)      CYGANIEWICZ(Y)      SALTER(Y)**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Debra Dennis".

Debra Dennis

Recording Secretary