

**Westport Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes
Virtual Meeting-Remote Participation
March 08, 2022**

Present: Karen Raus (KAR), Cindy Brown (CB) Charles “Buzzy” Baron (BB), Tracy Priestner (TP), Thomas Schmitt (TS), Hugh Morton (HM) Bob McCarthy (BM), Kevin Rioux (KR), Gary Carreiro (GC)

Also Present: Jim Hartnett, Nicole Pearsall, Thomas Aubin, Antonio Viveiros, Nancy Stanton - Cross, Susan Brayton, Nancy Tavares, Michelle Rapoza, Melissa Pacheco

KAR opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

KAR read the following: Under MGL Chapter 30A, section 20(f) – Meeting being recorded. *Pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020, Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor’s March 15, 2020, Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Westport Finance Committee is being conducted via remote participation. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings as provided for in the Order.*

A reminder that persons who would like to listen to or view this meeting while in progress may do so by following the remote links: <https://meet.google.com/jph-idsb-ndc>, dial in this number dial: (US) +1 302-440-6804 PIN: 599 966 655#

1.FY23 Department Budget:

a. **Westport Community School FY23 Budget** Thomas Aubin said the Budget A, we are approximately \$663,951 away from the town proposal. Michelle Rapoza presented Budget A which has not changed the last time that we all met up. As you can see, the FY23 school approved budget was \$19,935,683. For FY22. We are looking at contractual increases of \$511,799 and then a level service expenses which includes a new transportation contract that will be going out to bid for today. Out of district tuitions for a few students that we have that are going out of district and our foster homeless transportation has increased about \$50,000 for next year. An additional increase of \$251,838. So total contractual increases in level service expenses still remains at \$763,637. Giving that the total FY23 school proposed level, service budget is \$20,699,320 that is \$663,951 over the town proposed FY23 budget. This does not include any additional positions, just level service expenses together to get the school through next year.

(TP) asked if this shortage of \$663,951 is that inclusive of the additional \$300,000 that was voted at the board of Selectman meeting? Michelle Rapoza replied is does not include the \$300,000. (TP) said so there is an actual shortage of \$363,951, is that correct? Michelle Rapoza

said there be a difference of \$363,951. (KAR) wanted to clarify the select board has made a recommendation, the finance committee has not on recommendation in either case. The current budget difference I think for our purposes is still the \$663,951. Thomas Aubin mentioned some of these are increases. With many other districts are looking at a number of unfunded mandates or partially funded mandates that are coming our way for example homeless student transportation, special education. educated evaluation, circuit breaker and more, like many other school districts and number of initiatives that are either unfunded or partially funded. Michelle Rapoza mentioned transportation is one that we do not receive reimbursement for. (KAR) asked if there is there any opportunity for federal or state grants that can help with any of the expenses that are presently in the general fund budget which you are presenting to us today. Thomas Aubin stated that we search daily for grants. (KR) mentioned he will talk to Dana from the recreation department in regard to using the old high school for use of the gym and the walking track. Thomas Aubin said that would be great as well as.

(GC) mentioned with the with fuel prices rising is the fuel for the transportation already set for the budget. Michelle Rapoza said she puts a fuel escalation clause in the contract.

(GC) asked how many students go to Diman Vocational Technical High School. Michelle Rapoza said as of January 1st school attending report was 138, but that does include about 31 students that are Bristol Aggie students and that number over the last four years has decreased. We are retaining more of those students that are what being sent to Bristol Aggie or applying to Bristol Aggie and Diman back in January 2019 we have 156 students total that were attending Diman and Bristol Aggie, and that number since then has dropped down to 138.

(KAR) mentioned that last select board meeting the finance committee had requested to hold a joint meeting with the finance committee, the select board and school committee to get together to discuss the fiscal situation as a whole and everything that we have coming up for solutions, the selectboard was in favor of that meeting.

(KAR) mentioned going over Budget B. Michelle Rapoza said priority one with a two and half override was \$2,137,600. Priority two total was \$1,616,200 so the total for Budget B as a whole was \$3,753,800. (Kar) mentioned to add the \$667,000 to that which would get your present budget whole right now whether or not free cash is or is not used to help fund that that to \$667,000 that will be on top of this number to for quote override number if to make to make this whole.

2.FY23 Municipal Budget: (TS) asked with regard to OPEB and unfunded retirement plan and the stabilization reserve. Sue Brayton said the OPEB was established in 2012 and in 2016 we started making deposits to it and it is one of the accounts that when the town has been looking. for funding has been cut back and last year we put 50,000 into it. We do have a schedule that our actuarial had put together for us to potentially fund it by 2047. And that would have required us putting in \$150,000 a year to that fund. We have not done that, so we're already playing catch up with that. It is something that we need to seriously look at. we should be putting in a minimum of \$150,000 a year and do that. I am not sure what's in the budget schedule for this year, it's around \$70,000 that we're looking at putting into OPEB. Our stabilization fund is at \$1.2 million right now and should be up around 2.5 million., we do not add to on a regular basis every year when the budgets are short., These two funds both seriously impact our bond rating. And if we don't start funding them on a regular basis. We are still doing the borrowing for the school and in the long run, it costs us a lot more money if we're not putting into it.

(Kar) mentioned for free cash we have \$300,000 that is presently funding the school, \$67,000 unaccounted and \$80,000 the total \$450,000 of free cash. OPEB right now is not a priority, we can hold off another year. (TS) mentioned I would like to put in for the stabilization fund and Cindy said it well. The difference between our budget and what we have in reserve is in a pretty vulnerable situation and I think if we can another cruiser for the Police Department. (KAR)asked how much a cruiser is (TS) said about \$50,000.

(Kar) said the planner position is a key need and we can either fund it by ARPA our or other revenues. We have so far stabilization amount of \$50,000 CIPC cruiser \$50,000 the reserve account \$30,000 to \$50,000 to cover fuel that gets us to \$150,000. (GC) mentioned that Jim Hartnett just sent an email that the van was approved for (COA) through funding by a grant.

(KAR) said now free cash we thought was \$447,000 we can add \$17,000 which total is \$464,000 for free cash. (Kar) mentioned the item break down so far, the stabilization \$50,000. CIPC cruiser \$50,000, reserve account, \$50,000 and for fuel, add the three accounts total to \$150,000. The school \$300,000, that would leave \$14,000 in free cash for other departments. The question was asked about the town planner position funds and (KAR) said the planner position would be funded by some other revenue, ARPA or motor vehicle excise tax. (KAR) mentioned they would like to approve the budget next week.

3.Warrant Articles: N/A

5. Override Discussion: N/A

6.Committee Update /Liaison reports: N/A

7. Minutes: The minutes for February 22,2022 was presented for approval. (CB) motioned to approve and (TS) seconded with suggestion to change Tim Hartnett to Jim Hartnett. The roll call vote was unanimous in favor.

8.Topic for Next Meeting Agenda: Municipal Budget, CIPC Article

9. Meeting Schedule: Next meeting will be on March 15th ,2022 at 6:30 pm remotely due to the pandemic

10. Correspondence: N/A

11.Topic not anticipated forty-eight (48) hours in advance of the meeting: N/A

Adjourn: There being no further business to come before this meeting, a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:00pm by (KR), (BB) motioned and (BM) second and the roll call vote in favor was unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jessica McKane, Recording Clerk

Reference Documents:

1a. FY23 Proposed SC Budget Rev.2-18-22

1g. Working _(SC)FY23 Town & School Proposed Budget _budget B FINCOM_2-15-2022

Copy of 1a. SUmmaryofALLSchoolRevenueandExpenditures.pdf

Copy of 1b. NewMS-UtilitiesPAIDtoDate.pdf

Copy of 1c. FY22Approved6-5-21 BudgetCuts\$364.247

Copy of 1.d FormerHSCosts.pdf

Copy of 1e. FY22Budgetvs Autual1-31-22.pdf

Copy of 1f. SUPT.Narrative-FY23 Proposed SC Budget.docx