

FINANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES

March 4, 2019

Regular meeting of the Finance Committee was held on Monday, March 4, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. in Room #112, Town Hall, with the following members present: J. Burke, M. Trudell, R. Ardine, S. Lawson, R. Nottebart, A. Hamilton, M. Ahigian, A. Flowers, D. Crowley, B. Bain, L. Van der Linden, K. Greulich, M. Sullivan, D. Shea. Also in attendance was Town Administrator J. Johnson, Fire Chief T. Bailey, Finance Director M. Thompson. Superintendent of Schools L. Lynch, Assistant Superintendent B. Gough, School Committee Members: Chairman W. Buckley, N. Gallivan, J. Geosits and K. Denitzio, and School Business Manager M. Friscia.

7:00 p.m. – Quorum being present, the meeting was called to order by the Chairman M. Trudell.

May 6, 2019 Spring Annual Town Meeting

School Budget

School Committee Chairman W. Buckley outlined the FY20 Proposed School Budget. Requested amount is \$46,161,592 (4.5% increase) Town Administrator is recommending \$45,861,591. School Committee's priorities are to maintain class sizes, offering a comprehensive program to students, provide professional development for staff and support services for students to succeed. Included is intensive focus on digital learning and emphasis on safety, security and well-being of all students.

Budget drivers include collective bargaining increases, decrease in FDK tuition from \$3,000 to \$1,800 per student (\$160,000). Walpole is one of 45 districts in Massachusetts that charges tuition for FDK (88% of all school districts in Massachusetts offer free FDK). addition of two elementary adjustment counselors (\$140,000) and additional physical education teacher at the High School. They are anticipating that the Circuit Breaker Program will be cut in the amount of \$123,972. (State reimbursement for mandated Special Education) 85% of the teachers have masters. School Committee will be entering contract negotiations this Spring with three unions, largest being the Walpole Teachers Association.

School Superintendent L. Lynch spoke to requested appropriation of \$46,161,592. Reimbursements amounting to \$2,268,580, Offsets of \$1,733,600 and Grants 1,539,431 that make up the Total Comprehensive Budget of \$46,161,59. The Town covers the

health, heating and utility costs of the School Department along with plowing the school facilities. In addition the Town pays for the school resource and patrol officers.

Assistant Superintendent, Bridget Gough – The school's strategic plan is to develop goals, i.e. providing chrome books to students, updating the science curriculum, looking at professional development and the need to be proactive with school counselors. They are looking at the security at the schools with cameras, and panic buttons. Schools need to be competitive with other school systems.

M. Friscia, School Business Manager - provided an update on the school safety. –In 2013 started with installation of cameras, each year added additional cameras, mostly in the high school. Most of the funding has been through the Capital Budget and some supplements within the School Budget and Rental Accounts. They have been working with the Police Department. Two way radios are part of the police communication system, and they have added two additional panic buttons in each school building. Two way radios have been replaced in the schools. Alice training of all students at high school has been implemented and looking to do it at the middle schools. They also do emergency drills in each building and work closely with Police Department. Police train in the school buildings after hours. Phone systems have been replaced through the Capital Budget. Goal is to provide answers to all safety concerns within the buildings. School Department works with Police Chief J. Carmichael and Town Administrator J. Johnson on the safety in the schools.

School Committee Member Nancy Gallivan spoke to the Town's per pupil expenditure and provided a handout with ranking of communities in the state. Walpole is below average on the list provided and listed amount does include the indirect costs. Massachusetts has the best public school system in the country. She spoke to it being a challenge to remain competitive. Walpole's spending is not out of line with nearby towns. School Committee continues to fight for more money for State Aid. Most cities and towns spend beyond the Foundation Budget. Walpole's success rate is above average and feel they could do amazing things with additional money. In FY2017, per pupil expenditure was \$5,173.

Chromebooks Replacement – There is no money from Capital in this Spring, but noted School Department doesn't want to wait till the Fall for them. They have a long term plan for the purchase of Chromebooks and would like to start an annual occurrence for purchase starting the seventh grade.

Adjourn:

MOTION MADE by D. Crowley, Seconded by S. Lawson to adjourn the meeting at 9:25 p.m., Motion Passed (14-0-0) (14 voting) Unanimous

Respectfully submitted,

Clare P. Abril
Clerk