

**Westport School Committee
Work Session
DATE: Tuesday, September 17, 2024
TIME: 5:00 p.m.
PLACE: 2nd Floor Conference Room, Westport Middle-High School**

MINUTES

Members Present: Gloria Cabral, Evan Gendreau, Christopher Thrasher

Members Absent: Melissa Pacheco, Jason Pacheco

Also Present: Thomas Aubin Superintendent, Lori Melo Administrative Secretary, Wendy Miranda Special Education Coordinator, Michelle Rapoza School Business Manager, Melissa Sousa Executive Assistant for Business Services, Nancy Tavares Special Education Coordinator

I. Call to Order - Chair Evan Gendreau called the Budget Work Session to order at 5:05 pm. with a quorum of the members present.

II. FY26 Budget Discussion - Chair Evan Gendreau informed everyone the Finance Committee is looking for a joint budget discussion meeting sometime in November.

Superintendent Aubin attended a meeting with Town Administrator Mr. Hartnett. The school can expect an increase of around \$500,000 not including free cash.

Chair Evan Gendreau added \$400,000 in free cash may be expected.

Ms. Rapoza reviewed expected budget increases for FY25 that includes Westport Federation of Teachers (WFT) contractual, steps and lanes, American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) contractual and non-union preliminary numbers. Additional needs are water bill for Macomber School, Grant Writer \$50,000, and Summer School. An increase of 3% would represent a level funded budget and nothing more.

Discussion took place on having a Grant Writer position to share with the town. It was suggested to have a Grant Writer that places the School Department needs first, then work with the town program by program.

Chair Evan Gendreau requested to have building leaders present at future budget work sessions.

III. Special Education Budget - Chair Gendreau mentioned budget savings is taken up by Special Education. 7-11% of the budget is for special needs.

There may be a need for 2 sub separate classrooms depending on class size at a cost of \$300,000. This is a compliance issue if there is a need and it is not provided. If the current school budget cannot accommodate this expense, funds would come from the town's stabilization resources and they will deduct the amount from next year's school budget.

Ms. Tavares reported numbers for intervention referrals.

Ms. Miranda reported numbers on special education student movement within the district. Ms. Miranda mentioned that support is needed and space is a big issue.

Mr. Thrasher asked if an increase in special education services is accelerating? Ms. Miranda confirmed there is an increase. They partner with other towns that are experiencing the same thing.

Ms. Miranda went over some of the Special Education needs:

--Language Based Program

--Facilitator for meetings (last year 355 meetings were held)

Ms. Miranda explained when she first came to the district there was a lot of special needs with dyslexia. They provided intervention, Orton Gillingham, curriculum oversight, scheduling changes, and looked at data. They experienced learning in reading deficits decreased by implementation of a variety of these interventions.

Spreadsheet on Out of District Tuitions for FY24/25 was reviewed.

Presently there are 3 people in the district certified with Orton Gillingham.

Chair Gendreau asked for a cost on having a Language Based Program. Ms. Tavares informed everyone a more reflective estimate can be done after they visit a model program in Andover.

Mr. Thrasher asked if there is a set time for determining special needs? Ms. Miranda explained the evaluation process. Determination and services are provided for 2 years, then reassess at year 3.

Chair Gendreau went over the budget timeline. Two work sessions in October, then joint meetings with Finance Committee and Selectboard, a few work sessions in December, vote in January, 1 more meeting, meeting with Finance Committee in February, and budget in March.

Ms. Rapoza informed everyone she will bring the Capital Improvements Planning Committee (CIPC) list for the school committee members at the October 1 meeting.

Superintendent Aubin mentioned the CIPC items should be done from year to year and this does not happen. New school building items like intercoms need to be paid with school building funds not CIPC.

Need to prioritize items on the CIPC list:

Playground at Macomber \$300,000

Air conditioning at Macomber \$400,000 / also air conditioning at Westport Elementary

Short a field - Campground

Early Childhood Center

Classroom sizes

Chair Gendreau asked how student "age outs" work with circuit breaker funds? Ms. Sousa explained a decrease in students will be a decrease in circuit breaker reflected in the budget for the following year.

Discussion was held on ways to go forward with presenting the budget.

Add these items to the budget:

Language Based Program (to save money in the long term)

Unfunded requests/mandates

Special classrooms

High priority needs

Team Facilitator

Ms. Rapoza shared budget work sessions should be prioritized needs of the schools. Several work sessions should be held to determine budget needs.

IV. Adjourn - A motion was made to adjourn.

Motion by Thrasher, seconded by Cabral

3/0/0

The Westport School Committee Budget Work Session ended at 6:01 pm.

