

FIFTEEN ROPE FERRY ROAD
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Board of Finance
Budget Hearing Minutes

Wednesday, March 20, 2024
Town Hall Auditorium – 7:00 pm

Present: Chairman Glenn Patterson, John Sheehan, Michael Rocchetti*, Ronald Fedor, Joe Filippetti, and Robert Tuneski

Absent: *Michael Rocchetti (arrived 7:14pm), David Peabody

Elected: First Selectman Robert Brule; Patricia Fedor, Chair Board of Education; Paul Goldstein, RTM

Staff: Kimberly Allen, Director of Finance; Thomas Giard, Superintendent of Schools; Craig Powers, Assistant Superintendent; Joseph Mancini, Director of Operations Board of Education; Mark Geer, IT Board of Education; Kirk Samuelson, Waterford HS Principal; Amanda Batty, Waterford HS Assistant Principal; Tracy Moore, Waterford HS Assistant Principal; James Sachs, Clark Lane Middle School Principal; Chris Discordia, Quaker Hill Elementary Principal; Billie Shea, Great Neck Elementary Principal; Rebecca Hall, Admin Assistant Finance Office/BOF Recording Secretary

1. Establishment of a quorum and call to order:

A quorum was established and the Budget Meeting of the Board of Finance was called to order at 7:00 pm on March 20, 2024.

2. Public Comment:

- a. Narciss Greene, Great Neck Elementary School parent, questioned what department in town would handle the drainage problem on the playground at the school. Chairman Patterson explained that the meeting doesn't allow discussion with the board and suggested a letter be written to the Superintendent & 1st Selectman.
- b. Laurie Wolfley, Board of Education member, recommended that the Board of Finance approve the budget as presented.

Motion by Bill Sheehan and **seconded** by Ron Fedor to move forward the FY2025 Board of Education budget request for discussion for the amount of \$57,611,181.

Vote: 5-0-0

Motion: Passed

3. Board of Education Budget:

Patricia Fedor, Chair Board of Education (BOE), opened discussion by explaining the BOE proposed budget supports the district strategic plan and the BOE goals. The BOE Finance Committee met several times to put the budget together in addition to two (2) public workshops to encourage community input. Tom Giard, Superintendent of Waterford Public Schools (WPS), thanked all of the professionals who contributed to the completion of the budget. He remarked about the

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bright future of Waterford schools. He then presented the budget with a slideshow detailing all financial categories.

Bill Sheehan: Great Neck Elementary school and its bilingual program & new teacher. BOE anticipates Oswegatchie Elementary School the next school to implement the program in FY25/26. The program requires implementation if 20 or more students in one school speak the same native language. Spanish is the language driving the program at Great Neck Elementary School.

Robert Tuneski: How successful are the schools and how is success quantifiable? Mr. Giard: School success/progress quantified in "Annual Year in Review" by BOE which highlights Waterford education. Mark Greer, IT BOE, has assisted the BOE in creating a large database to help analyze educational trends in the schools so progress can be measured more effectively. Each school also has its own goals and strategies where metrics can be gathered.

Joseph Filippetti: UCFS School based health located at Clark Lane Middle School (CLMS) and Waterford High School (WHS). Will funding remain for these locations? Mr. Giard: VNA pulling out of the schools but several nurses have opted to stay. He stated five (5) nurses will be needed (one for each school) – possibly six (6) due to student needs. Health Aide will assist at each school. WPS will be splitting a Nursing Supervisor with East Lyme Public Schools who will manage substitute coverage and among other duties.

Michael Rocchetti & Ron Fedor: Chronic absenteeism: why and what strategies are the schools taking? Mr. Giard, with the assistance of the school principals and vice principals, answered that every student's situation is different and each school may use different strategies to increase attendance based on age and unique, individual situations. Mr. Rocchetti: Are teachers and administrators given leeway to use more stringent measures with students if necessary? Mr. Giard: Yes, where it seems fit. Strategies to address absenteeism include but are not limited to the following:

- Home visits
- Meetings with families
- Promotional campaigns (statewide)
- Activities before the school day begins
- Shorter school days to acclimate
- School based psychological services

Bill Sheehan: Is there a possible projection of retirees in FY25/26 and budget allotment for the replacement of retirees? Joe Mancini: Number of retirees using the health benefits data will be supplied by the BOE at a later date.

Bill Sheehan: Crossing guard removal at CLMS and replacement with Police Officer. Who pays for this? Mr. Giard: The office is paid by the Police Department and legally is the only representative who can direct traffic.

Robert Tuneski: Define paraprofessionals – their jobs in the classroom and is there a need for more. Mr. Giard stated that all paraprofessionals are in place to support Special Education.

Michael Rocchetti mentioned that East Lyme Public Schools has one (1) paraprofessional assisting in every classroom for regular education support. Is this something that WPS should implement?

Mr. Giard stated this has never been a topic for discussion during his tenure. When asked by Mr. Tuneski if he would advocate for this in the future, the Superintendent stated he would need to investigate the topic further before answering.

Bill Sheehan requested a list of organizations requiring fees and paid subscriptions that the BOE belongs to or subscribes to. This list will be provided at a later date.

Mr. Giard stated, when asked by Bill Sheehan, that the next contracts to be reviewed in the fall will be Administrators.

Michael Rocchetti: State funding for Education Cost Sharing (ECS) – WPS used to receive \$1.4million approximately ten years ago but now only receives \$322,000. East Lyme Public Schools receives \$6.5million through ECS. Is anyone researching why the big difference between two similar towns and is there a way for WPS to qualify for more money? Mr. Giard explained that a town's grand list is a primary factor in the state's ECS formula. The presence of Millstone is the primary driver for the lack of funding in Waterford and they may look into this for future years.

Budget for the Board of Education is tentatively approved in the amount of \$57,611,181.

Vote: 5-0-1

Abstained: Ron Fedor

Motion: Passed

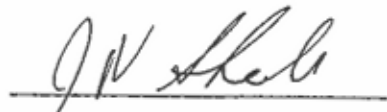
4. Adjournment:

Motion by Bill Sheehan and **seconded** by Joseph Filippetti to adjourn the Budget Meeting of the Board of Finance at 9:12pm.

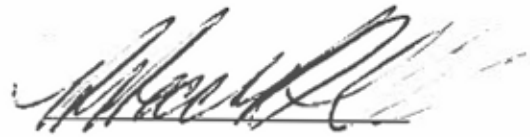
Vote: 6-0-0

Motion: Passed

Respectively Submitted,



John Sheehan, Clerk



Rebecca L. Hall, Secretary