

Wellesley Advisory Committee
February 6, 2016, 8:00 AM
Kingsbury Room, Police Station

Tom Frisardi called the meeting to order at 8:10am. Those present included Mary Crown, Tom Fitzgibbons, Chad Harris, Mike Hluchyj, Mark Kaplan, Michael Mastrianni, Frank Pinto, Sara Raveret, Mason Smith, Scott Tarbox, and Kathleen Woodward.

8:00 Citizen's Speak: There was no one present for Citizen's Speak.

Mary Crown introduced the School Committee.

The School Committee convened their meeting at 8:15am.

8:05 School Committee, School Department presentation of FY17 budget request and discussion

Guests: Matthew Kelley, Chair of the School Committee; Wendy Paul, Vice Chair of the School Committee; Judy Belliveau, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations; David Lussier, Superintendent of Schools; Judy Malone-Neville, Interim Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction; Heidi Perkins, Director of Budget and Finance; and Lori Cimeno, Director of Student Services. Also present were School Committee members Sharon Gray, Anthony Bent, and Patti Quigley.

Overview:

David Lussier presented the overview of the budget. The guideline is not to exceed a 4% budget increase. Items to consider: address legal mandates, invest in Strategic Plan goals, maintain competitive compensation, and seek cost savings and efficiencies. The budgeting process begins in the fall for the following fiscal year. The numbers for the previous fiscal year are usually final by the end of August. The circuit breaker is generally published in early October; this is primarily for out of district placements and is budgeted at 72% for FY17.

The FY17 Internal Budget Guidelines to Staff include proposals for new positions to be budgeted at mid-scale (\$68,717 for professional staff and \$23,000 for support staff). New staff members tend to have four to five years experience. The teaching assistants and paraprofessionals are organizing a union; these are benefitted positions, for the most part. The cost of benefits for requested positions is \$20,000 for professional staff and \$7,500 for support staff.

The process of building the budget begins with Level Service—keeping the same level of service from year to year. Then additional investments are made in the Strategic Plan initiatives. Finally, critical needs that don't fall into either category are addressed.

Enrollment forecasts for FY17

K-5: minus 36

Middle School: plus 2

High School: minus 18

Net total: a drop of approximately 52 students

There was a question on the accuracy of projections over past 10 years: projections are fairly accurate; a national consult was enlisted several years ago.

- Copper GIS forecast: teardowns appear not to have an impact on enrollment; rentals do.

- Even small increases can have a significant impact on schools with small classes/grades.
- No major influx from St Paul's closing.
- There was a question on how the Cropper GIS tracks increase? Wellesley is not seeing the same increase as other towns.
- Enrollment has actually gone down at a faster rate than what Cropper GIS predicted.

Compensation

Collective Bargaining Agreements are to be renegotiated for FY17. Compensation is based on Steps and Lanes: 16 steps, dependent on experience and education. Fifty percent is on top step, fifty percent is moving through the scale. Everyone gets the same step increase until they reach the top step. Step increases are given annually. A dozen benchmark towns are evaluated, and the goal is to not fall into the bottom half of the compensation scale.

Questions were asked regarding retirement: there is no set timeframe for retirement notice; if a retirement is anticipated, then it is factored into the turnover assumption. A question was asked about WHS Department Heads' responsibilities: the department heads are only required to teach one class, as they mentor other teachers and have extensive teacher evaluations and observations to complete. There was a question on how collective bargaining affects Cost-of-Living-Adjustment (COLA): a true increase from a step is really that number plus COLA; how should that be reflected accurately? Not unique to Wellesley; it's a traditional model. COLA takes care of people at top level. There was a question on retention: we typically don't see a pattern of leaving due to compensation; job satisfaction is a factor. A member pointed out that teachers also look at steps and the number of years it takes to advance to a higher level when considering taking a job. The turnover assumption is \$650,000.

Budget Drivers: Mandates and Fixed Costs

These include Special Education services, Special Ed transportation, Special Ed tuitions, requirements for English Language Learners (ELL), transportation, software licenses, utilities (telephone), and legal services (Labor Counsel). The Circuit Breaker is projected to be higher this year: 72% (approximately \$400,000). Anything not spent in the Circuit Breaker can be carried for one year; this can provide a buffer. We are not anticipating a carry over this year. The number of English Language Learners (ELL) is increasing in the schools; the state requires that teachers be specially certified. The ELL Director identified efficiencies saving approximately \$14,700. Labor Counsel has been moved into the school budget. The Special Ed budget and expenses have been relatively consistent. The mandated and fixed costs are \$189,994 (a 0.28% increase).

Personal Services

Additional 7.65 FTEs are requested to maintain level service in the schools—most of the request is for Special Ed teaching assistants. A total of 5.9 FTEs are being added to fill positions related to the Strategic Plan (including three elementary school world language teachers and a .50 FTE social worker). There was a question on FTE counts. Enrollments are going down but student requirements are increasing. Adding Special Ed staff allows Wellesley to keep more students in district, which results in savings.

Budget Process

The initial FY17 budget proposal was a 4.87% increase (\$69,936,218) over FY16. When the schools were asked to cut \$579,493 (to get to a 4% increase), they decided to reduce and/or delay capital requests for one year for both FF&E and Technology in order to preserve the operating budget needs. This strategy will put more pressure on the FY18 budget request. After they made significant cuts to the capital budget to get to the 4% increase, they were told that their operating budget needed to increase by only 4%, and that they could not achieve that by reducing their capital budget. They then went and made more cuts to their operating budget. The FY17 voted budget is \$69,524,634, a 4.25% increase (not including the cuts

made to the capital budget); the capital budget request is \$784,920, an 8.31% decrease (\$71,146 less than FY16).

There was discussion on scheduling a meeting for additional questions; the meeting has to take place before March 4.

There was a motion to adjourn School Committee meeting; the motion was seconded, and the meeting was adjourned.

10:15 Old business/new business

There was discussion on whether there should be additional meetings with FMD and PBC regarding budget questions. In addition, there are more questions for the Board of Public Works. Public Works could come to the March 17 meeting, after the Advisory Report is published.

11:00 Tom Frisardi adjourned the meeting with no objections.

Future meetings:

The Advisory Committee's Public Hearing for the 2016 Annual Town Meeting will be at 7pm on Wednesday, February 10, in the Juliani Room of Town Hall.

Other upcoming events:

Friday, March 11, Advisory Report goes to the printer

Monday, March 28, start date for Annual Town Meeting