

Watertown School Committee

Report of the Subcommittee on Budget and Finance

Meeting Date: March 3, 2016

Location: High School Library

Subcommittee Members in Attendance: John Portz (chair) and Guido Guidotti

School Officials in Attendance: Jean Fitzgerald and Charles Kellner

Other Attendees: School Committee members Mark Sideris, Eileen Hsu-Balzer, Kendra Foley, and Liz Yuseum; Town Councillors Aaron Dushku and Vinnie Piccirilli; Town Auditor Tom Tracy; and members of the public.

The meeting was called to order at 6:05.

I. FY17 Budget – Discussion

a. Move Forward of Personnel Costs

Mr. Kellner provided an object code presentation of the projected FY17 budget for personnel lines based on moving forward existing staff. The spreadsheet included the FY16 revised budget, expenditures, encumbrances, FY17 requested budget, the change in dollar terms and percentage. There was a general discussion on a number of lines. It was noted that there is wide variation in the projected increases due to a number of changes, including the reallocation of positions from grants and reallocating positions to different lines. It was noted that projected retirements (5 or 6 at the current time) are accounted for with a replacement person hired at a Masters, Step 3 level. A set aside is in the FY17 budget at \$990,143. This includes anticipated contractual obligations, teacher lane changes in the salary grid, and estimates for collective bargaining settlements. It was noted that the substitutes' line was increased due to pattern of higher demand. The FY17 projected increase is \$1,760,858.

b. New Positions

Supt. Fitzgerald and Mr. Kellner went through a list of proposed new positions for the district. For FY17 there were 20.35 positions at a projected cost of \$1,141,406. Many positions were partial positions that would complement an existing part-time position. Many of the positions were discussed by the committee and public. Among the proposed new positions are an elementary math and science coordinator, several partial music positions, an engineering teacher, two reading specialists, special education coordinator, and a variety of other teacher and support positions. It was noted that several partial positions would be created to operate a new preschool class planned for the former Growing Places space at the Phillips School. Costs will be partially offset by tuitions.

Those positions requested but not put in the FY17 budget were listed as phased-in in FY18 and beyond. These totaled 11.8 positions, which includes two digital learning instructional specialists, two reading specialists, and a variety of other teaching and support positions. It also was noted that implementation of the elementary foreign language program would include two more positions in FY18. Some discussion ensued as to whether one or two of the digital learning specialists should be moved to FY17 to coincide with enhancement of that program.

It also was noted that the NEASC accreditation process, due to be completed soon, might lead to additional budget needs in FY17 and beyond.

c. Schedule for Future Meetings

Some changes have been made in the schedule of future budget meetings. The Budget & Finance Subcommittee will meet in the High School library on the following dates:

- March 14 – 6:45 – Topics include: Special education, new initiatives, and other non-salary drivers. This meeting follows a full School Committee meeting at 6:00.
- March 28 – 6:00 – Topics include: Grants and revolving accounts, and draft budget summary.
- The previously scheduled meeting on March 21 has been replaced by a joint School Committee – Town Council meeting with the outside financial audit firm. This meeting will take place in Town Hall.

II. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:30.

Submitted by John Portz, Chair