



## **Town of Wilmington**

Finance Committee

121 Glen Road Wilmington, 01887

### **Meeting Minutes**

Thursday, March 4, 2021

Finance Committee Vice-Chairman, Theresa M. Manganelli called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Members present via video conferencing on ZOOM were, Michele Kincaid, Secretary, Jonathan Dugas, Marianne Gallezzo, Andrew Lavigne, Leigh Martinson, Bernard P. Nally and Kevin Stokes. Chairman John F. Doherty III was excused.

To begin the meeting Ms. Manganelli read a statement regarding Open Meeting Law and public access to the meeting via technological means, then took a verbal roll call of the attendees.

#### FY 22 BUDGET OVERVIEW

##### WILMINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

PRESENT IN INTEREST: Dr. Glenn Brand, Superintendent of Schools; Paul Ruggiero, Assistant Superintendent of Administration and Finance; Kenneth Lord, Director of Technology and Digital Learning; Christine Elliot, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Staff Development; Members of the School Committee: Jennifer Bryson, Chair; Erika "MJ" Byrnes, Jesse Fennelly; Jason Samaha and Jo Newhouse.

Dr. Brand presented the FY22 Budget. He shared the Wilmington Public Schools Vision and Mission, the Wildcat Circle of Values and the strategic planning process to develop these over the year.

In the budget for FY22, Dr. Brand presented four key components: identifying fixed costs, obligations and assessments; funding legal mandates; providing special education programming when possible; and determining the appropriate number of sections/staffing at all grade levels. Some of the budget assumptions include a projected enrollment of 3,133 students, anticipated enrollment of 65 out-of-district students, revenue sources from grants and state funded contributions parallel to LY and the continual provision of both transportation and athletic services primarily funded by the district's operating budget.

Dr. Brand anticipates a slight decline in enrollment continually over the next few years. He then reviewed the cohort survival average, or, the number of students that are retained. He then discussed factors that were taken into account when considering enrollment, including the impact of the pandemic. Dr. Brand reviewed enrollment by grade level in detail.

The budget includes \$75,000 earmarked for strategic planning initiatives. Much of the plan focuses on diversity, equity and inclusion. Dr. Brand also spoke about curriculum and staff development and various resources that are being planned for, continuing, or being renewed. In response to the effects of the pandemic, the Office of Student Support Services, which encompasses special education and behavioral health, is focuses on the challenges faced by students and responding to those needs. Every two years the School Department participates in a Youth Risk Behavior Survey to get feedback from adolescents.

The proposed budget for the Information Technology department includes efforts to provide students and staff with devices, especially though remote learning due to the pandemic. These devices include everything from telephones to servers. Dr. Brand reviewed the teacher laptop replacement plan and the replacements that have taken place over the last six years.

There is a Capital request to replace the computer labs at the High School and Chromebook replacements for students. Another Capital request is for the replacement of approximately half of all projectors at multiple schools. The current pole-mounted projectors are from 2013 or older.

Dr. Brand presented the FY22 personnel changes. The recommended budget for FY22 allows for 487.90 full-time-equivalents (FTEs). Salary changes are increasing 2.99% while non-salary changes have a .70% increase. Total change for the budget is 2.5%, or \$1,093,052.

Dr. Brand presented a revised version of the FY22-FY26 Capital Request plan and the changes that were made, particularly the removal of recommendations for new key personnel additions in the FY22 budget.

Ms. Manganelli asked Dr. Brand to elaborate on the declining enrollment. She noted that over a 15-year period, it appears that the High School will lose 285 students by 2026 (a 14-classroom equivalent using an average of 25 students per class) and the Middle School will lose 238 students (a 9-classroom equivalent). She stated that she is very concerned with the size of classrooms at the High School and the value for taxpayer dollars. Ms. Manganelli also requested as she stated, once again, class sizes for each subject.

Ms. Manganelli then referenced Mr. Ruggiero's comments about the MUNIS transition from a previous meeting, where he explained some of the challenges the School Department is facing. Ms. Manganelli stressed that \$800,000 has been spent so far and asked what steps can be taken at the School Department to achieve completion. She recommended bringing in consultants for both the Town and School sides if necessary.

Dr. Brand responded that the School Department does need to take a close look at enrollment, especially at the secondary school level. He stated that ultimately it comes down to programmatic offerings, should they be changed, whether increased or decreased. He agreed that the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades are losing students to other schools and noted that one thing that must be assessed is the array of course offerings and if they are something Wilmington wants to offer. He also stated that he will provide the class numbers that were requested.

Speaking to the MUNIS transition, Dr. Brand admitted that he knows the value of aligning the Town and School sides but the reality is truly the incredibly challenging times. He did acknowledge that the Town and School have already scheduled a follow-up meeting to plan out how to move forward. Mr. Ruggiero then stated that they are committed to moving forward and will do the best they can to come up with a plan.

Ms. Gallezzo asked about the athletic budget, that to her it seems low, and how does the School Department plan to fund the rest of the year and pay the portion of administrative staff that comes out of that. Mr. Ruggiero said that summer sports camp this year will help but that they are managing this very closely. As a follow up, she asked about the schools having funding for additional items needed for students to return to in-person learning, for items such as PPE, shields, additional desks, etc. Mr. Ruggiero said the department has already been talking with vendors but they need more concrete numbers first. He also stated that there is grant funding available to support efforts to bring students back to classrooms. Also, he said they are looking at creative solutions and best practices from other schools.

Ms. Kincaid asked about social distancing at the schools and whether 6-foot distancing would be used or would this be reduced. Dr. Brand explained that the CDC is still recommending six feet, but the Massachusetts Department of Education is now supporting 3-6 feet so Wilmington is planning for somewhere in between but a minimum of three feet with masks on. They are still waiting for guidelines to be issued. During lunch, when students would have to remove their masks to eat, they would have a minimum of a six-foot distance. The

cafeterias cannot support this space requirement so in many cases schools are either not serving lunch or utilizing the school gyms for additional space.

There was then a brief discussion of the salary increases and the number of retirements in 2020.

Mr. Stokes asked if the Town and Schools collaborate on technology spending. Mr. Lord stated that although he collaborates quite a bit with John O'Neil on things like cyber-security training, the Town and School receive different discount rates for purchases so they really can not collaborate in that area. Mr. Stokes then asked about the phone systems and infrastructure and if there is any opportunity there. Mr. Lord said that although the phone system may be one area, infrastructure and bandwidth is not as they are not qualified as reimbursable if they are shared.

There was a brief discussion about the effects of decreased enrollment on Chapter 70 funding. Mr. Ruggiero said it is not really a factor. He also said that they do keep a database of students who have left. Some have gone to private schools and homeschooling is up 3 or 4-fold. He said it is their intention to reach out in the next couple of weeks to see if these students will return in the Fall. When asked how many students, Mr. Ruggiero answered that 56 more students are being homeschooled this year over last year and approximately 50 more TY over LY have gone to private schools. Wilmington also has 36 more students going to Shawsheen Tech than last year. He is hopeful that the homeschooled and private school students will return. Statewide enrollment is down 30,500 students for a myriad of reasons. Private schools were doing in person learning even since the beginning of the pandemic.

Ms. Gallezzo noted that Recreation indicated in their meeting that the school buildings are unavailable due to the pandemic and asked if there is any plan to get the recreation department back in for evening classes. Dr. Brand said it is a possibility. He stated they have a meeting coming but there is still too much uncertainty to commit to opening the buildings to other departments at this time. He noted that many of the spaces that were previously used for these activities are now repurposed to provide space for social distancing, like using the gym for a lunch room.

Mr. Nally asked if once students are in person learning is there any plan to extend the school day or cancel vacations to give students more time for learning. Dr. Brand said that with contractual limitations this would not be possible this year but the School Committee has talked about next year and what could be done. Of course, he noted, extending the school year comes with a financial cost so that needs to be considered.

There was a brief discussion about the possibility of students returning with increased emotional issues, and the impact of social programming and the department's plan to respond and support. There was also a question about whether creative use of space could provide more room for recreational programs.

Ms. Manganelli thanked Dr. Brand.

#### PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

#### OTHER BUSINESS

There was a brief discussion of the upcoming meetings followed by some discussion about the MUNIS transition. The Committee would like to see a plan to move forward drafted and to have milestones set. Ms. Kincaid and Mr. Stokes, speaking from experience, agreed that there was not much left to do as the chart of accounts is

done on the Town side but that the School has more to do to catch up. Mr. Stokes also said that some modules may have to be delayed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

There were no minutes.

At the conclusion of the discussion, there being no further business to come before the Committee, a motion was made by Ms. Gallezzo and seconded by Mr. Dugas, it was unanimously and by roll call:

VOTED: That the Finance Committee adjourn.

Meeting adjourned at 8:41 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Chris Caggiano", is written over a horizontal line.

Chris Caggiano  
Recording Secretary