

WESTPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION

REVISED AGENDA*

(Agenda Subject to Modification in Accordance with Law)

PUBLIC SESSION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

7:00 p.m., Staples High School, Cafeteria B (Room 301)

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM BOARD AND ADMINISTRATION

PUBLIC QUESTIONS/COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS (15 MINUTES)

MINUTES: January 4, 2022, *page 2*

DISCUSSION/ACTION

- | | | |
|--|---------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Acceptance of CMS Building Project, <i>pages 3-10</i> | (Encl.) | Mr. Elio Longo
Mr. Don O'Day |
|--|---------|---------------------------------|

DISCUSSION

- | | | |
|---|---------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Health Report | | Ms. Suzanne Levasseur |
| 2. Health and Medical Insurance Review with Board of Education
Insurance Consultant, Lockton Companies LLC | | Mr. Tim Hasselman |
| 3. FY 2023 Proposed Budget of the Superintendent of Schools,
<i>pages 11-17</i> | (Encl.) | Mr. Thomas Scarice
Mr. Elio Longo |

ADJOURNMENT

*A 2/3 vote is required to go to executive session, to add a topic to the agenda of a regular meeting, or to start a new topic after 10:30 p.m.
The meeting can also be viewed on Cablevision on channel 78; Frontier channel 6021 and by video stream @www.westportps.org

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION WELCOME USING THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES:

- Comment on non-agenda topics will occur during the first 15 minutes *except* when staff or guest presentations are scheduled.
- Board will not engage in dialogue on non-agenda items.
- Public may speak as agenda topics come up for discussion or information.
- Speakers on non-agenda items are limited to 2 minutes each, except by prior arrangement with chair.
- Speakers on agenda items are limited to 3 minutes each, except by prior arrangement with chair.
- Speakers must give name and address, and use microphone.
- Per Board policy, speakers must be town residents or employees
- Responses to questions may be deferred if answers not immediately available.
- Public comment is normally not invited for topics listed for action after having been publicly discussed at one or more meetings.



WESTPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

THOMAS SCARICE
Superintendent of Schools

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Westport, Connecticut 06880
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To: Westport Board of Education Members
From: Thomas Scarice, Superintendent of Schools
Re: January 10, 2022 Board of Education Meeting
Date: January 7, 2022

Provided below for Board consideration is an overview of the meeting agenda items for January 10, 2022. The meeting will be held in-person.

Discussion /Action

1. Acceptance of CMS Building Project

The Coleytown Middle School Building Committee (CMSCS) must officially hand the school back to the Board of Education once there is confirmation and confidence that the building, including all controls and mechanisms that ensure the systems are running optimally, and to confirm that the work of the envelope meets the appropriate standards to declare the renovation complete. CMSCS Chair, Don O'Day, will update the Board on the condition of the facility and the readiness of the building to be formally accepted by the Board as a completed renovation. Mr. O'Day will recommend that CMS be formally accepted by the Board Monday evening. An action item is on the agenda for the Board to receive the building.

Discussion

1. Health Update

Supervisor of Health Services, Sue Levasseur, will continue to provide health updates to the Board as we continue to endure this recent severe Covid-19 wave of infections. Updates on testing, infection rates, mitigating measures, and other Covid-19 related matters will be provided to the Board.

2. Health and Medical Insurance Review with Board of Education Insurance Consultant, Lockton Companies LLC

Jillian Ritter and Tim Hasselman, Lockton Group, will give a presentation (remotely) on employee health insurance cost estimates and insurance plan options for FY23. In addition, they will apprise the BOE of the current year health trends along with cost projects as a member of the State Partnership Plan 2.0. Lockton was recently charged with issuing a RFP on the Board's behalf for a High Deductible Health Plan (HDHP) design for FY23. The RFP closed in December and there were four respondents. Lockton will present cost estimates for the following year based on: a) remain on the SPP 2.0 (albeit limited information available at this time from the Office of the State Comptroller), b) a switch to a HDHP full premium plan, and c) a switch to a HDHP self-insured plan.

3. FY 2023 Proposed Budget of the Superintendent of Schools

Given the postponement of the first Board of Education full day budget workshop, the entire calendar will be adjusted forward one meeting. Monday evening will serve as the executive summary meeting, framed by the executive summary memo in the meeting packet, and a slide deck presented by Chief Financial Officer, Elio Longo, and the Superintendent. Thematic presentations will now be shared at the rescheduled full day workshop on Friday January 14, and the capital budget prioritization will be shared at a Finance and Facilities Committee meeting next week, and then with the full Board on Tuesday January 18.

WESTPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION

Board Members Present:

Lee Goldstein Chair
Liz Heyer Vice Chair
Neil Phillips* Secretary
Christina Torres
Dorrie Hordon
Robert Harrington
Kevin Christie

Administrators Present:

Thomas Scarice Superintendent of Schools
Anthony Buono Asst. Superintendent, Teaching and Learning
Michael Rizzo Asst. Superintendent, Pupil Personnel Services
Elio Longo Chief Financial Officer
John Bayers Asst. Superintendent, Human Resources and
General Admin.

*Participated by telephone.

PUBLIC CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: 7:06 p.m., Staples High School,
Cafeteria B (Room 301)

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM BOARD AND ADMINISTRATION

PUBLIC QUESTIONS/COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

MINUTES: Kevin Christie amended the minutes. Lee Goldstein moved to approve the minutes of December 20, 2021 as amended; seconded by Liz Heyer and passed unanimously.

DISCUSSION/ACTION

Appointment of Board of Education Committees

Be it resolved that the Board of Education appoints Robert Harrington to the C.E.S. Representative Council.

MOTION: Lee Goldstein
SECOND: Christina Torres
RESULT: Passed unanimously
VOTE: 7-0

DISCUSSION

Health Report

Strategic Planning Presentation

ADJOURNMENT: Dorie Hordon moved to adjourn at 10:04 p.m.; seconded by Christina Torres and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Neil Phillips, Secretary, Board of Education
(minutes written by Lisa Marriott)

Coleytown Middle School Update

Coleytown Middle School Update

This purpose of this Coleytown Middle School project update this evening is twofold:

1. Provide an update on the project since my last overview in November.
2. Request that the BOE formally accept the CMS project as complete.

Coleytown Middle School Update

All leaks that were discussed during my November update have been addressed. The aluminum hood that I promised would be added to a roof top unit to prevent windswept rain from entering the school has been installed.

All necessary repairs related to the leaks have been completed.

Coleytown Middle School Update

The acceptance of the Coleytown Middle School project as complete is a required step to begin the State reimbursement process.

We will lead the reimbursement process with required input from the Administration.

Coleytown Middle School Update

As everyone knows, CMS welcomed students back to school on January 5th 2021 after a 16 month shutdown for a major renovation.

Since CMS reopened on 1/5/21, the committee (i.e., myself and Susan Chipouras) have worked closely with the BOE's Facilities team and the Administration to address all minor unfinished business.

Coleytown Middle School Update

What is next?

Coleytown Middle School Update

My commitment to the BOE...

During the reimbursement process, which we expect to last for most of 2022 and possibly beyond, we will continue to work with Ted Hunyadi and the Facilities and the Administration to collectively address any issues with CMS should they arise.

Coleytown Middle School Update

The CMS resolution in your meeting packet is the tool that, if accepted, will formally move CMS back to BOE control.



To the Westport Board of Education,

For two years now, our community, nation, and the entire globe continue to endure the effects of a paralyzing generational pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has begun to define an era. After two years, it is clear that no demographic has felt the devastating impact of the pandemic more than our children. Isolation, academic disruption, family stressors, and increased levels of depression and anxiety are only some of these effects. We will not know the full and true impact on the disrupted development of our children for years, but we can be assured that without concerted intervention and relief, COVID-19 will be felt by this generation for decades to come.

Federal and global efforts have mobilized, yet, it is the steady and consistent moves of one community at a time, as opposed to the intensity of macro federal and global programs, that could perhaps be the most consequential element of recovery for our children. There is no question that the infusion of funds at the federal level have helped communities through this dark period, and Westport is no exception. Yet, the real work of support, healing, and growth, is best done at the “micro level”, one family, one school, one teacher, supporting a child, helping to transcend the darkest moments of a generation.

This work is precisely how our community has responded. Collectively, we have acknowledged this moment, and refused to allow it to hold back a generation. We have done this by gaining the support of the town and elected bodies in putting the resources where they are needed, flexibly responding to the next burning challenge. Whether it is academic support, mental health support, substitute teachers, bus drivers, technology assistance for families, devices for students, and a myriad of others, the Westport community has done a remarkable job in collectively throwing our arms around our children to support them through this time, pushing to transcend this moment.

This work is fraught with uncertainty, emotion, and unpredictable change, at times having a “whiplash” effect. There is no playbook. There is no experience of pandemics of previous years to draw from. After ten years as a superintendent, I can state without hesitation that we are experiencing unprecedented events and challenges, ones that could devastate a community, a family, a school system.

Yet, an entire body of professional educators instantly reinvented their work in the service of children. A call at 7:00pm to a teacher to inform them that they will need to implement remote teaching the very next morning was common across our system. Plans that were made now needed to be halted, and an instant pivot to an unfamiliar pedagogical model was necessary. And our teachers, administrators, and support staff answered that call.

Additionally, when requested, the resources were provided. The Board of Education and Town of Westport stepped up and delivered. When scores of families relocated to Westport, teachers were added. When the district pivoted to a hybrid remote model, devices and classroom cameras were provided. When an innovative hybrid model at the elementary level was implemented to thin out our density while welcoming in our youngest learners to school every day, buses were provided. This is what will define the Westport community as we collectively confronted the generational COVID-19 pandemic.

I am personally honored and humbled by the opportunity to contribute to this work, alongside my fellow tireless educators, a committed support staff, an invested and supportive Board of Education, and a community of parents, residents, and elected officials.

Remarkably, during this time, the district has continued to incrementally advance work that will only add to the strength of an already renowned and decorated school system. Among these efforts include a continued analysis and programs to support our special needs students, advancing and supporting the work of maintaining our facilities, studying the roles, impact, and opportunities within equity and inclusion in our school community, and now, approaching a strategic vision that will meet the needs of our students to thrive in the complex and dynamic world they will live in as young adults.

There are very few systems that can balance the challenges of a generational pandemic, against the backdrop of national social unrest and instability, and continue to steadily advance the agenda of continuous improvement. The Westport Public Schools are among these systems.

We have strong shoulders to stand on. For decades, and for very good reasons, the Westport Public Schools have rightfully earned a state and national reputation to be considered among the very best. The Westport community draws many new families. When relocating, perhaps the very first consideration is the quality of the schools of a community. A testament to this reputation is the fact that during the pandemic, Westport was at the top of communities to experience the greatest influx of new residents, most significantly, new families with school age children. With that comes the challenge of programming and funding for this substantial increase in school age children. Our world-class faculty and support staff understand this responsibility and welcome the challenge of continuing to deliver nothing short of excellence for our families and community.

Yet, in the midst of more than two years of disruption and challenge, the annual work of the Westport Public Schools and the Board of Education must persist. This includes the presentation, consideration and adoption of the annual operating budget. I share the following document as a recommendation to the Westport Board of Education and community at large, for consideration to continue on this path. The challenges are obvious, but within and across those challenges are opportunities.

I am honored to share the Superintendent's Recommended Budget for the Westport Public Schools for the 2022-2023 fiscal year.

Within this document the Westport Board of Education is provided a budget timeline, budget highlights, and an analysis of key budget areas. However, our budget is more than spreadsheets and budget accounts. The school budget is a representation of the values and aspirations of the school system. The budget functions as a guiding document for the school year, endeavoring to continue to advance current valuable and relevant programs, while also initiating efforts to confront challenges and opportunities.

Budget Timeline

The approach to budget development is deliberate and transparent. This process began in the fall with the development and submission of recommendations from all district administrators on October 22. The central office team met with each individual administrator over a two day period in early December and then with all principals and coordinators on December 16.

Among other key dates are the following:

- January 7, 2022
 - Board of Education Meeting – Superintendent presents Executive Summary of Superintendent’s Proposed 2022-23 Education Budget (all day meeting beginning 8:30 am) Westport Library
- January 10, 2022
 - Board of Education (Regular Meeting) – Budget Discussions; and Health and Medical Insurance Consultant (For discussion of health and medical insurance) for Discussion of Health Insurance and Capital Projects
- January 18, 2022
 - Board of Education (Regular Meeting) – Budget Discussions
- January 24, 2022
 - Board of Education (Regular Meeting) – Board Approves Budget Submission
- January 31, 2022
 - Board of Education (Regular Meeting – Snow Date) – Board Approves Budget Submission
- February 7, 2022
 - Board of Education Submits Budget Request to Town of Westport
- March 2022
 - Board of Finance Meeting (Date TBD)
 - Budget Workshops (dates TBD by BOF)
 - Acts on Board of Education Budget (dates TBD by BOF)
- April 2022
 - Representative Town Meeting (RTM) – Budget Workshops with Sub-Committees (dates determined by RTM)
- May 2022
 - Representative Town Meeting (RTM) – Adopts Budget (dates determined by RTM)
- May/June 2022
 - Board of Education (Regular Meetings) - Adopts 2022-2023 Budget

Budget Components Overview

The Board of Education’s operating budget includes all of the funding necessary to operate a school district of 8 schools, a preschool, for a projection of 5,280 students. Operating budgets in Connecticut are defined by eight “objects,” which comprise a uniform chart of accounts. These accounts are: Salary, Benefits, Contracted Services, Property Services, Supplies, Purchased Services, Equipment, and Other. Within these accounts, the Board of Education has the autonomy to manage their adopted operating budget. This management, through the administration, enables a community to serve their student population responsively, knowing that a budget process begins a full 18 months before the end of the fiscal year being budgeted. A lot can happen over 18 months and this autonomy is necessary.

The 2022-2023 Superintendent’s Recommended Budget

The 2022-2023 Superintendent’s recommended operating budget is \$130,341,610. This represents a 3.78% increase over the 2021-2022 budget. Of this 3.78% increase, the current services budget represents a 3.48% increase.

The compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of this budget over the past 8 years from 2013-2014 through 2021-2022 is 2.36%. The regional “DRG A” CAGR median is 2.38%, placing the growth of the annual Westport budget precisely at the median of our district peers. The 9-Year

CAGR for Westport (including FY23) is 2.52%. At the present moment we do not have access to our proposed budgets of our peer districts (i.e. their “9th year”).

The district has confronted the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic with great success. Additionally, the district has continued incremental growth of services and programs in response to current student needs, as well as projections of the skills and capacities our students will need to thrive in the future. This budget will continue our practice of responsiveness, while pointing the district towards an unfolding strategic vision.

Key Preliminary Reductions Prior to Final Recommendation

The internal budget process that arrived at the final recommendation was a challenge. It was acknowledged that a final recommendation must account for the economic climate, and a projection among district leadership of what the community and Board would receive as a reasonable range of year over year budget growth.

The original request of district administrators initially represented a 5.71% increase. A \$2.4M reduction was made prior to the final recommendation to the Board of Education. This reduction was composed of \$1.4M in personnel and \$1M in non-personnel. 15.5 FTE were considered with the initial requests across the district administrators, yet only 2.8 FTE are included in the final recommendation. In addition, there is a recommendation to withdraw funds from the carryover account to offset spending. These carryover account recommendations are for “one time” expenditures that would not artificially inflate subsequent budgets. These include \$260,000 in facilities, \$300,000 in special education transportation if the current market disruption with bus drivers does not self-correct, and \$115,716 in facilities equipment.

Current Budget Accomplishments

In the midst of the pandemic and other related challenges, it is hard to surface the many accomplishments of the current budget. There are many highlights but the following is a list of those in special education and teaching and learning:

- The introduction of Effective School Solutions (ESS) program which currently serves 14 students, with 2 more close to qualifying. Most significantly, the district has returned 4 students from out of district and prevented 3 from being outplaced. This is good for the students and a cost container.
- The introduction of the Westport Connections - Transition Program which serves 4 students. This program, launched as promised, with Fairfield University and cooperation with local and town resources, including Dept of Human Services, the Senior Center, and local business, provides an effective program to 18-21 year old students with disabilities that the district is responsible for educating. Historically, these students would be placed in outside programs.
- 83% of our special education students spend more than 80% of their time with general education peers. This is a great success for our special education programming.
- Conducted over 2,100 PPT meetings PK-12 providing a highly individualized and responsive system for student needs.
- Continuing the Equity Study process from the 20-21 school year.
- Successfully implementing summer learning opportunities to support students impacted by the pandemic:
 - Grades 1 - 9 Reading, Writing and Mathematics Programs
 - Socialization Programs - Sports Camps etc.

- High School Credit Recovery and Program Electives
- The implementation of Mathematics tutoring 6-12.
- The addition of a writing lab 9-12.
- The implementation of new math textbooks K-5.
- The development and implementation of an expanded tutorial and support program for students out due to testing positive for COVID 19 or quarantining due to exposure.
- A return to Responsive Classroom training and coaching for all new teachers and returning faculty.
- Ongoing consultation and training with Teachers College Reading and Writing Project to maintain the quality of our literacy program.
- Beginning Orton Gillingham Training with K-3 special education teachers, interventionists, and regular education classroom teachers in partnership with the Southport School in an effort to continuously improve our literacy program.
- The initiation of teacher training in the Understanding by Design (UBD) curriculum unit development model.
- The development of “parent facing” curriculum documents (i.e. “Curriculum at a Glance”)
- Initiating the development of a curriculum review and revision process.

Impact of Bargaining Unit Agreements

The district has seven collective bargaining agreements for its nearly 1,000 employees. Each agreement has economic impacts on the budget including, but not limited to, salaries and benefits. Negotiations with four non-certified employee groups will take place this Spring with direct implications on the FY23 budget.

The agreement impacting the largest group of employees, nearly 550, is the one with the Westport Education Association (WEA). In December a successor agreement reached between the Board and the WEA for the years 2022-2025, was accepted, through a statutory process, by the Representative Town Meeting (RTM). As noted by members of the BOE, the Board of Finance, and the RTM, the agreement was fair for both parties.

Among the benefits of the new collective bargaining agreement with the WEA is the establishment of leadership stipends for the elementary and high school levels. These positions will mirror existing ones at the middle school level and provide systemic support for teacher leadership in implementing the strategic plan. The new positions were set to take effect in FY23, but implementation is not included in this budget proposal given the current economic pressures on the budget. This programmatic addition, one that I see as critical to advancing site-based school leadership, will be paused and revisited next year in order to prioritize funding for classroom teachers and supports to students.

In addition to the new leadership stipends in the successor collective bargaining agreement with the WEA, the BoE saw additional economic benefits with contract language allowing for greater flexibility and efficiencies in scheduling and duty assignments, particularly at the elementary level. These changes will not only positively impact the proposed FY 23 budget but future ones as well.

Fixed vs. Variable Costs

Over 80% of the BoE’s annual budget is earmarked for salaries and benefits. These funds cover fixed positions, such as custodial and nursing staff, and positions that are subject to variation in numbers based on enrollment and programmatic needs. For example, the number of custodians currently employed by the district meets the cleaning and maintenance needs of over two million

square feet of school space across the district. These are seen as fixed positions based on the physical needs of our learning and office spaces. On the other hand, elementary classroom teaching positions vary from year to year based on actual enrollment within our schools.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Board made significant reductions in variable staff positions based on enrollment. To better illustrate this point, the number of regular education and special area positions fell by nearly 30 in the six years leading up to FY 20. Likewise, the number of regular education paraprofessionals fell from a high of 64 in FY 08 to 54.5 on FY 20. Although some of these declines were offset by rising needs in special education staffing, those increases have been tied to legal obligations.

In the two fiscal years following the start of the pandemic, the Board's variable staffing needs, particularly at the elementary level, have seen a significant rise in response to sharp enrollment increases. In FY 21, the district added seven elementary teachers over budget, and in FY 22 the district added six elementary teachers over budget. If you combine these increases, which are a reflection of how attractive Westport's schools are to new homeowners, particularly those who left New York City, with the annual step increases found in our collective bargaining agreements, there are natural pressures on budget increases that are unavoidable.

Health Insurance

The recent settlement with the Westport Education Association enables the district to structure health care around a high-deductible model. The process for establishing health care costs for the budget unfolds throughout the budget process, typically culminating in late March or early April. Budget placeholders are held based on projections from our insurance consultants. For the 2022-2023 budget, it has been recommended to budget for no increase to health care over the FY22 budget. This flat health care projection is included in the final recommended budget.

Key Budget Drivers

Maintaining current programming is essential to our continued response to student needs. Public education is a human services endeavor, which is heavily dependent on human resources. It is no surprise that the most significant funding allocation is for human resources (i.e. staffing and associated costs).

As articulated above, the impact of the pandemic on staffing was profound. In FY22, 11.42 unfunded FTE were required to respond to the enrollment and programming trends. Again, this is the second year in a row that the district experienced a consequential influx of new students. These positions now must be rolled into FY23 recommendation to merely maintain services and respond to programming needs. Overall, these positions account for a 0.72% increase to the budget. These positions and associated costs include:

- Teachers: 6.42 FTE
- Paraprofessionals - Special Education: 5.00 FTE
- \$891,425 estimate salaries & benefits

Salaries are the primary budget driver. Projected FY23 certified salaries amount to \$64.2M, a 3.2% year over year increase. This salary amount comprises 49.2% of the total budget. This is equivalent to a 1.57% increase to the total budget. In turn, FY23 non-certified salaries account for \$17.6M, a 3.1% year over year increase and 13.5% of the total budget. This is equivalent to a 0.42% increase to the total budget.

In total, all budget salaries represent an overall 1.99% increase to the total budget. In addition, as a result of offsetting the technology budget with ESSER grant funds last year, in order to return to the replacement cycle, this budget includes a \$484,430 technology year over year increase. The benefit of the grants last year are a detriment to this budget as was discussed publicly during the public meetings. The supplanting of funds creates a compounding increase effect as the subsequent budget (i.e. FY23) needs to make up for the grant offset that no longer exists, and the natural increase to maintain the replacement cycle. This technology increase is equivalent to a 0.42% increase to the total budget.

Perhaps most impactful are the needs to maintain services in our programming for students with disabilities (i.e. special education). Enrollment in special education has increased from 13.4% of our overall student population to 14.6%. This trend mirrors state and national trends. As a result, an increase in special education supports (i.e. staffing and programming) is among the most substantive of drivers in the increase from maintaining the current services budget to the final recommendation. Among the primary cost drivers in this area are staffing increases strategically designed to create appropriate caseloads and teacher/student ratios, to address building and student specific needs, and to further develop programs to not only meet student needs but also to contain future costs, such as the Westport Connections program for students with disabilities from age 18-21.

In Closing

The Superintendent's recommended 2022-23 Budget fulfills the district's obligations to local bargaining unit contracts, local guidelines and policy (e.g. class size guidelines), state and federal mandates, and our commitment to continuing to respond to the needs of our students during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. The district continues to aspire to maintain the distinction and reputation that the community has enjoyed for decades, with an urge to advance our work towards a bolder vision. Along with the administrative team, I look forward to deeper discussions towards developing a greater understanding of the budgetary needs of our district.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Thomas Scarice', with a stylized, cursive script.

Thomas Scarice
Superintendent of Schools