

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

Finance Committee Members Present:

Thomas Kane, Chairman

Debra Dennis, Recording Secretary

Christian Orobello, Vice-Chairman

Maureen Ward

James Robichaud

Tonya Dokulil

Charles Corts

Absent : Robert Guenther

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

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

---

List of Documents Presented at Meeting:

- Winchendon Public Schools Comprehensive District Review(attached)
  - Winchendon Public Schools District at a Glance(attached)
  - Proposed School Budget for Fiscal Year 2018(attached)
  - Draft Special and Annual Town Meeting Warrant (attached)
  - FY17 Budget Transfer Requests Memo from the Town Manager (filed)
- 

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, administration and with the support of the School Committee they are working on a strategic plan. The School Committee has committed to their own set of goals and they are 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 the balanced where they cut 12 teachers of which four that are retiring are not being replaced. Another budget is improved where they bring back all teachers and the third budget is called what we are going to need which is bringing back all 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. He said most of the cuts were in the Middle School.

Superintendent Haddad went over some of the District at a Glance sheet. He said in 2012 they had 1479 students and in June of 2016 they had 1291 students. He said 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 are going to need. He said they are going to need a 2 ½ override. He said they are 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 said concerning the recommendations from DESC you should put recommendation number two on the front burner. He said with an override there is a concern that they buy you one year but you don't make much progress. He said you are going to shift priorities. He urged them to 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 said we aren't here to hold a public hearing. He said we are here to see if there are any questions between the boards. Mr. Hickey said legal counsel hasn't reviewed the warrant. The order of the articles are going to change. He

said the attorney has recommended article four will 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-None

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.

**OLD BUSINESS:** None

**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 said shouldn't you have had your 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 said the Finance Committee will be holding a 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 the 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 effect the class size. With smaller classes the students are more engaged. She said it is expensive when we lose the students to other schools. She said she is asking people to ask themselves what's best for our kids.

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

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

Mr. Josh Ramono came forward. He said with the cuts we are seeing now this could be the end of Murdock. He commented with continued cuts over the next few years there will be no other choice but to regionalize. He said he thinks the line has been drawn here. He said 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 says the budget has to be posted in the newspaper. In the new charter it says 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 Dr. Maureen Ward to adjourn; Christian Orobello seconded.**

**KANE(Y) OROBELLO(Y) WARD(Y) ROBICHAUD(Y) DOKULIL(Y) CORTS(Y)**

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

Respectfully submitted

Debra Dennis  
Recording Secretary