

March 8, 2012

A meeting of the Wareham School Committee was held on Thursday, March 8, 2012, at 8:00 p.m. in the Wareham Middle School Auditorium. Present were Geoff Swett, Kenny Fontes, Cliff Sylvia, Rhonda Veugen, and student representative Jessica Hanson, as well as Superintendent Dr. Rabinovitch, and recording secretary, Mrs. Ruiz. Absent was member Rachel Gillette.

Present from the Board of Selectmen was Ellen Begley as well as Town Administrator Mark Andrews and Financial Analyst, Derek Sullivan.

Present from the Finance Committee were Frank Heath, Dominic Cammarano, Larry McDonald, Donna Bronk, Bonnie Cottuli, Dick Paulsen, and Sam Gray.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Swett at 8:00 p.m.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Dominick Cammarano stated that where we do not have a quorum of the Board of Selectmen, should this meeting go on with Finance Committee participation?

Dick Paulsen concurred with Mr. Cammarano and stated that this is an important forum with no explanation of why the Board of Selectmen members are not here for this joint meeting. It's an insult to the committees and the community.

Donna Bronk stated that the Finance Committee came this evening in a spirit of cooperation to address the critical situation between the schools and municipality and hoping to bring continuity between the two boards.

Ellen Begley informed the group that last Tuesday evening Mr. Cruz expressed he would not be here this evening.

Frank Heath stated that the School Committee has met with the Finance Committee and worked in great detail on the budget. The Town Administrator has also worked with the Finance Committee and has met with Superintendent.

The Finance Committee adjourned their meeting.

Tony Scarsianni, a member of the audience, asked what can be accomplished here tonight?

Dr. Rabinovitch stated that the Town Administrator met with him and the Chair of the School Committee to discuss the gap between the School Committee budget and the Town Administrator's budget. In the best interest of the town, it was decided to schedule this meeting between the three boards to allow the School Committee to vote an amended number for its budget.

Mr. Swett hoped to present to the Finance Committee the consequences of the School Committee voting a different budget number and get everyone on the same page of exactly what is the problem and how to solve it.

Mr. Swett stated that he had a conversation with Selectman Winslow, who was advised by her physician not to come to this evening's meeting.

Mr. Fontes stated that the intent of the agenda was a joint meeting with both the Finance Committee and the Board of Selectmen. He would consider rescheduling and felt there was no benefit for this evening's meeting.

Mr. Fontes motioned to adjourn. No second – motion lost.

Both Mr. Andrews and Mr. Heath spoke on the timing of the budget process on the warrant.

Mrs. Veugen stated that this meeting was to receive input and discussion from three boards.

Ms. Cottuli stated that the Finance Committee is an advisory board. She felt that the Board of Selectmen and School Committee must come up with a plan first.

Dr. Sylvia stated that he had voted against the initial proposed school budget because it was too low. He would like the information of what a level funded budget would be in order to make a more informative vote.

Chair Swett stated he also would like the Superintendent to speak on a level funded budget and then allow for questions from the committee.

Mrs. Veugen moved to move onto the second agenda item, seconded by Mr. Fontes.

She did not want a presentation this evening but to have it at a rescheduled meeting of the boards.

VOTE: yea – 2 (Swett, Sylvia); nay – 2 (Fontes, Veugen); abstain – 0

FY'13 Budget Discussion with BOS and FinCom

Dr. Rabinovitch spoke on how to eliminate the achievement gap and listed the conditions for recommending a level funded FY'13 budget:

- Both school and town budgets be reduced to FY12 levels
- Agreements from boards to support debt exclusion for instructional material
- Without a contingency budget serious consequences

The \$27,195,370 voted by the School Committee would be reduced by \$1,808,000 less debt exclusion for instructional materials for a \$1,500,000 cut.

If the debt exclusion is not voted by town meeting and the voters as a ballot question, these instructional materials will not be in the school budget.

Reductions:

25 teachers reduced from 2 elementary schools and the high school – class sizes to 25/27 at elementary

High school would change its current schedule with no study halls

Reduction in substitutes and staff development

\$100,000 in non certified personnel cuts

Potential discussion of sports, facilities, and administrative cut

Vote on Articles for 2012 Spring Town Meeting

Dr. Rabinovitch read the articles and explanations as follows:

- Appropriate sum of money from the transportation revolving fund to purchase or lease new and/or used vehicles

Mrs. Veugen moved the recommendation of the Superintendent to approve the article as presented for discussion, seconded by Dr. Sylvia.

Chair Swett explained that at the current level of funding for the transportation department any surplus generated by the revolving fund will be necessary to make up for the deficit in the operating budget. The only way to have funds to purchase vehicles is to generate additional revenue. Mr. Tatro is forming a "Plan B" with cuts for the next Action Committee to be brought to the School Committee on the March 21st agenda.

Mrs. Veugen suggested the School Committee ask for an order of articles.

Dr. Sylvia expressed his concerns with charging transportation fees in "Plan B".

VOTE: yea – 4; nay – 0; abstain - 0

- Appropriate through a Prop 2 ½ override a sum of money to avoid teacher layoffs.

Mr. Fontes moved the recommendation of the Superintendent to approve the article as presented, seconded by Dr. Sylvia.

Mrs. Veugen stated that this article is necessary to bring to the voters if we do not come closer to a dollar amount needed to educate the children of the Wareham Public Schools.

Dr. Rabinovitch stated that in working with the Town Administrator, the town has slashed their budget and there is not \$1.3 million available. The only way other communities have avoided this type of situation is the town voters have voted the necessary resources.

Chair Swett stated that both schools and town government departments have grown less than 2% on the average per year. The problem is because of uncontrollable spending in the area of benefits and the state's failure in providing what is needed in aid through the Chapter 70 state aid formula.

Dr. Sylvia stated that this article puts the solution in the hands of the voters at Town Meeting and at large for an equitable education for our kids. The state should change the formula on average income as opposed to real estate values.

VOTE: yea – 4; nay – 0; abstain – 0

Dr. Rabinovitch stated that the following article was voted at the last meeting but has language changes after review by Counsel and the Town Moderator. If passed, this article will replace the one previously voted upon.

- Borrow a sum of money contingent upon approval of Proposition 2 ½ debt exclusion for a Minot Forest School Building Committee Feasibility Study

Mrs. Veugen moved the recommendation of the Superintendent to approve the article as presented, seconded by Mr. Fontes.

VOTE: yea – 4; abstain – 0; abstain – 0

Articles for override and debt exclusion need to go to the Board of Selectmen to vote whether in favor or not, but they are on the warrant as submitted by the School Committee. To make the ballot, the Board of Selectmen must vote to place on the articles as ballot questions.

Any other business

Dr. Rabinovitch asked to have the April 11th School Committee meeting changed to April 4th since he will be in China on an administrator shadowing visit.

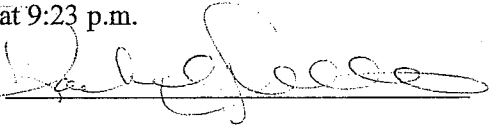
Chair Swett will discuss with the Chair of the Board of Selectmen & Chair of the FinCom a new meeting date.

Dr. Sylvia asked that the revision to the Superintendent's Evaluation goal section needs to be on a future agenda for a vote.

Mrs. Veugen moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Fontes.

VOTE: yea – 4; nay – 0; abstain – 0

The meeting adjourned at 9:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: 

List of documents:

The Educational cost of a Level funded budget for FY2013 March 7, 2012

School Department Articles – April, 2012

