

# **Watertown School Committee**

## **Report of the Subcommittee on Budget and Finance**

**Meeting Date:** March 23, 2015

**Location:** High School Lecture Hall

**Subcommittee Members in Attendance:** John Portz (chair), Guido Guidotti, and Mike Shepard

**School Officials in Attendance:** Jean Fitzgerald, Charles Kellner, Dari Donovan, Brian Rachmaciej, Craig Hardimon, Donna Ruseckas, George Skuse, Toni Carlson, Lauren Harwood

**Other Attendees:** Various elected officials and members of the public

The meeting was called to order at 6:10.

### **I. Discussion of FY16 Budget : Enrollment**

The administration presented an analysis of enrollment trends since 2007. Enrollment numbers were presented from October and January of each year. Included was a churn rate from June 2014 to the next school year that showed declines in enrollments based on students leaving the district. Overall, enrollments have stayed in the 2500 range, although enrollments have declined from 2013-14 to 2014-15. There was general discussion on the challenges of projecting enrollments. Additional information was sought on class sizes.

### **II. Technology**

A spreadsheet was presented with FY16 technology requests. This included instructional technology, digital learning equipment, software, technology infrastructure, contracted services, supplies, repair, and maintenance. The total is approximately \$520,000. These items are included in the object code presentation from last week. There was a broad-ranging discussion including the public on technology needs, developing a new technology plan, and learning management systems. It was suggested that this issue be brought to the full School Committee for further discussion and engagement with the public on developing the next Technology Plan.

### **III. Special Education**

A spreadsheet was presented that provided detailed information on materials and supplies for SPED that are included in the FY16 budget proposal. The total is \$142,010. There was considerable discussion on the development of capacity within the district to provide students with specialized services. Recently, for example, an inclusion program has been developed at the Cunniff, and a transition/vocational program is being planned for older high school students. It also was noted that Watertown has some unusual costs since some students in the community attend Perkins School for the Blind. State Rep. Jon Hecht noted various challenges in the state budget, but also said that he will work with the school administration to identify a strategy for financial relief, as was done last year, although those monies were later cut by the state. It also was noted that the subcommittee would like overall numbers and trends for the number of SPED students in- and out-of-district and respective costs.

#### **IV. Transportation**

Two bids were recently received for busing within the district and for athletics and Minuteman. Included was an option for a fourth bus for the Hosmer in the afternoon to help address timing issues. This fourth bus would cost \$16,200. Including the fourth bus and incorporating other changes should provide services at the same amount as already budgeted.

SPED transportation is bid in conjunction with seven other communities. The bid process has not been completed, but the proposed FY16 budget includes a \$50,000 increase for the upcoming year.

There was a general discussion including the public on bus services, including the possibility of having bus services from other schools to the Boys and Girls Club. This could be a School Committee policy discussion at a later date.

#### **V. Related FY16 Budget Items**

There was a discussion about how to present the budget. The administration is planning to develop a budget format with 12 or 13 cost centers, including: the five schools, Leadership, Curriculum, SPED, ELL, Athletics, and Guidance. The budget would be presented by cost center in terms of salaries and non-salaries. There was a general discussion, including town councilors and the public, about budget presentation formats.

The next meeting agenda on March 30 will include: overview of SPED participation and costs, cost centers, and more detail on other funding sources, including revolving accounts and grants.

A motion was made and unanimously approved by the subcommittee to recommend to the full School Committee a FY16 town appropriation budget of \$41,927,115, which is a 6.87% increase over the current year. This recommended budget will be available in object code format and will be advertised in the newspaper for a public hearing on April 6.

#### **VI. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 8:45.

Submitted by John Portz, Chair