

Westhampton, MA Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
Town Hall
March 27, 2024

Meeting called to order at 7:05pm

Attendance: Jeremy Durrin (note taker), Steve Holt, Marilyn Witherell, Jennifer Milikowsky, Carla Lussier, Tad Weiss, Richelle Hurd.

Also in attendance: Lauren Hotz, Susan Bronstein, Doug Finn, Tom Cleary, Scott Johndrow, Mickey Buhl, Peter Cleary, Tom Cleary, Maureen Dempsey.

Hampshire Regional School Budget Overview

- Overall Increase of .65% for an increase of \$65,716.
- Budget reflects a reduction of 3.5 Full time Teaching positions
- This budget is based on keeping the students' experience the same.
- Westhampton assessment is down .61%.

Principal Lauren Hotz explained that the cutting of 3.5 full time positions will not be an issue with the current class offerings.

Reserve fund considerations (funds that *could be* used to balance the budget)

- Excess and Deficiencies
- School Choice Revolving Fund
 - Keep 1.5 times budgeted expenditure
- Out of District Revolving Fund
 - Not touching it, as it needs to be looked at over the next couple years
- Transportation Revolving Fund
 - Using the entire balance towards this year's budget. Roughly \$1.2 million.

Central office costs are going up and include a \$200,000 temporary bump-up overall to fix the problems currently happening. This increase will be shared by all the schools that are a part of Hampshire Regional School District.

Salaries

Teacher contracts are currently under negotiation. Budgeted salary number includes normal step increases and previously contracted raises. It does not seem to include anticipated future contract numbers for future years. Other things to note is there is a \$25,000 increase for substitutes because of the increased costs around hiring these positions.

Other Budget Discussions

Tad raised the concerns about using the \$1.2M transportation revolving fund to balance the budget. What will happen in future years? The trend over the last several years has been to draw more on reserve funds to help balance the budget, which is not a sustainable practice.

Mickey Buhl articulated that this current year was not a year to try and raise budgets for towns in fear of it getting voted down and having even worse budget issues. He felt the leadership in place currently does not have the public's confidence so budgeting was done to restructure the central office while not increasing the overall budget dramatically.

Motion to accept minutes from March 13, 2024 meeting by Jeremy and seconded by Carla -
VOTE: 4-0-2

Reserve transfer request for \$2,517.87 from the Reserve Fund to the Town Hall Expense to cover expenses for HVAC. Steve made the motion to accept and seconded by Jen –
VOTE: 6-0-0

Remaining balance in the Reserve Fund is now \$17,482.13

Tad discussed the idea of changing the number of members needed for the Finance Committee to be able to hit quorum. The new number will reduce the committee from 10 members to 7 members. Meaning quorum will be 4 instead of the normal 6. Will be a warrant article to be voted on at Town Meeting. No vote was take, but there was consensus to move this warrant to TM. Of the three position eliminated from FinCom – two of them will be vacancies. One 1-year term, one 2-year term, and one 3-year term.

Motion to adjourn by Jennifer Milikowsky 9:10pm and seconded by Steve Holt.
VOTE: 6-0-0