

Weston Public Schools
 Board of Education Meeting
 Weston Town Library
 January 22, 2013

Attendance:

Philip Schaefer, Chairperson	Sonya Stack
Ellen Uzenoff, Vice Chairperson	Dr. Colleen Palmer, Superintendent
Richard Bochinski, Secretary/Treasurer	Dr. Kenneth Craw, Assistant Superintendent
Nina Daniel	Lewis Brey, Director of Human Resources
Denise Harvey	Dr. Jo-Ann Keating, Director of Finance & Ops.
Dana Levin	

III. RESUME PUBLIC SESSION, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

IV. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Motion: Moved that the Weston Board of Education elect Phil Schaefer as the Board Chairperson. Motion by Mrs. Uzenoff, second by Mrs. Harvey, all in favor. (7-0)

Motion: Moved that the Weston Board of Education elect Ellen Uzenoff as the Board Vice-Chairperson. Motion by Mr. Schaefer, second by Mrs. Levin, all in favor. (7-0)

Motion: Moved that the Weston Board of Education elect Dick Bochinski as the Board Secretary/Treasurer. Motion by Mrs. Harvey, second by Ms. Daniel, all in favor. (7-0)

IV. RECOGNITION – no report

VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: Moved that the Weston Board of Education approves the minutes of the December 17, 2012 Executive and Regular Sessions. Motion by Mrs. Uzenoff, second by Ms. Daniel, all in favor. (7-0)

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT – no report

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Ratification of Memorandum of Understanding with Weston Teachers' Association

Motion: Moved that the Weston Board of Education ratifies the Memorandum of Understanding with the Weston Teachers' Association (WTA). Motion by Mrs. Levin, second by Mrs. Uzenoff, all in favor. (7-0)

2. Presentation of the Roles and Responsibilities of School Resource Officer

Dr. Palmer introduced the Weston High School administration and leadership team (Mrs. Wolak, Mr. Doak, Dr. Marotto, and Mr. Berkowitz). Mrs. Levin commented that a similar presentation was given to the Policy Committee a few months ago as a beginning step in this process.

Dr. Marotto provided a copy of the School Resource Officer (SRO) Executive Summary and gave a brief presentation on the ongoing process of investigating an SRO, where we are now, and where we may be going.

The core belief summary of Weston High School is to provide “a safe and intellectually challenging environment that will empower students to become innovative thinkers, creative problem-solvers, effective communicators, and inspired learners to thrive in the twenty-first century.” It was stressed that without a safe environment, the mission cannot be achieved.

The Summary of Work encompasses three main areas:

1. **Ongoing research.** The State of Connecticut’s *Children, Youth, and the Police: Recommended Policies and Procedures* (November 2011) gives a very concise definition of School Resource Officer and very elaborately defends the position. Documents have been reviewed not only for districts within Connecticut, but related states as well.
2. **Interviews.** There are some site visits scheduled after midterm exams. Dr. Marotto has been able to have a conversation with counter-parts at other District Reference Group (DRG) A districts and the SRO at Wilton HS (in its 16th year with an SRO). It is stressed that we tailor the job description to meet our needs.
3. **Analysis and job descriptions.** Job descriptions from the four DRG A districts that employ SROs are included in the executive summary. Other districts in Connecticut that have SROs have been included as well.

A School Resource Officer is a law enforcement officer assigned to protect a school. The SRO position encompasses three major components:

1. The primary responsibility is law enforcement and security. The SRO will establish and maintain a close partnership with administration and faculty, maintain a high visibility within the school community, and serve as a positive role model for students.
2. We look at the SRO position as going beyond the presence of security in the school to include law-related education. The SRO will promote healthy behavior through positive relationships with students, act as an instructor for specialized short-term programs, and prepare appropriate lesson plans as needed.
3. The last component of the definition is law-related counseling. The SRO will work with school counselors to help students, and facilitate conflict resolution with students and families on preventative intervention efforts. Conflict resolution not only helps the students to solve problems, but it teaches them how to solve problems.

DRG A districts with an SRO are Darien, New Canaan, Ridgefield, and Wilton; Region 9, Easton-Redding, and Westport do not. The principal at Staples High School has enhanced security in place of an SRO.

If we decide to have an SRO, then the work really begins, with establishing a specific job description and deciding how this position really fits our particular needs.

3. Gifts

Dr. Palmer, as per Board policy #3280, has accepted, with appreciation, the following donation from the Weston High School PTO:

\$12,000 towards the refurbishment of the Weston High School Library.

This donation is for a room off the main library that is currently being used for storage that is being converted into an active space for students.

IX. OLD BUSINESS – no report

X. SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

1. Next Board Meeting Thursday, January 24, 2013

2. District Update

Dr. Palmer and Mr. Brey updated the Board on the principal search. We are working with C.E.S. to help us with the advertisement and a beyond-regional brochure to help us find candidates. Later this week, early next week we will officially post for the position. We have great success in using C.E.S. before and we expect a strong pool of candidates to choose from. We anticipate that within four weeks of getting the brochure out we will begin interviewing. We will take a 2-3 week period maximum to interview and are looking at a July 1, 2013 hire.

The only other item of note is that the Board has been provided with the *Outstanding Accomplishments for 11-12*. We will do this again at the end of this year. We are going to publish this on heavier stock paper and give it out to realtors and parents. It really speaks to our accomplishments in all realms and shows the quality of our educational program here.

School reports are included in the Board packets. We will be sending these out to parents. In the interest of time, we will not be giving presentations, but they have been provided for the Board to review.

XI. Budget Workshop #3

1. Special Education

Presented by Lois Pernice, Director of Pupil Personnel Services

The overall budget change is 5.65%.

We are continuing to work on the action plans from identified opportunities in the District and Community Partners report (DCP):

1. SRBI, remediation and intervention model – we have made tremendous progress.
2. The role of paraprofessionals – have taken survey information and are providing additional training.
3. Contracted services – particularly for students on the autistic spectrum where many of our services come from outside contractors.
4. Our own staffing criteria in terms of speech and PT – more group services and less 1:1 services.
5. Allocate district-wide resources to strengthen the interactions with parents and support in-district efforts. In this opportunity it has been recommended that we create a new position, which cannot be addressed at the building level, but rather, Central Office.
6. Expanding in-house programs – have developed a Life Skills program at the high school.

We did try to make some shifts with teaching staff, but it didn’t meet our needs.

Budget Drivers

1. Assistant Director of Pupil Personnel Services

This position encompasses special education as well as pupil personnel services. The title of this position varies at other districts. While there has been stability in the number of students in our district who are identified as qualifying for special education (at 9.74%, we are below the state, which is at 11% and the DRG which is around 10%), there is an increase in student needs. We have some student with multiple disabilities also we have an increased focus on our students with lesser disabilities. We have a strong increase in parent requests for those services as well as an increase in accountability for all our students.

There are changes coming in terms of supervision and evaluation. Right now our building administrators do the evaluations for all our special education teachers and counselors. Mrs. Pernice currently evaluates and supervises all related service staff and provides indirect supervision and evaluation to all the others. There is a large number in terms of supervision: 23.8 teachers, 19 related service, 12 counselors, 4 nurses, and 45 paraprofessionals. The changes coming will make this extremely difficult to manage. The Assistant Director position could take some of those teachers and related staff off of the building administrators and Mrs. Pernice. Per state statute, this has to be an administrator in order to do the supervision and evaluation.

The time required to manage state mandates continually increases. There is increased reporting and increased monitoring by the CT SDE. For example, something we have been monitored on is that we have too many white children identified as OHI (Other Health Impaired). This means we may be over-identifying OHI, but because we do not have a very diverse population that is how it comes out. Each IEP of children who were identified as OHI must be reviewed to find out when they were identified and why they were identified. There is a lot of paperwork that comes with that. There has been an increase in desk audits, in terms of how money is spent. There are other mandates around PBIS, SRBI, student success plans, and bullying. When there are parent complaints, there is a great deal of paperwork involved with the State Department. There is an Early Childhood Commission we have to be a part of. We have to prepost all of our preschool students in terms of testing. There is the ongoing Wellness Committee.

We are always looking to align the special education curriculum with the regular education curriculum for students who are in a pull-out program as well as students who get support. Our special education teachers need to learn all of the information going along with common core and align direct classes to this model. We need to train our special education teachers in Reader's and Writer's Workshop, responsive classroom, AIM – all of the initiatives our regular teachers need to be trained in as well, and maybe modeling and coaching to ensure they are carrying this out correctly. And there needs to be evaluation in terms of all the implementation.

Our curriculum goes hand-in-hand with CMTs. Our scores are currently not as strong as we would have liked. When you look at CMT scores, there is a special subgroup for special education students. This group used to be looked at in schools with 40 and below in special education, now they look at 20 or below. There is more emphasis on CMTs now than previously in the district. With Weston not being included in *Schools of Distinction*, we are focusing on this area, but we also need to maintain our curriculum.

There are new CMTs being developed, as we now, which we expect to be an improvement, especial for SPED students. They are going to be more individualized, and will look more at a student's growth, and less at their achievement against everyone. However, in the interim, we need to focus on improving scores for the test that we have.

Special education law is constantly changing and adding additional requirements. With regards to due process, we have not had full hearings. We try to mediate, which is cost effective and less stress for both the family and district. The mediation requests have increased. It is somewhat of a flawed system in how parents are allowed to request, and how that mediation process works is very difficult. It's not just here, it's all districts. I recently completed a Federal survey on this topic, so the government is looking to put new legislation in place. Also, the time it takes to prepare for these mediations and PPTs is considerable.

Overall we try to strive for effective and efficient management; however, trying to stay on top of these does not allow enough time to move forward in any other areas.

We will look to fund the position by decreasing a 1.0 special education teacher at the high school. There is a retirement in the middle school so no high school teacher would lose employment. Additionally we will be able to reduce one paraprofessional at the elementary school.

2. Contracted Services/Outplacements

For outplacements we do have a couple of new students. This particular budget line is volatile – it changes a lot. We were able to bring two students in-district through the mediation process. We anticipate fewer tuition students (which are not outplacements, but rather students of employees).

Cost Containment

The transition/life skills teaching position (filled by Nancy Johnston) that we created as really helped us significantly. The parents are very happy with the program. There are transition coordinators every district is mandated to have – Nancy Johnston is working with them to create a 19-21 year old program for us; currently we have a program that takes most students through age 18. We are required to provide programming for students with severe disabilities through age 21, and that often turns out to be an outplacement for us.

We do want to hire our own Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA), which would reduce our contracted service costs, we hope. The one thing we don't pay with contracted services is benefits, so we would have to weigh out that cost.

Also, the SRBI really does speak to what I said in terms of students that have more learning disabilities, attention deficit, 504 students, all of those areas where really we are seeing a lot of requests for additional services, and strengthening those programs really assists us there.

Mrs. Pernice shared a photo of the Special Olympics team from last year. Next Special Olympics will be Saturday, May 11.

2. Pupil Personnel Services

Presented by Lois Pernice, Director of Pupil Personnel Services and Special Education

This budget is much lower than the SPED budget with a 1.75% increase. We are not adding any new positions to the pupil personnel services budget. We are also looking at decreasing some of the OT contracted services.

Budget Drivers

1. We are looking at a .2 position for the Center for Academic Support and Enhancement (CASE) program for Science at the high school.
2. Additionally we are looking at an \$8000 allocation for online courses for students that exhibit attendance issues. We have students that have issues with social anxiety or may have medical issues (such as Lyme disease, concussion, etc.) and may have difficulty keeping up with a course.
3. The drug and alcohol consultant for student needs and staff training is not an FTE position (counselor). Rather we are looking at services. We have had an increase in suspensions due to drug and alcohol use on school grounds and during the day use – 5 this year so far. We have had maybe 3-4 students in past years, and it has been off school grounds. We are talking about students who have direct concerns. We have had an increase in mediation requests for outplacements for students who were not suspended but have underlying issues of depression that we have missed. We also have students who have shared that they are struggling and need services or there might be requests for outplacement due to an underlying or self-medicating problem. The consultant would work with the staff to help them recognize a problems, how to counsel, and how and when to involve parents. We would like to be able to do stronger drug and alcohol testing. We would also like to provide greater support of students who would benefit from drug and alcohol counseling, linking families and students to additional outside resources. Mrs. Pernice has worked with that model before. It is better for students to go elsewhere for counseling due to the size of our community, but we should fund it if we require it.

How does this all interface? All new positions need to work together: town social worker, school social worker, drug and alcohol consultant, and SRO. The all have very different training and different approaches.

Cost Containment

1. Continued expansion of CASE.
2. Continue to look at speech Center, which will provide after-school social skills services for kids out of spectrum inside instead of outsourcing.
3. Containing Occupational Therapist services by bringing some of it in district.
4. Continue PBIS – a strong program to address bullying in particular, but also to offer interventions and support to students who may be struggling.

We can't discount the tragedy that occurred. We have to look at our students and make sure that we are providing everything they need, particularly mental health services. Parents have been making many more phone calls. Everything we are trying to do ties together in terms of the needs we are seeing right now.

3. District Administration

Presented by Dr. Jo-Ann Keating, Director of Finance and Operations

This budget includes funding for the following offices and positions:

- Superintendent of Schools;
- Director of Finance and Operations;
- Director of Human Resources;
- Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent of Schools;
- Administrative Assistant to the Director of Finance and Operations, which is shared with Erik Haakonsen, Director of Technology and Dan Clarke, Director of Facilities;
- Administrative Assistant to the Director of Human Resources; and
- Bookkeepers for payroll, accounts payables (.2 FTE reduction in FY 2013 due to turnover), procurement, and student activities.

Changes in Accounts

- Turnover from Non-certified staff saved \$36,460.
- Two one-time legal settlements (separation settlements) saved \$117,441.
- Three studies were budgeted under professional technical services, totaling \$21,600: a facilities review, which dovetails with the strategic plan to evaluate space needs; the annual NESDEC Enrollment Study; and professional meetings that take place inside the district.
- Management services totaling \$1500 were included in the budget for 403(b) services, employee screening, an allowance for special audits/reviews, residency verification, and a year-end grant audit.

4. Facilities

Presented by Dan Clarke, Director of Facilities

The budget request is \$4,689,707 which is a reduction of -0.68 % over last year.

The budget priority is to provide a consistently safe, comfortable, clean, and functional environment for teaching and learning. We accomplish this through our services: facilities management, including weekends and overnight; operations, which includes safety monitors, a maintenance crew, a custodial crew, and a grounds crew; projects, such renovations; and special events, namely graduation, Special Olympics, and unexpected events such as community shelters for storms.

The buildings themselves – four schools, administration, Annex, and the waste water treatment plant – cover 660,000 square feet of space. The grounds are 117 acres and include four major athletic facilities. There is also the Mile of Safety, which requires daily implementation of the Traffic Management Plan every morning and afternoon to ensure over 3000 people arrive to school safely.

Accomplishments

- This was the first year that we assumed responsibility for all grounds (some used to be contracted out to Parks and Recreation), including Revson Field.
- We were very involved in the middle school window and door replacement project, which was a complex project. We were pleased with the outcome.
- We were involved with the renovation of the middle school library, which was happening simultaneously with the window project.

- Projects accomplished by in-house staff include sink and cabinet replacement at Hurlbutt Elementary School, the renovation of two existing bathrooms at Weston Middle School to make them handicap accessible, and emergency management upgrades.
- We provided an emergency shelter in the high school after Storm Sandy
- Graduation was successful despite extremely humid weather thanks to the set-up of cooling stations.
- We were presented with two awards: The Pace Setter Award for energy conservation and the CIRMA Award for Exceptional Property Management.
- We provided support for two PTO projects: Weston Intermediate School playground sod and Hurlbutt Elementary School Learning Garden behind East House.

We continuously examine practices to thoughtfully improve the quality of our services – safe, comfortable and clean environment through staffing, training, procurement and management.

The staffing model is the same one we have used for a number of years. The total for this year is 29.75 due to the anticipated addition of four new security monitors.

Changes in salary, totaling \$96,074 will be due to:

- Contractual increases totaling \$39,435;
- A vacant position we will anticipate filling in 2013 totaling \$12,557;
- A turnover savings of \$6,750; and
- The mid-year hire of four safety monitors.

Non-salary increases totaling \$36,177 stem from increases in contracts for utilities, cleaning, rubbish removal, alarm services, and elevator; maintenance projects (which are broken out by school on page 119 of the Budget Book); property insurance; and equipment, including a riding mower tractor to remove leaves and other debris, a key duplicating machine (currently a contractor needs to do this), and a larger plumbing snake.

Non-salary savings reduce the budget by \$163,579 and come from the expiration of our energy education contract, the expiration of our contract with an expense reduction analyst, continued energy conservation, bringing more work in-house, and negotiations on cellular service.

5. District-Wide Services

Presented by Jo-Ann Keating, Director of Finance and Operations

This budget includes items that are not appropriate to allocate to the other cost centers.

Pupil Transportation

In-town home to school contract is going up by 3% or \$41,117. We have 20 buses through First Student. Over the last few years we have done a lot of work in terms of special education transportation. While we purchased three SUVs initially, this year we purchased an additional SUV for a total of four in service for out-of-district runs. These also service in-district for mid-day runs and sporting events when possible. We really optimize the use of those vehicles. We purchased two additional vehicles to service special needs students two years ago (last budget year). Going into next year, one student will not require transportation, allowing us to eliminate one out-of-district contracted run, which will save \$36,000. We will also do some sharing of resources with another district. Dave Lustberg continuously reaches out to transportation coordinators in other districts to see if there are any ride-share

opportunities. This portion of the budget also includes regular vehicle maintenance and tire replacement.

Copy Center

We have 1.51 FTEs at the copy center. We did go to bid after the budget cycle last year and were able to save about \$23,000 on our printer and copier contract. This is going to be the second year of that four-year contract.

Employee Benefits

Employee benefits are projected to go up \$330,912. The internal services fund is not yet available and is pending bid results, but is expected to be in the \$200,000 range.

Other

There is an estimated turnover savings of \$202,570 as a result of five retirements this year. Degree changes will increase the budget by \$64,917. A FY 2013 staffing carryover (the contingency teacher) will save \$61,824. We do have one staffing allowance for next year, which is the second contingency teacher. The allowance for non-represented salary increases is \$42,500. Life insurance has a placeholder of 3% for the increase.

6. Summary

Presented by Dr. Palmer, Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Palmer reviewed a slide that framed the central themes to the budget presentation during the first budget workshop. We are looking at achieving a new normal. We have been working collaboratively with all town officials, because safety is not only a school issue but a community issue. We have plans in place over the next few weeks to have an audit completed. One issue that we looked at immediately is how we manage visitors into the school. None of our facilities is designed in a manner that allows visitors to be funneled into the main office – there is no guarantee that once buzzed in the visitor will actually go to the main office rather than their intended destination. It is important that we manage visitors as well as the perimeter to deter and delay any intruder. We currently employ five security monitors. We see these individuals managing traffic at the beginning and end of each day, and who manage recess and assist in our lunchrooms. Right now, with the current staff of five, we have three hours per day at each school to manage visitors at the door. We cannot change the infrastructure at the schools without major renovations. Adding an additional four personnel to the team would help ensure our schools are secure and having a basic understanding of who comes into our schools. This is a basic, underlying, foundation of security. Other needs may come down the line, but they are not in this operating budget. We are working hand in hand with the WPS to ensure there is police presence on school road.

The changes in teacher and administrator evaluations are profound and are going to change every district in the state of CT. Even by adding this additional administrator, we will be stretched. We have 8.6 administrators to evaluate 200 teachers.

How did we get to a 1.55% budget? We addressed cost containment, we reviewed all budget requests, we prioritized those requests and reallocated existing resources, we looked at doing things creatively, and we aligned resources with the strategic plan.

What is not included? We did not include \$200,000 in special facilities projects, an additional 1.4 FTE paraprofessional support, \$70,000 in equipment for the district, \$200,000 in technology, and a multitude of other requests. We focused on the core of our work.

Our budget comes in the lowest of all DRG A schools at 1.55%. Wilton is presenting Thursday, and Region 9 we are still waiting for, so we will provide that data once public. These districts also have to meet the demands of common core, security, and teacher evaluation.

If we look at the last four years of final education budgets for DRG A, Weston has a compounded increase at 3.66%. Darien is a real outlier at 20.49%, but the next highest is Redding at 8.97%. The majority of other districts are clustered at 7-8%.

If we take the four year actual and add in the proposed FY 2014 superintendent budget, the differences are more pronounced. Weston is 5.27% in comparison with Darien at 25.4% and New Canaan at 13.49%.

If you look at our Outstanding Accomplishments, you will see that we have not sacrificed quality. We make tough decisions about putting the right things first and doing the right things for our students.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Motion to adjourn by Mrs. Uzenoff, second by Mrs. Levin, all in favor. (7-0). Meeting adjourned at 10:19 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Jennifer Markov, Board of Education Clerk.

Minutes reviewed/approved by Dr. Colleen Palmer, Superintendent.