

Watertown School Committee

Report of the Subcommittee on Budget and Finance

Meeting Date: March 30, 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, 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 : Class Sizes and Enrollment Changes

The administration presented an analysis of enrollment projections, completed with the support of the New England School Development Council. Enrollment projects were made out to 2024-25, although the numbers are most reliable over the next five years. In general, a gradual increase is projected, primarily at the elementary level. There was a general discussion about churn rates and other changes in enrollments. Information also was presented on class sizes in FY15 and projected for FY16 at the elementary level and middle school. For FY16, class sizes at the elementary schools are projected to average in the 20-21 range with the largest at 26 at the Hosmer and Cunniff. Class sizes at the Middle School are projected also to be 21-22.

II. Special Education

Data was presented on the distribution of SPED students by disability, with the changing percent in each category over the past three years. Data also was presented on the out-of-district SPED student count. In FY15 there are 65 students out-of-district (and 34 additional at Minuteman). In FY16 it is projected that there will be 47 students out-of-district. This drop is attributed to a variety of reasons, including students aging out and some staying in district to receive specialized services. Data also was presented on SPED tuitions, which have dropped significantly in the last three years. FY15's total of \$5.7 million is project to be \$4.5 million in FY16.

SPED costs in the town appropriation budget are projected to drop slightly from approximately \$14.2 million in FY15 to \$14.1 million in FY16. It is projected that circuit breaker will bring in \$2.29 million in FY16.

III. Grants and Revolving Accounts

A spreadsheet was presented that provided grant allocations from FY12 through FY15. It was noted that grant funding has been relatively stable in the past few years, although there are some fluctuations, including the projected loss of \$104,000 in the state kindergarten grant in FY16.

A spreadsheet was presented on revolving accounts based primarily on fee revenues. Data was included over the past three years, including the remaining balance at the end of each fiscal

year. Accounts with the largest balance include the extended day programs. It was noted that these programs could be analyzed to see whether adjustments are needed on the revenue or expenditure side.

IV. Cost Centers

A summary by cost center was presented. This included 12 cost centers with the FY15 expended and encumbered funds as of 3/30/15 as well as the proposed FY16 budget. This provides a high-level view of the budget. Also presented was a sheet with the major offsets that are applied against the FY16 budget. This includes athletics, bus fees, WCAC, community education, and the town (covering part of a salary) for a total of \$354,806. These offsets are funds from fees and other sources that help to cover expenditure areas that are also covered by the town appropriation budget.

V. Public Hearing Presentation

There was a general discussion about the materials needed for the public hearing on April 6. This will include the cost centers as well as object codes. Also included will be a summary sheet presented at the subcommittee that identifies the major budget drivers for FY16. The two largest areas are move ahead costs (contractual obligations and similar costs) of \$1.54 million and new positions of \$1.14 million. Projected savings in SPED tuitions equal \$970,465. The total requested increase is \$2,695,115, which is a 6.87% increase.

VI. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:30.

Submitted by John Portz, Chair