



Town of Wilmington

Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, March 15, 2018

Finance Committee Chairman, Theresa M. Manganeli, called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm in Town Hall, Room 9. Members present were John F. Doherty, Jonathan Eaton, Marianne Gallezzo, Michele Kincaid, Bernard P. Nally, and Kevin Stokes. Excused: Neal Couture and Leigh Martinson.

WILMINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

PRESENT IN INTEREST: Paul Ruggiero, Interim Superintendent; Steve Bjork, School Committee Chairman; Mary Jane Byrnes, School Committee Member; Frank Antonelli, Interim Director of Administration and Finance; and Jacquie Raffi, Assistant Director of Administration and Finance.

Mr. Ruggiero stated that the Wilmington Public School Department's mission is to be a high-performing district where all students are provided opportunities to learn through high-quality, rigorous curriculum and engaging, personalized instruction delivered in a safe, supportive, inclusive environment. All members of our school community work together to develop confident, empathetic, life-long learners and responsible citizens. Our students become innovative, creative, collaborative problem-solvers capable of making positive contributions to society.

Budget priorities are to provide appropriate funding for services and programs essential to students, which: strengthen the connection between learning and teaching; continuously improving student outcomes; support a growing need for social and emotional programs; support the need for differentiated curriculum delivery; expand and support the educator evaluation system; enhance and expand technology access for students and staff; and maximize the prudent use of School resources. The School Department complies with all legal mandates to meet professional staffing guidelines, addresses the growing need of special education services, strives to pursue more cost-effective goods and services, and works with all Town departments to preserve capital assets.

The department continues to seek additional funding sources. Mr. Ruggiero stated that the School Department receives approximately ten grants per year and received approximately \$1,000,000 in FY 2018 through grants. Some grants are entitlement grants, but still require applications and supporting documentation be submitted. Other grants are researched by the Assistant Superintendent, Director of Student Support Services, and others.

Budget highlights include: investigation science program at the Middle School; writing for elementary grades; English Language Arts (ELA) benchmarks for Middle School readers; textbook funds; readers workshop at all schools to buy books for libraries; Chromebook initiative; and increased special education costs. The School Department is a sheltered English immersion training site for surrounding districts and one of Wilmington's teachers is certified to teach the program. The School Department runs programs in which surrounding districts are charged to have their teachers endorsed in the

immersion program, which is two classes each year and thirty-five students in each class. Wilmington's goal is to have 100% of teachers endorsed within two years.

Mr. Ruggiero stated the School Department strives to meet contractual obligations. The teacher's contract negotiations were finished in FY 2018 for a three-year term, plus one-year contract. Contracts for FY 2019 include negotiations with nurses and administrative staff. Contracts for educational assistants will be negotiated the following year. Teachers' salaries prior to the contract renewal were, on average, approximately 6% lower than to surrounding and comparable communities. However, when health insurance and total employee compensation costs were considered, the difference was approximately 4%. The new contract gives teachers a 3% increase for three years. The teachers' union was informed that future negotiations will factor health insurance and total compensation.

District statistics include: 3,399 students as of October 2, 2017; 476.25 staff members; 93% of High School students continue on to higher education; and 35 students who are learning English as a second language (ESL), of which there are fifteen different languages.

Personnel for FY 2018 started with 471.9 full time equivalents (FTE). There was a reduction of two teachers through attrition and an increase of 3.4 FTE for special education compliance. Salaries for FY 2018 started at \$30.6 million. Step in lane changes increased \$428,000. Addition of aforementioned special education positions increased \$376,000. Salary increases account for \$928,000. Replacements for retirees, or those who resigned increased \$382,000. Longevity decreased \$347,000. Overall, salaries totaled \$1,022,000, an increase of 3.34%.

Non-salary expenses for FY 2018 totaled \$8,200,000. Special Education tuitions and transportation costs were \$363,000. Other expenses included: textbooks and books for student libraries; electricity; school and office supplies; and transportation for general education. For general education transportation, the current contract with North Reading Transportation expired the end of the fiscal year. The School Department went out to bid for a new contract, and North Reading Transportation was the only bidder. Frank Antonelli, Interim Director of Finance and Administration, was instead able to negotiate a better rate with the company for \$338 per bus per day. However, there is a warrant article which will allow the School Department to enter into a five-year contract for transportation if the residents approve it at this year's Annual Town Meeting.

The recommended FY 2019 budget is \$43,000,000, an increase of 1.5% from FY 2018. Capital requests include: voice over internet protocol (VoIP) system; replacement of laptops for teachers at the middle school; replacement of projectors at elementary schools; handicapped minivan; and data center for the district to help consolidate servers and expand storage capacity.

Mr. Stokes noted that some teachers at the middle school are more consistent with posting in the Aspen system than others. Mr. Ruggiero stated that professional development is budgeted at \$20,000 for teachers to learn how to use the online resources.

Mr. Eaton asked about the status of the Information Technology Director position. Mr. Ruggiero stated that due to budgetary constraints, the position is not being filled. The technicians at the schools are reporting to Frank Antonelli and Jacquie Raffi at the Finance department. Mr. Doherty asked if John O'Neil, Director of Information Technology for the general government side, has helped. Mr. Ruggiero

stated that he had not asked Mr. O’Neil for assistance. Mr. Stokes noted this may be an opportunity for Town and Schools to combine technology and infrastructure and alleviate the School’s need to support general purpose technology.

Ms. Kincaid asked if there were students who aged out of special education support services as the budgeted line item decreased to \$600,000 for next fiscal year. Mr. Ruggiero stated that some moved to residential. Ms. Manganelli asked why there are shared costs with Peabody and Waltham. Mr. Ruggiero stated that is due to parents having dual custody arrangements.

Mr. Doherty asked who approves the cost for students who are accepted to charter schools. Mr. Ruggiero stated that the cost is paid per pupil. Mr. Bjork noted that approval is based on acceptance. Mr. Doherty stated that he believed the approval had to come from the Superintendent. Mr. Ruggiero noted that he would research the process. Ms. Byrnes noted that charter schools work like private schools. The district has been against charter schools, as they take funding away from public schools.

Mr. Stokes asked how the snow days have affected the end of the year. Mr. Ruggiero stated the district has had seven snow days to date. Currently the last day of school will be on a Monday, and there is a tight timeline as summer special education classes need to start.

Ms. Gallezzo asked if the photo lease maintenance budget was for a long-term lease on equipment. Mr. Ruggiero noted that is all for copiers. Ms. Manganelli asked if the district had considered purchasing equipment instead of leasing. Mr. Ruggiero stated that it had not, and it keeps the district up-to-date with the current technology and eliminates having to maintain extra printers throughout the buildings.

Ms. Gallezzo asked if there is bus transportation for junior varsity boys’ hockey in the athletic budget, as other junior varsity teams have bus transportation. Ms. Kincaid stated that transportation is provided for some games, but not on the weekends. Mr. Ruggiero stated that it was not a conscious decision to not have transportation, and that it may just be schedule related. Ms. Gallezzo asked if that could be accommodated in the revolving fund going forward.

Ms. Manganelli asked how the district is doing with regards to the social and emotional needs and how it finds and reaches those children in need. Mr. Ruggiero noted that the lower grades have a Positive Behavior Intervention & Prevention (PBIS) program, which focuses on social emotional needs and works to improve the culture. The middle school has the “Signs of Suicide” program to identify signs and a need for interventions. The Director of Student Support Services and Behavior Health Coordinator are involved with support programs.

Mr. Doherty asked about the security at the school buildings. Mr. Ruggiero stated that the schools are safe. They have card readers for access and cameras outside. Administrative assistants at the schools ask visitors for identification. Attendants are present at entrances in the morning as the students arrive.

Ms. Gallezzo asked if there has been an increase in drug education. Mr. Ruggiero stated that they have been added, especially at the high school. Mr. Doherty asked if the school nurses have Narcan. Mr. Bjork stated the nurses at the middle and high school have Narcan.

Mr. Nally asked if enrollment of 800 students at the high school will be consistent. Mr. Ruggiero stated that the figure is based on a three-year cohort average and is based on the model trending that way.

The Cecil Group, as part of the Facility Master Plan, did a town-wide resident enrollment projection, which estimated that enrollment would remain flat and the population growth would be higher among senior citizens.

Ms. Gallezzo asked how many Wilmington students are enrolled in private schools. Mr. Ruggiero stated that there were twenty-five students last year. Ms. Manganelli asked if the draw for students to enroll in private schools was due to sports. Mr. Ruggiero stated that sports may be a contributing factor.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Finance Committee reviewed the Minutes from February 27, 2018. A motion was made by Mr. Doherty, seconded by Mr. Eaton, and by the affirmative vote of all, it was:

VOTED: To approve the minutes from February 27, 2018.

The Finance Committee reviewed the Minutes from March 1, 2018. A motion was made by Mr. Doherty, seconded by Mr. Eaton, and by the affirmative vote of all, it was:

VOTED: To approve the minutes from March 1, 2018.

The Finance Committee reviewed the Minutes from March 6, 2018. A motion was made by Mr. Doherty, seconded by Ms. Gallezzo, and by the affirmative vote of all, with Ms. Manganelli and Mr. Stokes abstaining, it was:

VOTED: To approve the minutes from March 6, 2018.

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Manganelli entered an email from Committee member, Marianne Gallezzo, into the record. In the email, Ms. Gallezzo states that she will recuse herself from voting on Town Meeting Warrant Articles 49, 50, 51, 52, and 54. Ms. Gallezzo noted that she will also recuse herself from voting on Article 53 to avoid the appearance of impropriety, even though she confirmed that her employer does not have a role or financial interest in the matter.

Ms. Manganelli reminded the Committee that the next meeting will be the Joint Public Hearing with the Planning Board on Tuesday, March 20, 2018.

At the conclusion of the discussion, and there being no further business to come before the Committee, a motion was made by Mr. Doherty, seconded by Ms. Gallezzo, and by the affirmative vote of all, it was

VOTED: That the Finance Committee adjourn.

Meeting adjourned at 8:16 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Recording Secretary