



Town Of Webster

Massachusetts

Est. 1832

Finance Committee

350 Main Street
Webster, MA 01570

Mat Fitton, Chairman
Sarah Sansom, Vice-Chairman
Joshua Sterczala
Courtney Friedland, Recording Secretary

Michael Finamore
Scott Dziedzic
Joseph Ralph
Wilfrid Cournoyer

FINANCE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, April 11 2023

Webster Town Hall, 350 Main Street, Webster, MA
via conference call in accordance with Governor Baker's
emergency "Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the
Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §20
6:00 p.m.

The Finance Committee meeting was called to order by Chairman Mat Fitton at 5:12 p.m. via Vonage Conference Call.

Present: Sarah Sansom (via conference call), Joshua Sterczala (via conference call), Matt Fitton (via conference call), Wilfrid Cournoyer (via conference call), Town Accountant, Timothy Bell (via conference call), Town Administrator, Richard LaFond (via conference call), School Superintendent Monique Pierangeli (via conference call), Water/Sewer Superintendent Thomas Cutler (via conference call), Police Chief Michael Shaw (via conference call), IT Director Greg Roberts (via conference call), Highway Superintendent Kenny Pizzetti (via conference call), and Finance Committee Secretary Courtney Friedland (via conference call).

Governor Baker issued an Executive Order modifying certain requirements of the Open Meeting Law, to enable public bodies to carry out their responsibilities while adhering to public health recommendations regarding social distancing. The Executive Order relieves public bodies from the requirement in the Open Meeting Law that meetings be conducted in a public place that is open and physically accessible to the public, provided that the public body makes provision to ensure public access to the deliberations of the public body through adequate, alternative means.

FY2024 Budget Review and Discussion – Webster Public Schools

Webster Public Schools instructional priorities for 2023-2024 continues to create a sense of belonging and engage all students through on or above grade-level learning experiences where students do the majority of the thinking and have access to as-needed scaffolds to support their success.

Additional Staff that have been added as a result of COVID with ESSER Funds

- Academic Coaches for PAE, WMS, BHS (FY23 & FY24)
- Academic Interventionists PAE, WMS (FY23 & FY24)
- Counselor for PAE (FY23 & FY24)
- Counselor for WMS (FY23 & FY24)
- Nurse Assistant (FY23 & FY24)
- ELL Teacher (PAE) (FY23 & FY24)
- ELL Teacher (BHS) (FY23/ in LEA for FY24)
- BHS Interim Dean (FY23 & FY24)
- Special Education Teachers PAE and WMS (FY23 & FY24)
- Building Based Substitutes for each building (FY23 & FY24)
- Re-Engagement Specialist (FY23 & FY24)
- Coordinator of Equity and Inclusion (not filled FY23/ will be replaced with Asst. Director of Student Support and Equity in FY24)

FY24 Budget Goals

- To continue to prioritize safety and student learning needs
- To continue to improve student programming with a focus on developing strong academic skills in all students and ensuring equitable access to ALL students
- To continue to provide staff with ongoing professional development to build internal capacity and sustainability with using research-based curriculum, instruction, and assessment
- To continue to take a systems-wide approach with determining needs and setting budget priorities
- To continue to work collaboratively with the Town Manager & Finance Committee

Historical View

Webster School District Budget

FY23 - \$24,067,832 7.17% Increase

FY22 - \$22,456,864 3.51% Increase

FY21 - \$21,695,946 -.55% Decrease

FY20 - \$21,815,850 3.88% Increase

FY19 - \$20,969,677 4.21% Increase

FY18 - \$20,086,062 4.36% Increase

The Webster Public School FY24 Proposed Budget - First Draft was presented on January 10th, 2023 at \$25,313,083. This is a \$1,245,251 or 5.17% increase.

The Webster Public School FY24 Proposed Budget - Updated March 14, 2023 added RCVD which was an additional \$616,339 at \$25,929,422. This is a \$1,861,590 or 7.73% increase.

FY24 Proposed NEW Staff

Park Avenue Elementary

- .5 FTE Administrative Assistant (LEA)
- 1.0 F.T.E. Library/Media Specialist (ESSER)
- F.T.E. Family Liaison (ESSER)

Webster Middle

- F.T.E. Library/ Media Specialist (ESSER)
- F.T.E. Behavior Interventionist (LEA)
- F.T.E. ABA Teacher (substantially separate program- LEA)

Bartlett High

- F.T.E. Math Coach (Title 1) (replacing Academic Interventionist)
- F.T.E. PLTW Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Teacher/Coordinator (LEA)

District

- F.T.E. Assistant Director of Student Support Services and Equity (ESSER) (replacing the unfilled Coordinator of Equity and Inclusion)

Staff that have been added as a result with ESSER Funds

- Academic Coaches for PAE, WMS, BHS (FY23 & FY24) Now LEA
- Academic Interventionists PAE, WMS (FY23 & FY24)
- Counselor for PAE (FY23 & FY24)
- Counselor for WMS (FY23 & FY24) Now LEA
- Nurse Assistant (FY23 & FY24)
- ELL Teacher (PAE) (FY23 & FY24)
- ELL Teacher (BHS) (FY23/ in LEA for FY24)
- BHS Interim Dean (FY23 & FY24)
- Special Education Teachers PAE and WMS (FY23 & FY24) - Now LEA
- Building Based Substitutes for each building (FY23 & FY24)
- Re-Engagement Specialist (FY23 & FY24) - Now LEA
- Coordinator of Equity and Inclusion (not filled FY23/ will be replaced with Asst. Director of Student Support and Equity in FY24)
- Library Media Specialist PAE and WMS (FY 24)
- Family Liaison PAE (FY24)

ESSER: Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief

LEA: Local Education Agencies

RCVD: Relative Change in Vertical Direction

The FY2024 budget will focus on improvements in learning environments, student programming, and staff development.

The Teacher's Union contract provides for a 2.5% increase with their contract expiring June 30, 2025.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Motion by Sarah Sansom, seconded by Wilfrid Cournoyer, to approve the meeting minutes of March 7, 2023 and March 14, 2023. Call Vote: Joshua Sterczala – yes, Wilfrid Cournoyer – yes, Sarah Sansom – yes, and Mat Fitton – yes.

Town Administrator's Report

The draft Human Resource Report was submitted by the Collins Center. There are still some open issues that are being addressed with the review. Conversations are still occurring between the Town Administrator, Assistant Town Administrator and the Collins Center.

The Conservation Agent is now a full-time position. She has been working very hard on her certifications. There is currently an open Conservation Commission seat.

The Cable Advisory Committee has been meeting to review the renewal of the Cable Contract. The cable subscribership is declining. They are looking at a Capital Grant. They are also looking to see if local municipalities can benefit from steaming services. A recent Legislative Bill has been presented to allow steaming services to pay fees.

The Town is currently in active Collective Bargaining with Police, Clerical, and DPW unions. The Fire Department is also potentially unionizing after their required one year cooling off period.

Review of Special and Annual Town Meeting Warrants

There was a discussion on the Special Town Meeting Warrant Articles. The Snow and Ice budget should be increased. Towns tend to keep the budget modest out of fear that once appropriated it can't be reduced. The town does not want to appropriate more than is needed. Article 6, Capital Projects was revised this morning with information received at the Board of Selectmen informational meeting the night prior. The It Director indicated that the core network equipment for the Police Station has exceeded its lifespan. The unified storage back-up will require ongoing licensing software costs. This system will act as a back-up for the Police Department data. The Highway industrial class/detachable snow blower is 47 years old and needs to be replaced. Two Police cruisers are being funded out of the regular budget and one is being funded through the Capital Improvement Plan. There is a set replacement cycle for all Police vehicles. It is done every three years. These vehicle's run 24/7. There are currently nine vehicles in the fleet.

The Rescue Truck is a different model then they currently have. This will add another frontline vehicle to their fleet. The current truck is 27 years old. The new vehicle should last the town 25 years. It is currently taking between 1 ½ to 2 ½ years for vehicles to come in from the date they are ordered.

The nuisance property located at 124R High Street needs to be removed due to health and safety concerns. This property is not owned by the town. It is privately owned. The property does not have enough value to recoup the money to demolish it. The property owner is current on their property taxes. The town will lien the property.

The total cost for the PFAS system is 33 million dollars. The town is eligible for a 0% interest loan. The total amount of the project needs to be approved at Town Meeting. The town is eligible for a minimum of 19.8% funding by the State. The Water Sewer Commission and Thomas Cutler have worked very hard on being the leaders for this project. Other towns are in similar situations. The State has been very happy with the town aggressive approach to PFAS. The town is looking t a 20-year term loan. The Water Sewer Commission will set the rates on Thursday night. The meeting will also include a PFAS presentation.

Motion by Wilfrid Cournoyer, seconded by Joshua Sterczala, to recommend approval of Article 1 – 17 on the Special Town Meeting Warrant. Call Vote: Joshua Sterczala – yes, Wilfrid Cournoyer – yes, Sarah Sansom – yes, and Mat Fitton – yes.

There was a discussion on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles. The Finance Committee held their Public Hearing on March 11, 2023 regarding the proposed FY24 budget.

Motion by Wilfrid Cournoyer, seconded by Sarah Sansom, to recommend approval of Article 1 – 8 and Article 10 on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant. Call Vote: Joshua Sterczala – yes, Wilfrid Cournoyer – yes, Sarah Sansom – yes, and Mat Fitton – yes.

Motion by Wilfrid Cournoyer, seconded by Joshua Sterczala, to recommend Refer to Sponsor of Article 9 on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant. Call Vote: Joshua Sterczala – yes, Wilfrid Cournoyer – yes, Sarah Sansom – yes, and Mat Fitton – yes.

Motion by Wilfrid Cournoyer, seconded by Joshua Sterczala, to recommend Refer to Sponsor of Articles 11-16 on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant. Call Vote: Joshua Sterczala – yes, Wilfrid Cournoyer – yes, Sarah Sansom – yes, and Mat Fitton – yes.

Motion by Wilfrid Cournoyer, seconded by Joshua Sterczala, to recommend Refer to Sponsor of Articles 16 and 17 on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant. Call Vote: Joshua Sterczala – yes, Wilfrid Cournoyer – yes, Sarah Sansom – yes, and Mat Fitton – yes.

Finance Committee Report

The Finance Committee Draft Report has been submitted by the Finance Director. The report summarizes the financial stance of the town and provides adequate financial information. The Finance Director would like to publish this report to the public. He will update necessary information and include the Finance Committee’s recommendation on Town Meeting articles.

Motion by Wilfrid Cournoyer, seconded by Joshua Sterczala, to appoint Sarah Sansom as the Finance Committee’s designee to work with the Finance Director on finalizing the Finance Committee Report. Call Vote: Joshua Sterczala – yes, Wilfrid Cournoyer – yes, Sarah Sansom – yes, and Mat Fitton – yes.

Proposed Future Meeting Date

The Finance Committee will meet on Monday, May 8, 2023 at Bartlett High School at 6:00 p.m.

Informational Mail

There is no informational mail.

Any Other Items Not Available at the Time of Posting

There are no other items available at the time of posting.

Adjournment

Motion by Sarah Sansom, seconded by Wilfrid Cournoyer, to adjourn the Finance Committee Meeting at 7:22 p.m. Call Vote: Joshua Sterczala – yes, Wilfrid Cournoyer – yes, Sarah Sansom – yes, and Mat Fitton – yes.

Respectfully submitted,
Courtney Friedland