

TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES
BUDGET/MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Town Hall Council Chambers
June 5, 2023

Present: Michael Molisse, Chairman
Christopher Heffernan, Vice Chairman
Pascale Burga, Councilor
Maureen Kiely, Councilor
Greg Shanahan, Councilor

Also Present: Brian Connolly, Town Auditor
Robert Wargo, Superintendent of Schools
Brian Smith, Asst. Superintendent of Schools

Recording Secretary: Mary Barker

Chair Molisse called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM.

Deliberate the following measures:

23 045Z- Schools

This measure was referred to the Budget/Management Committee on April 24, 2023. School Department budget was presented by Rob Wargo and Brian Smith. Supt. Wargo thanked a number of school department staff for their work putting the budget together.

The budget was reviewed using the Q&A between the Town Auditor and school administration, accompanied by a slide deck they prepared. As it was presented, both parties elaborated. Food Services participation has increased, and credited to universal free meals program instituted by the state. The budget uses a zero-based approach, and it is developed with a goal to have everything needed and improved transparency. Goals and objectives were designed with staff and support input in subcommittee. The budget drivers were reviewed. ESSER funding was used to meet one-time costs. the budget approach is level funded, maintaining existing staff. Enrollment was reviewed – over the last ten years, there has been a decline, but kindergarten numbers are now on the uptick. Of concern is a “fiscal cliff” will be reached in FY25, when ESSER funding goes away and they absorb positions currently ESSER, so they are watching it. CBA contracts- there are ten unions; all but three have settled next years contracts. In summary, all cost centers funded in level service amounts to \$84 million. They do project breakage each year to cool costs. Other drivers factored include personnel, utilities, new middle school configuration, SPED compliance, athletic fees, ESSER I, II and III, revolving funds, controls and oversight, food service, athletics, Kindergarten, Johnson ECC, Evening HS, CTE, and Payrider. Mr. Smith explained some of these in further detail. Transportation

cost increased by 25% that is expected to be temporary with fuel costs. The department is currently in year 2 of a 5-year bus contract. First Student's contract has adjustment costs built in for protection from volatile costs in fuel. All contracts are subject to bidding under 30B. The department uses consortium bidding where possible. Custodial staff numbers explained. Teaching staff salary increases are either by contractual obligation or lane changes. Student/teacher ratios explained. Supt. Wargo explained that the department decentralized administration and runs a lean central office. While there hasn't been redistricting, there is equitable distribution to temper class sizes, and program shifts between buildings. Councilor Burga arrived during this presentation, at 6:33 PM. The Capital Plan was part of the review, and from it, the following measures were forwarded:

23 061-Free Cash for WPS Technology Needs

This measure seeks \$750,000 from Free Cash into an 02 fund account for the purpose of funding costs associated with firewall, web filters and data center upgrades for Weymouth Public Schools. The department's Ed Tech team along with the town will use it to fund initiatives around cybersecurity data recovery, with a focus on phishing, 2-party verification and updating firewall infrastructure. This is items #35 and #36 on the Capital Improvement Plan.

23 062- Free Cash for WHS Career and Technical Education

This measure seeks \$19,000 from Free Cash into an 02 fund account for the purpose of funding costs associated with new and upgraded equipment at the Career and Technical Education Department at the Weymouth High School. This includes new work stations, a press brake, and new surface and upgrades to the Early Childhood Education play area. Most of the funding will be used to resurface the childhood play area- at early ages it's more important to have adequate surfacing rather than play structures. This is items #104, 105, and 106 on the Capital Improvement Plan.

23 063- Free Cash for WPS Utility Vehicles

This funding request seeks \$25,000 from Free Cash into an 02 fund account for the purpose of funding costs associated with purchasing two (2) utility (cart) vehicles for the Weymouth Public Schools. Vehicles will be used to go back and forth either for equipment or emergencies.

23 064- Free Cash for WHS Furniture Replacement

Funding sought to replace damaged desks and chairs at the HS.

Councilor Kiely asked if there is a means of funding athletics for students who do not have the means otherwise to participate. Asst. Supt. Smith responded that the schools use the free/reduced lunch process to determine eligibility waivers, or students can use the Dreamcatcher program, or payment plans with the Athletic Director. No child is turned away. It does create a structural deficit in the revolving fund. Councilor Kiely asked if they could elaborate on supplementing mental health services in the schools. Asst. Supt. Smith responded that adjustment councilors were being added to staffing before the pandemic. There are now school adjustment councilors in every school and a new wraparound center to support families. Councilor Kiely asked about safety at the

Chapman School and what is being done to address bullying on the grounds. Supt. Wargo responded that any concerns should be brought to the office. There are 200 cameras around the building. The middle school works with families so that students understand what is expected of them.

Councilor Shanahan asked about the increase showing up in the kindergarten forecasting numbers. What steps does the department take when they see changes like these bubbles. Mr. Smith responded they watch and project and may shift staff support as needed, with future sustainability. Mr. Wargo added that the pre-K program is attracting families to Weymouth. Sometimes the bubbles settle themselves. Their forecasting is done with NESDEC guidance.

Councilor Heffernan asked about post-grad programs and what measures can be used to address failure recovery- can the Evening High School supplement a grade failure. Mr. Smith responded that it cannot, but there is a failure recovery process.

Chair Molisse pointed out he has seen from real estate sales that people want to move to Weymouth.

ADJOURNMENT

At 6:54 PM, there being no further business, a motion was made by Councilor Heffernan to adjourn and was seconded by Councilor Kiely. Unanimously voted.

Respectfully Submitted by Mary Barker as Recording Secretary.

Approved by Michael Molisse as Budget/Management Committee Chairman
Voted unanimously on 20 June 2023