

Members present: Kevin M. McCormick Christopher A. Rucho
Allen R. Phillips John B. DiPietro, Sr.
Members absent: Valmore H. Pruneau

Mr. McCormick convened the joint meeting of the Board with the School and Finance Committees at 7:02 p.m.

School Superintendent Thomas Kane explained that when we last met it became clear that we have a major gap in the level service budget he presented to the School Committee, which was exacerbated by those students who are leaving the school system to attend Assabet. There is a \$410,000 gap between Mr. Gaumond's number and a level service budget for the school. Since then, the School Committee met and recommended additional reductions of \$230,000 in the areas of expense accounts and anything beyond level funding. Much of the money was earmarked for capital improvements and technology, which should be a growth area in the school budget. In addition to the \$150,000 in expense reductions they looked at reduction of staff that would not impact instructional programs. That was reduced by eliminating a monitor, teacher's aid and reducing the high school principal to a ten-month position. The School Committee is trying to work with the town and recognize the reality of the fiscal situation so they can protect our structural programs as best we can in these difficult times. The current gap is at \$208,000 and the sub-committee is ready to make their recommendation to the full committee.

Ray Bricault, Finance Committee Chairman, questioned how that number could be bridged.

Motion Mr. McCormick, to move \$10,000 of the unexpended additional cuts, \$5,000 from the Fire Department and \$5,000 from the Library together with \$140,000 from the new growth associated with the National Grid project, for a total of \$150,000 to the school budget, seconded by Mr. DiPietro. Mr. McCormick would also like to move the remainder of the National Grid New Growth money, \$195,000 to the Capital Investment Fund as all departments are able to use this fund. This would require an additional \$58,000 cut by the school.

Mr. Phillips feels this would be a beneficial move of funding. He also challenged everyone to come up with ideas, funnel them into revenue making ideas, and suggested holding a summer meeting to go over the ideas. Off the table would be PILOT funds for the Wachusett Reservoir as that has been sought after for years with no results, the Worcester County House of Corrections, Pay-as-You-Throw, no mention of cutting another department's budget and nothing that will raise taxes. Ideas need to be forwarded to the Chairman of the School Committee or the Town Administrator. Mr. Kane feels we should look at the town's finances early in the summer. He thinks there are things that should not be off the table as the town wrestles with how do you deal with our resources. We have to look at what we provide citizens as far as services. Mr. Phillips encouraged input from town's people and board. If the goal is to raise the level of consciousness Mr. Kane feels we have met that goal. He also feels we should have guidelines by which to make a decision. Mr. Desy asked for a recess in order for the School Committee to caucus before commenting on the \$58,000 gap. Mr. DiPietro read something this week that some municipalities that own their own water and light departments get a municipal discount especially for the schools. He suggested having a conversation with both those departments.

At 7:25 the Board held a short recess.

The Board reconvened at 7:59 p.m.

Mr. Desy stated that there are several people who would like to address the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Phillips acknowledged that everyone would like to have input, and will allow three people the opportunity to speak. Mr. Desy announced that if the Board of Selectmen vote to approve

the motion on the table the School Committee has voted to accept the existing funds. Mr. Phillips thanked Mr. Desy and his committee.

John Owanisian state that he thinks it is encouraging to see the many people who turned out for the meeting and are interested in the quality of West Boylston's schools. One of the reasons why he moved to West Boylston was the quality of the schools. What is disheartening to him is the school is taking the brunt of the cuts, the percentage of funds added to the school has shrunk, and we are seeing an outward migration of students to Charter Schools and Assabet. As this creates a bigger financial burden, we want to avoid this. He appreciates the \$150,000 and would like to see more, as we need to look at ways to increase revenues and bridge the gap.

Mr. Phillips noted that he has children in the system and also moved to town for the school system, however, next year we will get together in the summer and start the budget process sooner than later to work through these issues in advance. He added that for years we cut all the other departments and supported the school. The DPW is smaller than it was ten years ago.

Dennis Mulryan requested the warrant be structured in such a way that everybody could be in attendance for the budget vote. Mr. Gaumond explained that the warrant for town meeting has housekeeping articles first followed by revolving accounts, and then we get into the budget. Some years it may take a little longer to discuss the budget, other years there is no discussion. Ten taxpayer petitions are placed at the end of the warrant and thus far we have two for street acceptances. On April 16th the warrant will be given to the Board of Selectmen, and it will be closed on April 23rd.

Mr. Trudeau explained to those in attendance that they are the legislature and encouraged them to attend town meeting and participate with their friends. He also noted the need to find ways to raise money.

Vote on the motion – all in favor.

Ray Bricault recommends the Selectmen and the School Committee meet jointly to keep cost of living adjustments to a minimum during the contract negotiation season. Mr. Rucho thanked Mr. Shaw for stepping forward and running for the School Committee. Mr. Rucho was congratulated on his re-election to the Board. Mr. DiPietro feels that a lot of people do not realize the mandates put upon Superintendent Kane from Boston. Another audience member questioned why the Selectmen could not give the School Committee another \$58,000. Mr. Phillips encouraged people to come out for all meetings and not just this one as we need to hear everyone's opinions.

With no further business to come before the Board, motion Mr. McCormick at 8:15 to adjourn, seconded by Mr. DiPietro, all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved: April 16, 2008

Nancy E. Lucier

Allen R. Phillips, Chairman

John B. DiPietro, Sr., Clerk

Christopher A. Rucho, Selectman

Kevin M. McCormick, Selectman