

August 1, 2012

A meeting of the Wareham School Committee was held on Wednesday, August 1, 2012, at 6:30 p.m. in the Wareham Middle School Auditorium. Present were Geoff Swett, Kenny Fontes, Cliff Sylvia, Michael Flaherty, and Rhonda Veugen, as well as Superintendent Dr. Rabinovitch, and recording secretary, Mrs. Ruiz.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Swett at 6:30 p.m. He apologized for setting the meeting the same day and time as the Scotty Monteiro, Jr. Foundation event at the High School.

#### PUBLIC HEARING

##### Proposal to Reduce Pupil Transportation Services

Dr. Rabinovitch stated that there are two major problems in our transportation department – underfunding and the average age of the fleet. He presented the FY10, FY11, and FY12 budgets, expenses, and differences funded by the transportation revolving account and the deficit for each of these years. There have been no major increases in the transportation budget for the last 7-8 years.

Dr. Rabinovitch explained the McKinney Vento federal law which requires transporting homeless children from the school district they came from, if they wish, and paying 50% of the cost. In FY12 it cost Wareham \$162,000. Towns never received additional funding from the federal or state. It was an unfunded mandate. The state budget now will reimburse districts for monies spent the year before at approximately 70%, which goes directly to the town. Wareham should receive this year \$125,000.

The Action Committee voted to ask town meeting for the McKinney Vento monies to be added to the transportation budget. In FY12 special education/homeless cost \$860,912 and regular education was at \$814,720. If we do not make up the deficit, we must go to town meeting to seek additional funds.

Dr. Rabinovitch explained the reasons why a transportation proposal is before us to reduce services. The solutions to consider are:

- increase in appropriation at fall town meeting with the McKinney Vento monies for FY13
- authorize the purchase of two new buses from meals tax funds for FY14
- institute a 3 tier system using 13 buses
- charge approximately \$75 fee per eligible child – maximum number of students charged 1,000 for \$75,000, which is not an equitable way in Dr. Rabinovitch's opinion

Chair Swett made a statement about the options and the tough decision to be made by the School Committee. He opened the meeting for comments and questions from the public.

The concerns expressed included:

- the impact on Wareham Childcare at Decas and Minot schools
- half days for high school students who have working parents if no transportation
- a way to have a special town meeting to transfer money sooner than October
- ask for the budget needed next time
- would fees for transportation go to school or town

Chair Swett opened the meeting for comments and questions from the public.

The concerns expressed included:

- how long have we invested time in Instructional Leaders
- why does this matter NEASC accreditation matter
- what is the future of Hammond School
- where is the maintenance money for this building going to be used and is the building and grounds going to be maintained
- how can we get the \$120,000 in increased aid
- accreditation is impacted by many factors - teachers, texts, roof
- consequences of WHS roof on gym classes and other sports
- HS students risk of getting into college if WHS is on probation
- 700 who voted yes, able to take our money and give it for schools
- Ch.41, Sec.108 – high degree of credibility NEASC and we need to pay attention
- why cutting so many teachers – what other were departments cut?

Chair Swett stated that the Transportation Action Committee is meeting again next meeting Monday 4:30 p.m.

Mrs. Veugen suggested that the School Committee request to be on the Finance Committee and the Board of Selectmen meetings to address their questions and seek their vote of support for these additional funds coming to the town for the school department. Parents need to ask what else these funds would be used for by our town officials.

Dr. Rabinovitch explained Ch. 70 and in kind expenses by town including health care and unemployment as well as an increase in Ch. 70 aid in FY14 for full day kindergarten this year.

Chair Swett closed with this is a town-wide problem and feels McKinney Vento and new Ch. 70 aid is new money. The town's revenue has not kept up with the needs of community. The state legislature has failed to update the formula for how much a town like Wareham gets and he suggested parents call their state rep and senator to get the adequacy study out of committee to fix the state formula and put it before the legislature. A health cost care containment bill just passed to help with cost.

Mr. Flaherty asked for a budget discussion at the August 8<sup>th</sup> meeting.

The School Committee members made closing comments and thanked the public for coming this evening.

Chair Swett closed the public hearing at 8:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: \_\_\_\_\_

**List of documents:**

Transportation Proposal to Reduce Services

Powerpoint – Public Hearing Wednesday, August 1, 2012/FY13 Budget

