WILTON-LYNDEBORUGH COOPERATIVE SCHOOL
BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
WLC-Library

FINAL MINUTES
Wednesday, October 22, 2025

Committee Membership: Bill Ryan (Chair), Alyssa Lavoie (Vice Chair), Bridget Mooney (Secretary), Craig Alley, Jennifer Bernet, Phil Brooks, Harold Melcher III, Bob Silva, Jonathan Vanderhoof

Present: Brooks, Golding (SB rep), Lavoie, Melcher, Mooney, Ryan, Silva, Vanderhoof

Absent: Alley, Bernet

Other Attendees: Peter Weaver, Kristie LaPlante, Tom Ronning, Ned Pratt, Samantha Dignan, Stacy Maghakian, Katie Gossling, Amber Brewster, Dennis Golding

The meeting was called to order at 6:33

The meeting was recorded.

Adjustment to the agenda:
Alyssa requested that acceptance of previous minutes be moved to the end of the meeting.

SPECIAL EDUCATION - Ned Pratt - *Director of Student Support Services*
Ned Pratt presented the Special Ed budget emphasizing the huge set of laws and regulations that need to be adhered to when creating the budget. The Special Ed budget is fluid as the needs of students and the number of students is constantly in flux. He explained the areas of Special Ed addressed include out of district placements which require tuition and transportation costs, specialized reading programs, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech and language. The budget has a .97% increase including all benefits and salaries.
Except for school psychologist, which is outsourced, all the other services have been a contracted service. Ned Pratt does a cost analysis on these services every year. There are three Pari educators currently onboarding and three more openings for Pari educators.
Alyssa Lavoie asks Ned Pratt for data on the number of IEP's and the number of hours calculated for each IEP. Ned Pratt explains that he is happy to explain the process for getting to the number requested in the budget, but that the process is ongoing and not fixed and therefore he can not provide that number. However, Ned will provide as much information as possible to fulfill her request. Kristie LaPlant will

work with Ned Pratt to break out the numbers requested.

CURRICULUM CO-ORDINATOR - Samantha Dignan – *Curriculum Coordinator*
Samantha Dignam explains that her budget, excluding salaries and benefits, has risen from $9,410 to $23,761. The reason for the increase is twofold; one is the iReady professional development was previously in the technology budget and now all the professional development is in the FRES budget, and the overall cost is also up $500.00; two is the behavioral learning specialist who was extremely impactful and well liked and has therefore been budgeted next year as well.
Alyssa Lavoie asks for an update on the results of the iReady program in terms of results. Samantha Dignam states that across our district in K-8, we are outperforming both the state and the nation in reading and math overall. Jonathan Vanderhoof gives a little history of the iReady program in the district saying he was a strong supporter, but now questions if it is a valuable resource worth the cost to fund it and why we aren't seeing the projected results. Samantha Dignan counters that our SAT scores are on par or above schools in our geographic area as well as schools of our same size.

FRES/LCS - Stacy Maghakian, *Principal of LCS and FRES*
Stacy Maghakian thanks the people who helped her gather information for putting the budget together. She notes there were not many requests this year with math being the largest increase and a smaller increase in the library budget. They tried to keep a level budget.

WLC – Tom Ronning – *WLC Principal,* Katie Gossling- *WLC Vice-Principal,* Amber Brewster – *Athletic Director*
Tom Ronning explains the complexities of the budget process, all the elements that need to be considered, including the savvy actions of some staff in purchasing or acquiring needed items as donations which results in not spending all the budgeted funds. He goes on to explain that it takes 3-5 years to create a good budget and that he's at the beginning of his third year at WLC. He enumerates the choices he made in this budget to keep the budget flat, as he was instructed to do, and explains ways of altering good programs to make them inclusive and less expensive. He explains that in keeping with the budget constraints a position for physical education will not be filled, some books will not be purchased for the library, and an incentive program for student teachers will be cancelled. He feels the budget he's presented is responsible and works to keep the budget level. However, it also means co-curriculars cannot be supported. He proceeds to explain all the dance, robotics, sports and fine arts equipment that have necessarily been left out of the budget.
Jonathan Vanderhoof asks where Mr. Ronning got the notion that the Budget Committee was requiring a flat budget. by the budget committee to request a flat budget. Alyssa Lavoie says that she thinks that was a miscommunication because the question of a flat budget did come up in the April 21, 2025 budget committee meeting, but was only discussed and not voted on. She apologizes for the misunderstanding. During a meeting on September 8th that included Alyssa. Lavoie,

Peter Weaver, Kristie LaPlante, Dennis Golding (SB Chair), Bri Lavalee (SB V. Chair), and Bill Ryan, Alyssa did question the goal of a flat budget in that meeting, but there was no further discussion about it. Alyssa goes on to say that she thinks all departments presenting their budgets should include a flat budget cost and add notes for all the items they'd like to include beyond the flat budget costs. She also brings up having a CRF for co-curricular costs such as field lights, nets, and dance entry fees.
Jonathan Vanderhoof thinks a CRF for big ticket items (replacing the field lights) makes sense, but smaller items should be in the budget as the cost for running a successful school system. Jonathan Vanderhoof is suggesting that everything that is needed should be added to each department's budget to let the taxpayers decide it they want to support all the needs of a good school district. Mr. Ronning said he could get the additional budget items to the Budget Committee by Friday. Dennis Golding asks that the additional items also be sent to the school board.

Kristi LaPlant requests that the Budget Committee give a clear vote or directive if it wants to see each department's wish list added to the budget. If the committee wants additional items in the budget, it will come as a bundle, not piecemeal.

Alyssa Lavoie thinks expensive items that will only be purchased once and that will last perhaps up to twenty years should not be in the annual budget. In the past these items have been cut from the budget when it is time to vote, and the budget is deemed too high. How do we get out of this cycle she wonders.

Jonathan Vanderhoof agrees that expensive items could go into a new CRF. He also makes the point that he doesn't want a "wish list" from each department, but rather items that each department feels should be in the budget.

Alyssa Lavoie makes a motion that the budget committee makes a policy that each year by default we want the department heads and the administration to present the budget, in full, that they feel is necessary for the operation that they feel is prudent for the students.
There was not a second to the motion.

Jonathan Vanderhoof makes the motion to direct the administration and department heads to go over the current budget in light of not requesting a level budget given that it sounds like that was the directive that was never made by the budget committee.
Jonathan Vanderhoof immediately rewords his motion to read:
To direct administration and department heads to take a second look at their budget given that the Budget Committee did not request a level budget.
Hal Melcher seconds the motion. All ayes, no nays. The motion passes.

Dennis Golding clarifies "so basically, you're asking them to give you the budget they need to actually run the school". Jonathan Vanderhoof responds Yes we want a budget that they feel they need to successfully run the school.

Alyssa Lavoie asks Kristie LaPlant to verify that FY25 budgeted employee salaries and taxes are correctly accounted for. She then has a question about changes in CTE costs from last year to this year. Peter Weaver explains transportation costs associated with CTE.

Jonathan Vanderhoof makes the motion to accept the minutes of the October 8, 2025 meeting. Alyssa seconds the motion. All Ayes, no nays. The motion passes.

Alyssa Lavoie would like to clarify what the policy is, and our preference are in terms of our communication with the SAU. She would like all communications to go to both her and Chair Ryan. Chair Ryan says he was offended to be publicly chastised at the last meeting and then points out that a policy was set about ten years ago that communication between the committee and the SAU goes only through the Chair. Peter Weaver speaks to this and says he appreciates the one point of contact with the committee as it streamlines things. Jonathan Vanderhoof feels that questions to the SAU should go through the Chair, but that answers should go to the entire committee.

Chair Ryan calls for
Public Comment

Bob Newton of Lyndeborough is frustrated with the way the school budget is presented to the voters at the school district meeting. He likens it to a new CFO being handed a ledger sheet to try to figure out how the organization is run. He feels there is no business model for voters to understand why a budget should be approved. He suggests the budget committee consider how the information is presented to the voter and the story of the school system so they can make a fully informed and rational decision about approving what they're asked for. He would like to see a business unit summary of each school as well as an organizational chart of each school and the administration. He wonders how many students are in each grade and what it costs to run each one. He wonders if we're receiving all the money that is due us from the State and the Feds for Special Ed? He then goes on the suggest the school district should be run on the principle of businesses like an oil refinery or a paper mill. He questions if we should close LCS and merge it into FRES. He suggests killing the iReady program. He asks what performance measures are used in the Administration and in each school to determine if your staff are doing a good job. We need to explain how every dollar we spend is used to improve student outcomes. He believes the Budget Committee is focusing in a granular level and should instead be looking at the big picture.

Jonathan Vanderhoof asks about the schedule of the next meeting.
Kristie LaPlant says the next meeting is November 12, with facilities, capital improvement discussion and presentations, grants, wages and benefits expendable trust fund, emergency contingency trust fund, and co-curriculars.

Jonathan Vanderhoof makes a motion to adjourn. Hal Melcher seconds the motion. The motion passes unanimously.

The meeting adjourns at 8:14 pm

FINAL