

Town of Princeton, Mass. – February 27, 2017 – 5 PM

Board of Selectmen –Budget Meeting Minutes

Chairman Stan Moss, Edith Morgan, Jon Fudeman present; plus TA Nina Nazarian.

5:03 PM Stan opened meeting in the Town Hall Annex. Advisory Committee members present were Chairman John Shipman, Jim O'Coin, George Handy, Wayne Adams, Don Schoeny and Judy Dino. WRSD group included Supt. Darryll McCall; HR Director Jeff Carlson; Dir. of business Joe Scanlon; Dep. Supt. Robert Berlo. Princeton's School Committee rep Megan Weeks was also present.

Administrative staff from WRSD were in to share detail of the district's budget for FY'18. Darryll distributed a FY'16 Preliminary Budget Presentation and discussed the strategic plan and action plan which goes forward five years and is both quantitative and qualitative, he said.

George H. noted the vagaries of some of these measurements, such as "develop well-defined learning outcomes..." and said only qualitative measurement is MCAS scores.

The handout showed graphs, charts and lists comparing towns and individual schools in the district, along with per-pupil spending and budget breakdowns. Pupils come and go each year, and cannot be forecast in budget planning. The total enrollment in the district was 7,221 in FY'08 and is 7,298 in FY'17. George pointed out that the state Foundation Budget numbers are different from those of the district and he'd like to see a reconciliation.

WRSD spends \$11,537 per student and State Chapter 70 funds almost half of that. At T.P.

School, about 100 students from other district towns bring the total enrollment to over 400. A graph showed how WRSD spends less per pupil than any other regional district. Jon F. noted that the reason for that may be we're not comparing apples to apples. As an example, one town department may charge paper clips to a different department while another charges paper clips to office supplies. He noted that debt service may or may not be included in an operating budget. The Foundation Budget does not include transportation or OPEB payments.

They discussed items which cannot be changed, such as health insurance of which the school budget provides 78 percent of each employee's premium. Group went over differences between the GIC (Group Insurance Commission) Plan used by many school districts, and Blue Cross, which WRSD switched to when it was cheaper. The GIC is now cheaper but offers fewer options and unions are involved as well as the Public Employee Commission (PEC).

Darryll reported the instructional support is flat-budgeted as they've scrapped some leased equipment and are purchasing less-expensive ChromeBooks.

The budget being presented reflects a 5.2 percent increase from FY'17 to FY'18. In the past the Chapt. 70 contribution to WRSD was 40 percent and now it's 29 percent. Stan noted the increase at around \$200 to Princeton's average tax bill with an annual school district increase and the Adv. Cmte. wanted to know the breaking point and asked about sustainability.

The group discussed ChromeBooks for all students and Stan described the Shrewsbury model, basically lease-to-own. Any real savings and decrease in the budget has to come from labor/staffing which is by far the biggest cost.

It was announced that Tim Corcoran will arrange to have DESE Director Jeff Wulfson in for a meeting on Tuesday, March 14 at 5 PM for more about the inequity of state funding for education that Princeton receives.

School group left and selectmen turned to issues of short and long-term borrowing as capital borrowing will take place in next 3 – 5 years.

There was some discussion about the role and tasks of the Advisory Committee and who appoints them. Jon F. has a citizen's petition for the ATM that would ask voters to change the appointment of the Advisory Committee from the BOS to a combination of the moderator, Advisory Committee Chair, and BOS Chair, which other towns do.

6:55 PM Selectmen voted all in favor to accept resignation as its written of cemetery superintendent Andy Brown, effective April 1. The group asked Nina to send a list of accomplishments, so that the Selectboard could complete the TA evaluation. Stan mentioned that an article should be created for ATM that applies cable franchise fees to pay the make-ready debt, and use payment from sales of equipment huts for that as well. The public hearing for the two cable franchise applicants will be March 13.

7 PM Selectmen voted to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted, Marie Auger, admin.assist.

BOS Referenced Documents: Presentation from WRSD; letter from Andy Brown

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978-464-2100