

Westhampton Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
March 8, 2016

Meeting opened at 7:00 pm

Present: Thomas Cleary (Interim Chair), Jackie Brodeur, Mary Cleary, Maryanne Duggan, Aniko Giordano, Ellice Gonzalez Brandow, Joe Pipczynski, Chevy Seney, and Celeste Whiting

Also Present: Dean Bates (Elementary Principal), Morley Cleary, Peter Cleary, Bobby Jones, Craig Jurgenson (Superintendent of Schools), and Bridgid O'Reardon

Minutes from February 23, 2016 were amended to read that the town had three **Board of Health members**, not three health agents. Motion to accept amended minutes of February 23, 2016, approved 9-0-0

Review of Correspondence: Tom shared an invitation to review the *The Beacon*.

Old Business

Tom reiterated the information from Joe B. that explained that the money borrowed for the school roof can be used for another capital expense.

New Business

Tom C. defined the structure for the evening's presentations; ~15 minutes for presentations from each department, then open for questions.

Dean reviewed each slide of the Westhampton Elementary FY 2017 Budget Presentation. The increase in Personnel includes a contractual 2% increase plus step increase for instructors. Joe P. asked about the transportation portion of Other School Services. Bobby said it was \$2500 and that transportation was "locked into a bid." Tom asked how long the Out of District Tuition increase could be projected. Dean replied the "bump" will continue for seven years. Dean explained that although school enrollment is down slightly, the special needs population has increased. There was a need to hire another special education teacher. Tom asked what the goal was for the School Choice Revolving balance. Dean said it was "to stabilize offset cost of programs." Bridgid added to "offset salaries." Bobby said it would be "good to keep a year's reserve." Bridgid explained that the school had "control over accepting [choice students], but not who leaves." She and Dean both expressed a need to have programs that "make the school attractive." Tom asked why families would choose a charter school. According to Dean "it depends on the family...perhaps they are looking for an arts program." The \$5,000 per

incoming school choice student does not offset the higher cost of sending a student to a charter school. No new “choice in” students are estimated for FY16-17. There may be 3-5 slots open. The committee’s perspective was that improving programs at WES would “keep students at WES rather than sending them out.” This sentiment was true regarding the Pre School Revolving balance, as well. Tom asked if preschool was required. Dean said it was required for students with IEPs (Individualized Education Plans....legal contracts between schools and families of students). Currently the school is spending more than it is taking in, according to Dean. This mandated preschool requirement used to be offset by a Community Partnership Grant. Joe P. inquired, “If you get them in preschool do they stay?” Dean said, “Yes.” In the following discussion about per pupil expenditure Tom asked Dean, “Who are your peers? What are they spending?” Dean said that he would compare WES (\$14,393) to Williamsburg (\$14,362) and Whatley (\$???) and that these costs were slightly higher than the state average (\$14,018). Norris School (\$10,000) is low. It’s per pupil expenditure is so low it is considered to be “at risk with the state.” Kim Florek was recognized for her efforts in helping to attain the Digital Connections Grant. Another grant proposal has been submitted for wireless access in cooperation with the five towns.

The presentation shifted to the High School Budget and Craig and Bobby stayed at the meeting while WES committee members exited. Bobby distributed copies of the slides for the Hampshire Regional FY17 Budget Presentation. There has been a change in an instructional position from Athletic Director to Director of Student Activities. This position would be responsible for **all** before and after school programs. Contractual increases “are not settled, yet.” The school would like to have the school resource officer (\$8,000) in addition? to the time (~10 hrs/wk) that Chief White is at the High School (pro bono?). The grant that could offset the increase in nursing services is only to send a “revolving” nurse. Aniko asked about the decrease in the Special Education department. It is the result of keeping services at the school, a savings on “out of district placement.” Tom asked if Smith Voc was expected to “become its own stand-alone school.” Craig was not sure if it would. Craig also clarified that the district is mandated to provide transportation to **one** vocational school. So, if a student elects to attend Westfield Voc, the transportation cost is not the district’s responsibility. Historically, more district students have elected to attend Smith Voc because of its Agricultural program. Craig is not able to “speak to Smith Vocational’s tuition structure.” Aniko shifted the conversation to students attending HRHS from Worthington. Fifteen students at a tuition rate of \$7,500 per student are? attending HRHS. These students do not contribute to HRHS’s transportation costs. The revenue is used to “offset the budget.” In response to the cost related to students participating in school choice, Craig said that there was “\$660,000 coming in and \$361,000 going out.” Cummington is considering joining the district. Tom asked Craig and Bobby about the Town’s future assessment for HRHS. Craig explained that the Town’s assessment was based upon a “five year rolling average of enrollment.” He also said that “school choice students were not part of the Town assessment.” Aniko observed that the population of students attending HRHS is shrinking

and then asked “Why is the budget increasing more than the cost of living?” Bobby responded, “Contractual increases.” Craig added “unfunded mandates related to incorporating the Common Core Standards and data gathering required by the state.” Joe P. added that the school is offering more than it did five years ago. Craig supported that comment by noting that there were AP courses and more services for a variety of students. Tom asked Craig who were HRHS’s “peers.” Who (what districts) would be comparable? Craig said Gateway and Mohawk. Mary asked about Smith Vocational’s numbers (enrollment from Town). There are 18? currently, 8 of which have SPED requirements. [My apologies, I did not record next year’s projected enrollment. I believe it was 17 with 8 SPED requirements continuing??] Current tuition for Smith Voc is \$17,556. It **MAY drop** to \$16,500. Aniko asked why the assistant principal expenditure, to date, had increased. Craig and Bobby guessed that it was most likely due to a stipend paid to an interim principal while one assistant was out.

Other Business

Planning ahead, Tom reminded the committee that we are scheduled to meet 3/22 and 3/29. The committee added 4/5 as another date to meet. Tom will ask Cheryl about the deadline for the budget....“the drop dead date.”

Tom defined two goals for the next meeting. The committee should review the budget information from the Select Board. And the committee needs to discuss ideas for balancing the budget....“look for wiggle room.” Tom will invite Joe B. to the next meetings to help the committee “ensure that we have good numbers.”

Aniko shared her observations after attending the SB meeting on 3/7. She is concerned that the SB is “at sea” about the proposed budget numbers. They seemed unclear about who generates the entire budget. Ellice responded that it is the Finance Committee’s role. Celeste clarified the Committee’s role as “supervising with Cheryl’s understanding of the numbers and the process.” Joe P., who also attended the SB meeting (3/7), said that the “SB seemed to be looking for guidance on salaries.” According to Joe P., the Highway contract was comparable to neighboring towns. Aniko is concerned about “historical precedence” expressed by the SB regarding (salaries?). Ellice encouraged the Committee to discuss how to modify and share the proposed budget with the Town. It is important to make it accessible before Town meeting.

Next Meeting: March 22nd

Meeting Adjourned at 8:55

Respectfully submitted by,
Chevy Seney