

West Boylston Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

February 16, 2006

Upon notice duly given and quorum present, the West Boylston Finance Committee convened at 7:15 pm, Ray Bricault chairing the meeting.

Members in attendance : Ray Bricault, Patricia Altomare, Mychelle Phillips and Chris Berglund

Minutes

Upon motion duly made (Phillips) and seconded (Bohnson) the minutes of the February 2, 2006 meeting were unanimously approved as amended(5-0)

Transfers

No transfers were acted on

Other discussions

Tom Kane and Peter Desy attended the meeting in an effort to provide a better understanding of the challenges that the schools face in the coming fiscal year. At the heart of the discussions were a few primary issues.

The first was an effort to overcome the cumulative effects of several years of budgets that did not allow the schools to deliver level services on the town approved funds alone. The schools have had to dig progressively more deeply into school choice funds where these funds have become, in effect, part of the operating budget which is not the original intention of that funding conduit. Further, there is some uncertainty associated with the ability to sustain the level of school choice moneys that the school will be receiving. In fact, this year will be the first where the schools actually see a slight decrease in the funds per pupil recovered from the state (as a result of the budget cutbacks last year).

As a result of several years of what the schools describe as inadequate funding , Mr. Kane will be seeking a nominal 8% increase in the school budget for FY07. This is the first step in an effort to restore some programs, staff positions, and teaching positions that have either been lost or moved under the funding of school choice. Mr. Kane described this as absolutely necessary to maintain the caliber of the education West Boylston provides.

The schools will also be seeking to resubmit the request for the modular classrooms as part of the FY07 budget and/or a warrant article at the upcoming May 15 Town meeting. There are two main drivers of this : curriculum diversity and DOE Special Needs audits of building space. The result of the recent DOE audit was that the schools had not done enough to address the issues raised in previous reviews. If the schools do not address these concerns, the DOE may escalate the issues with withholding of funds or other measures. Further, the school structure is not easily handling the needs of a 21st century education. Class space is extremely limited with teachers no longer assigned to a room, but rather circulating to rooms available. This becomes a serious hardship for those classes such as science labs that require some advance setup. Teacher offices are being housed, in some cases, in closets. Some classrooms are being split in half and used simultaneously. Overcrowding in some classes has become a serious issue.

The next initiative was to supplement the administrative leadership within the middle school by creating a new administrative position solely dedicated to tasks/issues within the middle school. Some of the increased budget request go toward this position and toward the incorporation in the base budget of the new “dean of students” position. This position is removes discipline from the current principal allowing her to focus her efforts on other matters.

Finally, after several years of taking various approaches toward mediating the costs of the special needs programs, this year will see an increase. The cost of this program is highly dependent on the specific mix of students and their individualized program needs.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the FINCOM is not yet scheduled.

After motion duly made (Bricault) and seconded (Phillips) the FINCOM meeting was adjourned at 9:45 pm.

Raymond J. Bricault Jr.
Secretary of the Meeting