

February 12, 2018
Budget and Finance Subcommittee
6:30 pm
Phillips Building

I. Call to Order

II. Roll Call

Present at the meeting were committee members Kendra Foley, Chair, and Lindsay Mosca. John Portz was not present. Also at the meeting were Mark Sideris, town council president, Amy Donohue, SC, Eileen Hsu-Balzer, SC, Dr. Deanne Galdston, and Mary DeLai, along with members of the public

Note: the chair of the committee decided to rearrange the agenda to accommodate members of public interested in agenda items.

IV d. Later Start Time Transportation Plan

Mary gave a summary of the options presented last meeting, and thanked people for their feedback and guidance on adjusting the options. Please reference the memorandum on [Later Start Time: Transportation](#) for details. The option being considered and discussed maintains three buses for the district (which is about cost-neutral) but removes the shared bussing with the Middle School and Hosmer School. This sharing will not be possible when school start times change. One bus will be for the Middle School, and two for Hosmer.

Kendra asked about the large area of the middle school service and expressed concern about a long bus ride. Mary said ideally the bus route is not more than 45 minutes. The key is the amount of stops, so when students are older (in middle school) they would have to walk a little bit to a stop to make sure that kids are not getting up extra early to get the bus.

Lindsay asked about the enforcement of the procedure for who gets priority to ride - Mary said it's facilities/operations and with a combination of new contract for bus, new system, etc will manage it all and electronically to make sure the priorities set by the SC.

Mark Sideris asked about the traffic concerns coming from South of the Charles ("SoCha") to Hosmer at a later time because it's more "rush hour" than service now. Mark also mentioned that the school committee should consider eliminating the SoCha discount and also consider options for expanding access to the Boys and Girls Club (B&GC)

Amy also asked about the B&GC expansion idea. Mary elaborated that it would not be a school department expense.

Members of the public (representing the Boys and Girls Club) spoke about the importance of the club to some of the neediest families in Watertown. They urged the committee to consider this impact in their decision.

Mark reiterated that this is a process and the committee is gathering information, options, and needs to collaborate and work together to find an option that makes the most sense for our students. Dede commented that this whole process started with later school start times - knowing it would be hard, and tough decisions would have to be made. But it was all done with best interest of students in mind, at every turn.

Kendra would like to keep conversations open and work together to increase access to all programming around town for all students. She believes there are ways to collaborate and work together to increase opportunities for all kids to many options in Watertown.

Dede further explained that a new bus is \$60,000 and that it is not an option that we have in the budget - this amount of money is a literacy coach, or a teacher.

Eileen is on the board of the B&G club. She will recuse herself from a vote on this. Reminded us that we ONLY have \$373,000 for *any* new initiatives. Adding more busses is a much bigger item when you look at the available budget to be allocated.

It was noted that having two buses from Hosmer isn't specifically excluding kids from using a bus to get a ride closer to the B&GC. However, due to space restrictions given 2 buses, WPS would not be able to guarantee that there will be seats available for children who live closer than 1 mile to Hosmer that previously only used the bus in the afternoon to get to the Club.

The issue was tabled, with a 2-0 vote, for further discussion at the 3/12 budget and finance subcommittee meeting.

IV a. Community Education, Extended Day Program Fees

Debi Cornelius spoke about details of the [report on increasing extended day fees](#). In summary, the last increase in tuition was 15% in 2011. The recent NESDEC report noted that Watertown's Extended Day Programs had too much turnover in staff, and not able to get enough staff.

Kendra asked about over time issues - last year they got retroactive pay for 3 years of not being paid for the overtime worked in previous years. Debi explained that many of the qualified employees of the EDP also work in the schools during the day, and the over time cannot be avoided. Lindsay asked if there is an after school wait list. Debi reported that currently there are a handful at Lowell and about 10-12 at Cunniff. There is not enough staff to increase numbers and its hard to retain staff.

Mark Sideris commented that it's good to catch up on fees. He is happy to see the proposal for an annual 2% increase. Catching up on fee increases is a hard ask. Lindsay asked if it would make sense to split the increase over 2 years.

Debi discussed that when you look at the per hour cost broken down, the increase is very reasonable. Additionally, she has had parent feedback (anecdotally) that they WANT the teachers to stay - their students make strong connections with teacher and they want them to continue.

Kendra asked why there was a proposal to give building monitors steps increases for their after school work when they did not received them during the school day. Suggestion was to eliminate the building monitor steps.

The subcommittee unanimously voted to recommend all proposed changes to the full school committee, with the edit that steps for building monitors would be eliminated from the proposal.

III. Reports

a. [Additional FY'19 Salary Information](#)

Salary information - further breakdown of information about salaries and increases was presented as requested. See memo for details.

b. [Grants and Revolving Fund Balances](#)

History and data were presented on how much money WPS has received in grants over the year. Mary also presented information and summaries about all the revolving fund balances. See report for details.

Amy asked when the last time PreK tuition was increased. Mary explained that she would look at it every year to make sure its self sustaining. Preschool is charging off only ½ of its expenditures because the Special Ed is a school expense. Lindsay suggested exploring a regular annual increase for PreK preschool tuition (maybe next year) so that adjustments and increases are an automatic decision that supports the program as self-sustaining.

Mark asked about the empty revolving accounts - Mary said many are inactive, but MUNIS pulls them ALL when a search is run. There was a discussion about various revolving accounts and details about the amounts. See document for details.

c. [Tuition and Fees Schedule](#)

Mary reported on the memo (linked above). She would like to see the SC approve fees annually moving forward, before the busy budget season begins. Facility fees may make more sense to explore increases when facilities are renovated and demand for rentals increases.

d. [FY 19 District Leadership budget priorities](#)

Committee discussed many items and what this list means moving forward - it is a first pass and separates items into categories based on rankings and what admin will try to shuffle and change to get more covered. Discussion about community liaisons - in collaboration with BC project, they will re-post the job and hope to find the right people and make a good program with more data and info. Dede said some items low on the list are also intended to foreshadow priorities moving forward in future years as programs and initiatives need more support.

IV. Discussion and Action Items

b. [Athletic Fees](#)

Committee discussed the merits of having a one time fee for the whole year versus a per sport fee. Mary presented options for fees and comparison fees structures from surrounding communities.

Eileen brought up that the fee structure might discourage kids from doing a third sport (like spring track) and trying something new. Others feel it will encourage more to play one sport with a reduced fee. It was determined that more information about how parents feel about the fees was needed. Dede will conduct a brief parent survey.

The discussion was referred to the Athletics Subcommittee with a 2-0 vote.

c. [Extra Curricular Fees](#)

Mary recommended creating a Middle School and High School revolving fund - separate for each school.

It was proposed that a \$50 fee for any stipended advisor activity (not including class councils) be assessed to students to provide consistency on which activities have a fee and which do not. The policy would be spelled out in the handbooks for each school.

Mary explained that having this fee will allow us to track participation data and learn more about how this fee could look or be used in the future.

The committee unanimously voted to recommend a one time annual extra curricular fee, with no waiver for students that already pay for athletics at high school. Central office will determine the handbook policies.

V. Future Budget & Finance Subcommittee Meeting Dates

Dede discussed that we need to be mindful of subcommittee meetings and how big the agenda is. She recommended using the summer to allocate issues and spread out the items that we need to tackle. For example, put fee structure and approval in an earlier meeting.

Eileen mentioned that we need to change two of the future Budget and Finance meetings to joint with the Curriculum Subcommittee. (3/14 and 3/20)

- a. March 12th, 6:30 p.m. – FY19 Superintendent’s Recommended Budget, Districtwide Cost Centers
- b. March 14th, 6:30 p.m. – FY19 Superintendent’s Recommended Budget, Elementary Schools
- c. March 20th, 6:30 p.m. – FY19 Superintendent’s Recommended Budget, Secondary Schools

VI. Adjournment

Minutes prepared by Lindsay Mosca