

**TOWN OF WALPOLE  
SPECIAL SELECTBOARD MEETING  
JANUARY 5, 2018**

Selectboard Present: Peggy Pschirrer (Chair); Steven Dalessio; Cheryl Mayberry

FMRSD: Superintendent, Ms. Laurie Landry and Business Manager. Mr. Jim Fenn

Staff Present: Rich Kreissle, Sarah Downing

Public: Cheryl and Leroy Watson

**CALL TO ORDER:** Mrs. Pschirrer called this Special Walpole Selectboard meeting to order at 2:05 PM in the Walpole Town Hall. The Fall Mountain Region School District Superintendent, Ms. Lori Landry and Business Administrator, Mr. Jim Fenn requested a meeting to review their proposed 2018-2019 Budget. The Walpole Selectboard requested this meeting be held before the budget is officially adopted by the FMRSD Board. The format will be that Ms. Landry and Mr. Fenn will make their presentation first and that will be followed by questions from the Selectboard and the public. There will be final comments from Ms. Landry and Mr. Fenn.

Ms. Landry explained the purpose of their request was just to have a general conversation on their proposed budget and to answer any questions regarding the budget. They start their budget process by meeting with the school principals and have met with their Finance Committee. They have published a great deal of information on their FMRSD website. They previously forwarded copies of their State & Local Ed Tax Comparison Schedule.

Mr. Fenn advised they put together a budget that they felt meets the needs of the students. The budget was originally a 2+% increase over their previous budget and that was presented to their Board. They were concerned with the impact on two of their towns, in particular, Alstead and Charlestown, who got hit hard. Therefore they went back and trimmed their proposed budget to these new numbers. The report distributed at this meeting is the general operating budget supported by taxes and is a decrease from the current year's budget (Article 1). Article 1 is what he had highlighted in yellow plus the other funds of the Food and Grants Program. Those have to be combined in Article 1. Mr. Dalessio noted that last year Article 1 was \$29,636,262 and now this year it is \$30,258,708. The general operating fund has gone up. Mr. Fenn explained Article 1 last year plus Articles 2 and 3 last year (collective bargaining agreements) become a part of the base budget comparison going forward. He had explained the different appropriations and how they have changed. The other articles are separate. Ms. Landry explained in the calculations there are certain things they include by law. They include the collective bargaining agreements and contractual agreements which includes the teachers and other personnel which had to be added into this year's default budget. That is how they end up with the default budget of \$30,292,413. Ms. Landry displayed these calculations of the default budget on her laptop computer in accordance with the RSA. Mr. Fenn said what they propose is \$92,000+/- of what was approved last year. What they are experiencing is even though their budget is down. The amount of money that needs to be raised by taxes is up over \$300,000 from last year. That is because of two major components: 1) they lost State aid funds of \$169,718; Charlestown will be losing \$110,000/year. Walpole will be losing less. Because they had over the fund balance last year, every town got a portion of their \$263,000 back. This comes back to the towns during the tax rating process and it is included in their non-tax revenue and off-set by the amount the towns need to give them. It reduces the amount the towns end up paying during the next year. This is on the FMRSD form MS-24R which Mr. Fenn submits to the Department of Revenue Administration as a part of the tax rate setting process. These forms are on the DRA website. In the big formula it is approved and calculated by the DRA.

Ms. Landry went over staffing changes that appear in the budget. They removed a half-time custodial position at the High School. By doing that, they will restore a half-time person back at the High School. They are also going to remove one teacher at their Alternative Ed Program as they no longer need two people in this program. They need to add one para-professional at the Alstead Primary School. Other personnel changes were mentioned. Replying to a question from Mrs. Pschirrer, Mr. Fenn said it is eliminating the position depending on seniority and rules within the union. We may have somebody else leave or retire to enable them to move a position. He would have to look at each one individually. Their goal is not to lay off or terminate someone; they work within natural attrition. Mrs. Pschirrer asked how big the budget is for Special Education Services. Mr. Fenn said it is \$6,700,000. About \$1,000,000 is out-of-district. Ms. Landry would have to check on the number of students in Walpole but probably less than 20. Mrs. Pschirrer noted the Selectboard would like to know how many students Walpole has in the High School, elementary and pre-school. Mr. Fenn will provide those numbers. Mr. Fenn noted that “504” was originally started for accommodations for Vietnam Veterans for colleges but then the scope got broadened. They deal with medical issues and food allergies all the time; special diets are addressed in all the schools every day.

Mr. Dalessio asked what is driving the school board numbers so high. Mr. Fenn said they did a Wage and Salary Study this last summer/early fall for the non-union positions. The recommendation was they need to step-up some people in different categories for about \$60,000. Ms. Landry and Mr. Fenn worked on a three-year proposal that they have not as yet presented to the Board. Some is legal costs. Ms. Landry said they have to negotiate the support staff agreement next year. It is a separate line under School Board. They negotiated a three-year contract with the teachers this year; it will be on the warrant in March. The secretaries are unionized except for Ms. Landry’s secretary. None of the other administrative staff is unionized. Mr. Fenn moved unemployment insurance over to Board; it had been buried under facilities.

Mr. Dalessio asked what the current thinking is on the FM Regional Middle School. Mr. Fenn read Warrant Article 3; it is to form a Research Committee. Ms. Landry said right now it is just an idea/ thought. Mr. Fenn noted they would look at this educationally first and then financially. Mrs. Pschirrer and Mr. Dalessio mentioned the Hooper Trust that applies to Walpole students only. It is to study soils, botany, agriculture, and forestry. Environmental studies were added in 1995.

Mr. Watson had some questions that will deal with his new position as the School District Moderator. He referenced Article 3: First there are two questions: “shall there be a study” and “shall they appropriate the money to fund that study”. At the Deliberative Session, they have the authority to adjust the money amount, but do they have the authority to vote down the idea of having a study during this session? Ms. Landry would ask the attorney first but she believes they can adjust the money. Mr. Fenn will have to clarify the wording because that is a good question. The School Board can do the study committee without voter approval. They are asking the voters if they want to do this and/or pay a little towards it. The Board can do this in the budget without voter approval but the Board does not want to do it on their own. Mrs. Pschirrer said they could break this down into two Articles: 1) Should they form a Research Committee; and 2) are they willing to fund it?

Mr. Watson referenced Article #8 that deals with Walpole; funding and Capital Reserves. Are they going to make available fund balances? Mr. Fenn replied they are now in this version. The Walpole Capital Reserve Fund as of June 30, 2017, had \$204,834.01. Mr. Watson noticed Article #10 which is to “raise and appropriate up to \$500,000 to be placed in the district’s Capital reserve funds with the breakdown” and it lists percentages to be distributed, for example, Acworth and the High School have more money

going in. They are all spending more out of their capital reserve accounts than is going in. Mr. Fenn is happy to share the plan that shows how the funding is being raised and the plans. This year Walpole will be spending more than will be going in because they are doing two major roof projects. They build up the savings and then do a major project. Mr. Watson's concern is four towns will say more money is going out than is coming in; what do they do about it. That could lead to someone wanting to make an amendment. Article #10 is listed in both percentage allocation and dollar allocation. What authority does a Deliberative Session have in terms of amendments related to the allocation? Mr. Fenn said they could do a separate warrant article to put any amount of money into a Walpole reserve fund to raise and appropriate those funds. They cannot give a town 50% unless they paid in the 50%. There are two things going on. First, it has been the case that if we do not have the revenues to fund this warrant article then they distribute what they have depending on the percentages. That is why the percentages and dollar amounts are there. Mr. Fenn noted they could not change percentage figures in this warrant article but could bring in either a new article or petitioned warrant article to do a site specific for Walpole. Mr. Fenn said they would have to reword it because now it says "and 50% for up to \$250,000 to be placed in the High School Capital Reserve Fund". Mr. Fenn said they would have to amend that as that motion to be legitimate and legal. It is a good question.

Mr. Watson mentioned that for Article 1 there is a lot of information on the website. How far into the available data can you go in to propose an amendment? Mr. Fenn replied you can go in and say you would like to reduce \$50,000 because he does not believe this function of the Superintendent's Office needs to be going forward. It is the School Board's decision whether they are going to use the funds for the purpose it is being asked for. Someone can change a budget but they cannot say where it will come from.

Mr. Kreissle had a question about the MS-24. Can he log in to get the information? Mr. Fenn said he could go into that website but to use the MS-24R as it is the revised copy approved by the DRA.

Ms. Landry talked about some budget cuts. The SRO officer at the High School; they would like to reduce it from a year-round to a nine-month school year hire. Right now they have a full-time SRO officer. The Early Learning Center; they are proposing to start bringing in three-year olds into the Pre-K program. They will eliminate one teacher in this program and move the three-year olds into the regular Pre-K programs in the schools. They have put together a fantastic four-year old universal program. Mr. Fenn said they are ready to bring the three-year olds back into their home schools. This will save them about \$100,000/year going forward. Mr. Dalessio reported the Walpole Police Department feels the safety officer is an important position. Going to a nine-month position sounds reasonable.

Mr. Fenn mentioned they are starting to see growth in their student population after an almost 20-year decline. As the older generation is moving out of their homes, they are starting to see a younger population with children moving back into the communities.

Mr. Fenn noted they are in their three-year cycle of Homeland Security coming in and doing updates on their buildings. As a result there are things they can do to improve safety in the buildings. There are grants available for safety, security and some building work. For Charlestown he wrote a grant for some asbestos abatement. District-wide he wrote some grants for security access to the buildings. The local Police and Fire Departments pretty much know where the rooms are but the out-of-town emergency service providers do not know where the rooms are. Through Homeland Security they discovered their intercoms do not always work in all hallways. He wrote a grant to enhance all the intercoms in the district so they can put speakers outside the buildings. He has about \$400,000 of grant applications in; he

would like all of them but will be happy with half. Ms. Landry noted they are also looking at their Emergency Management Program and will be meeting with local officials soon. Mr. Fenn feels it is important to coordinate their work with the district towns and emergency services. Some towns have the railroad, we are close to Int. 91, etc. He is impressed with the good plans they have. Their plans need to be updated every year and sent to Homeland Security. They plan to do a skills assessment with all employees. They are almost finished with the first draft of their Master Plan but need to work on the “holes”. They then plan to invite police chiefs and fire chiefs in to give them their perspectives on it. After that they will meet with all the Police and Fire Departments and ask them to review the draft plan. They want to include the uniqueness of the five towns into their Master Plan. It is a lot of work. One of the new things that is coming is looking to use social media/cell phones to put out the right message.

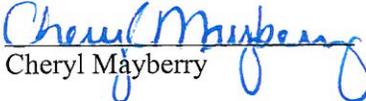
Mrs. Pschirrer summarized by saying the Selectboard appreciate all their time to discuss these important issues with them. The FMRSC Board will present this budget on Wednesday, January 10<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 PM at the High School.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Mrs. Pschirrer declared this meeting adjourned at 3:08 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Regina Borden, Recording Secretary

  
Peggy L. Pschirrer, Chair

  
Steven Dalessio

  
Cheryl Mayberry

(**Note:** These are unapproved Minutes. Corrections will be found in the Minutes of the January 11, 2018, Selectboard meeting.)