

**TOWN COUNCIL BUDGET/MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**  
**Wednesday, June 11, 2014 at 6:00 p.m.**  
**Town Council Chambers, Town Hall**

Present: Councilor Patrick O'Connor, Chair  
Councilor Rebecca Haugh  
Councilor Jane Hackett

Absent: Councilor Michael Molisse  
Councilor Brian McDonald

Also Present: Richard Swanson, Town Auditor  
Dr. Kenneth Salim, Superintendent of Schools  
Garry Pelletier, Assistant Superintendent of Schools  
Mickey McGonagle, Interim Business Manager  
Lisa Belmarsh, School Committee  
Sean Guilfoyle, School Committee

Recording Secretary: Patricia McDonnell

Chairman O'Connor called the Budget/Management Committee meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

**14 057Z – School Department**  
**14 062 – Free Cash-SPED Out-of-District Tuition**

Dr. Kenneth Salim and Lisa Belmarsh were present for measure 14 057Z. Ms. Belmarsh made opening statements. She walked through the in depth review process that was done prior to the budget. She commended the increased communication between the town and the school department. She referenced the high level of stress created by the budget process. She stated she would like the administration, Town Council, residents, and the School Committee to develop goals for the town to form a vision for the future of Weymouth.

Dr. Salim stated he will provide an overview of the budget and how it was developed, the schools budget summary, and steps taken to close the level service gap. He stated they will address needs that will not be met in FY15 that is part of the school budget passed by the School Committee and will address the questions submitted by Town Auditor Swanson. His report included a PowerPoint presentation (attached).

Councilor Hackett confirmed that what is being presented this evening is a level service budget for FY15, including the services provided in the current fiscal year, plus a few additional requirements from the state, which results in a slightly above level service budget.

Dr. Salim reviewed the budget development process and the resultant needs list, which was provided to the Committee for their review. Councilor Hackett asked how much the overall SEIU collective bargaining line item is currently. Dr. Salim stated he does not have the exact figure but it is approximately 2 percent of the budget.

Dr. Salim reviewed the School Budget Summary. The Mayor's proposal was \$60,153,728, with a free cash measure for special education in the amount of \$900,000, bringing the total proposed allocation to \$61,053,728. The needs based budget approved by the School Committee on March 27 was \$64,927,218. He reported they have identified what a level service budget would be on July 1 if they were operating with the staffing and resources they currently have as \$61,551,642, which is a gap of \$497,914. He stated they have mandated needs that will have to be funded, as well as anticipated collective bargaining, creating a revised need gap of \$865,000.

Dr. Salim indicated 80 percent of the budget is personnel, 13 percent is contracted personnel services for students, and the remaining 7 percent is for expenses such as maintenance, utilities, supplies, and materials. He provided the Committee with a handout illustrating some of the trends around numbers of teachers in the district. He stated there were 26 more general education teachers in FY08 and 16 more special education teachers in FY08 than there are today.

Councilor Hackett asked what year the middle schools were restructured. Dr. Salim stated the restructuring was done in FY10 for FY11. Councilor Haugh asked what the student population was in FY08. Dr. Salim stated the student population has been relatively stable at just under 7,000 students. Councilor O'Connor asked what the impact has been with the reduction in special education teachers. Dr. Salim stated the costs for special education have increased over time but they have not done a thorough analysis of how teachers were allocated at that time. He stated class sizes are at the maximum allowable by law at this point in time and there may have been smaller class sizes at that point. He

stated they are meeting all their legal obligations for special education services. Councilor O'Connor noted the special education department does an excellent job.

Dr. Salim explained in order to bridge the \$865,000 level service gap, the following decisions were made: deferral of \$60,000 in extraordinary maintenance, \$100,000 in projected utility savings, \$60,000 in school supplies, \$250,000 in special education costs; savings from teacher retirements of \$280,000; transfer of \$100,000 in expenses into revolving account for WeyCare; projected \$15,000 expense savings due to new copiers, printers, etc. He noted the special education cost deferral will be offset with a \$250,000 free cash allocation from the Mayor in the fall.

Councilor Haugh asked why the fee for WeyCare went up by approximately 24 percent. Dr. Salim stated WeyCare had not had an increase in fees in five years and they looked at comparative fee numbers and state voucher reimbursement rates to determine the new rates. Councilor Haugh stated there has not been a deficit in the WeyCare account since FY10. The program made \$21,000 in FY11, \$49,000 in FY12, and \$92,000 in FY13. She stated at the start of this fiscal year there was \$272,000 in reserve in the WeyCare revolving account. She has personally spent \$3,100 this year for her kids to bring their own gym equipment to school to play outside for one hour 180 days a year. She stated next year this same service is going to cost her \$3,900. She stated it is ridiculous that the program cost is increasing when the program has sustained itself for four years and asked if the level of service for this program is going to increase to reflect the increase in cost.

Dr. Salim stated they are hiring a new director to provide meaningful learning experiences for students in WeyCare. Ms. Belmarsh stated part of the reason the money was left over was due to the fact that WeyCare was not carrying its own expenses. By making this transfer, WeyCare will be carrying its own expenses. She stated the School Committee is planning on having a discussion this year about all fees, including WeyCare.

Councilor Hackett asked if the school department will be going forward with the same services from this year to next year with the same fee structures, with the exception of WeyCare. Dr. Salim stated fees have been adjusted for WeyCare, Johnson Early Childhood Center, and Weymouth High School early education program. Councilor Hackett confirmed with Dr. Salim that they are not increasing athletic, drama, music, or transportation fees.

Councilor Hackett stated there is a tremendous amount of concern about cuts for next year, however, in the budget being presented none of these cuts are occurring. She stated what is happening next year is they are taking a financial risk by deferring costs. She confirmed that a free cash appropriation request for \$250,000 will be expected by the Mayor in the fall of 2014.

Councilor Hackett asked if district level collective bargaining is inside or outside the \$865,000. Dr. Salim stated this is inside the \$865,000. Councilor Hackett stated the WeyCare increase is a significant concern for working parents and a 24 percent increase without an increase in services is too much. She recommended delaying or phasing in any increases and perhaps forming a committee to explore this. She stressed it is important to get the word out that the FY15 budget is exactly what they have in FY14 plus state and federal mandated requirements, without eliminating services and without increasing fees.

Councilor Haugh stated she is fine with deferring supply purchases, however, parents are already expected to supply paper towels, tissues, purell, glue sticks, and paper and the public and Council members should be aware of this.

Dr. Salim reviewed the state and federal mandates that will need to be met for FY15. Councilor Hackett asked how large the English language learner (ELL) population is in Weymouth. Dr. Salim stated the increase over the last five years has been 1.5 percent. He stated this is a relatively small increase, but what has changed is the obligation of general education teachers to be trained on strategies to support ELL kids in their classroom.

Dr. Salim provided a review of needs that will not be met for the FY15 school year under this budget. These included: program improvement goals; academic and enrichment opportunities for college and career readiness; team support for teachers; improved inclusive practices for special education programs; and improved social, emotional, behavioral, and health supports for students.

Councilor Hackett asked if Dr. Salim could walk them through the music program analysis that was conducted this past year. Dr. Salim stated a professor from Boston University visited the district and it was clear that what is important is the overall collaboration across all levels to generate interest in music education in younger years. He stated the middle school is a six period day and does not provide as rich an opportunity for these types of electives. He stated the School Committee has discussed a director of K-12 music as a need which they cannot meet.

Councilor Hackett referenced academic opportunities and asked if there are specific levels that are being targeted for prioritization. Dr. Salim stated in FY15 they are not adding personnel, but have identified needed positions in their

needs list. He provided an overview of these needs. Councilor Hackett stated it is important for the committee, Council, and Mayor to understand how the needs list is tied to the school departments overall goals and results. Ms. Belmarsh stated the middle school principals were adamant that they try to get the seventh period into the middle school to utilize some of these programs. She stated they cannot fund this right now and it is very frustrating as they have a solution but cannot get to it.

Councilor Hackett asked if they are in the second year of the primary school curriculum. Dr. Salim stated this is the second year of the Pre-K through 6 curriculum. He stated they just purchased the new middle school math curriculum which will be starting in the fall and just started the professional development. Councilor Hackett asked if they anticipate this curriculum investment will assist in achievement. Dr. Salim stated they conduct formative assessments and these results have been encouraging in terms of the amount of growth students have been making over the course of a year.

Councilor Haugh stated she is disappointed the music program did not progress and is disappointed that the marching band is so small. She stated music is important and captures certain students and gives them a reason to go to school. Ms. Belmarsh stated the recommendation that was provided as a result of the music program analysis included a number of no cost items that they can start looking at. She stated she can provide a copy of the recommendation to the committee.

Councilor Hackett asked if there is an agreement in place for Southfield for the current school year. Dr. Salim stated an agreement has not been executed but is in its very final stages.

Councilor Hackett stated this is her third budget as a Councilor and it is nice to see that there have been some improvements in growth back to where they were in 2008, but they are not there yet. She stated there has been a lot of rhetoric this year and there is a lot of concern among parents and families and the budget process each year causes a lot of distress for families. She stated these discussions have real impacts on families. She noted that poor schools are not good for property values or the community and she feels the School Committee and Mayor Kay deserve credit for getting together earlier and coming together with a resolution for just above level service for next year.

She indicated they are working hard to get new recurring growth into community. She spoke about Southfield, Partners taking over South Shore Hospital, and the Fire Department assuming EMS services as opportunities to bring in additional revenue. She stated this committee is committed to education and they are doing all they can to get money. As of today the Mayor, school administration, and the School Committee have agreed to a mechanism to get to level service in FY15. There is a question whether this agreement is the best mechanism to use and this will have to be worked out before the close of the fiscal year.

Councilor O'Connor stated the committee members are all strong advocates for education. He stated there are a lot of financially based issues in this town and they are cash strapped and built out, but feels they are on an upward trend. He indicated the partnership between the School Committee and the town has been great, but the state has not provided enough Chapter 70 money and has to do more. He is hopeful a new Governor may make changes, as the state has historic revenues from the lottery, yet education has been shortchanged. He referenced the other town departments and how they are struggling. He stated he understands the frustration but he believes this proposed budget minimizes risk to students.

Councilor Haugh stated she is new on the Town Council and this is her first time working on the budget. She has been following the school budget since 2008 and they have lost touch with what level spending in the schools is. She referenced parents having to pay for sports fees and transportation fees. She stated there have been no adjustments to these fees since 2008 when they were supposed to be temporary fees.

The Town Auditor's questions were addressed. Dr. Salim addressed recurring questions on how the number of full-time employees remains the same for a given school but the salaries seem to increase a large percentage. He stated taking into account all personnel across all cost centers the percent increase in salary is 3.03%, or \$47,716,915 for FY14 and \$49,162,802 for FY15. He stated the variations in cost centers are due to staff that may be transferred from one building to another, or students who transfer to another school which necessitate staff changes. He said that when these changes happen they are not yet reflected in the base budget and as a result there is a larger fluctuation.

Councilor Haugh asked if there is a grants manager position currently in the school department. Dr. Salim stated this is an open position that has been reclassified as a Data Assessment Strategy Manager and they are in the final states of hiring for that position. She expressed concern that there is less grant money coming in than there was ten years ago. Dr. Salim outlined the two major grants they had and those they have been awarded this year. He stated many grants at the federal level no longer exist and this trend is not unique to Weymouth.

Councilor O'Connor stated the Councilors have reviewed the Town Auditor's questions and responses and asked if the Councilors had any questions or concerns relative to these questions. Councilor Hackett stated they are very appreciative of the level of detail provided in answering these questions. Dr. Salim thanked the members of his team who were all instrumental in putting this information together. The Councilors had no specific questions.

Dr. Salim stated there were a number of questions related to district administration and there are a number of items that have fallen under that cost center that could be more precisely categorized. He cited an example of districtwide therapists that provide support across many schools and fall under district administration which need to be labeled more clearly.

Auditor Swanson asked what costs are not included to compute a per pupil expenditure. Dr. Salim stated healthcare costs for educators is not part of the per pupil allocation and are borne by the town budget. Auditor Swanson asked for clarification of grant awards reduction due to sequestration. Dr. Salim stated there were across the board cuts of approximately 10% for all federal programs.

Auditor Swanson noted a deficit balance in the food service revolving fund. He asked if they anticipate this being positive in FY15. Dr. Salim stated it is their hope this will break even or be positive for FY15. They have analyzed the food services budget and currently have an RFP for a management company to oversee the management of the program. Employees will still be employees of the town of Weymouth and organized under SEIU, but the director position will be replaced by a contracted-out food services company. Councilor Haugh asked if there are any proposed increased fees for school lunches. Dr. Salim stated there was an increase last year, but no increase planned for FY15.

Auditor Swanson referenced an increase in transportation services due to the addition of three van drivers which was inaccurately reflected in the schedule. Dr. Salim stated there was a chart in the budget book that was incorrect for FY14 and the increase actually occurred from FY13 to FY14. There is no change from this year to next year in the number of drivers. Auditor Swanson stated he is very pleased with the comprehensive answers to his questions.

Councilor Hackett reiterated they are planning on a budget of level service plus state and federal mandated positions for FY15. She took the opportunity to recognize Garry Pelletier, Assistant Superintendent, on his upcoming retirement.

With no further business to attend to, Councilor Hackett motioned to adjourn at 7:58 p.m. Motion seconded by Councilor Haugh and voted unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted by: Patricia McDonnell, Recording Secretary

Approved by: Chairman Michael Molisse

Voted unanimously on 14 July 2014

Attachment: Weymouth Public Schools FY15 Budget Presentation, June 11, 2014