

**Westport School Committee
Work Session
DATE: Thursday, February 27, 2020
TIME: 6:30 p.m.
PLACE: Westport Jr./Sr. High School Conference Room**

MINUTES

Members Present: Michelle Orlando, Melissa Pacheco, Nancy Stanton Cross, Nancy Tavares, Antonio Viveiros

Also Present: Dr. Gary Reese, Superintendent, Michelle Rapoza School Business Manager, Tracy Priestner and Tom Schmitt Finance Committee Members

I. Call to Order - Chair Viveiros called the SC Work Session to order at 6:39 pm.

II. Comments and Statements from the Public/Citizen's Participation - There were none.

III. Informational – FY21 Budget Discussion - Dr. Reese explained the school budget voted on by the School Committee was \$19,597,562. This amount was a difference of \$347,408. There was an additional amount of \$70,000 requested for the purchase of Chromebooks on a separate warrant.

The BOS school budget given in October 2019 was \$19,250,154 (Chromebooks not included).

The School Committee held a Budget Public Hearing on January 30, 2020. After this meeting, the Town told the school committee to cut \$200,000 and suggested the funds be placed in unfunded capital improvements.

In addition, the BOS has recently taken \$78,000 out of the school budget and placed it on a line item. Chromebooks were not included in the budget, so this was a cut from the budget.

Dr. Reese shared a list of potential adjustments for the SC to consider with the implications. He explained all the items to the Finance Committee members.

Discussion took place about the high costs associated with Special Education and out of district placements. There is loss of funds on the cherry sheet when students decide to attend other schools that can run from \$12,800- \$20,100 per student. Long term financial impacts to the Town could occur if some of these items are not funded now.

Mr. Schmitt shared there are two items squeezing town funds that include the Treasurer fowl up making free cash not normal and tax bills going out late this year. Also mentioned was every department has been hit by the state. Some department have positions not filled for 5-6 yrs. The Town cannot run a deficit budget.

It was recommended that the school department get as close to the BOS budget because they do not see how additional funds can be found unless the school department can identify a funding source. Also, if making a pitch for additional funds show impact. Sharing a list of out of district placements and transportation costs with real and reasonable numbers.

The budget breakdown of 54% school 46% town was mentioned.

It was suggested funds come out of the stabilization fund, however Finance Committee members did not see this happening.

It was mentioned that the school department will be receiving \$45,000 and a plan for how the funds will be used must be written by April 1, 2020. How this money will shift back to the schools is unknown at this time.

The list of adjustments will be looked at again. Each School Committee member will be given a sheet to give priority rankings and recommendations on the items listed to see where changes can be made.

Questions to consider:

What is "unfunded capital improvements" that \$200,000 is going into? Does the school department get 54% of this money?

\$70,000 Chromebook was not on a line item so why is the budget reduced?

IV. Adjourn - A motion was made to adjourn the Work Session.

Motion by Pacheco, seconded by Stanton Cross

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The Work Session ended at 7:56 pm.

