

TOWN OF PRINCETON,  
MA Princeton Advisory  
Board Meeting Minutes  
Feb 08 2016

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AB members in attendance were: Don Schoeny, George Handy, Bill Lawton, Dave Cruise, Jimmy O'Coin, and Wayne Adams

Guests: WRSD Representatives Darryl McCall, Joseph Scanlon

BOS in attendance were: Stan Moss, Edith Morgan, Jon Fuderman, and Nina Nazarian

**Agenda AB**

- WRSD 2017 Budget Overview discussion

Meeting started at 6:00PM

**Handout:** WRSD presentation provided to Princeton Town Administrator

**WRSD Budget Roundtable Position and Questions**

WRSD officials provided high-level guidance for the 2017 budget – as desired by WRSD

- Level Service, but expenses go up to deliver the same level, due to salaries and employee insurance ; > 5% increase in the draft budget from 2016 to 2017
- 2016 budget year to finish with a projected surplus of >\$300K
- Princeton HS enrollment for 2014-2016 was 455, 441, 447
- Princeton TP enrollment was 151 in 2014, 149 in 2016
- Healthcare insurance costs have increased over the years, WRSD to manage costs has shifted more costs to the employee. 90/10 (90% paid by WRSD, 10% paid by employee), has evolved to 80/20 and 78/22. With employees paying more, yearly steps have been increased to offset the out of pocket expense.
- Fuel costs for heating have been realized and the savings have been redirected into building maintenance to avoid capital projects the town would bear the cost. Water and electric have increased during the same time period
- WRSD 2017 budget roundtable did reflect 2 of the 5 towns had indicated a willingness to spend more than a 5.3% increase, being Holden and Sterling
- State foundation budget is not reflective of true costs for health insurance nor special education. State is picking up more costs for retirement benefits, reflective of the aging workforce.

Advisory Board recommendations, observations, along with BOS

- Yearly increases of >5% are not sustainable in the WRSD budget, not in the full budget or even in the employee steps. COI is closer to 2%. Private industry is flat to minimal, 0-2% salary increases, and is passing more healthcare costs onto employees. These kind of sizeable requests come at the expense of residential taxpayers; Princeton tax base is not increasing due to lack of development; fixed income senior citizens will struggle with any increase, even nominal. Overall initial position is Princeton is not supportive of a budget with this size of increase.
- AB would like to help and further analyze WRSD budget components. AB requested to receive grade-by-grade cost breakdowns.
- WRSD should continue to work with the state to improve the Chapter 70 formulas to fairly

award any/all regional districts \$\$ per student. Though the analysis of surrounding towns/districts with per student spend is a OK benchmark, it can be also be an apples to oranges comparison since their school administration infrastructure and community avg household affordability can be significantly different.

- All encouraged more out of the box thinking going on in WRSD to reach its goals, e.g. looking at technology refreshes through town warrants instead of school budget.
- From an earlier AB meeting, key questions were formed and not adequately answered yet:
  - what are the 4 hurdles the WRSD want to accomplish through the budget priorities to improve the district school ranking to the top 20
  - what are the measures of work productivity and its multi-year trend reflecting teaching FTE to student ratios; Princeton has observed in previous years a district wide student population as steady/declining while the budgets reflect increases in teachers and administration
  - what can the district collective of the 5 towns do to improve the foundation budget
- AB members want to have Princeton WRSD representatives at Princeton WRSD budget meetings

AB/WRSD Portion of Meeting adjourned at 7:15PM

Respectfully submitted,

Wayne M. Adams, AB Member