



Finance Committee

William Steinberg (Chair)
 Pamela Roman (Vice Chair)
 Abner Bruno
 Michael Hoyle
 Kelly Lappin
 Steve Correia

FINANCE COMMITTEE

September 14, 2021

In Person and Remote

7:00 P.M. Minutes

Attendance: B. Steinberg, K. Lappin, M. Hoyle, S. Correia, and A. Bruno.
 Absent: P. Roman. Also in attendance: Chris Ryan (Chair, School Committee), Ellen Greico (Vice Chair, School Committee), Jeanne Downs (School Committee), Dr. Omar Easy (School Superintendent), Ellen Whittmore (Director of Finance, Wayland Public Schools), and Seath Crandall? (Moderator).

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Chair B. Steinberg at 7:04 PM. As this was a joint meeting, Chair C. Ryan called the Schools Committee to order at 7:04 PM. FinCom Chair B. Steinberg said that all Members were participating remotely. He reviewed the agenda and gave instructions to all present.

Announcements:

B. Steinberg announced that Christine Roberts had resigned from the Committee.

Public Comment and Members' Response:

No public comment.

Meet with Members of Wayland School Committee:

J. Downs, Chair of the Finance Subcommittee, gave a presentation based on questions that the Schools Committee had received from FinCom Members.

Ms. Downs first presented on per-pupil expenditures compared to other districts. She shared a spreadsheet on FY18-FY20 per-pupil expenses. She said Wayland consistently ranked 9th on a list of 13 peer towns for these. S. Correia asked about the difference in the Schools Committee's and FinCom's peer towns lists: from educational and financial perspectives, the lists differed slightly. E. Whittemore said she would collaborate with S. Correia to create an updated list.

There was discussion about various factors that may have contributed to different towns' expense levels. J. Downs said they could add information about how many students were in each community for the Budget presentation. Members agreed that this would help residents better understand costs.

Dr. Easy then talked about vocational education. He said he had connected with principals at the middle and high schools to talk about the process for students. He said that the VocEd option was usually presented in the Fall of a student's 8th grade year; usually the high school presented their course offerings to the middle school in the spring, but Dr. Easy said he was in discussions to make that happen in the fall as well, so that students could compare options sooner.

Dr. Easy said he was looking at a pocket academy model, in order to potentially acquire Chapter 70 funds for VocEd programs within the high school. Dr. Easy said that the Town was legally responsible for educating students who wanted to do Career/Tech Education (CTE). As Wayland was no longer an active member of any vocational schools or part of the district for Minuteman, they would need to reach out to those schools to have them showcase a range of programs. He and FinCom Members agreed that the main concern was that students got to see the multiple options for vocational school, not just Minuteman.

J. Downs then discussed full-time employees. She emphasized that schools were not static, that their rosters changed frequently based on enrollment changes, legally-mandated services, and faculty and staff on leave. Schools had always done a Staff Deployment Report prior to Covid, and they would be doing so again. Members said they really appreciated the level to detail.

Members then asked about the total number of employees. J. Downs said that what was in the Warrant was different procedurally. E. Whittemore said that the Staff Deployment Report would include this number.

Members then asked about benefits-eligible employees, as this was a frequent concern for the public. K. Lappin said that understanding these benefits costs was

critical both for hiring and for reconciling the Town Budget. She also said it was important to understand how and why the hiring numbers in the Warrant changed between TM and the school year. J. Downs countered that the Schools budget was a single line item in the Town budget for this reason, to provide the needed flexibility. There was discussion of this.

The Schools Committee went on to discuss the Spanish Immersion Program. Foreign language in elementary school was identified as a major priority a few years prior, and the schools had found that immersion was the best method. There were maximum 22 students enrolled each year, beginning in kindergarten. Attrition was managed with a waitlist; they did not accept students off the waitlist after midway through first grade, as the students were too far advanced. Currently there were 17 students on the waitlist for first grade, and 13 on the waitlist for kindergarten. J. Downs said that the program had been hugely successful thus far.

K. Lappin expressed concern about messaging around staffing for the program. She expressed that it was atypical for staffing special programs to be explicitly mentioned at budget meetings. She also emphasized the need to look to the future with regard to the students emerging from the program with higher proficiency in Spanish than any currently available program in fourth grade and beyond. She was concerned about whether this would represent future unanticipated costs. J. Downs said they had added 6th grade world language to supplement the program.

The Committees moved on to discuss the School budget calendar. December 15th was when the Superintendent budget came before the Town, and then it was approved in January. FinCom usually started looking at the operating budget in late December and voted a final budget late January or early February. Members requested the budget in early January rather than late January, in order to factor in any major changes from the Superintendent budget.

The Schools Committee Members said they would consult with the full Committee, as some of their members left town for the winter holidays, which made it more difficult to meet. Dr. Easy also said that it was difficult to get accurate numbers much earlier than they did. Members of both Committees agreed to focus on finalizing the Schools' capital budget as early as possible.

E. Whittemore moved to adjourn the School Committee meeting. J. Downs seconded. Motion passed by a roll call vote of 3-0: J. Downs (yes), E. Whittemore (yes), C. Ryan (yes). School Committee meeting adjourned at 8:01 PM.

Discuss Special Town Meeting:

Chair B. Steinberg said that discussion of assigning article write-ups was no longer needed, as assignments had been given out at the meeting on September 9th. S. Correia said that he would be meeting with Tom Fay and that he had started on a draft.

There was discussion of the costs involved with this Special Town Meeting.

Follow-up Discussion of Finance Committee Summer Projects:

S. Correia said that he had a very productive meeting on vocational schools with Dr. Easy, C. Ryan, and Town Administrator Louise Miller. That contributed to the usefulness of this joint meeting. He applauded the efforts of Dr. Easy and the Schools Committee.

With regard to the Transfer Station, B. Steinberg said he would reach out to Tom Holder from DPW to find out about the revenue numbers from recycling. K. Lappin said that she still had capital concerns over time.

B. Steinberg said that Louise Miller would be coming in to discuss a peer town comparison.

Financial Summit on 9/20/21. The planned focus of that meeting is on Revenues to the Town:

B. Steinberg was unsure whether FinCom was invited to the Financial Summit in their Member capacities. He said he would find out what their role would be.

Review & Vote to Approve Minutes of 8/2/21 and 8/31/21:

The Committee reviewed the Minutes of 8/2/21. B. Steinberg made a minor change, to reflect that he had said he wanted to do “comparisons” to peer towns, not to “study” peer towns.

S. Correia moved to approve the Minutes of 8/2/21, as amended. K. Lappin seconded. The motion passed by a roll call vote of 5-0: S. Correia (yes), K. Lappin (yes), M. Hoyle (yes), A. Bruno (yes), and B. Steinberg (yes).

Members' Reports, Concerns; Topics, Unanticipated 48 Hours Before Meeting:

B. Steinberg brought up liaison roles that were originally assigned to Christine Roberts and how to redistribute them. Mr. Steinberg volunteered to take on the DPW liaison position until the Committee found a new Member.

The next FinCom meeting would be on September 20th. They would attempt to meet on October 4th as well, with an eye to meeting with Hilltop and Louise Miller.

S. Correia asked the Chair to check in about the Council on Aging Community Center. It was a huge capital item, and he said that he was fielding a lot of concern on the project. B. Steinberg said he would follow up on the issue.

Adjournment:

K. Lappin moved that the meeting be adjourned. M. Hoyle seconded. The motion passed by a roll call vote of 6-0: S. Correia (yes), K. Lappin (yes), M. Hoyle (yes), A. Bruno (yes), and B. Steinberg (yes). Meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Erin Callahan