

Wareham School Committee
Budget Public Hearing
Joint meeting

December 7, 2023

The School Committee Chair called the joint meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. He announced that the meeting was broadcast live with a hybrid zoom, and audio recorded by Jamie Wiksten.

School Committee Attendance: Kevin Brogioli, Geoff Swett, Joyce Bacchiocchi, Apryl Rossi, Brennan McKiernan, Dr. D'Andrea, Ms. Kristin Flynn, and Dr. Andrea Schwamb

Select Board: Jared Chadwick (acting Chair), Alan Slavin, Ronald Besse, Absent: Judith Whiteside, and called the meeting to order with a quorum.

Derek Sullivan, Town Accountant was present via zoom.

The Finance Committee called the meeting to order by Norma Scogin, Matthew Rose, and Gerald Stefanski, and noted that their committee did not have a quorum.

Dr. D'Andrea presented a level service budget, that includes an increase of out of district tuitions, and steps and lane changes for salaries.

Dr. D'Andrea shared with the committee the programs in place and the success of the last graduating class. The middle School is receiving individualized attention with the student teacher ratio. The Elementary School currently has 934 students with an average class size of 20.1 students.

The proposed FY 25 budget includes:

District Wide \$7,103, 983
High School \$9,842,950
Middle School \$6,769,714
Elementary School \$11,034,364
Curriculum \$319,390
Student Services/ELL \$1,301,104
Transportation \$2,969,944
Total \$39,341,449
FY24 = \$36,965,778
Difference \$2,375,661 increase

The \$2.3 Million is:

- contractual obligations for the bargaining units and pay increase.
- New chrome books \$199,000
- Heat and Utilities \$137,500
- OOD Transportation \$120,000

-OOD Tuition \$119,968
-Lights at WMS \$30,000
-Home/Hospital Tutoring \$20,000
-Other \$169,583
Totals = \$2,375,661

Revenue Offsets:

240 Grant, Circuit Breaker, School Nutrition, Title I, PreK revolving, IVAQ, ESSER III which provided \$3,455,479 in offsets for the FY24 budget.

The FY25 budget will receive only \$2,391,323 in offsets which is \$1 million less.

The presented budget is JUST for level service without adding anything to the following year.

Ms. Flynn presented the FY 25 Preliminary Budget pie charts, including the categories that are reported on by budget function.

74% salaries

26% expenditures

Final thoughts:

Total Budget	Total Increase	Percent Increase	Budget Cut
\$36,950,056	\$3,439,747	10.26%	\$0 – level service
\$35,765,553	\$2,255,244	6.73%	\$1,184,503

Dr. D’Andrea shared that a level service budget would be \$36,950,056. Since his time in Wareham, we will have reduced 12 positions. He asked what can be reasonable for the upcoming year. He continued that he can try to move forward with a 6.73%, which is about 20 positions cut from our staff and will be very impactful to our schools. The Superintendent is hopeful for state level support.

Norma Scogin feels the prediction for inflation is 5% in the budget, but feels the realistic number is closer to 3%. Dr. D’Andrea shared that the utilities have been factored with 5% for FY25. Ms. Scogin asked about the salary increase. Dr. D’Andrea responded that what is negotiated on with the bargaining units will be factored in and will impact this budget.

Ms. Flynn expanded on the Superintendent’s response. Tuitions are set at a 4.6% increase, based on the state recommendation. Utilities are 5%, and will be balanced between the schools, as some schools might be less, and the elementary school seems to be more.

Mr. Chadwick asked how many students are per grade in the high school. Dr. D’Andrea provided the numbers for the high school.

Ms. Rossi explained that having a broad band of services and programming has helped our students from the lowest economic standing to the highest, and we need to show we are invested in our students. We cannot handle what is out of our control when a student has

needs that we cannot serve. We are losing students to Carver and Bourne, when we have more to offer, and if we are not willing to fund our schools, the more people will not want to live here. It would be a huge disservice not to fund our schools.

Mr. Besse responded that it's not the willingness to fund the schools, it's the ability. Mr. Besse shared that when looking at surrounding districts. Bourne has 1600 students with a \$26 million budget, and \$16 million went to salaries. Mr. Besse asked why is there such a discrepancy. Mr. Besse asked about cuts, and understands that all positions matter, and is taking away the ability to function properly.

Dr. D'Andrea responded that he knows the Bourne Superintendent well, and can look into this.

Mr. Swett responded that 75% of our students are considered high needs, and Bourne is less than 50%. The cost of Special Education is very costly. In some cases, we are spending \$90,000 per Special Ed student. Our elementary school is declining in Special Ed numbers. Mr. Swett doesn't want anyone to think that just because we have a significant number of students with higher needs, does not mean that we do not offer a great education to the students who are not a part of the special education department.

Mr. Slavin shared that he has been on the select board for 12 years. He continued that Mr. Swett made a comment last year and chastised the school for spending money that we were aware would go away. There are 413 students in the high school, and he considers it a crime. We have lost control of what is going on. It's time to make changes. There are students that are difficult to educate. We have a system here that isn't working and how do we move forward and say enough is enough. You'll be back here another year with the same problem.

Dr. D'Andrea responded that our numbers are decreasing, and Wareham is not the only district with decreasing numbers and this is not unique to Wareham.

Mr. Chadwick responded that Bourne is having similar issues. Ms. Rossi responded that on the DESE website they offer a list of districts that are comparable to our district, and Bourne is not one of those districts, and is a poor comparison.

Ms. Scogin mentioned "override", as we have this constant issue of being understaffed, positions not filled, and we have to be thinking about an override if you think you can get this type of budget passed.

Mr. Swett stated that he and Ms. Bacchiocchi meet with the Superintendent and Director of Finance weekly and hopes that Maura Healey understands the fiscal cliff needs to be dealt with for many districts, like she did with Chapter 70. You must spend \$50,000 on a special education from LEA before you get any access to circuit breaker.

Mr. Slavin asked how do we find ways to fund the schools properly.

Ms. Rossi responded that trust is earned, and there is a need to become as a united front as we fight for the piece of the pie.

Mr. Slavin stated that most overrides do not pass.

Ms. Bacchiocchi stated that we follow the town charter and we speak to a budget very early, before negotiations are completed, and we won't know if there will be state funding until we know.

Mr. Sullivan shared the preliminary revenue, including increase at Upper Tech, Plymouth County Retirement to be a higher assessment, the uncontrollable, and projected the revenue. When we take the fixed cost, and pure guess work of state aid, we have about 1.2 million left over for school and town increases. He continued that we are looking at 2.2 million, and not factoring in town departments, we are hoping to be closer to the "1 million mark" for an increase.

The Chair thanked everyone for their thoughts and comments.

The Select Board made a unanimous vote to adjourn the joint meeting.

VOTE: 3-0-0

Ms. Rossi made a motion to adjourn the joint meeting, seconded by Brennan McKiernan


Roll Call Vote: Kevin Brogioli - yea, Geoff Swett - yea, Joyce Bacchiocchi – yea, Brennan McKiernan – yea, Apryl Rossi - yea

Yea – 5, Nay – 0 Abstain – 0

VOTE: 5-0-0

The meeting adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:



A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Joyce Bacchiocchi", is written over a horizontal line.