

Warwick School Committee Minutes
Meeting of May 7, 2008
Budget Open Session

The Warwick School Committee met in Open Session at Aldrich Jr. High School, on Wednesday, May 7, 2008. Chairman Friel called the meeting to order at 7:08 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

The Chair announced that the proposed adjustments to the Warwick School Department Budget were available. He called for a Motion to approve the Proposed Adjustments for the FY2008-09 Warwick School Department Budget as more fully set forth in the document with the same title available at this meeting. (1) **reduce non-salary and benefit expenditure areas by \$1,869,698;** (2) **budget for 9 additional 10th step teacher retirements at a savings of \$1,086,874;** (3) **eliminate six science lab aides [sic] assistants for savings of \$305,000;** (4) **remove from the superintendent's proposed budget a salary increase of 3% for administrative and middle management/supervisors resulting in savings of \$298,000;** (5) **reduce on electrician position for savings of \$49,982.40;** (6) **eliminate maintenance warehouse/stock clerk position for savings of \$66,471;** (7) **reduce the salaries and benefits line items by \$1,083,043;** with reasons fully set forth in that document.

MOTION 2008-83: Moved by Ms. Mota-Costa, seconded by Mr. Cannistra, to approve the proposed adjustments for the FY2008-09 Warwick School Department Budget

The chair asked if the School Committee had any comments – there were none. The Chair called for public comment – summarized as follows: Tracey McDermott – noted it was lab “assistant” not aide and asked for clarification of time and trip to microphone for comments. She asked where in the budget are there cuts for furniture, supplies, calculators, equipment, etc., and we should not be spending \$450,000 on social studies books. She said there is no one coming through looking to see what we have. She said that some of the science lab people received calls from the union just this afternoon and some did not get a call at all. She commented that cutting science lab assistants is a safety issue, saying she has 500 kids a week in a lab. She does the chemical sorting and she is certified in science. There will be safety code issues; we use fire, gas and chemicals. How do you think the department head will have time to do that, with three minutes between classes to reorganize? Some science assistants have Bachelor Degrees. Ms. McDermott also asked why we pass our budget on an incremental budgeting system. This approach is not recommended. She said we should start with a base of zero and make each department prove where they need to spend money.

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Donna Tobin from Pilgrim commented on #7 [reduce the salaries and benefits line items] She said there are many rumors regarding cutting salary persons hours, clerks, secretary and guidance. She hoped that this was something that wouldn't happen, especially in guidance. She said there is one clerk in her school, and she is an extremely busy person. There has been a request for the past 5 years for an extra half-time clerk to help out. Michelle Landri from Pilgrim said that it occurred to her that at the previous meeting you were looking for suggestions at what "could be done," but got a lot of what you can't do. There consistently was the suggestion for "cutting administration." She was glad to hear the administrators were not getting a 3% raise, but said there are no cuts in administration. She said if she could choose Cathy Lawson, science lab assistant, over Ron Poirier (who she said was her mentor and a fantastic person), she would choose Cathy. How will we meet the Governor's challenge for better math and science students? George Landri was disappointed with the small crowd in attendance at the meeting. He mentioned the elimination of Mr. Tinkham after 39 years of service, and said that the music department needs a voice, saying he would be that voice, but perhaps we could hire back Mr. Tinkham at a lower rate.

Cheri Nickerson commented - "guess you didn't take my suggestions" [cutting management and administration.] She said she saw a pattern and read some employee's names with dates of hire - 1972, 1977, 1979, 1980, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988 – on and on, and asked if everyone with longevity was being cut to save money or force them to retire? The Chair said that positions were eliminated not the person. Ms. Nickerson asked about the \$800,000 Medicaid figure and where did that figure come from.

Pam Carroll commented about the consolidation of bus routes and the timing and safety of children and increased traffic. She said we currently we are just getting there on time. If you consolidate, children will be on the buses for longer periods of time. Special education students have medical problems and some can't sit still for long periods of time – they will spend more time in the morning and afternoon on the bus.

Jonathan Latierre remarked about budgeting for 9 additional 10th step teacher retirements and asked if the unemployment figures had been figured in. The Chair said that is an assumption and every year we do make certain assumptions. There is a line item for unemployment costs. Mr. Latierre also asked about #7 discussion with executive board of WTU "have taken place" or "plan on taking place." The answer to that was "plan." Jim Ginolfi questioned about the difference in the deficit and wondered where the \$1.5 million difference came from. The Chair commented that this is a living document, it is tough to forecast, some areas increased, pension contributions, health insurance, etc. Attorney Steven Fanning, attorney for WISE, wanted to go on record saying he thought the way this budget has been handled is disgraceful, 20% layoff WISE. This is on the backs of the hardworking union people. He asked when are you going to sit down with the WISE union and negotiate a fair contract with our members. The Chair responded was it was his understanding that certain documents had been requested and provided, and we are waiting to hear back from the Union. Mr. Fanning said we are prepared to meet any day.

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Amy Frank (parent of students at Winman and Toll Gate) said that thinking about the elimination of lab assistants was making her nervous, and asked what are you putting in place for the safety and education for my kids next year in science. The Chair said we are not happy to make these cuts, but we have a deficit to address. He said he knew what a good job they do, and it was not with any pleasure we are making these decisions tonight to eliminate them. Lynn (WISE employee) asked why no cuts in middle management, and why are science teacher assistants being cut, they are fabulous, as well as secretaries, clerks, electrician, and warehouse person you are cutting. Why WISE – we feel we have a target on our back. The Chair said that there have been cuts in middle management. Lynn said there are so many areas you can cut, find another way to save jobs, we need science assistants and custodians.

Darlene Netoch said she felt that this school committee was more compassionate, and that the previous School Committee, business director and superintendent were asleep at the switch. She asked why we had to pay the new superintendent's moving costs. She said that if the state is not going to give you money, go to the state and say "no we are not going to do that until you give us money." She also questioned about paying for lunches for the judges and why did we pay \$7,100 to test the sixth graders to go into honors. Charlie Benson commented that a budget that is balanced at this moment may not be in another month. He said that there is no reason to give benefits to any elected official, and he knew that the job was difficult, but if you decide to run should you should not be given benefits.

The chair called for a vote on Motion 2008-83 Moved by Ms. Mota-Costa, seconded by Mr. Cannistra, to approve the proposed adjustments for the FY2008-09 Warwick School Department Budget.

MOTION PASSES (5-0)

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

Budget adjustment worksheet	
\$4,759,069	projected deficit
(\$1,086,874)	savings realized through 9 additional teacher retirements
(\$305,000)	elimination of six science lab aide [sic] assistant positions
(\$298,000)	elimination of proposed wage increase for adm/middle management
(\$66,471)	elimination of maintenance warehouse/stock clerk position
(\$49,983)	elimination of one electrician position
(\$1,869,698)	level funding of all non-salary/benefit line items
(\$1,083,043)	reduction of salary and benefit line items
\$ 0	adjusted projected deficit

MOTION 2008-84: Moved by Ms. Mota-Costa, seconded by Mr. Cannistra, 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: 8:02 p.m.
Bethany Furtado, Clerk
Betsey Snipes, Secretary