

**Westport Finance Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
Virtual Meeting-Remote Participation  
February 07, 2023**

Present: Karen Raus (KAR), Cindy Brown (CB), Hugh Morton (HM), Lawrence Holsworth (LH), Zachary Lebreux (ZL)

Absent: Charles "Buzzy" Baron (BB), Gary Carreiro (GC)

Also Present: Jim Hartnett, Nicole Pearsall, Thomas Aubin, Nancy Stanton-Cross, Antonio Viveiros, Michelle Rapoza

KAR opened the meeting at 6:31 p.m.

KAR read the following: *This meeting is being held remotely in accordance with the Governor of Massachusetts 'March 12, 2020, order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c.30A Section 20 and on June 16, 2021 Governor Baker signed an Act relative to extending certain COVID-19 measures adopted during the state of emergency. This meeting is being recorded.*

(Kar) opened up the meeting saying thank you everyone for coming tonight we are continuing with our Fiscal 24 Department Budget Meetings and tonight we have the School District Budget with us.

**1.Fy2024 Budget Meetings with Departments:**

- A. School Department** Thomas Aubin was in attendance to present the Fy24 departmental budget Thomas Aubin said as of July of 2020 as part of our District Improvement Plan. We continue to do that types of outreach including the two open houses we've done over the past three weeks which were actually attended by over 400 members of the community. Our reduced lunches program we have 37% of our students who are now currently receiving either free or reduced lunch. In terms of our budgeting for this year the Operational Services Division in a narrative that they sent out pretty early in the year suggested that based on inflation that we should be budgeting at 14% over whatever the projections were for Fy23. Michelle Rapoza then continued with presenting the FY24 budget and Michelle said as you can see FY23 preapproved budget of \$20,335,369 that does include the free cash number. The FY24 contractual obligations which is our teacher's contract, AFSMCE contracts and nonunion and also replacement of our retirees and the new ones that have come in which is \$632,618 that is a 3.1% increase over the previous year. We have a district from OG reading teacher which that is a

specific type of reading teacher to help to keep students in district. We currently have a few students that have to go out of district by not having this type of teacher in house does save us money We have a nurse at the middle school based on the number, we have almost 900 students at the middle high school, a new custodian, which is really not a new one, but it's one that we've been trying to hire at the middle high school because the amount of the size of that building now to be able to keep up with it.

Thomas Aubin then continued and said the Star Young program, it was our multi-purpose program. One of them was to quite honestly respond to the tremendous difficulties that that students were having in mental health, a program that would allow them to participate in both enrichment and academic programming after school. And it's been absolutely wildly successful. We have served at least 200 students in each season.

Michelle Rapoza continued with the budget and said we have our 4<sup>th</sup> preschool classrooms have a maximum of 15 students per classroom and we were at that capacity in order to be able to service the preschool students coming in, we had to increase that classroom for teachers and teacher's assistants. We try to stay as competitive to other preschools around the area. We had four building subs, one at each school that was very crucial and needed during COVID especially because we had such a large number of staff that were out. We needed a Wes TA for our students which is a social emotional learning class where students that are struggling with social emotional issues and the assistant is needed in that class to support those students. Then we had a team that was Special Education and provided where with a one to one is required. Software renewal increases where we found to be a big thing this year that a lot of them had increased probably up to about 15 %. Maintenance and Custodial are filter maintenance for the new school and the other schools. With all of the new purifying machines. Trash was a big increase. We had about 15 to 18% increase in trash, lawn and fertilization and just the windows to keep clean which is something that is new to the district with having the new build. Special Ed Outplaced students this year, unfortunately during the school year, we had two of our students move out, but we had four new special education students come in. Michelle said the district is looking for a \$21,706,159 Jim Hartnett had proposed at one time \$20,644,273 that is with the school from the town a \$1,061,886 difference based on state numbers not in yet and as a level service budget.

(Kar) said I certainly support the needs of the school. I don't want to speak on behalf of the Finance Committee, we support the needs of the school. I look at your inflation is nearly 7% rate in the last year. The other town departments unfortunately haven't increased either by the inflation. They're increasing at a rate of no more than 2% it is affecting every department in in the whole town, and we don't have the funds to pay for it. When proposition 2 1/2 is our major source of funds for property taxes and they're allowed to increase by 2 1/2% and inflation is increasing by 7% and continues to squeeze the town beyond its ability to be able to do so. That forces us to have no choice but to have cuts.( Kar )also said you have a number in there was close as you mentioned Michelle it's kind of floated around a little but the town administrator has a budget that's balanced right now and with significant cuts to all departments including the school and so that the school in order to balance the budget the present number that the town administrator as is \$20,627,332 which is a gap of from what you've presented with your budget of \$1,078,827. And there are no other cuts that can be done anywhere else that can handle it.

Jim Hartnett said as for as the override goes, we are going to have to go town meeting with the budget. With the revenue, with the expenses. That we have without an override.

The override has to be approved and, on a ballot, it will not be on the April ballot, it would be after town meeting. With the Article with the figures that we have now with the cuts that we need to balance the budget and then we would have a contingent override, but we would supplement the budgets with additional funds from the override and that would be contingent on the ballot being approved. We have to go with the town meeting with bare minimum budgets. Just a couple quick things, the police arbitration 3-year contract we are hoping that will be somewhere around 3 to 3 1/2 percent by the time the arbitrators are done per year. The free cash at this point has not been certified and hoping around \$2 million from that could change based on how they review it. But it is going to be a substantial number it should be close to that.

**2.FY2024 Town Budget, Warrants, Override Discussions:** (Kar) said the Board of Selectmen they're meeting on the Monday, the two weeks from yesterday, so we should have their final version of the budget by then.

**3.Committee Updates /Liaison Reports:** N/A

**4.Minutes:** The minutes for January 31, 2023, was presented for approval. (HM) motioned and (CB) seconded to approve. The roll call vote was unanimous in favor.

**5.Topic for next Meeting Agenda:** Budget, Free Cash, Capital Improvements recommendations

**6.Meeting Schedule:** February 21,2023

**7. Correspondence:** N/A

**8.Topics not reasonably anticipated forty-eight (48) hours in advanced of the meeting:**  
N/A

**Adjourn** There being no further business to come before this meeting a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:56pm was made by (HM) and (CB) seconded the roll call vote in favor was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jessica McKane Recording Clerk

**REFERENCE DOCUMENTS:**

01-31-23 Meeting Minutes.pdf

0.2023 02 07 AGENDA INDEXED.docx

FY24 Proposed SC Educational Budget.pdf

