

TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES
Education Committee
Town Hall Council Chambers
May 21, 2012-Monday

Present: Thomas J. Lacey, Chairman
Edmund Harrington, Vice Chairman
Robert Conlon, Councilor
Jane Hackett, Councilor
Victor Pap, Councilor

Also Present: William McKinney, Chief Financial Officer
Richard Swanson, Town Auditor
Arthur Mathews, Town Council President
Patrick O'Connor, Town Council Vice President

Recording Secretary: Mary Barker

Chairman Lacey called the meeting to order at 6:30 and noted the meeting was to continue the discussion on net school spending. The School Committee was invited but due to tonight's graduation exercise, no members were present. Chairman Lacey reported he does not intend to report out until after the next committee meeting.

Calculation of Net School Spending

Chairman Lacey noted this matter was referred by the Council and there is a motion on the table. Specific communities have been included in calculation prior to 2004. Those communities joining the program after 1994 do not have same opportunity. The intent of the law is a standardized calculation; the difference between communities is therefore a flawed calculation. The matter was referred for discussion as to how to proceed. CFO McKinney was invited to advocate and Chairman Lacey acknowledged his work in regard to advocating on the state level.

CFO McKinney noted he has been in Weymouth one year and new to municipal finance. He has had conversations with DESE and looked at all categories of spending and what does and does not count towards the calculation. It doesn't include long term debt, some revenue (school lunch) and gifts. A waiver was granted to allow ARA funds to be counted. Councilor Hackett asked if transportation costs are factored in. During this discussion, Councilor O'Connor arrived. Previously uncounted (by oversight) maintenance costs are now being counted- this includes snow removal and trash pickup- which are both significant. DESE does not allow waivers for the towns to go back and revise prior years, but this was captured in the end of year report for 2011 and will be included going forward. Retired teacher insurance costs are reported but not included in the calculation.

The question arose regarding going back and amending calculations going forward. Mr. McKinney was asked if it is allowable to go back and obtain a waiver. Mr. McKinney

confirmed that this cannot be done but can be captured in FY11 going forward. Other categories...retired teachers insurance costs, while reported, are not counted. Because of the way the legislation is set up, 60% of state communities are allowed to count this. Weymouth is in the 40% that can't. If the town had been able to claim this the amount would have been \$3.5M per year. This didn't become an issue until the economy tanked and the deficits started showing and growing. Councilor Harrington asked if there is any legislation pending to correct this. Mr. McKinney responded that he is not aware of any. There was a discussion on retiree insurance and the GIC negotiated rates, the insurance and health care in general.

Chairman Lacey reported that he advocated going back to the Mayor with a more realistic request, and asked for it as a late agenda item. The net school spending inequities have been brought to light; now it is time to advocate from a community standpoint to the state. Councilor O'Connor noted he appreciates the CFO identifying past errors and Councilor Hackett noted she will support a motion for further advocacy.

Chairman Lacey suggested drafting a letter to the Mayor requesting collaboration to present at the next meeting to bring forward to Council. Councilor Hackett asked if the intent is to seek legislative or regulatory change. Mr. McKinney responded that the intent is legislative. The discrepancy is in how the law is read and interpreted.

A MOTION was made by Councilor Hackett to draft a letter advocating for standardized fair calculation of net school spending among the state communities and was seconded by Councilor Pap. Chairman Lacey noted his disappointment in having to look for things like dumpsters to count in the calculation to support student education.

Adjournment

At 7:06 PM, there being no further business, a motion was made by Councilor Pap to adjourn the Education Committee meeting and was seconded by Councilor Harrington. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

Respectfully submitted by Mary Barker as Recording Secretary

Approved by Thomas J. Lacey as Chairman