



Town of Wilmington
Finance Committee
121 Glen Road Wilmington, 01887

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TOWN OF WILMINGTON, MA

Meeting Minutes
Finance committee 2/28/23

Finance Committee Chairman John F. Doherty III called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Members present were Theresa Manganelli, Vice-Chairman; Marianne Gallezzo, Secretary; Chris DiOrio, Dr. Brad Jackson, Joseph Lavino, and Scott Neville.

Present in Interest: Town Manager Jeffrey M. Hull, Assistant Town Manager Susal L. Inman, Police Chief Joseph Desmond, and Superintendent of Schools Glen Brand.

Mr. Doherty asked Chief Joseph Desmond what it meant that the cruisers were in poor condition as he had spoken to Town Manager Hull earlier in the day. Chief Desmond noted that due to mileage the cruisers were not considered first responder conditions. Chief Desmond added that a notation of this status could be added through the DPW for transparency. Mr. Doherty asked how much the Pickup truck cost. Chief Desmond responded with \$57,569.15. Mr. Doherty noted that he had previously asked how surrounding towns handled the replacements of their cruisers. Chief Desmond noted that Tewksbury receives 5 cruisers per year, and Andover receives \$220,00 for cruisers each year: leaving an excess for specialty vehicles. Chief Desmond stated that Reading and North Reading typically received 2 cruisers per year. Chief Desmond noted that local departments recycle vehicles.

Ms. Gallezzo asked where the Police Department received funds for the Pickup truck. Chief Desmond noted that in August of 2021, car 40 a K9 Vehicle was totaled and produced an insurance payment of \$55,000. The costs of Tahoe's had gone up significantly and as previously discussed the department decided to get a pickup truck as opposed to a line car. Ms. Manganelli asked what a pickup truck would be used for. Chief Desmond informed the committee that having a pickup truck allowed a relief of DPW assistance. The traffic division uses things such as cones and barrels. Chief Desmond noted that local communities use a pickup truck for purposes such as plowing.

Mr. Doherty moved the meeting to the subject of Tasers. Chief Desmond noted that the department had made progress with Tasers. The history of the Wilmington Police Department and the current company TAP program, which included building credit, at the end of the five years, the community would receive brand new replacements with 1-year warranties at no added cost. Or if the community wished to take the valued credit of \$55,000 and apply it to a newer model. Town Manager Hull added that they are awaiting a final quote from the company for an updated cost estimate for updated Tasers.

Mr. Doherty asked for the specific difference between the newer and older models of Tasers. Chief Desmond informed the committee that different features are available including firing distance, firing frequency, and other advantages. Chief Desmond noted that previous models' relevance may dissipate. Mr. Hull noted that it was recommended to replace equipment older than five years.

Ms. Manganelli asked if the tasers asked how frequently the taser units had been used. Chief Desmond noted that numbers of usage include the number of displays of this equipment and the ability to avoid conflict. Chief

Desmond noted that he wouldn't put a value on weapon systems to avoid or de-escalate conflict. Ms. Manganelli clarified that she had been an advocate for introducing Tasers into Wilmington and that her question was to pay or acquire such cartridges for such systems in advance. Mr. Hull noted that acquiring the new X2 models would be at no cost to the town, with the concern of X2 models being phased out. Mr. Hull added that X2 Models would be supported for another 5 years. Mr. Hull expressed his concerns with staff training on two different systems, although he would defer to Chief Desmond on this matter.

Ms. Manganelli asked if local communities such as Cambridge and Boston, how do they handle a changeover of models. Ms. Gallezzo quoted an email between herself and Town Manager Jeff Hull, asking how long the town would have to stay in the TAP program during FY23. She explained that the company had given conflicting information. Chief Desmond noted that representatives at the company had changed over which resulted in conflicting information. A meeting with Chief Desmond and Town Manager Hull had been conducted for clarification. Mr. Hull had requested detailed information in writing.

Ms. Gallezzo expressed her concerns with the company in question discontinuing programs and equipment in the timeline of the town's contracts. Ms. Gallezzo referenced email correspondence from 2017. Chief Desmond noted that Ms. Gallezzo's concerns were just and that Mr. Hull had requested an original signed agreement from the company. Mr. Hull noted that he had sent a follow-up email to the company to clarify that the credit would be valid through 2024. Chief Desmond noted that he believed there was wiggle room for negotiation. Mr. DiOrio asked Chief Desmond what his recommendation would be. The finance committee discussed various options over the years and the costs associated.

Mr. Hull noted that based upon the email exchange, the trade-in or cash-in on the credit available would be feasible through FY 24, although he hesitates to find out this information in writing. Ms. Gallezzo expressed her concerns with having this information in writing. Ms. Manganelli expressed her interest in receiving future data for such matters.

The Finance Committee expressed their thanks to Chief Desmond for his presentation and his ability to take care of and protect the town of Wilmington.

Mr. Doherty noted that Shawsheen Tech would be attending a public hearing on March 21, 2023, to present their budget. Mr. Doherty proposed having a meeting with Shawsheen Tech on March 22, 2023, with the Finance Committee voting on March 23, 2023. Ms. Manganelli noted that this circumstance was unacceptable.

WILMINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Mr. Doherty welcomed Mr. Glenn Brand and Mr. Paul Ruggiero to the meeting.

Dr. Brand thanked the Finance Committee for their availability for the Wilmington Public Schools presentation. Dr. Brand introduced Christine Elliot, Ken Lord, Andrea Armstrong, Stephen Turner, Melissa Plowman, and many others working in the schools and departments. Dr. Brand provided a PowerPoint presentation to the Finance Committee.

The presentation depicted FY24 Guidelines which outlined topics such as funding of services and programs. Dr. Brand focused his report briefly on the recommended for Special Education curriculum as well as professional development for existing staff members.

Dr. Brand noted budget drivers consisted of meeting contractual obligations and finalizing almost all contracts except the educational assistance program. Dr. Brand noted that planning for Special Education costs, transportation costs, and lack of grant funding.

Dr. Brand displayed a PowerPoint presentation to the Finance Committee. He explained his concerns regarding the overall enrollment from 2018 and 2019. Dr. Brand noted Mr. Ruggiero's contribution to data collection, depicting 70 overall new students at the elementary level. The town also continues to track the current 8th-grade class at the middle school and what the retention rate is.

Dr. Brand provided a slide including numbers from Shawsheen Tech which showcased an interest in alternative learning programs or other schools and programs.

Dr. Brand noted relative quotes depicting challenges relative to the educational systems and the community's specific needs. Dr. Brand tied in the communities' specific needs and challenges to the quotes, he noted that specific legal parameters required Wilmington to build their programs to where they can create full, partial, and or substantially separate programs to fit the needs of students in the community, which at times may require additional staffing.

Dr. Brand acknowledged the financial aspect of implementing programs for the tuition of students mapped out about three years. The town of Wilmington faces costs ranging, depending on the needs of a child 50 or 60 thousand dollars—one student in being out of district setting at the cost of \$105,000. Mr. Ruggiero noted that the presentation slide displayed a cost avoidance versus cost savings. Mr. Doherty asked if the number provided was a net difference. Mr. Ruggiero noted that the cost out of the district would be \$630,000 for tuition for six students with another \$120,000 for transportation. Dr. Brand noted that a similar presentation had been provided to the Finance and School Committee last year, and the current presentation had been updated to reflect FY24. Dr. Brand reviewed the presentation, the numbers provided, and how they were relative to staffing.

Ms. Gallezzo asked that the School Department be more clear in the number of staff deductions enrollment. Ms. Manganelli asked for more clarification as well. Ms. Manganelli asked for clarification as to what the staff reduction pertained to directly to each school specifically. Mr. Ruggiero noted that the reduction included about 5 staff members per classroom between the middle school and high school. Specifically, four teachers for the high school. Ms. Gallezzo noted that the FY23 and FY24 budget only noted a reduction of one staff member. Mr. Ruggiero noted that this number was inclusive of the previous year's cuts and future limitations.

Mr. Ruggiero presented changes for staff including lane and step changes. This presentation included reductions in longevity changes. The school department is finalizing a MOA with Education Assistance, which all contracts are included in the budget. Mr. Ruggiero explained the step and lane system to the committee.

Mr. Ruggiero presented a breakdown of salary adjustments inclusive of Special Education Tuition, which is carried out in the current FY24 Budget. This included more extensive programs for students with more severe autism with the addition of three employees.

Dr. Brand provided a brief update regarding the MSBA process for the Wildwood Early Childhood Center. Dr. Brand informed the committee that they would be hiring a designer and are continuing to follow the specific guidelines of the MSBA. Dr. Brand noted school consolidation would be looked at throughout the process.

Ms. Gallezzo questioned enrollment, and how many students decided to go to Shawsheen Tech. Dr. Brand noted that a good number of students who went to Shawsheen Tech had returned to Wilmington High School. Dr. Brand explained that a survey had been conducted with families of 8th graders, however, it only received a 25% response rate. Preliminary numbers for 8th and 9th graders show a good retention rate. Mr. Doherty asked if students needed permission to attend Essex Agricultural Tech. Dr. Brand informed the committee that if the desired program does not exist at Shawsheen Tech they would need permission to attend. Mr. Jackson confirmed this.

Ms. Gallezzo asked if there was any traction for retention of existing middle school students to move onto Wilmington High School. Dr. Brand added that it was difficult to tell, as data had not been gathered. Mr. Doherty asked if K-8 classes were at maximum capacity per contract. Dr. Brand stated that the schools remain as closely in line as possible. A schedule overhaul would reshape class sizes, which currently is 1-20 at the high school, with a minimum of 7 although rare.

Mr. Neville asked if the school system was aware or supportive of transportation costs being covered by the state as mentioned by Senator Finegold at a prior Select Board meeting. Mr. Brand informed Mr. Neville that he was not aware of this, although that didn't mean it wasn't out there.

Mr. Neville noted student support services would be adding positions supported by grants and that he understood the low MCAST scores and wanted to know if a metric would be used to establish how long these added positions would be needed. Dr. Brand informed Mr. Neville that permanent staff members for reading support needed to add math, and the need for math help became more necessary during and post-pandemic.

RTI Program catches students before they fall behind, he wanted to know if that meant staffing would be provided for lower grade levels as opposed to higher grade levels. Dr. Brand confirmed more advanced intervention would be provided at lower grade levels. Mr. Doherty asked if support to parents was provided for at-home learning outside of school. Dr. Brand confirmed that parent support is provided.

Mr. Neville asked if the school was teaching about online presence and safety precautions. Dr. Brand noted that the school system uses the Market Curriculum and conducts parent nights because it has become such a big issue for children and families.

Mr. Neville asked if the Middle School Renovations were included in the Capital Items for the schools, where historically it was included in the Public Buildings Budget. Mr. Ruggiero informed the committee that adjustments had been made.

Mr. Jackson informed the committee that he has an adult child who is employed by the school department and has completed all necessary state reporting for conflict of interest etc. He asked if the circuit breaker revenue number reflects the funding level of circuit breaker funds in the governor's budget. Mr. Ruggiero noted that the funding can be carried for one year and the amount the funding increased does not include the governor's numbers. Mr. Jackson added that as a past administrator, he would like to see the cost of health coverage included in the budget.

The Finance committee thanked the school department for their presentation.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Finance Committee Reviewed the Minutes from February 9, 2023. A motion was made By Ms. Manganelli, seconded by Ms. Gallezzo, and unanimously:

VOTED: To approve the minutes from February 9, 2023

ADJOURN

At the conclusion of the discussion, being no further business, a motion was made by Ms. Gallezzo for the Finance Committee to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Neville and unanimously:

VOTED: That the Finance Committee adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 9:46 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Tom Donahue', is written over a horizontal line.

Thomas F. Donahue

Recording Secretary