

Westport School Committee
Work Session
DATE: Tuesday, February 4, 2020
TIME: 6:00 p.m.
PLACE: Westport Jr./Sr. High School Conference Room

MINUTES

Members Present: Melissa Pacheco (*arrived at 6:05 pm.*), Michelle Orlando, Nancy Stanton Cross, Nancy Tavares, Antonio Viveiros

Also Present: Dr. Gary Reese, Superintendent, Michelle Rapoza, School Business Manager, Melissa Sousa, Business Office

I. Call to Order - A quorum being present, Chair Viveiros called the Work Session to order at 6:00 pm.

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

III. Informational – FY21 Budget Discussion – Dr. Reese presented information on FY21 Proposed Budget Adjustments. A progression of the budget was given, with reasons for additions and implications. from the Work Sessions on January 9, 2020, January 30, 2020 and today February 4, 2020.

On January 9, 2020 the proposed budget presented to the SC was \$19,477,288 or a 3.7% increase reflecting \$148,609 over the Town's budget figure. Additions to the budget included a Reading Specialist Teacher, Teaching Assistant at MAC (required support), SPED Out of District tuition, Food Service Director and Food Service Clerk. Not included was Inclusion Teachers grade one and grade two for MAC, School Adjustment Counselor, 1.5 FTE Teachers for WJSHS (.5 Social Studies, .5 English, .4 Computer Science), and .5 Music Teacher.

(Ms. Pacheco arrived here at 6:05 pm.)

On January 30, 2020 the proposed budget presented to the SC was \$19,341,912 or a 3.0% increase reflecting \$13,233 over the Town's budget figure. This reduction does not allow for unanticipated expenses. Two increases were for legal services (going into negotiations with WFT) and Athletics contractual services for rental and transportation associated with the tennis program. Further reductions included various line items looked at over a 4-year span, Campus Supervisor and Monitor for WES, Title II grant adjustments, salary adjustment, SC contracted services and NSBA membership.

Dr. Reese shared Mr. King Town Administrator's memo written on January 31, 2020 with SC members. Mr. King informed the School Department based on revenues and charter school assessments the budget needs to be reduced by \$256,724. Mr. King suggested the funds be placed in unfunded capital improvements. This letter was received from Mr. King after the FY21 School Budget Public Hearing was presented on January 30, 2020. SC members shared concerns about the impact a reduction to the budget would bring to the district. It was noted that Mr. King did not ask the superintendent how these cuts would affect the school department.

On February 4, 2020 the proposed budget presented to the SC was \$19,055,812 or a 1.46% increase reflecting \$16,143 over the Town's budget figure. This revision includes the reduction of the Reading Specialist, 3 FTE Teachers at WES, Nurse Leader position, summer school program for MAC and WES, and morning Monitor at WJSHS.

Dr. Reese explained that the district would receive about \$45,000 as a result of the Student Opportunity Act. These funds would go into the Town's general fund and could possibly not come back to the school's budget.

After reviewing all the budget proposal options, SC members shared many concerns and stressed the need to have a budget that serves the students in the community. One major concern is budget cuts may increase students going into out of district placements, therefore costing the district more in the long run. In addition, a reduction in staff would affect differentiated instruction and could lead to an increase in special education referrals.

SC members agreed that the first column budget dated January 9, 2020 was the best option. They requested for Dr. Reese to take a look at the first column budget and identify areas with less impact or no impact to student delivery. Another revision will be presented to the SC for consideration. At the next SC meeting on February 6, 2020 a vote on the final budget number will take place. The final budget will then go before FinCom on February 25, 2020.

A recommendation was made to have a narrative and a visual explaining the impact of cuts on areas of the budget for the FinCom presentation. Presenting the first column budget to FinCom plus asking for the \$200,000 and the \$45,000 (Student Opportunity Act) would get the budget below 2.9%.

IV. Adjourn – A motion was made to adjourn.

Motion by Stanton Cross, seconded by Pacheco

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The School Committee Work Session adjourned at 6:55 pm.