

Warwick School Committee Minutes
Budget Meeting of May 6, 2008
Open Session

The Warwick School Committee met in Open Session at Winman Jr. High School on May 6, 2008. Chairman Friel called the meeting to order at 5:10 p.m. with the following in attendance:

COMMITTEE

Christopher Friel, Chairperson
Lucille Mota-Costa, Vice Chair
Bethany Furtado, Clerk
Joyce L. Andrade
Paul Cannistra

ADMINISTRATION

Peter P. Horoschak, Superintendent
Victor Mercurio, Director of Secondary Education
Robert T. Bushell, Director of Elementary Education
Richard D'Agostino, Director Special Services
Leonard Flood, Director of Business Affairs
David E. Small, Director of Buildings and Grounds
Rosemary Healey, Esq., Director of Compliance & Human Resources

Chairman Friel announced that this meeting will be for public comment relative to the budget. The comment rules will apply, i.e. two minutes per person, one trip to the microphone and please address comments to the School Committee.

Summary of comments are as follows: Elizabeth said she had sent a letter to the School Committee members regarding the elimination of the art, music and physical education supervisors. She commented that the elimination of Steve Saunders was a huge mistake and asked the Committee to reconsider. Linda Sheehan said that when we had bond dollars, we hired a coordinator to oversee projects. We haven't had bond money in two years. Ms. Nickerson said that when the budget was presented it was mentioned hiring a consultant for the 403B plan. The Chair said that due to recent changes in the IRS Code, in order for the plan to maintain qualified status, we needed someone as this is a specialized area of the law. We would lose our qualified status and contributions could not be made if not done properly. This is not a new position it is an outside service. Ms. Nickerson questioned why it was not the controller's job. Ms. Nickerson also asked why \$25,000 was budgeted in the Human Resource budget for advertisement of subs when we cannot get subs. She suggested keeping that money for a WISE person.

Tracey McDermott asked how the Committee was going to vote and go to the City with the budget when \$4.7 is needed in cuts. She wanted to know what those cuts would be and asked how the Committee could vote on a budget that we [public] don't have an opportunity to defend and comment on. We have to be able to comment on the budget. She said that with such a deficit, no one should be getting raises; we shouldn't be buying furniture until someone walks these buildings. There is stuff shoved in rooms and in closets. She said that we don't need a \$20,000 line item for calculators each year, don't need \$60,000 for microscopes. We should level fund every department and deduct another 10%, if you don't have it, you work outside the box. She asked about the \$12,000 item for catering for accreditation, when we have Voch Tech.

Jonathan Latierre said he was disappointed after closing three schools we did not cut what we said we would. He asked how \$4.7 million was going to be cut between now and 7:00 o'clock tomorrow night so

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you can vote on it? Will we be given a revised copy of the budget? The Chair responded he would make a presentation of what cuts are made. He said what ended up happening was that pension contributions and health insurance was higher than projected.

A person from transportation remarked that in 2007 WISE lost 17 people and now another 29 jobs are being cut. You are cutting away from the bottom and should be chopping from the top. Bernadine Noland remarked that 29 jobs were lost and only 9 administrators were eliminated. Pam Carroll said that you must realize that the people sitting out here and the parents are your foundation; you will all crumble, be careful and wise in decision for cuts.

Michael Karten asked if the School Committee had considered filing suit. The Chair responded that it would be something the Committee would consider if the City did not contribute 5%. Jeff Miner asked if any of the cuts regarding the nine administrators were positions paid by grants; and the answer was no. Mary Townsend said that \$29,000 appears in two places in the budget, and Mr. Flood responded that it only belongs in Director of Compliance budget and is budgeted in only one place. Ms. Nickerson said it appears in two spots, Superintendent and Human Resources. Ms. Nickerson also asked if an audit took place after Mr. Dooley left and Mr. Flood took over. Ms. Nickerson said that six weekend people were being eliminated. What was the plan for activities during weekends, what are you planning to do with those schools when there are no weekend people there? The Chair said that issue would be taken up with the Superintendent.

Ray Miller asked how long have you been working on the budget? The Chair answered the budget had been presented on Monday and Tuesday. Mr. Miller then commented you are \$4 million short, how can you take care of that in a day? He suggested taking 10% from everyone. The Chair said you can't as there are contracts in place. Mr. Ginolfi commented on the \$250,000 in stipends, hearing impaired teacher being hired, 3rd party 403B position, arbitration fees, and his confusion on the deficit changing, saying it is a moving target. Tracey McDermott remarked about the \$450,000 line item for social studies textbooks, which will replace the 1991 textbooks. She said what will one year matter. Cathy Davis (art teacher) said that Mr. Saunders was critical to the art program, that he looks for funding, and she did not want to lose an administrator, mentor and leader. Brian Thomas commented if you knew there was no funding why sign the contract and go ahead. The Chair responded that we relied every year on the City providing funding. Michelle Landri asked who was on the Committee when the contract was signed [Mota-Costa, Friel and Andrade]. She said she voted "no" for the contract, and knew that this day was going to come. She did not have faith in the School Committee or in the administration that they would live up to their end of the bargain. Three years ago the teachers took a 0% and a retro and a retro to get the problem solved. It is unfair now that Superintendent Horoschak is counting on the teachers and the union to help solve this problem.

Linda Sheehan asked about the hearing impaired teacher position, saying we have a full time and two half time, and now we are hiring a third. Dr. D'Agostino said this teacher is specifically for a student in an outside situation that is being brought back. We are going to share this teacher with North Kingstown. If the student is unable to return, we will not hire this teacher.

Two employees from WISE said that there is a woman who has worked 36 years who is being laid off, and requested that she be given six months for retirement. Janice Dailey commented that only three or four people were taking notes and asked "are you remembering all of the suggestions or you just don't care." The Chair said that the suggestions made would be taken under advisement.

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Lou, a parent of a teenage boy with special needs, said it was a shame to lose our bus drivers and aides and that a different company would not save any money, it would just hurt the kids. Peggy McKeever suggested bringing back children from outside, back into schools, and have our own school building. She said not to underestimate our importance as we are the foundation. Sue Pastino said she was a clerk at the health office and said someone has to be there when the nurse is not.

Betty O'Leary said we are human beings, not numbers, and that the cutbacks are on the backs of the blue collar workers. It is time that this administration gives something back. How can you give this administration a raise? Ed Allen said he didn't know how to run a building with all the cuts. If a kid is sick or has a bloody nose, who do you call – the custodian. Dale, a WISE employee, said you gambled with the teacher contract to settle it, now gamble and settle our WISE contract. Tom Flanders, commented on the woman with 36 years being laid off, saying we need to do something for this woman, let's put the "human" back into Human Resources.

MOTION 2008-81: Moved by Mr. Cannistra, seconded by Mrs. Furtado, to go into closed session for discussion and/or action regarding those items of business exempt from open meetings under General Laws of Rhode Island 42-46-5(a)(1) and (a)(2).

MOTION PASSES (5-0)

Christopher Friel - Aye Lucille Mota-Costa - Aye
 Joyce L. Andrade – Aye Bethany Furtado – Aye
 Paul Cannistra - Aye

MOTION 2008-82: Moved by Mr. Cannistra, seconded by Mrs. Furtado, to adjourn.

MOTION PASSES (5-0)

Christopher Friel - Aye Lucille Mota-Costa - Aye
 Joyce L. Andrade – Aye Bethany Furtado – Aye
 Paul Cannistra - Aye

Meeting adjourned: 6:30 p.m.
 Bethany Furtado, Clerk
 Betsey Snipes, Secretary