



WESTPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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To: Westport Board of Education Members
From: Thomas Scarice, Superintendent of Schools
Re: April 1, 2021 Board of Education Meeting
Date: April 1, 2021

Provided below for Board consideration is an overview of the administrative team’s response to the recent action taken by the Board of Finance which reduces the request of the Board of Education by \$975,284. As we have done for previous meetings, the meeting will be held remotely with public access through live streaming and public comments and questions submitted electronically.

Discussion

1. Consideration of Modification to FY 2022 BOE Adopted Budget

As the Board is aware, on Monday evening the Board of Finance reduced the Board of Education adopted 2021-2022 operating budget in the amount of \$975,284. The Board of Education’s adopted budget represented a 4.11% increase over last year. The Board of Finance reduction lowers the Board of Education budget to a 3.0% increase. Following discussions with all bargaining units, the savings of changing the current health care plan to a high deductible plan did not materialize.

As a result, the Board of Education is faced with revisiting the adopted budget in search of reductions to meet the Board of Finance’s action. The administrative team has been working across the entire system, including building administration and district coordinators, beginning last week in anticipation of a potential reduction from the Board of Finance. The pace and intensity of these meetings increased with urgency once action was taken on Monday evening. A final meeting is being held the afternoon of April 1 to pull together previous considerations, and to incorporate any new information.

Three tiers of reductions were presented to the Board of Education in January when requested to model what programs and staffing might be at risk. The administrative team revisited these reductions and made further considerations for new information that has been learned.

As recently as Tuesday afternoon, Westport Finance Director, Gary Conrad, shared information that he received from the Connecticut Council of Municipalities (CCM) indicating that the most recent round of federal funding is expected to award the district \$1.6 million. This is consistent with information shared by the Connecticut State Department of Education.

Federal funding during the pandemic has been filtered to states through the Education Stabilization Fund, which has been approved by Congress in the CARES Act for the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER Fund). The following table illustrates the funding that has been appropriated to the Westport Public Schools through the CARES Act, ESSER I, and ESSER II:

Grant	Amount Awarded	Status	Use
CARES/Coronavirus Relief	\$947,633	Approved	PPE, Cleaning, Elementary Bus Runs, COVID-related personnel costs
ESSER I	\$141,129	Approved	Chromebooks, Technology, Parent/Student Help Desk
ESSER II	\$691,788	Application Submitted	Summer Learning Programs, Tutoring and Intervention, PD, SEL Summer Programs, Technology (i.e. smartboards, laptops)

U. S. Secretary of Education, Dr. Miguel Cardona, informed each state department of education that The American Rescue Plan (ARP) of 2021 requires the U.S. Department of Education to allocate \$121,974,800,000 in awards to State educational agencies (SEAs) through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER Fund). Again, there have been projections in the amount of \$1.6 million in funding targeted for the Westport Board of Education.

Additionally, initial guidance on the use of the funds has been provided. This guidance states that an LEA must reserve not less than 20 percent of its total ARP ESSERIII allocation to address learning loss through the implementation of evidence-based interventions. Furthermore, the remaining ARP ESSER funds may be used for the same allowable purposes as ESSER I and ESSER II (i.e. PPE, COVID-related personnel costs, technology, intervention programs, maintenance projects in response to COVID, etc.).

To be clear, there is no grant application to complete as of today for ESSER III. Yet, Congress approved the program and the correspondence from the Secretary of Education to each state indicates an aggregate amount for the state of Connecticut with identified and approved uses of the funds.

With that, in order to meet the reduction of \$975,284 issued by the Board of Finance, I recommend using \$607, 923 of anticipated grant funds to address the current shortcoming. This would bring the Board of Education budget to a 3.3% increase over last year. The remaining amount, \$367,361, could then be requested in restoration from the Board of Finance.

I further recommend that if the Board of Education were to reduce additional funding to approach the \$975,284 reduction, that revenue generating options be initiated, such as “pay to participate” for high school athletics and targeted arts programs that are not curriculum-related. Additionally, as presented in the initial budget workshops, I would recommend that all K-12 intramural programs be either offset by a participation fee, or outsourced to the Park and Recreation department, or Continuing Education, so that programs are maintained but funded through student fees and not the Board of Education budget.

If the projected grant funds are utilized (approximately \$607,923), and combined with revenue generating options (approximately \$286,929 of revenue, “pay to participate”), the Board of Education request would represent a 3.07% increase over last year.

These moves above would protect any further staffing reductions, which was a high priority of the administrative team in deliberating over the past week. The remaining reductions on the three tiers presented in January are all staff-related (Grade Level Assistants, elementary paraprofessionals, and 4 teacher FTE, which was discussed as the elementary world language program). Again, the priority of the administration was to preserve all staffing positions and consider reductions in areas that would not directly impact the classroom or individual students.

As we close out this year in a few months and prepare for next year, it is a high priority of the full administrative team to keep the remainder of the professional and support staff fully intact in order to be equipped to respond to all of the needs that will need to be addressed in the fall.

The administrative team will be available to respond to Board member questions and considerations this evening, in advance of final Board action Monday.

Corona Virus Relief Fund
\$947,633 (max.)
<p>Approved budget:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal Protective Equipment Cleaning supplies PM elementary bus runs COVID-related personnel costs

ESSER I
\$141,129
<p>Approved budget:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chromebooks & document cameras Parent/Student tech help desk

ESSER II
\$691,788
<p>Application submitted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summer learning opportunities Tutoring and interventions Social/emotional summer programs Teacher professional development Technology (ie., smartboards, laptops)

ESSER III (American Rescue Plan)
\$1,600,000 (est.)
<p>Awaiting formal award, guidelines and application. Only operational memos available at this time.</p> <p>Assumptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50%/50% allocation FY22 & FY23 Qualifying facilities (IAQ) projects Qualifying technology (remote learning) <p>Set aside:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reserve at least 20% of funds to address learning loss (ie., interventions)

	<u>Operating Budget</u>	<u>% Increase</u>
FY 21 (BOE Adopted)	\$ 121,936,000	
FY 22 (BOE Proposed)	\$ 126,942,298	4.11%
FY 22 (Recommended revision to Health Insurance estimate - Acct 210)	\$ (372,432)	-0.31%
	\$ 126,569,866	3.80%
FY 22 (BOF Approved)	\$ 125,594,582	3.00%
Funding Gap	\$ 975,284	

ESSER II Grant - Technology (smartboards & laptops)	\$ (100,000)	-0.08%	
ESSER III Grant - Technology (chromebooks)	\$ (344,145)	-0.28%	
ESSER III Grant - Technology (facilities - indoor air quality) - 435 account	\$ (41,313)	-0.03%	
ESSER III Grant - Technology (facilities - indoor air quality) - 437 account	\$ (122,465)	-0.10%	
	\$ (607,923)	-0.50%	3.30%
Required Restoration	\$ 367,361		

116 - Extra Curricular Stipends (High School - Drama - Pay-to-Participate)	\$ (24,000)	-0.02%	
118 - Coaches (Intramural - Elementary - Pay-to-Participate)	\$ (21,776)	-0.02%	
118 - Coaches (Intramural - Middle - Pay-to-Participate)	\$ (44,203)	-0.04%	
118 - Coaches (Intramural - High School - Pay-to-Participate)	\$ (16,950)	-0.01%	
812 - Student Athletics (Pay-to-Participate)	\$ (180,000)	-0.15%	
	\$ (286,929)	-0.24%	3.07%
Required Restoration	\$ 80,432		

			<u>FTE</u>	<u>Std. Salary</u>	<u>Std. Benefit</u>
102/103/210 - Teachers (Reg. Ed & Spec. Areas) ie., WL K-5, classroom teachers	\$ (375,524)	-0.31%	4.0	\$ 66,881	\$ 27,000
122/210 - Paraprofessionals (Elementary)	\$ (289,945)	-0.24%	5.0	\$ 30,989	\$ 27,000
133 - Other Assistants (Grade Level Assistants)	\$ (231,956)	-0.19%	4.0	\$ 30,989	\$ 27,000
	\$ (897,425)	-0.74%	13.0		