

**Westport School Committee
Work Session
DATE: Tuesday, December 17, 2024
TIME: 4:30 p.m.
PLACE: WMHS 2nd floor Conference Room**

MINUTES

Members Present: Gloria Cabral, Evan Gendreau, Jason Pacheco, Christopher Thrasher (*arrived at 4:57 p.m.*)

Members Absent: Melissa Pacheco

Also Present: Thomas Aubin Superintendent, Lisa Kaminski Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development (*left at 5:56 p.m.*), Lori Melo Administrative Secretary, Wendy Miranda Special Education Coordinator (*left at 5:12 pm.*), Manny Moniz Head of Facilities and Custodians (*left at 5:31 pm.*), Melissa Sousa Executive Assistant for Business Services (*left at 6:46 pm.*), Nancy Tavares Special Education Coordinator (*left at 5:12 pm.*), Anthony Tomah Director of Technology (*left at 5:48 pm.*)

I. Call to Order - Chair Evan Gendreau called the Budget Work Session to order at 4:37 pm. with a quorum of the members present.

II. FY26 Budget Discussion

a. Special Education - Nancy Tavares began with a proposal in 2026 to add a Sub Separate Pre-K multi-level classroom. This is due to uncertainty of referrals and an increase in enrollment. Cost would be \$150,000 offset by students aging out.

In addition, Ms. Miranda shared they have seen reduced services for out of district placements with the number of students reduced from 16 to 12.

Another request is adding 1 Special Education Teacher and 1 Teaching Assistant to the Sub Separate classroom at the middle school for a cost of \$150,000 offset by outplaced tuition and transportation for aging out students.

These Sub Separate Classrooms are needed to maintain being in compliance.

Chair Gendreau mentioned a buffer is needed in the budget to avoid using the Town stabilization fund due to unanticipated special education expenses.

(Mr. Thrasher arrived at 4:57 p.m.)

Ms. Miranda shared the need for a therapeutic classroom at the high school level to accommodate up to 12 students. Ms. Miranda listed key benefits and expected outcomes for this kind of classroom. Staff needs would include an 1 FTE (full time) Certified Special Education Teacher, 1 FTE Teaching Assistant, 1 FTE Behaviorist RBT Certified, 1 Clinician, incentives, CPI Training and Family Engagement. Net cost would be \$111,000 with a savings from an out of district placement.

Ms. Tavares requested to add a Special Education Facilitator to assist with IEP Meetings. This would allow the Special Education Directors to spend more time with observing classrooms, collaborating with teachers to refine instructional practices, foster stronger family and community engagement and better handle timelines for DESE's (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) tiered focus monitoring.

Chair Gendreau asked if there were any questions? There were none.

(Ms. Miranda and Ms. Tavares left at 5:12 pm.)

b. Maintenance - Mr. Moniz went over the budget for everyday usage, expenses, and upgrades.

Chair Gendreau asked about whether the \$228,331 was an overall figure or an increase? Mr. Moniz mentioned that it is an increase from the basic budget line.

Chair Gendreau inquired about \$65,000 for maintenance of building contracted services? Some of these funds can be covered by the Macomber air conditioning project.

Chair Gendreau asked if hiring and in-house grounds person would make more sense than using contractual services? Mr. Moniz agreed having an in-house person would be better. Ms. Sousa confirmed there are funds available from contracted services to use for an in-house person dedicated to fields and grounds.

Chair Gendreau asked about building checks with overtime. Ms. Sousa confirmed there is \$13,000 budgeted.

Chair Gendreau asked if building contracted services are separate contracts and how many? Ms. Sousa verified there are multiple contracts and run from year to year.

Mr. Moniz explained under custodial other expenses \$5,000 is for staff training on how to handle certain issues. Ms. Sousa shared once a year there is a training for this at no cost. She will check into when this is offered.

Mop rentals - Mr. Moniz mentioned he would like to clean mops inhouse instead of using a service.

Mr. Thrasher asked if the numbers presented are all increases? Mr. Moniz confirmed yes.

Ms. Cabral asked if the district has all the equipment needed if they were to eliminate contracted services? Mr. Moniz confirmed they do.

(Mr. Moniz left at 5:31 pm.)

c. Technology - Chair Gendreau reported he had a discussion with the Town Administrator concerning the Chromebook replacement and rotating program.

Mr. Tomah gave a snapshot of what exists and a projection for 3,4 and 5 years.

Mr. Tomah mentioned the age issue for Chromebooks with a 3 - 4 year average lifespan, staff machines 5 years and desktops a little bit longer.

Chair Gendreau mentioned having a certain number each year for Technology around \$140,000.

Ms. Kaminski brought up that other things may need to be replaced besides computers, so a static cost could help to replace other items as needed.

Ms. Cabral asked for breakage costs? Mr. Tomah shared about \$10,000 - \$12,000 is collected for replacements.

Chair Gendreau asked what would get the district through next year? Mr. Tomah would like a minimum of 200 Chromebooks and 5-10 laptops.

Chair Gendreau asked if there were any questions?

It was mentioned that in the future looking at technology separate in the budget may be the way to go.

(Mr. Tomah left at 5:48 p.m.)

(Ms. Kaminski left at 5:56 p.m.)

d. FY26 Recommended Budget - Chair Gendreau gave a timeline on the budget process. A vote on the budget will be done at the next meeting in January 2025. Departments have presented their figures and there is a master list. Budget deadline is February 20, 2025.

Discussion took place on defining the most important budget items that include contractual increases, transportation increase of \$100,500, Chromebooks \$153,000, therapeutic classroom/program \$111,000, add 3 Teaching Assistants \$90,000.

Town level service number **\$23,351,500**

After discussion of the budget items there will be an increase of \$560,000. This does not include summer school.

Total is **\$23,911,500**

Chair Gendreau asked if there were any further comments on the budget? There were none.

(Ms. Sousa left at 6:46 p.m.)

III. Joint Meeting with the Finance Committee and Select Board - Chair Gendreau reported that the Finance Committee and Select Board would like to hold a joint meeting in January 2025. The School Department budget will be presented to them in February 2025.

Chair Gendreau asked what the pleasure of the committee would be on how to move forward?

Mr. Thrasher asked if all information has been received on any outstanding issues?

Chair Gendreau mentioned items on the budget can be identified, we have certified free cash, and will have a picture on state aid. Ms. Sousa has listed cuts.

Chair Gendreau mentioned the first meeting in January 2025 will be to have a budget discussion and approve the recommended budget.

IV. Adjourn - A motion was made to adjourn.

Motion by Cabral, seconded by Thrasher 4/0/0

The Westport School Committee Work Session ended at 6:54 pm.