

TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES
BUDGET/MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Town Hall Council Chambers
June 14, 2010 - Monday

Present: Kenneth DiFazio, Chairperson
Patrick O'Connor, Vice Chairperson
Arthur Mathews, Council President
Michael Molisse, Councilor
Michael Smart, Councilor

Also Present: James Wilson, Chief Financial Officer
James Clarke, Director, Planning and Development
George Lane, Town Solicitor

Recording Secretary: Mary Briggs

Chairman Kenneth DiFazio called the Budget/Management Committee meeting to order at 6:45 PM.

Continued Review and Discussion on School Department Detailed Budget with School Superintendent, Assistant Superintendents, and Senior Staff

Deliberation of measure number 10 020 Z

Chairman DiFazio asked Solicitor Lane to provide the opinion requested regarding possible violation of the Charter by the school committee's process in submitting the budget to the Budget/Management for review this year. Mr. Lane responded that liability issues under section 6 of the Charter have been raised, in particular whether the actions of the school committee were in violation of Article 6 of the charter. In accordance with that, he had requested pertinent information from the school committee and outlined in the opinion that the school committee, following a public hearing did vote a \$55.5 million budget, and the matter was forwarded to the Mayor for consideration. Having reviewed all correspondence, it is clear to Mr. Lane that the school committee has met its obligation. He notes they are not in any liability of not having met their obligation under the charter. Any subsequent action is not problematic to the action.

Councilor Mathews asked Mr. Lane read for the public specific language from the opinion. Mr. Lane read paragraph three, "the actions of the school committee as above stated clearly indicate compliance with the requirements of the Weymouth Town Charter. Discussion ensued regarding the lack of a school committee vote to implement a \$51.5 million budget, as proposed by the Mayor to the Town Council. This matter affects the ability of the school committee to implement a line item spending plan required by July

1st. As stated by Chief Financial Officer Jim Wilson, the lack of the vote of implementation will leave the town unable to pay school department bills and expenses.

“The function of the Town Council is to review the town operating budget of \$51.5 million, as submitted by the Mayor in accordance with section 6 of the Town Charter. The Town Council has no authority to add programs, or increase amounts, but only to delete or decrease any amount except expenditures required by law or for debt services.”

As Mr. Wilson has explained, he is in agreement, that the implementation plan is as a result of the \$51.5 million budget and the actions taken were not in violation. It does not matter what number the school committee votes, so long as a vote is taken.

The next part of the meeting reviewed the questions by the internal auditor with regard to the school department's proposed spending plan. Mr. Swanson put together a packet of questions which were emailed to the superintendent for review. Ms. Livingstone also brought additional materials which were requested by the committee at the last meeting. She provided a comparative spreadsheet of school districts in other towns, including Framingham, Plymouth, Billerica, Peabody, Malden Quincy and Braintree. Data includes per capita income, property values and number of students. Salary information, as well as positions were provided where available. She believes that in relation to other communities, Weymouth's number of administrators and associated salaries are low.

Ms. Livingstone also provided a Hall Rental Fees structure with separate charges for the turf high school field. Fees are tiered to youth organizations, profit, and non-profit groups. There is a separate set-aside in the account for turf maintenance. Mr. Smart noted that town fees should be more in line with the way school department charges for the turf field.

The last analysis provided is class sizes, existing and with projected enrollment and anticipated cuts for the next year. Lower grades are less impacted. Current per pupil cost to educate a student is about \$10-11,000. Redistricting is not being considered, but may if it becomes necessary. Councilor Mathews asked that this comparison be uploaded to the school website for parents to review.

Review of each cost center were then discussed with the changes made in each building. There were general questions regarding each school. There were brief discussions during the review, including where increases/reductions are proposed, special education transportation, homeless students in the district, operating without watchmen oversight, and reductions in circuit breaker funding.

There followed a discussion of the Collective Bargaining Agreement passed, and what impact future negotiations may have on the town. Town Council is not privy to negotiations as bargaining is in executive session and details cannot be divulged until the bargaining group arrives at an agreement or impact. Mr. Guilfoyle noted that both sides made concessions in the agreement. Chairman DiFazio mentioned that there are eight bargaining units currently under negotiation and the school committee contract sets a

precedent. The town cannot sustain these impacts.

Councilor Harrington asked who was on the negotiating team and noted none are professional negotiators. He recommended a professional be hired the next time negotiations begin. Mr. Guilfoyle took exception and responded that the committee had professional oversight.

Chairman DiFazio noted that when the Council had an idea of what was being considered as a result of an impasse, they drafted and submitted to the school committee a resolution, which by his recollection was ignored. Councilor Smart requested the minutes from the negotiations which he has previously requested under the Open Meeting law. What he has received so far has provided nothing of any substance. Ms. Livingstone noted she has not had the chance but will look for the specific minutes requested. Councilor Harrington requested information on national standards for optimal classroom size for each level. Ms. Livingstone noted there are no set standards, but that Weymouth will exceed most guidelines next year.

Councilor Mathews noted it is the committee's position to scrutinize the budget, and Chairman DiFazio noted that the dialogue with the school department has greatly improved over the years. He predicted it will be difficult to support the current plan considering the proposal to reorganize grades 5-8. He does not believe it will allow for recovery further down the road.

A discussion followed regarding positions which some of the committee members note are duplicated on the town side, including the human resources supervisor, custodians, and whether in times of economic hardship the superintendent has the need for a personal secretary. Additionally the status of the high school principal position which is currently open and the status of anticipated retirements were discussed.

Resolution to the Weymouth Teachers' Association

Councilor O'Connor, as author of the resolution, noted while it is not the solution to all of the budget problems, it is a fair starting point, where the current budget requires the elimination of teachers to fund salary increases. Councilor O'Connor read his proposed resolution into the record:

"Whereas the current global economic crisis has led to the loss of eight million jobs, the collapse of the U.S. housing market, the near financial collapse of entire European nations, and the greatest period of economic instability since the Great Depression,

"And whereas the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has cut local aid to the Town of Weymouth while burdening the Town of Weymouth with additional unfunded mandates and higher assessments,

"And whereas over the past three fiscal years the Town of Weymouth has been forced to mandate furloughs, cut all discretionary spending, eliminate all borrowing for general

government capital improvements, reduce employees' hours, cut salaries, and eliminate positions just to preserve basic governmental services,

"And whereas the Town of Weymouth has embraced reform, where appropriate, such as the regionalization of the trash collection services, reducing health care costs, and streamlining government operations,

"And whereas the scheduled salary increases due to the Weymouth Teachers Association in fiscal year 2011 exceeds the amount the Town of Weymouth can increase the tax levy limit under Proposition 2 1/2,

"And whereas the Weymouth Teachers Association has received over \$5,000,000 in salary increases (step increases, lane changes and raises) over the past three fiscal years,

"And whereas it is the opinion of the Weymouth Town Council that smaller class sizes, better materials, and more teachers are of a higher budgetary priority than salary increases,

"Be it resolved, that the Weymouth Town Council

- 1. "Respectfully request that the Weymouth Teachers Association defer their salary increases in FY2011*
- 2. "That these savings be used to preserve teaching positions, maintain class sizes, and purchase educational materials so that the students of Weymouth can continue to receive the quality education all children are entitled to receive."*

Chairman DiFazio commended Councilor O'Connor for the resolution which he will support. He recommended two minor changes to the language; changing the word "defer" to "forego" in item 1, and inserting in item 2 to "maintain the current 5-8 grade configuration" following "preserve teaching positions". There was a brief discussion regarding the first recommended change. Councilor Smart noted he supports workers' rights to collective bargain and is not sure the resolution sends the proper message. Councilor O'Connor responded that the intent of the resolution is not to undermine the collective bargaining process, but rather is a respectful request to the teachers to consider foregoing raises to support education in this crisis situation.

A MOTION was made by Councilor O'Connor to forward the resolution to the Weymouth Teachers Union, as amended, to include the language changes as proposed, and was seconded by Councilor Smart.

Councilor Molisse noted he will not support the resolution, as the WTA ratified this contract and the school committee voted it in good faith. He predicts the loss of quality teachers by sending this message. Councilor Smart will abstain from voting as he wants more time to review, but plans to vote at Town Council level. Vote PASSES, 3/1/1.

Adjournment

At 9:10 PM, there being no further business, Councilor O'Connor made a MOTION to ADJOURN the meeting and was seconded by Councilor Smart. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

Respectfully submitted by Mary Briggs as Recording Secretary

Approved by

Arthur Mathews-Town Council President