

Feb 13 2023 Precinct 17 Caucus Meeting Minutes

Location: 7:00-8:00 South Elementary School

Precinct 17 Member Attendees: Bill Licata, Joseph Hutchinson, Lori Downs, Lorenzo Pizarro, Kathy Bell, and Sue Arenstam

Absent: Cindy Femino, Al Dinardo, Pamela Hastings

School administration presented 2024 budget

Discussion/presentations

- Introduction
- Meeting minutes approved for Dec 2022 and Jan 2023
- School budget presentation by Dr Chris Campbell and Dr Adam Blaisdell
Over the years, schools have worked collaboratively with town to reduce the budget as much as possible. Additionally have worked to reduce budget by:
 - Working with unions to pass modest contracts.
 - FY23 reduced the budget by 770,000...
 - FY 2024 reduced budget by 2.2 million dollars
- I Installing solar panels to reduce electricity costs

Summary of school system budget:

- 77% of school budget is salaries.
- Contracted services up 13%; transportation is major driver of increase of budget....100 miles of road, cost of oil up **206%**.
- Special education costs are up **14%**.
- State auditors identified \$711.4 million in unfunded state mandates related to school aid.
- Thus the large percent increase is not due to staff salaries, but rather due to uncontrolled costs...busing, special ed, state mandates, etc.

Town has requested level service funding for 2024....reduced it by 4% in Nov of last year.

Dec 5th school department presented budget...was asked to reduce by another \$800,000.

Current budget is 2.2 million dollars, to get to current budget, department is reducing already 15 positions through attrition. Entry level positions are not being filled now because neighboring towns pay new teachers more. Currently, schools are trying to get less experienced teachers to get those savings, however seeing fewer applicants with less experienced teachers holding off retiring.

- To cut another \$450000, will need to lay off 15 positions thru attrition and reduce admin positions.
- To cut 800,000 will need to lay off 7-10 teachers, specialists, plus admin positions, plus 15 through attrition.
- Fincom education subcommittee has proposed to hold \$800,000 of School Budget for 2024, will provide to school system if needed.

Discussion ensued: how budget shortfalls may be managed in coming years; need for more commercial development; better education entices more commerce to area; better planning needed by town to meet future needs vs potential override if these shortfalls continue in the coming years.

- Ongoing Traffic Mitigation project.
 - Lori: plans to go before Select board on Feb 21st via public comment. Can request that they look at it in a future meeting. Discussed how to get public to attend meeting to support this initiative
 - Met with Mr Downey, said 4-way stop at Wareham and River Run Rds don't meet requirements. Also stated to slow traffic need multi-prong approach – speed tables, perhaps a roundabout, etc. Suggested Lori go to Old Colony Planning group to discuss this issue
- Precinct 17 prep meetings to discuss warrant and April 1 Town meeting warrant:
 - March 13th – watch presentation of town warrant on PAC TV
 - April 27th LWV presenting overview of town charter at town hall