

**Minutes**  
**Watertown Board of Education**  
**Budget & Finance Subcommittee Meeting**  
**Monday, November 30, 2015 – 6:00 p.m.**  
**Swift Middle School Library**  
**250 Colonial St, Oakville**

**Members Present:** Tom Lambert, Chairman Budget & Finance Committee  
Cathie Rinaldi, Committee Member  
Janelle Wilk, Committee Member  
Josephine Cavallo – Rosa, Committee Member

**Members Absent:** None

**Others Present:** Dr. Bridget Carnemolla, Superintendent of Schools  
Jill Browne, Business Manager  
Janet Parlato, Director of Curriculum  
Jeff Turner, Director of IT  
Ray Ceniccola – Facilities Manager  
Vic Vincenzi, Member, Board of Education  
Rob Makowski, Member, Board of Education  
Jim Gambardella, Member, Board of Education  
Cheryl Albino, Member, Board of Education  
Vic Vicenzi, Member, Board of Education

**1. Convene Meeting**

Mr. Lambert, Chairman of the Committee, convened the meeting and immediately turned the meeting over to Dr. Carnemolla.

**2. Budget Discussion and Objectives for Fiscal Year 2016 - 2017**

Dr. Carnemolla began letting everyone know that they had a draft of the budget and they feel they are a little bit ahead of schedule at this point. She passed out another copy of the districts vision, core beliefs, and strategic goals that they agreed upon in the previous year are using again in this year. She wanted to show that the way they are budgeting is in line with the district goals. There are four areas in the strategic goals which include: teaching and learning, systems, school and district culture, and communication. You will see that the budget alliance with this in which category it will belong to. The budget process was done very similarly to the previous year. Each director and building principal was given a copy of last year's budget along with a

handbook and deadlines and was asked to questions: what is your top priority in this budget? And how do the identified budget priority support the current school district goals/current school areas of focus? This is a long process, but each one of them came to me and to cabinet and went line by line to their budget and the way I asked. This was a successful way of doing the budget last year and we wanted to make sure we do begin this year and not just take what we needed and add it on.

### **Teaching & Learning**

Full Day Kindergarten: This will include the teachers that we've discussed in the past, the paraprofessionals that supports the teachers, the supplies, and the furniture. The cost of this, as presented in the past, is \$598,000. With a budget of over \$40 million, that can equate over a 1% increase.

Board Certified Behavior Analyst: Currently, we contract services for this position. While this is a fairly common practice, we are looking to reduce the number of contracted services. This position is primarily support for students on the autism spectrum. This is a person that assists in planning behavioral interventions, oversees the trials, and the progress made. There are several students that use the IPP program and it is a per student cost. Currently, the cost is \$80,000 per student. This begins the path to providing some of the services in our district. This is not only IPP, but also students that need help from a behavioral person. We did reduce some of this money last year with bringing in a social worker and this is another step towards reducing it more. We also contract out behavioral therapists and we would like to move forward with training our own paraprofessionals along with the BCBA to further reduce costs. Also note, the cost per student this year is \$80,000 up \$3000 from last year and I'm sure it will continually go up each year. If we can strengthen our own program, we may be able to outpace less students. The budgeted amount for this position will be \$80,000 (approximately) as this is a position that is not easily filled. It is important to note the people who we contract with are not in district all the time or every day.

Technology: Here we will be maintaining and moving ahead with what we already planned to do. We will continue to upgrade our current hardware, as well as new software, and maintenance contracts. What we are looking to do is still within the same budget. Amazingly, there will be a 0% increase in the technology budget and yet, be able to do more than we expected. With the hiring of Mr. Turner, we've been able to look differently at the equipment that we currently own. We have currently replaced over 150 hard drives over three schools. We went forward with tripling the memory of the machines, we need to replace three of the servers, and with those upgrades we still have a Plan B which is to take the new computers ordered within the budget, and put them on the teachers' desks and take the upgraded computers (which were done for the teachers) and place them into the laps. This will all be done with no increase over last year's budget. With this new way of thinking, we can bring in more chrome books and computers for the classrooms that are faster and last longer. To give you an example of the savings, in our original budget, we were looking to replace 150 of our slowest and oldest computers. This was just the tower and the cost was \$650 apiece at a total cost of

\$97,500. Instead, upgrading the computers the way we have been doing it costs about \$100 per computer. That's \$82,000 in savings.

I need to take a moment here and just let you know that every single department had an administrator knew the challenges we face with our budgets and every one of them came in with the budget of a 0% increase or less. Every single one of them wanted to go forward supporting full day kindergarten and looked at their budget line by line to see what they could do with or we can talk next year or figure out a better way with and for that we thank them.

Math Interventionist: You all remember that tutors have been placed in our schools to support grades K through 5. This position will move it forward and support grades six through eight. He saw the grades that we went through when the state testing was talked about in a prior meeting and we need all the help that we can get. In our budget, we had put in a placeholder for three positions, one for each grade at Swift. They will tutor small groups of students and allow them to dig into the needs of the students all the while allowing the teachers to also be more one-on-one with some of the needier students. This position will cost about \$12,000 apiece, so as you can see it's not an expensive position. It is important to note that two will go into local budget and one will be paid for through a federal grant.

### **Climate & Communications**

Additional Nurse: This goes along with making sure we always provide a safe environment for our students and our faculty members. This is something we talked a great deal about because it is something we have to add in at a cost perspective. When you look at the amount of cases (students) and the severity of the needs that seem to increase year-over-year, with examples like extreme allergies, extreme diabetics, and everywhere in between, there is so much more we see every year. You will recall, we had a nurse that floated between five schools in the past. We had to make a decision to permanently place that nurse at John Trumbull. With 760 pre-K to second graders in the same building, it was almost as if we had a mini emergency room running. If you look at the locks, there are days where one nurse will see over 200 kids. That if everything from my tummy hurts to an emergency. However, it's the end of November and there is no one in that position. It is very hard to recruit this position because of the money we have to offer. We are currently offering a little over \$38,000 to be a nurse at any one of our schools. Nurses make three times more than that the hospital however, sometimes the schedule can be to both our advantage and disadvantage. There is a huge flexibility to working in a hospital or nursing home. Our advantage as they have summers off and only work Monday to Friday. When we put this position out, we only had three people apply. We got down to the final candidate in the hospital offered her more money to stay and we still have no one in the position currently. With the new position in the budget, we will have this person be half-time at the high school and half-time at Swift. That is a similar situation to John Trumbull where there are 960 kids up high school now with only one nurse. There is so much that this one nurse does from seeing the kids, to pay for, to the federal law changes, and the documentation they need to do, not to mention the meetings they need to attend. One nurse to that ratio of students is not necessarily safe. It is

important to note that all nurses that work in the schools are on our payroll. That includes the nurses at both St. John's and St. Mary Magdalen's. Very often, because of the way things have been, I have to call those nurses to come work in the public schools. This is a very roundabout way of telling you we need nurses. If you know of anyone, please let me know. I law, it must be an RN that works in the schools, and while we do use some subs when necessary, they are even hard to find. It is also important to note that our administrators are trained in emergency first aid to be able to handle an emergency until the first responders get there.

## **Systems**

Facilities: We obviously want to maintain our buildings and address all the needs for them. We do need to make sure we keep them as up-to-date as possible. The first would be the Bobcat Utility vehicle. In our last facilities meeting, to backup for a minute, we went through a huge list of needs for the district. The list we have here that we will go through for what is first and foremost with trying to stay within the same budget. The utility vehicle, the clock replacement and driveway/parking lot at John Trumbull are most pressing there. The field lighting control at the Mills complex is something we went around about but decided it was something we needed to get done this year. The way the system was designed was for breaker panels to control the lighting. They are not meant to do that, they are not meant to be "switches". If we don't address it now, there will be a time where we will be addressing more serious issues. Not only will fix the issues that we are having, but will give us remote accessibility, which we do not have today. Currently, we have to schedule people to go to the complex to physically turn the lights on and off. The use of that field has increased over the last five years and the amount of money we are spending just rolling trucks out there along with the people to turn the lights on and off is incredible. With the new system, everything can be done remotely and no one will have to be physically on scene. Currently, anytime someone is needed to turn the lights on and off, they are paid for 1.5 hours of work for what should be about 15 minutes worth of work. That 1.5 hours of work is only if it is planned, if they are called out for an emergency situation, they are paid for a minimum of three hours of work. This is all because of contractual obligations and the results of a grievance hearing back when Dr. Baldwin was superintendent.

We need to do the Trane BMS replacement that we talked about the facilities meeting. This is the control system for all the heating and air conditioning at John Trumbull, where the original one works off of it DOS style computer. This is a significant part of the budget, where we have it estimated at about \$22,500. However, it is not as significant as it would be if the system fails and we have to have an emergency replacement done and we have no heat with schools in session.

We are also looking to lease a dump truck. While this wasn't discussed at the facilities meeting, it was left off inadvertently. We did replace some of our trucks last year with the lease to own option, and now we need to do this with the dump truck. Our current truck is over 10 years old and we are concerned with its ability to make it through another winter. Not only does this truck plow, but it also hauls all the salt and sand to the schools. The cost for this truck is approximately \$12,700. This will also include the plow package for the truck.

We have underfunded facilities budget for so many years, that we are constantly trying to correct that. We still to this day are going through each line item looking back through the years to see what was budget for items and what was spent.

Finally, there is the sidewalk replacement and repair which is the shared service with the town.

There was a small discussion held on more facilities contracts and maintenance. From there the committee went on and discussed what were on with as “wants” versus needs or what would be a “B” list. These things that were discussed may or may not have a future budget and may or may not come to fruition. These include things like bringing back different classes that were cut, a full-time athletic director, and several different improvements in our schools.

Wrap up: There was a pie chart draft of the operating budget that was passed out showing what was spent in 15/16 and what is proposed or recommended for the 16/17 budgets showing what percentage of it is change and what percentage of it as part of the budget. There must be a board approved budget to the town by March 3. We definitely have more work to be done on our end at this point, there are numbers we do not have yet like insurance and state numbers, and some as we will get until February. So we will have to give our best estimate based on what we’ve had in the past. What I see after tonight that we will meet again after we have those solid numbers, but for the time being, with everything we talked about as a priority has a spot in this budget with an estimated amount. We have gone through all the different areas and looks for offsets and we were very conservative on estimating our numbers. With all of this, we were able to bring the budget at 2.49% over last year with a real chance of making that even lower, possibly to just 2% or under. That is with full day kindergarten included.

The salary and wages are including all three kindergarten teachers, the BCBA, and also includes the contracted raises for the teachers and the salary increases for the custodian’s, etc... The benefits are down quite a bit as well as professional services are going back to cutting out candy kit behavioral health where we can by hiring the BCBA. We’re down also in transportation and student tuition. We need to note that we are taking some salaries out of the IDEA grant line and putting them back into the salary and wages line. That is something that should have been done before and where rectifying it now. We are also very lucky that heating prices have gone down and we are paying less for oil and gas. We cut back a little bit and supplies and materials. We also get the money back from the federal government for the E rate and we are still getting some income from athletic fees.

So we would like to meet again once we get some are finalized numbers and you have had a chance to reread all of this and ask different questions, if you have any. At that point, we should know what our overall increase will be. At that point, we will be ready to present the entire board. Ideally, we should shoot for the first board meeting in February for presentation. Especially with the chance the snow out, there would not be another before we have to present to the town.

### 3. Adjournment

Mr. Lambert adjourned the meeting at 8:04 p.m.

He then called for a motion to adjourn.

Subject: Motion to Adjourn

Motion Presented by: Ms. Rinaldi

Motion Seconded by: Mr. Vicenzi

Motion Passed

**Respectfully submitted by,**

**Mindi Davidson**

**Recording Secretary**