



Finance Committee

**350 Main Street
Webster, MA 01570**

**Earl Gabor, Chairman
Sarah Sansom, Vice Chairman
Christine Jackel, Recording Secretary
Nick Adamopoulos
Kiel Becker**

**Joe Beresik
Julie Dell'Anna
Neil Dixon
Michael Finamore
Carole Marchand**

MINUTES April 26, 2017

Present: Nick Adamopoulos, Kiel Becker, Neil Dixon, Mike Finamore, Earl Gabor, Carole Marchand, and Sarah Sansom

Absent: Joe Beresik and Julie Dell'Anna

The meeting of the Finance Committee Public Hearing was called to order at 7:00 PM on Wednesday, April 26, 2017 by Chairman Earl Gabor in the Board of Selectmen's Meeting Room in the Town Hall. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the FY18 Proposed Operating Budget, pursuant to Section 6-5A of the Town of Webster Charter. Town Administrator, Doug Willardson was also in attendance.

Chairman Gabor stated we have a balanced budget as a result of last night's meeting of the School Committee where they voted to accept the total educational appropriation of \$20,086,062 which represents a change of 4.56% over last year; on the Town side, \$22,408,495 which represents a 5.28% increase over last year showing a combined increase of 4.94% over last year.

Report on School Budget

Ted Avlas, Assistant Superintendent for Business was there to report on behalf of the School and stated the School Committee utilized the T/A's proposal and with the proposal from the House Ways & Means Committee, the additional \$54,000 of state aid allowed the school to bring back some positions and programs.

Park Avenue Elementary was built to accommodate approximately 780 students and the enrollment is now at 850 and with this increase the District's top priorities were focused on adding a new administrator role, teacher for the Star Program and three (3) instructional aides to help keep children in the district without having to send them out of the district, which allows these children to get up to speed in the regular classroom.

The Middle School is in the process of re-organization; there are scheduling changes to include the athletic program that was eliminated several years ago and bringing back 5-6 extracurricular activities after school, with no fees for any of these changes.

He said the Town is about offering free education without excluding anyone as well as athletics and after-school activities, with no transportation or parking charge.

High School brought back three (3) full time positions that were part time; English, Social Studies and Science. With a lower class size, more electives can be offered. No layoffs, may be some reductions and several retirements will open up positions in the district. The IT position will be added to maintain tablets. Mr. Finamore asked to add “quality” free education for all students, and Mr. Avlas agreed, saying Webster provides a well-rounded education which includes extra-curricular activities. It was also noted that Bay Path provides a quality, solid education, where students are learning a trade.

Vice Chairman Sansom asked what specific changes were made since the preliminary budget. Mr. Avlas stated Park Avenue couldn’t provide for all the Assistant positions on the school list; Middle School has a new Administrator coming on at the beginning of the school year (currently interviewing for that position) and there is a re-organization in progress. The Middle School is cutting seven (7) periods to six (6) which will increase class time of each core subject.

Chairman Gabor thanked Mr. Avlas and the School Committee for the work they did in conjunction with the Finance Committee and Town on the FY18 operating budget. Mr. Avlas said there are small consortiums in Worcester County, and they are looking at ways to combine services, split teachers where full time can’t be funded by one district but could be if shared with another district. He noted that transportation is a big factor in trying to regionalize, especially special education students and they continue to see rising costs for special education as the number of students enrolled continues to rise. He also noted that healthcare costs are rising and that is 40% of the state’s budget, and State Reps and Senators are addressing this growing need. Mr. Avlas expressed his thanks to the Town Administrator for meeting with the School, showing interest in education in the Town and supporting it and its importance in the community.

Chairman Gabor asked if anyone had questions. Mr. Becker asked about positions on the School’s priority list, noting the new Administrator for Park Avenue, three (3) aides, a Star teacher and new IT person were included in the budget; Mr. Avlas said all others on the priority list had to be cut.

T/A Report on Budget

The T/A went through the individual budget lines noting the changes: Moderator, very little change; Board of Selectmen Executive Secretary position increased (if other positions needed to be filled, this would be decreased); Sick Leave – increase contractual; TA salary reserve – contract negotiations; Finance Committee’s Reserve Fund – now at \$35,000 would like to see it go up to \$50,000; Assessor – increase contractual; Treasurer – slight increase in professional services; Collector – increase contractual; Town Counsel – decrease by \$15,000; IT – increase in computer maintenance and new software; Town Clerk – less elections so election line down; Conservation Agent – took from Wetland funds for salary; Custodian – was full time position and had been split between the Town and Senior Center now eliminated; part-time position will be covered by the senior center grant.

Police – Quinn bill now part of their salary; increases depend on level of education/degree attained, minor cuts in gasoline based on trend usage; SWECC – call volume slightly decreased \$49,00 less assessment; Fire – remains flat; Inspectional Services, Weights & Measures and Harbormaster – same; DPW – big change as we were paying for lifeguards for the beach out of DPW budget, now will be charged to the recreation revolving fund; Engineering – we do not have a Town Engineer so \$10,000 allocated should we need an engineer for any reason; Marble House/Veterans – increased slightly, we still receive 75% from the state; new Director’s hours will increase to 28, noting a lot of veterans are being served; Library – few changes; electricity now part of town building; Parks & Recreation – no director; Retirement Assessment \$178,000 – Health Insurance saw \$900,000 increase – this will be funded each year but not at the level of 25% this year; Insurance/General Liability/Fire/Police – salary contractual for fire being negotiated.

Chairman Gabor asked about money in the Reserve Fund, and if we should hold off filling those positions Assessor/Assistant Police Chief position/ Assessor as we haven’t seen what unpaid bills are or snow removal. Mr. Finamore said, up until the past few years when the T/A and Accountant tapped into the Reserve fund unreasonably, \$35,000 was adequate. He also said the Board of Selectmen can declare an emergency where the funds might be needed for unanticipated emergencies. Snow and Ice line at \$155,000 and this is the only line item by state law that can be spent into deficit, and the T/A said this is standard practice in all towns. Mr. Finamore thanked T/A Willardson for his diligent work with the budget noting he brought the financial ability needed to the Town; all members agreed and expressed their thanks to the TA.

Adjourn

There being no further business, motion made by Carole Marchand and seconded by Neil Dixon to adjourn at 8:45 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christine Jackel
Recording Secretary