



HAMILTON-WENHAM

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

5 SCHOOL STREET, WENHAM, MA 01984 · TEL. 978-468-5310

**Quintuple Board Meeting Joint Meeting with Towns of Hamilton & Wenham
Board of Selectmen and Finance Committees ([Agenda](#))
Buker Elementary School Multi-Purpose Room
In-Person Meeting
Wednesday, November 30, 2022
6:30 PM - 7:54 PM**

Present:

Dana Allara, Chair
Julia Campbell
Amy Kunberger, Secretary
Anna Siedzik, Vice Chair

Also Present:

Eric Tracy, HWRSD Superintendent
Vincent Leone, Assistant Superintendent to Finance and Administration
Hamilton Select Board
Hamilton Finance Committee
Wenham Select Board
Wenham Finance Committee

1. Call to Order

With a quorum present, Ms. Allara, Chairperson, calls the meeting to order at 6:35 PM.

2. New Business

a. FY24 Budget Discussion

Ms. Allara states that this meeting is being recorded and live streamed.

Hamilton/Wenham Regional School District

Mr. Leone begins his presentation of the FY24 budget, which is a summary of the presentation from the 11/17 school committee meeting. The main objective of this presentation is to review changes to:

1) Enrollment

This shift has Hamilton down 14 students (1%) and Wenham down 3 (less than .5%), with the shift overall at -17 (1.4%) of resident enrollment (not including preschool or school choice). Using a 3 year average, looking solely at enrollment, there is .83% shift that as applied to the FY24 budget is taking \$281,000 from Wenham and applying it to Wenham. The Hamilton budget will increase roughly 1.27%, while the Wenham budget will decrease roughly 2.4%.

2) Offset and Revenue Projections

Overall there is an increase of \$166,000 (1.75%) for offset and revenue projections. Some of the big items here are:

- Circuit Breaker Offset/Special Education costs
- Transportation
- Medicaid
- Excess & Deficiency/Vacant Positions

3) Expenses Increases and Decreases

This is broken out into two categories: Operating Budget and Debt Service. For the Operating Budget, there is a request for an increase of 1.7 million (4.16%) looking at upgrades to smartboards, salary shifts (COLA, step increase), staffing, and one time offsets. For Debt Service the request is for a \$270,000 increase. This increase is dependent on the Cutler feasibility study, where the timing may have payment shifting to FY25, and thus the debt service request would shift to approximately \$24,000.

Mr. Leone concludes his presentation with a final assessment of the initial budget request that has an increase to Hamilton of 23.7 million (6.89%) and 12.1 million (3.02%) to Wenham. This leaves the district with an initial overall request of 5.55%, with changes still to come.

Town of Wenham

The Town of Wenham presents its financial overview based on:

- FY24 Budget Drivers, including school budget, health insurance, utilities
- FY24 Forecasted Revenue Assumptions, including housing starts and real estate tax
- FY24 Preliminary Expenditure Forecast, including personnel, collective bargaining, health insurance
- FY24 Preliminary Budget Forecast shows annual revenues of 23.2 million and appropriations of 24.1 million, leading to a structural deficit of approximately \$905,000.

Town of Hamilton

The Town of Hamilton preliminary budget summary has revenues projected at \$37,424,057 and expenses projected at \$38,134,398, with a deficit of \$710,000. The schools (HWRSD and Essex Aggie) contribute to 63% of the town expenses. Hamilton supports the new school and does not want an override, so they are eager to balance the budget.

Following all school and town presentations, John McGrath of Hamilton FinCom starts the discussion. The budget discussion ensues with agreement over all parties' desire to come together with a long term, multi-year plan. There is some question as to why the district is losing students and the effects of COVID, and Superintendent Tracy shares that across the state, there are approximately 38,000 students who are no longer enrolled post COVID. Mr. Leone is questioned about the pupil services increase in the budget, of which he answers is mainly due to transportation. As to the philosophy on balancing the budget, Superintendent Tracy explains that it starts with the kids and what they need, and then looks at what is needed across the board. Ms. Allara emphasizes that the district students are served by living in a community where all sectors: Fire, Police, Seniors, etc., are also served. Ms. Siedzik points out that a good portion of the budget is contractual/according to state law. There is a push to be transparent so taxpayers can understand the story the budget is telling. After confirming the next meeting, the meeting concludes with the suggestion for more open houses (virtual as well) to help communicate to the community what the district has to share.

3. Vote to Adjourn

I MOVE THAT THE HAMILTON - WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE ADJOURN THE 11/30/2022 MEETING AT 7:54 PM.

MOTION by Anna Siedzik; SECONDED by Julia Campbell.

MOTION PASSES unanimously by vote of Four members present.

Respectfully submitted 3/10/23 by Alison Carey, Recording Secretary.