

Watertown School Committee

Report of the Subcommittee on Budget and Finance

Meeting Date: March 14, 2016

Location: High School Library

Subcommittee Members in Attendance: John Portz (chair), Guido Guidotti, and Candace Miller

School Officials in Attendance: Jean Fitzgerald, Charles Kellner and other staff

Other Attendees: School Committee members Mark Sideris, Eileen Hsu-Balzer, Kendra Foley, Liz Yusem and members of the public

The meeting was called to order at 7:00.

I. FY17 Budget Discussions – New Initiatives

New initiatives proposed for the FY17 budget include:

- Makerspace at the Middle School – This would be in the library and cost approximately \$23,000 for staff support and \$20,000 for equipment.
- 1-1 Chrome Books – This would add chrome books for all students in the 9th and 10th grades. The pilot in the 8th grade would continue. Students in all three grades could take the chrome books home. The chrome books would use google apps for education. Estimated cost is \$122,500. There was a discussion about students/parents purchasing insurance and the challenges of students using private devices.
- Project Lead the Way – This is a national program involving various pathways for high school students. We are participating in the engineering pathway. One course was added this year and two would be added in FY17. Approximate costs for laptops and fees are \$40,000.
- Music – Add one FTE by making two part-time elementary music teachers each full-time. This has ripple effects that benefit the middle school music program as well.
- Foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES) – A detailed three-year budget was provided for the implementation of this program, beginning with pre-K and Kindergarten in FY17. The program is scheduled to be 30 minutes/day, five days/week. For FY17, this involves hiring three teachers and various materials at an approximate cost of \$198,000.
- Preschool – A preschool class will be built into the space in the Phillips School formerly used by Growing Places. This will be a mix of special education and typically developing students, with tuitions offsetting some of the additional costs.

II. Special Education

A document was presented that compared FY16 SPED costs for tuitions and transportation to projected costs for FY17. The projection is based only upon current students moving forward to next year; it does not include any calculation for currently unknown requests for SPED services. On that basis, enrollment in tuition programs is anticipated to drop from 89 to 84, while gross tuition costs drop from \$4,546,157 to \$4,539,683. Transportation services are anticipated to drop from 113 to 100 students, however costs are anticipated to increase from \$1,000,300 to \$1,172,061.

A variety of related topics were discussed, including the carry-forward in the SPED Circuit Breaker account; the need to create protocols for accessing the town's SPED Stabilization Fund; and the need for an Integrated Support Program at the elementary level, but no space for such a program.

III. Major Budget Offsets

A document was presented that included the fifteen most significant budget offsets that come from funding sources outside the town appropriation. The largest of these sources are grants: federal SPED and Circuit Breaker, federal Title 1, as well as the one-time state Foundation Reserve Grant of \$250,000. There are a variety of fee-based sources as well, such as athletic fees, bus fees, and pre-school fees. The total in offsets on the document is \$5,131,731.

IV. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:30.

Submitted by John Portz, Chair