

Approved March 10, 2021

**Advisory Committee Meeting
Zoom Video Conference
Wednesday, March 3, 2021, 6:30 p.m.**

Those present from Advisory Committee included Shawn Baker, Julie Bryan, Tom Cunningham, Jake Erhard, Jennifer Fallon, Neal Goins, John Lanza, Jeff Levitan, Bill Maynard, Deed McCollum, Corrine Monahan, Patti Quigley, Mary Scanlon and Doug Smith.

Julie Bryan called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

6:30 p.m. Citizen Speak

There was no one present for Citizen Speak.

6:30 p.m. Article 6 Town Clerk's Salary

Meghan Jop, Executive Director and Tom Ulfelder, Select Board were present.

The Town Clerk survey and analysis of salaries was presented, reviewed and discussed.

Questions and Discussion

- Are Town Clerk jobs comparable across all locations?
 - In many communities, they are. In general, with comparable communities the tasks are the same.
- How long has the Town Clerk had the job and what is the tenure in other towns?
 - This is the Town Clerk's second term. It is an elected position and it was felt that whoever is in the position should be paid what is comparable to other communities.
- A comment was made that it seems like a lot of money to increase the salary in one year.
 - The Town Clerk's salary is evaluated year over year. Every year the Town Clerk's salary is on the warrant. The last review of the comparable salaries was in 2015.
- Do we have any idea what the Town Clerk staffing is in comparable communities? Is the staffing the same as the Wellesley Town Clerk's office?
 - We could reach out to get the comparable information.
- A comment was made that given this is a year of beating on the budget with concerns about closing the gap, it is important to have hard data to evaluate this article. Advisory would like more information before going to Town Meeting on this.
 - We are happy to get information but these are 2021 salaries and it is being looked at as the Town Clerk's position and not the individual in the job.
- What comparable information is needed?
 - Solid answers regarding comparable staffing levels and the tasks performed by other town clerks.

Further clarification/explanation from the Executive Director: When we talk about salaries, we are increasing salaries that are out of line and need to be increased. HR does their part to fix some of this across boards and the departments. When we negotiated with Police and Fire, we found that they were far behind, and these salaries were increased in a difficult year. We don't feel this salary is any different than any other salary in town except in the sense that it is approved by Town Meeting and not a Department.

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- A comment was again made that hard data would help Advisory.
 - The Town Clerk is the only department that can't negotiate on behalf of themselves. This is a non-negotiable salary.
- Based on the median and comparable data, is this something we knew about in the past? Is there any explanation as to why we are trying to do all in one year? It's a tough year to make a large leap rather than doing it in two years.
 - A review was done in 2015, and we thought the position was keeping pace with the 40 - 50 series, but clearly it has not.
- A comment was made that, given the larger budget challenges this year, devoting valuable staff resources to further research on this relatively small-dollar increase may not be prudent.
 - The SB took a very hard look at the proposed increase, and had a thorough debate.
- To the extent it not a huge task to get additional information, it would be great to have and the information can be sent via email versus having another meeting.
- Could HR help provide this information since this is what they do, and what is the logic for not using the established HR group for this?
 - We would reach out to HR, and did so for the previous study as well.

6:50 p.m. School Committee (SC) FY22 Budget

David Lussier, Superintendent, Wellesley Public Schools (WPS); Cyndy Mahr, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations, WPS; Sarah Orlov, Director of Student Services, Michael LaCava, Interim Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, WPS; Kathy Dooley, Director of Technology, WPS; Melissa Martin, Vice Chair, SC; Linda Chow, Chair, SC were present.

School Committee has voted on and supports the FY22 School budget. This has been a very challenging year, and difficult decisions were needed.

The FY22 budget guidelines, budget architecture and process, budget drivers, and the FY22 budget request were presented and reviewed, including detail for enrollment projections and SPED costs. Topics covered included increases/decreases to mandates and fixed costs; positive and negative impacts of maintaining level service; fee increases; budget offsets; and the Cash Capital Budget.

Questions and Discussion

- Do we have the Year-To-Date Actual budget from the current fiscal year so we can see if the Schools are on track with the FY21 budget?
 - The Q2 update was presented at last week's School Committee meeting. We are in better position now than was expected earlier in the year, and we don't think we will need a supplemental appropriation. Q2 updated will forwarded to Advisory.
- The elementary school enrollment numbers jump from this year to next year. How many students do you have that were enrolled for this year and then dropped out and went to other schools due to COVID?
 - It was a 393-student drop, which exceeded our expectations. Parents were making decisions before the district had formulated a plan, and the numbers were most acute at the youngest grades. The home school number is 76. We expect enrollment to reset itself, recognizing thought that elementary enrollment was already on a decline.
- What is the impact if we continue with remote learning in the fall?
 - That would be in addition to what we have budgeted as it is not built into the FY22 budget. It would require supplemental budget funds or state money.
- Do you have a sense of the classroom volume across schools?

- Projections and staffing levels are based on everything being back to normal and following our classroom size guidelines. We don't know whether social distancing requirements will be in place in the fall, and staffing levels do not contemplate them.
- If things don't happen as planned, and not as many students return and classroom sizes are low – will there be mid-year adjustments to the numbers of classrooms?
 - Contractually there are time thresholds -- for most staff, April 15 -- beyond which we can't reduce the staff levels. For newer staff, we have until June and the end of school year to be able to reduce staffing. Colleagues could also be redirected/redeployed.
- When do you expect to hear the final Chapter 70 number and, if we get more, what does that mean from a budgeting standpoint? Is that more money for the Schools or do you give it back to the town?
 - Chapter 70 money doesn't go to the Schools, it goes to the Town. We have a conservative estimate as to what FY22 will look like.
- What future COVID-related costs might there be?
 - The state might require individual districts to carry fully remote learning into the next year, but this has not been budgeted.
- Any requirements related to COVID that resulted in expenses?
 - The actual number is in the budget, with over \$300,000 to provide support for students in making the transition from this year to next year because of COVID disruptions.
- If virtual learning continues, will the town pay for it or will the state provide reimbursement?
 - It is hard to know.
- Do you think delayed K starts will be a problem in the future?
 - We are in the middle of K registration right now, and this is something we see every year where parents hold their kids back for a year.
- Did we lose any students who had to travel to Wellesley and might not have had resources available to do so?
 - We didn't lose any students. We were able to support the Boston students.
- Are any students falling behind?
 - There has been a cost in social and emotional wellbeing and health, not just education. We will be able to adapt educationally, and are at the front end of assessing the other impacts.
- What are the factors that reduce headcount?
 - With the enrollment decline, over the last decade we've consolidated sections. These are anticipated in the appropriate timeframe but, as noted, once we get into the summer and start of the school year, we contractually can't reduce headcount. In fact, the reason we start the K process earlier is to help make decisions on headcount in a timely fashion. Before the April deadline, we will have a sense.
- What is the total IT equipment asset base that the \$1 million in annual tech replacement is serving?
 - We can get back to you on that number.
- A comment was made that this presentation did not cover diversity, equity and inclusion. Were any cuts made throughout the budget that impact DE&I? Is there anything the Director would have done but can't because of budget cuts and the financial situation?
 - Work has expanded around DE&I for example in professional development. We will continue DE&I work into the following year.
 - We have a full landscape of funding including local dollars and federal grants. We think about various title grants and how to use those dollars wherever we can. We can fund many DE&I activities through the grants.
 - This will be a robust year of presence and expanding work on DE&I. The goal is to imbed DE&I work across the organization.

- Can you provide more explanation for the level service reductions of \$640,000 and the \$70,000 increase in COVID expenses?
 - These include one-time expenses such as licenses for on-line learning, and athletics.
 - The viral testing expenses in FY21 of \$300,000 will not recur in FY22.
 - Busing will increase as next year busing will be brought back
 - Out of district tuition costs were in the base for FY21, and not needed for FY22.
 - Other COVID costs that will continue include mobile device management device licensing, online registration process, and Zoom.
 - A detailed explanation of those costs can be provided.
- In chart 16, we could infer that the drop from pre-Covid estimates of FY 22 elementary enrollment to the current estimate represents students who left due to the Covid situation and are not expected to return, correct?
 - Yes.
- In Chart 18, the continuing “glide path” decline in elementary enrollment over the next several years is about 7%, correct?
 - Yes.
- How easy might it be for the RLS teachers to find jobs?
 - It is hard to say. We are seeing retirements. The State might have an early retirement incentive, but it is hard to know.
- A request was made that, with respect to enrollment, the school department provide a chart to SC that gives the number of students in each classroom. Is it possible to provide Advisory the same report based on the chart on Slide 16?
 - The October enrollment report has that for this year, but it is hard to replicate without the actual enrollment.
- A request was made to nevertheless provide an estimate as this would give Advisory a sense of what the budget is built on from the classroom perspective.
- What was the total reduction in capital based on School’s original request to the town?
 - Around \$500,000 for technology. The overall capital request was \$1.5 million which was reduced by \$700,000, with the bulk in IT.
- How do we take \$500,000 out of capital for technology? Will the Schools be able give students the education they need post-COVID as we continue to use Zoom? It seems like a big hit.
 - It is a big hit. We will continue to use Zoom but not to the extent as this year. It has been a great benefit for a lot of different things. There is a planful approach to replace equipment based on service life, but, to accommodate these cuts, things will instead be replaced when they break.
- Now that students are used to having a computer, are they able have the equipment they need both to be in the classroom and to do homework that maybe they didn’t need before?
 - The 1-to-1 environment was accelerated due to COVID. At the high school, students can bring the device of their choice. Families in need are provided with the technology. As device costs come down, though, more students are able to provide their own devices.
- Are there internet services for families that need it?
 - Yes, we provided internet for some families.
- Will they be able to keep that going forward?
 - Yes, it is built into the budget.
- Are Schools included in the town’s IT security audit through Brian DuPont?
 - The Schools are not covered by IT’s security audit. The Schools do an internal audit of the environment. However, an external audit is a good way to ensure that we have reached all benchmarks to keep our technology safe.
 - We have a grant for training for phishing, email and spam and that is being implemented in the central office staff and it will be spread out to teachers. It is a multiyear grant.

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- With respect to the planned replacement of equipment, it seems wasteful to replace items before they break. What is the reason for not waiting until things break?
 - There are many reasons. Devices can be upgraded through the end of their useful life as set by the manufacturer, but beyond they do not provide upgrades for old software meaning there are no security patches which in turn can threaten the entire network.
 - With projectors, one can't see as well as they get older and the light dims. As we continue to replace projector bulbs, the bulbs are expensive. When we replace the equipment, we trade in and get a reimbursement for repairs. We keep the equipment as long as possible, and then trade in at an optimal time to minimize cost.
- Do you track useful life from the manufacturer?
 - We have an extensive asset data base, and every year we run an asset report to track manufacture date, purchase date, and replacement. We recently extended tablets to four years because Apple extended support to four years.
- There was additional discussion of enrollment and the enrollment report. How do we know how many sections are needed?
 - It's estimated based on the enrollment in each year. There is information in the budget document regarding enrollment including projections on the number of classrooms; this will be further refined in April, May and June. We will have a good sense in June if we need to close sections.

8:53 p.m. Administrative Matters/Liaison Reports/Minutes

Minutes Approval

Deed McCollum made and Corrine Monahan seconded a motion to approve the February 24, 2021 minutes.

Roll call vote:

Bill Maynard – yes
Patti Quigley – yes
John Lanza – yes
Mary Scanlon - yes
Deed McCollum - yes
Jennifer Fallon – yes
Jeff Levitan – yes
Corinne Monahan - yes
Shawn Baker – yes
Doug Smith – yes
Jake Erhard – yes
Tom Cunningham – yes
Neal Goins - yes

Minutes were approved 13 to 0.

Liaison Reports

Recreation/Mary Scanlon – Matt Chin, Recreation Director, met with Finance about adding the Morses Pond renovation to the capital plan over next 5 years. The physical project will occur in FY24. Funding

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for the various phases will be covered by CPC for FY22 and FY23. In FY24, \$1.4 million will need to be borrowed.

8:55 p.m. Adjourn

Deed McCollum made and Jenn Fallon seconded a motion to adjourn.

Roll call vote

Bill Maynard - yes
Patti Quigley – yes
John Lanza – yes
Mary Scanlon - yes
Deed McCollum - yes
Jennifer Fallon – yes
Jeff Levitan - yes
Corinne Monahan - yes
Shawn Baker – yes
Doug Smith – yes
Jake Erhard – yes
Tom Cunningham – yes
Neal Goins – yes

Approved 13-0.