

**Joint Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District Committee
& Towns Selectmen & Fincom Meeting**

March 7, 2012

Minutes

CALL TO ORDER

A. McCloughan called the School Committee meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. at the Buker Multipurpose Room. The chairs of the other participating boards called those boards to order.

PRESENT:

School Committee: Sean Condon, Bill Dery, Kym Donnellan, Roger Kuebel, Alexa McCloughan, Ann Minois, Jack O'Keefe, Dacia Rubel, and Larry Swartz

Wenham Board of Selectmen: John Clemenzi, Molly Martins, Patrick Wilson

Wenham Finance & Advisory Committee: Anne O'Connor, Catherine Harrison, Ted Richard, Jack Wilhelm

Hamilton Board of Selectmen: Jeff Hubbard, Marc Johnson, Jennifer Scuteri, Jeff Stinson

Hamilton Finance & Advisory Committee: William Boesch, John McWane, Joe Santarelli, Laurie Wilson

ALSO PRESENT:

Paula Bartlett, Wenham Assistant Finance Director; Jeff Chelgren, Wenham Town Administrator; Peter Gray, Superintendent of Schools; Michael Lombardo, Hamilton Town Manager; Deborah Nippes-Mena, Hamilton Finance Director

ABSENT:

School Committee: None.

Wenham Board of Selectmen: None.

Wenham Finance & Advisory Committee: Hillard Ebling, Michael Lucy.

Hamilton Board of Selectmen: Dave Carey.

Hamilton Finance & Advisory Committee: Kalil Boghdan.

**WALK THROUGH OF BUDGET
DETAIL, DISCUSSION OF
BUDGET, AND COMMENTS
FROM OTHER PARTICIPANTS:**

P. Gray went through the updated draft of the proposed FY2013 district budget and highlighted changes made since an earlier draft was presented at the March 1 School Committee meeting. He noted that after meeting Monday with the chairs of the Towns' Finance Committees he revised and reformatted the presentation to focus on a level services budget that would request level funding from the Towns.

Page 1: executive summary

Page 2: enrollment as of Oct. 1, 2011, which constitutes the basis for the Towns' shares of the budget. J. Scuteri stated that enrollment has

decreased since 2003 and she requested an enrollment report covering the past 8 years to help identify trends. D. Rubel noted an existing demographic study would be helpful too.

Page 3: Per FinCom request P. Gray provided an organizational chart of the central office as of July 1, 2012, with salaries; it includes principals. In the budget, principals' salaries appear with each school.

Page 4: Per the request of the FinCom chairs, proposed new positions have been deleted from the proposed expense budget. It is now a level service budget. Projected spending for the balance of FY12 has been adjusted; utility, snow-related, and legal spending is expected to be lower than was reported in the previous draft. An appendix on pp. A4-A12 lists the salary of every district employee. Discussion topics included the estimated salaries listed for positions that are being vacated in FY12 and will be filled for FY13; anticipated reduction in the special education (SPED) salary budget; a shift between budget lines for the language learners program and professional staff development; tutor staffing; athletic costs, user fees, and revolving funds; and the lack of an increase in employee health insurance rates for the coming year. M. Johnson requested information about total athletic fees. A. McCloughan said she would obtain information about the nature of consulting costs.

Page 5: P. Gray said revenue projections are unchanged from the previous draft of the budget. Topics of discussion included out-of-district SPED tuition, the school choice program and whether it is beneficial to admit enough choice students to fill the high school to capacity; and funding to reimburse the district for providing SPED services to choice students receiving SPED services. A. McCloughan said she would identify the source of the latter funding and where those funds appear in the budget. Discussion also took place about use of Excess & Deficiency (E&D) funds, debt service, and the process for approval of such spending. M. Johnson requested a separate capital budget in future years; L. Swartz referred him to the facilities project list on p. 13 of this budget. B. Dery pointed out items on p. 10 that he said are unlikely to take place in FY12.

Page 8: P. Gray explained revolving account balances. J. Santarelli requested detailed analysis of these accounts. Discussion addressed cost components of several revolving accounts, and a proposed emergency fund for SPED. A. McCloughan requested materials clarifying how kindergarten tuition would offset costs.

Page 9: Discussion touched on the district discontinuing prepayment for out of district SPED tuition; transfers from revolving accounts to pay for one-time capital items; and information technology (IT). The latter discussion touched on IT capital purchases; a proposal to hire more IT technicians and make the existing technicians full-year employees; whether to use one-time funding for ongoing staff positions; and training staff to use technology that the district already owns. J. Scuteri cited lower staffing at a nearby district; A. McCloughan said she would find

out what this district staff's and the nearby district's do to provide tech services.

Pages A17-A18: P. Gray referred participants to the two-page state overview of new educator evaluation regulations and said this new process is the reason he previously recommended adding the new position of human resources director; that position does not appear in the current draft of the budget. Discussion addressed contracting out such work; whether comparable districts have HR directors; and prior discussion of the Towns and district sharing an HR director.

Page 12: Discussion of the proposed partial funding of athletic fees by the district touched on the district's current 100% user fees, and on the possibility that unless fees decrease and improvements are made to the high school auditorium, NEASC might place this district on probation, and whether such action would have significant impact.

P. Gray specified the requests for new staff positions that the administration and/or Committee did not support, and why.

Participants discussed whether staff cuts might occur; the lack of a strategic plan; per pupil costs compared to a neighboring district; quantitative measures of district effectiveness; whether new software is essential to determine whether and how changes to class schedules and offerings might save money at the high school; why fewer such efficiencies were proposed this year than Town officials desired; the idea of adding a development officer to the staff to seek corporate grants; and whether staffing and program changes should be placed on hold until a permanent superintendent joins the staff.

Page 16: P. Gray briefed the group on mandatory work at Cutler Elementary so handicap accessibility will meet ADA requirements.

Page 15: He briefly described proposed renovations to the high school auditorium. The discussion that followed touched on the Capital Management Committee's inclusion of those costs in its expected Town Meeting warrant article, and what would happen if one or the other was approved; whether to apply available funds to such projects or return them to the Towns and then request funding for such work.

Several Town officials provided opinions about funding priorities and about whether the Committee should proceed with bonding approved for the Cutler boiler work that has already taken place.

NEXT STEPS IN THE PROCESS: After discussion, the boards and committees agreed to meet again at 6:30 p.m. on March 15 to discuss answers to questions raised at this meeting, and provide further input. In an informal voice vote, Town officials agreed not to hold the School Committee to its legal obligation to approve the FY13 budget by March 21, but to extend that one day so the vote could take place during a regular meeting of the Committee.

There was brief discussion of ongoing work to propose a joint Virtual Department of Public Works, the composition of its staff, and the timeline for proposal of such an agency.

J. Scuteri requested a new page 2 be inserted in the budget proposal using Manchester-Essex's page 2 as a model.

ADJOURNMENT:

JEFF STINSON MADE A MOTION THAT THE COMMITTEES AND BOARDS ADJOURN. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY BY GENERAL CONSENT.

The meeting adjourned at 10:45 p.m.

**DOCUMENTS AND EXHIBITS
USED AT THIS MEETING:**

Fiscal Year 2013 Budget, Draft, March 8, 2013

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Sierks Smith, School Committee recording secretary