

**Town Of West Boylston
Finance Committee
Meeting of April 8, 2013**

The meeting of West Boylston Finance Committee (Fincom) convened at 7:05 pm in meeting room 1 at Town Hall. Those attending were: Ray Bricault, Chris Berlund, Dave Eckhardt, Pat Crowley, Bill Fay, Jim Marinelli, Eric Reddy, and Pete Murphy. No one was absent.

FY13 budget transfer requests from the Town Clerk:

- \$1,000 from Town Clerk Other Charges to Town Clerk Salaries & Wages. These funds are needed to pay the Assistant Town Clerk for covering the office while the Town Clerk is out sick. Motion to approve was made by Pat Crowley and approved unanimously.
- \$900 from Election Purchased Services and \$300 from Election Other to Elections Salaries & Wages. After discussion it was agreed that not enough information has been provided to fully understand this request. Action was postponed until more information is available
- Request for Reserve Fund Transfer in the amount of \$6,000 for Election Salaries & Wages. This request also was determined to be related to the \$1200 transfer request and also to have incomplete information. Action was postponed until more information is available.

School Committee Presentation:

Members of the School Committee Beth Schaper, Rick Shaw, John Owanisian and Jim Pedone were in attendance.

The committee has not developed a 5 year capital plan or request at this time. Work is underway on a capital plan, including the new school safety package. A request for a school safety package and a repair project for the Media Center roof will be submitted before April 24.

The FY14 school expense budget was discussed. The spending report is divided into major cost categories by line, and into three columns of cost, which include the FY13 budget, the FY14 budget assembled based on requests received from school administrators, and the FY14 budget approved by the school superintendent.

- Salaries and Wages increased \$347,264, a 4.5% change. This includes salary step increases and pay raises (2%), and personnel shifting. Two staff additions were also included, a custodian and paraprofessional.
- Superintendent budget increased \$332, 0.3%.
- Major Edwards non-salary expenses increased \$1995, 1.3%.
- Middle/High non-salary expenses increased \$2705, 1.1%.
- Special Education increased \$139,146, 19.2%. There are big decreases (69% and 72%) in instructional costs by avoiding purchases of infrequently used materials. Out of district tuition increased 36.5% and transportation 31.9% for 8 students. These are the cause of most of the increase in this budget item, offsetting the reduction in other items. An application has been submitted to the State for extraordinary relief because the increase in special education cost is so large and

was mostly unanticipated. It is not expected that the extraordinary relief will exceed \$25,000.

- Pupil Personnel Services is a federally mandated program to allow students with a temporary special need to continue to attend classes. These costs increased \$1900, 8.7%
- The total school operating budgets, a sum of the items above, increased \$493,341, 5.5%.
- School choice expense decreased \$15,406, -2.5%. This cost is more than offset by the tuition paid.
- Vocational school tuition increased \$211,614, 17.8%. Transportation remained unchanged. 84 students are being served. There is no control over this budget item since the WB district is not a member of a vocational district and, therefore, is not included in the planning or budgeting processing. The published tuition must be paid for students who apply and are accepted at any of the vocational schools.

Outstanding grants were discussed and the risk to the budget if they are not received. Arts grants are the primary funds received through a grant. If the grant was lost, it could result in an additional request for funds, however, the request would be much less than the grant, since the budget would be cut.

Opportunity to join a Vocational district was discussed. The cost to join Assabet would be over \$2 million in capital contribution and would require a town debt exclusion vote. Montachusets has many town members already and is not interested in adding another school district. State law allows students to apply to any Vocational school and the town must pay the costs. There is no limit on the number of students that can attend vocational education. There is no action at the State level to make any changes to the law. Other towns have not shown any interest in promoting changes to the law. The cost to WB is \$16,080 per student (\$300 increase this year) with no opportunity to reduce or control the cost.

The school budget gap with the available revenues is \$426,369. Potential cuts have been examined. Personnel reductions would provide a savings of \$115,123. Circuit breaker revenue (new student contingency funding) is expected to be \$120,000, based on prior experience. This money is not currently available and remains uncertain. Using this state money reduces the budget gap by \$235,123 to \$191,246. If this money is used and there are significant numbers of unexpected new students, the budget will be in deficit again in the fall. There are no identified reductions so far to cover the remaining gap of \$191,246. The school superintendent intends to continue to work with the town manager to find a way to close this remaining budget deficit.

The school committee was asked what is being done to examine new ideas to fix the continuing budget problem? A continuing annual school budget increase of 4.5% is not sustainable with an annual increase in tax revenues of 2.5%. The committee discussed vocational in house program development as one option to keep more students in the district. However, even with this program, students would still be allowed to apply to

vocational schools. An engineering program is another option under vocational education (Chapter 74). Working together with Clinton school district on either of these options is another possibility to explore. WB plans to implement a STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) program in the 7th grade next year. This could connect to an engineering vocational program and keep some students in the district. WB has also been sending students to college courses at local colleges for both high school and college credit. This is a program to further promote.

The school committee was asked if anything can be done on the revenue side? Is an override inevitable? If so, when? Too many big variables in the budget make it impossible to predict the need for an override. Special education is one of the major variables. As an example, three unexpected special education assessments (child out of district, but parent in the district) have been received this year. Some small amounts of revenue may be available from the state, but not enough to close the annual budget gap.

The school committee was asked to discuss capital plans again. Two capital spending warrants are expected for the May town meeting from the school committee, but the details have still not been developed.

- School security plan – Package including locks and surveillance will be ready in a week, April 19.
- Media Center – Package including roof repair will also be ready in a week, April 19.

Future capital needs were discussed. Last year's plan needs to be updated. There is one item to be added to the plan

- Conversion of the heating boiler to natural gas fuel – There is no detail but the plan is in process.

All capital updates are needed before the April 24 Board of Selectmen meeting. This is the meeting that will finalize the budget and warrants for the May town meeting.

The school committee was thanked for their presentation and discussion.

The requested FY13 budget transfers delayed at the beginning of the meeting were reconsidered:

- \$900 from Election Purchased Services and \$300 from Election Other to Elections Salaries & Wages.
- Request for Reserve Fund Transfer in the amount of \$6,000 for Election Salaries & Wages.

This \$7200 is intended to cover the two elections, the addition of poll hours for the town election (to comply with the state special election requirements) and the separate special election. These costs have not been fully explained. More information is needed to be able to consider the transfers. Pat Crowley moved to table the transfers until more information is received. The motion passed unanimously. Chris Berglund was assigned to investigate the transfer requests.

The school security capital request was further discussed with a report by Pat Crowley the new door locks will cost \$3000 at Major Edwards and \$15,000 at the MS/HS. Major Edwards locks can be modified, the MS/HS locks must be replaced. This is to allow the doors to be more easily and quickly locked without using a key. The MS/HS video cameras, that were never installed, are usable. A quote is being obtained for cameras for Major Edwards and camera installation in all schools.

At the next meeting on April 17, presentations will be made by the Library and the IT department. IT will discuss future technology capital needs and the current implementation of the schools network.

FISP building committee has had no meetings since the last Fincom meeting. No debt exclusion decision is expected before the date of the special elections. No plan is ready and the town manager is working to improve the plan.

The meeting adjourned at 9 pm.