

MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Special Session – October 15, 2012

A Special Session of the Wayland School Committee was held on Monday, October 15, 2012, at 7:00 P.M. in the School Committee Room of the Wayland Town Building.

Present were:

Barb Fletcher, Chair
Beth Butler, Vice Chair
Malcolm Astley
Ellen Grieco
Shawn Kinney (absent)

Also:

Paul Stein
Superintendent of Schools

Brad J. Crozier
Assistant Superintendent

Marlene M. Dodyk
Director of Student Services

Geoffrey S. MacDonald
Business Administrator

Also:

Bill Steinberg, Tom Greenaway, Cherry Karlson, Carol Martin, David Gutschenritter, Steven Lesser, Nancy Funkhouser
Finance Committee

Chair Barb Fletcher convened the Special Session at 7:04 P.M. and announced that WayCAM will not be airing the meeting live, but it will be shown On Demand at a later date.

1. **Joint Meeting with Finance Committee re: the FY14 Operating Budget Guideline:**

Chair Bill Steinberg introduced the members of the FinCom and Chair Barb Fletcher introduced the School Committee and administrators.

Bill explained the history behind and the reasons why and how the FY14 budget guidelines were developed. He stated that the FinCom received much input and pressure from the community regarding the development of the FY14 budget in terms of lowering the high tax rate; thus, the residents are asking for a level funded budget for FY14. Bill stated that the town has provided level services, and the tax levy has been reduced as a result of using free cash for FY12 and FY13. He also stated that there is about \$6M remaining in free cash, but if spent over the next year, the tax levy would most likely increase. Therefore, the FinCom is looking for ways to understand what the alternatives are for the current year; understand where the town is now, and then plan for it. Bill commented that the FY14 budget will either be level funded or involve a 10% cut, as they are trying to be responsive to the needs of the town.

Tom Greenaway spoke to the community vote at the Special Town Meeting. He stated that the FinCom needs to understand where the town is over the next few months before going to Town Meeting in April 2013.

The School Committee asked questions of the Finance Committee in terms of the tax levy and how they reached the decision to ask for a 10% cut in the budget. Barb asked the FinCom to what level of detail the prioritized list of cuts should be drafted. A discussion ensued.

Malcolm Astley commented that the 10% budget cut exercise would be a backwards step in terms of programs and services and senses that the town does not want to reduce services.

The School Committee also asked the FinCom to consider the degree of this request and to listen to the people in the town who do not favor a 10% cut in the budget.

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2. **Public Comments:**

Kent George commented that the property taxes/tax rate is unsustainable and gave examples of where money was spent in past school department budgets. He agreed that Wayland has an excellent school system, but asked the School Committee for a zero-based budget. He would like to see a real comparison for why there is an increase in the budget; asks for a line item budget.

Jeff Dieffenbach commented that the tax rate in Wayland and per pupil expenditures, when compared to peer towns, is in the middle; thus, to take 10% off the budget would decimate the education system and real estate values. Jeff asked that the request be tabled indefinitely, and to think about ways to improve the system. In his opinion, if this exercise is carried out, it will raise taxes even higher, not to mention the possibility of larger class sizes, higher student activity fees, etc. He also stated that the request to cut the budget would mean countless hours of work for the administrators.

Tony Boschetto wanted to clarify the message that was delivered at Special Town Meeting from him and those with whom he worked regarding the budget. He agreed that it was not fiscal prudence to ask anyone to perform the exercise of cutting 10% from the budget. He asked for a thorough budget to actual analysis (a root cause analysis), which would result in more prudence and more precision in the fiscal budget process.

Louis Jurist commented that he believes there has been a misinterpretation of what the town voted in terms of what they want, and there is a big difference between level funded and level taxed. In his opinion, the last vote at Town Meeting overwhelmingly supported the current level of spending and services the schools provide. Louis also referred to past overrides and what effect they did or did not have on the budget. He also commented that Wayland has the lowest per pupil spending among the top 7 or 8 schools ranked by Boston Magazine (Wayland #6).

Margo Melnicove stated that she does not support drastic cuts to the school budget, but that the town is facing unsustainable salary increases, and they must be controlled. She stated that in terms of teachers' salaries and COLA's, the conversation must be now, as a discussion at Town Meeting will be too late. She offered suggestions and ways, in terms of salaries, to achieve significant savings without reducing a single position, program or service.

Andrea Case commented that she moved to the town three years ago, specifically for the schools. She compared the education in Wayland to the town from where she came and stated that the teachers in Wayland put their heart and soul into teaching and the results are amazing. She also commented that compared to six peer towns, Wayland's per pupil spending was the lowest. However, the assessed valuation of her house has gone down because her house is smaller in size than most in Wayland.

Tom Largy commented on OPEB of which he wrote a letter to the Town Crier in terms of town employees' retirement accounts.

Donna Bouchard stated that she supports precision budgeting, not budget annihilation. She also supports the work and dedication of Wayland teachers. However, she stated that taxpayers are paying more than their share. She stated that more efficiency is essential in terms of what is spent to support the schools; thus, when preparing the budget, requests should be based upon what is really needed.

Lisa Valone expressed her respect for all town boards in terms of what they do during budget preparation. She agreed that Wayland is doing well in terms of spending less per pupil in comparison to other peer towns. She also stated that over the years, level services have repeatedly been voted on at Town Meeting.

Alice Bolter asked the School Committee to look at other ways to save money, i.e., outsourcing in some areas. She asked the School Committee to be frank regarding the cost of education and to re-evaluate the programs offered.

Sharon Burke stated that she supports some of the comments made and feels that there is a loud minority in the town. She spoke about classroom size and what it would mean if teachers were let go, as well as the small commercial base in Wayland. She also asked the older residents to support the schools and to think about the staff morale. She praised the FinCom and School Committee for a job well done.

John Flaherty stated that he did not want to see a 10% cut; other areas should be looked at.

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Tom Sciacca commented that over the years there hasn't been a real focus on the efficiency of the budget, but rather on the quality of education. He believes that 10% can be cut from the budget over a 5-10 year period, not one year.

A resident commented that 70% of households don't have children in the schools and to be careful when entering negotiations.

Dave Bernstein commented that it is clear that everyone believes in funding education. He stated that it's always possible to increase efficiency without addressing quality, and would like to see a budget that has credibility.

Suzanne Geiger applauded both committees for their hard work. She commented on the union negotiations that begin on December 1, stating that there is plenty of room to make some changes in the WTA contract in order to save money. She asked the Committee and administrators to find ways, other than layoffs, to achieve savings.

Alan Reiss commented that it is important to be proactive now, because, in his opinion, the pending union negotiations could result in an override vote.

Sharon Burke asked what peer towns are doing in terms of COLA's, and is concerned that this budget exercise could cause Wayland teachers to take jobs in other communities.

Peggy Patton commented on the most recent U.S. News and World Report ranking Wayland in the state.

The Fin Com left the meeting at 8:32 P.M.

Barb announced that the School Committee will await feedback from the FinCom in terms of the level of detail in the two budget exercises they recommend.

3. **Comments and Written Statements from the Public:**

Tom Sciacca confirmed that he sent the School Committee a copy of a Boston Globe article regarding meeting salaries in professional groups and well compensated Massachusetts' teachers. He asked the School Committee to consider this information when entering into negotiations.

A resident commented that each of her four children have had a phenomenal teacher each year, which, in her opinion, is the reason why Wayland schools are exceptional. Thus, she supports teachers' salaries. However, she agrees that the School Committee should be careful when negotiating union contracts.

4. **Executive Session:**

Upon a motion duly made by Beth Butler, seconded by Malcolm Astley, the School Committee voted unanimously (4-0) to convene in Executive Session at 8:44 P.M. to discuss strategy with respect to Collective Bargaining for all school unions (WTA, WESA, Custodial and Food Service), as set forth in M.G.L. Chapter 30(a), Section 21 (a) (3), as such a discussion in open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the School Committee and an Executive Session is necessary to protect the bargaining position of the School Committee. The Chair announced that the School Committee will reconvene in Open Session following Executive Session. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

<u>Roll Call</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Barb Fletcher, Chair	X	
Beth Butler, Vice Chair	X	
Malcolm Astley	X	
Ellen Grieco	X	
Shawn Kinney (<i>not available by remote; a message was left for him</i>)		

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5. **Adjournment:**

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Malcolm Astley, the School Committee voted unanimously (4-0) to adjourn the Regular Session at 9:59 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Stein, Clerk
Wayland School Committee

Observers:
See attached.

Corresponding Documentation:

1. Written Statement from Margo Melnicove