

TOWN OF WELLESLEY



SUPPLEMENT

**TO THE REPORT OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
TO THE 2011 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**

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ARTICLE 7. To see what sums of money the Town will raise and appropriate, or otherwise provide, including transfer from available funds, or borrowing, to supplement or reduce appropriations previously approved by the 2010 Annual Town Meeting; or take any other action relative thereto.

(Board of Selectmen)

Please see the Report, page 12, for a summary for the proposed authorization and appropriation from Free Cash. The Advisory recommendation is below.

The Board of Public Works (BPW) requests a supplemental FY11 appropriation from Free Cash for winter maintenance in the amount of \$750,000.

Advisory recommends favorable action, 13 to 0.

ARTICLE 8. To see what sums of money the Town will raise and appropriate, or otherwise provide, including transfer from available funds, or borrowing, for the following:

(a) for the operation of the several Town departments, including capital outlay, maturing debt and interest, and to provide for a Reserve Fund;

(b) for extraordinary maintenance, special capital projects and other capital outlay items for the several Town departments;

(c) for such purposes as may be voted contingent upon passage by the voters of referendum questions as authorized by the General Laws Chapter 59, Section 21c (m), as amended;

and among other resources to meet said appropriations, to authorize the Board of Assessors to use any monies paid to the Town from the Wellesley Municipal Light Plant as an estimated receipt when computing the Fiscal Year 2012 Tax Rate;

or take any other action relative thereto.

(Board of Selectmen)

Please see the Report, starting page 13, for the Motions under Article 8 and the budget detail. Below is the information and summary specific to the School Department budget. Advisory's considerations and the recommendation on Article 8 will be provided at or before Town Meeting.

WELLESLEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS - Motions 1 and 2

	FY10 Actual	FY11 Request	FY12 Request	FY11-12 Change
Instruction	\$40,666,576	\$41,549,788	\$42,315,358	1.8%
Administration	1,009,772	1,014,818	1,031,413	1.6%
Operations	4,659,566	4,831,992	4,867,913	0.7%
General Operating Total	\$46,335,914	\$47,396,598	\$48,214,684	1.7%
Special Tuition, Transportation & Inclusion (STTI)	9,123,803	9,985,412	11,889,365	19.1%
School Total (Motion 1)			\$60,104,049	
Opening of New High School (Motion 2)	---	---	370,080	---
TOTAL BUDGET	\$55,459,717	\$57,382,010	\$60,474,129	5.39%

Approximately 4,900 students, 750 employees and ten school buildings comprise the Wellesley Public School (WPS) system. The School Committee is requesting a total budget appropriation of \$60,474,129 for FY12, an increase of \$3,052,259 or 5.39% over FY11. Personal Services comprise the major portion of the budget request at \$50,228,534 while expenses total \$10,245,595. Within this total request is the Special Tuition, Transportation and Inclusion (STTI) budget request of \$11,889,365 which consists of \$5,577,218 of personal services and \$6,312,147 of expenses. The full detail of the FY12 School Budget Request can be found on the Wellesley Public Schools website, www.wellesley.k12.ma.us, under the *District Information* tab.

This 5.39% increase is due to increases in personal services, the unanticipated early move to the new High School, and in large part to the unexpected increases in the Special Tuition, Transportation and Inclusion portion of the budget. The year over year percentage increases in the Wellesley Public Schools budget over the last decade is as follows. (The figures for FY11 and FY12 are based on budgets; the prior years are actual figures.)

	FY03	FY04	FY05	FY06	FY07	FY08	FY09	FY10	FY11	FY12
Total	7.2%	3.4%	3.8%	5.4%	9.2%	4.9%	8.5%	3.1%	3.3%	5.4%
Operating Budget	6.2%	2.5%	4.3%	3.3%	9.0%	6.3%	5.6%	3.5%	0.5%	2.5%
STTI	7.1%	11.8%	(0.17%)	12.0%	17.3%	0.4%	28.2%	1.5%	18.9%	19.0%

In October of 2010, the Advisory Committee issued a 2.5% budget guideline for the School Department (an increase of \$1.43 million over FY11) as outlined in the Town Wide Financial Plan reviewed at the ATM in March of 2010. The FY12 budgeting process started with the full awareness that it would be a difficult budget year as state and local revenues have not recovered fully from the economic crisis. Additionally, the federal stimulus funds available FY11 have been exhausted leaving a number of significant gaps in funds available to the schools going forward. When the Superintendent's recommended budget was presented in early December, it became apparent that the Town would experience a significant increase in the tuition portion of the Special Tuition, Transportation and Inclusion (STTI) budget due to circumstances beyond the control of the School Department.

In order to address the general education operating budget and the sizeable pressure of the STTI budget separately, the School Department proposed bifurcating the budget as had been done in the FY11 budgeting process. Agreeing that this was a good approach, Advisory issued a revised guideline for Schools, setting a 1.5% guideline for the general education budget, the same guideline set for all other Town departmental budgets.

The Superintendent's initial budget proposed in December 2010 requested a total of \$61,527,964, with \$49,543,518 recommended for the general education operating budget (a 4.4% increase) and \$11,984,446 for STTI (a 20% increase). Getting to the current budget has involved a great deal of debate, discussion and difficult decision-making. The School Committee approved a number of reductions to the Superintendent's budget and adopted several fee increases. In recognition of the Town's mandated obligation to fund STTI costs, the Board of Selectmen and the School Committee are discussing a mechanism to fund STTI increases outside of the regular school budget process for FY12 and going forward.

Factors Affecting the School Budget

Major Factors Impacting the School Budget, FY09 - FY12				
	FY09 Actual	FY10 Actual	FY11 Budget	FY12 Request
Personal Service <i>(excluding STTI)</i>	\$40,889,229	\$42,435,860	\$43,606,442	\$44,442,716
STTI	\$7,097,535	\$9,123,803	\$9,985,412	\$11,984,446
New High School	---	---	---	\$370,080
Enrollment Change Costs	\$501,000	\$440,000	(\$11,399)	\$188,750
Federal Stimulus Funds	\$685,484	\$1,127,797	\$1,088,059	\$0

The 5.39% budget increase from FY11 to FY12 can be attributed to increases in personal services, the unanticipated early move to the new High School, and in large part to the unexpected increases in the Special Tuition, Transportation and Inclusion portion of the budget. Also having an impact on the budget is the end of federal stimulus funding (seen in FY11) which is mitigated to some degree by the FY12 availability of a Federal Education Jobs Grant.

Personal Services (Total) Increase of \$1,279,884 over FY11

For a detailed report on teachers salary structure under the current collective bargaining contract, including an explanation of Steps and Lanes, please see Appendix C to the 2010 ATM Reports to Town Meeting, on the Town's website, www.wellesleyma.gov.

Personal Services *(including STTI)*, the component of the budget including all salaries for WPS staff, comprises \$50,019,934 or 83% of the school budget request, excluding personnel costs connected to the move to the new High School. This represents a \$1,279,884 or 2.6% increase in Personal Services over FY11.

This budget request includes \$44,442,716 for Personal Services expenses for the General Education operating budget, an increase of \$836,274 (+1.9%) in the same category over FY11. The FY12 budget request for Personal Services (STTI) is for a total of \$5,577,218, a \$443,610 (+8.6%) increase over last year.

Personal Services increases are driven by enrollment increase adjustments, turnover adjustments and level service adjustments and are offset by the one-time Federal Jobs Grant. Included in the level service adjustments for Personal Services in FY12 are funds for step increases, lane changes and salary increases for school personnel. Embedded in the FY12 request are assumptions made for collective bargaining with the school department unions as the current contracts expires at the end of FY11. Collective bargaining is underway but no settlements have been reached at the time of this report. The budget request also includes funds for salary increases for the schools non-union employees. These increases are expected to be less than or comparable to the 1% and 1.5% increases anticipated for the non-union employees in other Town departments. Also assumed in the Personal Services number are \$275,000 in projected savings from turnover and \$45,000 related to expected retirements.

The availability in FY12 of FY11 Federal Education Jobs Grant funds provides a significant offset to the FY12 personal services budget. The Federal Education Jobs Grant program, announced in August of 2010, was established to provide school districts with financial assistance to retain existing employees, recall or re-hire employees who had been laid off, or hire new employees. The School Administration has established that these FY11 funds may be used in FY12 and has allocated the \$528,228 in grant funds as follows: \$433,147 (82%) to the general education operating budget and \$95,081(18%) to the STTI budget, according to the distribution of personnel between the two budgets. This is a one-time grant that will not be available going forward.

Special Tuition, Transportation and Inclusion (STTI)

Increase of \$1,903,953

For a more detailed discussion of Special Education Programs, including a discussion of the state funded circuit breaker reimbursement mechanism, see the Appendix on page S-18.

The FY12 budget request for STTI is \$11,889,365, an increase of \$1,903,953, or 19%, over FY11. The STTI portion of the school budget request represents 20% of the total FY12 school budget request. It is anticipated that \$95,081 of the Federal Education Jobs Grant mentioned above will offset a portion of this request.



STTI costs include all costs associated with educating those students with the most intensive special needs. These students receive services in one of two ways, through: 1) a Wellesley Public Schools *Inclusion Program* or, 2) an *Out of District* placement.

Wellesley has developed a number of Inclusion programs which are classes for students with a wide variety of intense special needs who spend large parts of their day in “substantially separate” classes from general education students. Out-of-District (OOD) placements are for Wellesley students whose needs cannot be met by services and programs offered in the public school setting and require educational services through private, collaborative or vocational school settings for which Wellesley is required to pay a “special tuition”.

Also included in this category are the transportation costs for these students both within the Town and out of district. Additionally, included in the transportation costs are the expenses for those students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) specifying a transportation need and

students with a 504 plan. (The latter are students with physical limitations who require transportation assistance but not necessarily special education assistance in school.) The costs of regular special education for students with more moderate needs are funded through the Instructional portion of the general education operating budget. (This portion of the general operating budget request, \$6,255,431, is down by \$256,501 from FY11.)

The STTI budget request is built upon information the School Department has in-hand (students receiving STTI services as of October 1, 2010), predictions based on information from early intervention services, and information from other districts as students move to Wellesley. STTI costs can be unpredictable due to the changes in the level of need of individual students, the need to find placements for students with unexpected issues, in-migration of students with special needs and children who turn three and require special services but had not been previously identified to the Town. Additionally, many assessments of student needs take place after the budget process leading to changes in program that had not been reflected in the staffing or expense requirements for the upcoming year.

To build the FY12 STTI budget, an adjustment of \$515,217 has been made in the current fiscal year to support the changing needs of inclusion students and unexpected out of district placements. For FY12, it is anticipated that 180 students will be enrolled in Wellesley's Inclusion programs, 79 students will be placed out-of-district and 139 students will receive special transportation services. By comparison, at this time last year, the Town budgeted for 171 Inclusion students, 84 out-of-district placements and 143 students to receive special transportation services.

Special Tuition, Transportation and Inclusion, FY09 - FY12				
	FY09	FY10	FY11	FY12
	Actual	Actual	Budget	Budget
Number of Students				
Inclusion	167	168	171	180
Out-of-District	68	83	84	79
Transportation	158	153	143	139
Costs				
Personal Services (all)	3,253,916	3,957,043	5,133,608	5,672,299
<u>Expenses:</u>				
Inclusion	445,195	501,728	316,650	377,100
Out-of-district tuition	5,762,130	5,606,718	5,516,212	7,030,248
Less: Circuit Breaker	-2,157,003	-658,792	-1,088,419	-1,576,011
Less: ARRA funds	-685,484	-742,492	-325,000	
Transportation	478,781	459,598	432,361	480,810
Total Net Cost	7,097,535	9,123,803	9,985,412	11,984,446

Inclusion

The Inclusion budget request for FY12, \$5,561,435, includes \$5,184,335 for personal services and \$377,100 for expenses, an increase over FY11 of \$589,800 or 12.5%. For FY11, the Inclusion budget request was \$4,654,985 for personal services and \$316,650 for expenses. Inclusion programs are expensive to implement because of the highly individualized programs and specialized staff required, but they enable students to remain in Wellesley and are more cost-effective than sending students out of district. In FY11 a new district-wide therapeutic program was implemented at Hunnewell School for grades 3 to 5, and FY12 will see the expansion of that program to the primary grades, reducing the need for a three out-of-district placements with a net savings to the Town of \$136,900. In addition, a vision-impairment specialist will be brought on staff, replacing the services of an outside vendor and saving the Town \$21,800.

FY12 Out-of District Students and Range of FY11 Tuitions							
	FY12 Students	Gross	CB offset	ARRA	Net	Low	High
Residential	12	\$2,669,816	(\$710,468)		\$1,959,348	\$173,434	\$344,521
Day	53	\$3,450,059	(\$765,368)		\$2,684,691	\$31,003	\$124,572
Collaborative	14	\$865,961	(\$100,175)		\$765,786	\$43,672	\$109,530
Vocational	2	\$44,412	0		\$44,412	\$18,725	\$21,000
TOTAL		\$7,030,248	(\$1,576,011)	\$0	\$5,454,237		
Highest costs include one-to-one assistant. Excludes cost share							

Out-of-District Tuitions

The FY12 budget request for out-of-district tuitions totals \$5,454,237, an increase of \$1,351,444 over the FY11 request, or 71% of the total STTI increase. While FY10 saw a state mandated freeze in out-of-district tuition rates, that freeze was lifted in FY11. Accordingly, the FY12 budget assumes an average increase of 1.85% in tuitions. Additionally, adjustments have been made in tuition rate assumptions for five out-of-district schools (affecting placements for 8 Wellesley students) who have indicated their intent to seek “reconstruction rate increases”, a mechanism for schools to apply for adjustments in tuition rates because of significant changes in the program they are delivering. The possible tuition increases for Wellesley students range from 7.8% to 56%. The Commonwealth’s Division of Purchased Services must approve any reconstruction rate increases but the Schools budget assumes that the rates will increase. Additionally, Wellesley has experienced an in-migration of a few students for whom out-of-district placements are required and the towns in which the students previously resided are responsible for FY11 tuition and transportation costs. Wellesley will be responsible for these costs in FY12, but they will not be reflected in the state funded circuit breaker reimbursement to the Town until FY13.

At the time of the writing of this report, the projected circuit breaker reimbursement rate remains at 40% of qualifying expenses, the same rate as budgeted in FY11, but considerably lower than the 75% provided by the original circuit breaker law. The FY12 circuit breaker offset is projected to be \$1,216,011 based on FY11 costs. In addition, the School Department plans to utilize \$360,000 from the FY11 circuit breaker reimbursement to offset the FY12 out-of-district tuition costs. It is not clear that the School Department will be able to accrue FY12 circuit breaker funds for use in FY13 and this will result in another funding cliff for the Schools.

Special Transportation

The transportation portion of the FY12 STTI budget is \$968,774, \$487,964 in personal services costs and \$480,810, in expenses, a \$57,790, or 6.4% increase over the FY11 budget request. The special transportation program consists of 13 Town-owned vans which provide 88% of the transportation for Wellesley's special needs and vocational school students, at a significant recurring savings to the Town vs. current rates of contracted transportation. The School Department contracts with outside vendors for services to meet remaining transportation needs and maintenance costs. Lease-to-purchase contracts for replacement of three eight-year-old vans with mileage exceeding 110,000 miles are included in the FY12 budget.

Stimulus Funds

The end of federal stimulus funding available in 2011 has left significant "funding cliffs" in the school budget for FY12. The FY11 general operating budget was supplemented with more than \$230,000 in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds for personal services and expenses. The FY11 STTI budget was supplemented with \$133,063 for personal services and \$325,000 was used to offset tuition expenses. These amounts were added to the FY11 budget base in building the FY12 budget, contributing to the budget gap. In an effort to mitigate the funding cliff, the School Department has increased a number of fees and has applied funds from revolving accounts with positive fund balances to reduce the FY12 operating budget request. It is likely another funding cliff will result for FY 2013, as these revolving account transfers are expected to be non-recurring events.

Incremental Costs of Opening the New High School

\$370,080

After the budget process was well underway, the School Department was notified that the new High School building would be ready for occupancy in February, 2012 well in advance of the original estimated move-in date of summer 2012. While this was exciting news for the Town, it accelerated the anticipated transition costs from FY13 to FY12, increasing the FY12 budget gap.

The incremental *personnel costs* of the early move are \$208,600. This is comprised of the following positions: network and instructional technology personnel (starting in September of 2011) to set up the network and classroom technology capabilities in the new building; additional custodial personnel starting in January 2012; a facilities and security supervisor to manage the new building systems; an additional building security monitor and temporary business office support to assist with ordering and scheduling involved with the move; and systems and technology staff orientation and training.

The incremental *expenses* of opening the new building are estimated at \$119,645 and are attributable to utility costs. (If the early move to the new building did not take place, the School Department would assume utility costs for the new building from March 1 through the end of August while still paying for the old building for the same period. The early move allows for a much shorter overlap period to pay utilities for both buildings, January 5 through the end of February, and then costs for only the new building from March 1 forward.) The FY12 budget originally proposed did not include any expenses associated with the new building.

In addition, the move to the new building will require one-time incremental expenses totaling \$41,835 which include additional custodial supplies and the removal and set-up of technology

equipment being relocated from the old school building to schools across the system. This cost for relocating existing technology was previously expected to be in the FY13 technology capital budget.

Enrollment Changes

Cost \$188,750

The WPS full enrollment report is on the WPS website, www.wellesley.k12.ma.us.

The adjustment to the budget to accommodate costs due to increased or changing enrollment is \$188,750. The personal services portion of this is \$172,670 based upon a system-wide increase of 3.3 FTEs, with an overall projected increase of 9 students from 4,809 to 4,818. The expense portion of the enrollment costs, \$16,080, is to fund mainly textbooks. As a point of comparison, for the FY11 budget the School Department had projected an increase of 38 students, but a system-wide staffing reduction of 0.10 FTE, with a net savings to the budget of \$11,399.

There is considerable variability in the impact of any one year’s enrollment changes on staffing levels and budgets, depending not only on the absolute size of the year’s enrollment growth, but also on the changing mix of students. The distribution of students across schools, grades, academic interests, and learning skills has an impact as do existing staffing patterns, class sizes, and so on. In certain years, enrollment increases can be absorbed without significantly affecting class sizes, while in other years enrollment increases reach a level that requires hiring additional teaching staff. The challenge is to absorb the enrollment increases while maintaining class size guidelines and the full breadth of program offerings.

FY10 saw the first decline in aggregate enrollment in the Wellesley Public School system in more than 10 years. The decline continued, although very slightly, in FY11. The table below presents the projected enrollment increase for FY12 and for the last several years, along with the operating budget adjustment associated with that enrollment change where relevant, actual enrollment growth is also shown in parentheses.

ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS AND BUDGET INCREASES				
	Projected (Actual) Additional Students		Operating Budget Increase	
	Students	% Students	Costs	% of Total
FY07	71 (72)	1.6% (1.6%)	\$491,000	1.2%
FY08	96 (146)	2.1% (3.2%)	\$276,000	0.6%
FY09	96 (121)	2.1% (2.6%)	\$501,000	1.0%
FY10	48 (-21)	1.0% (-0.0%)	\$440,000	0.9%
FY11	38 (-7)	0.8% (-.64%)	-\$11,399	0.0%
FY12	9	0.19%	\$188,750	.37%
<i>Totals K to 12, not including Pre-K or Out-of-District Students</i>				

Elementary School Enrollment

In FY12, elementary school enrollment is expected to decline by 84 students to 2,292. The FY12 budget responds to this declining enrollment by reducing the number of elementary school

sections from 113 to 111. Elementary school instructional FTEs will decline by 2.0. Having hit a high water mark in FY09 of 2,478, elementary school enrollment dropped by 57 students in FY10 to 2,421, and decreased by another 45 in FY11 to 2,376 – 29 fewer elementary students than projected in the FY11 budget, which led to an unexpected reduction of one section in FY11. There were significant variances in projections for individual grades. Kindergarten enrollment exceeded projection by 19 students and Grade 2 enrollment was six students over projection. All other grades were lower by a range of 5 to 20 students, with Grade 1 20 students below projection and Grade 5 18 below.

The School Department sets elementary school class-size guidelines at 18-22 students for grades K-1, and 22-24 students for grades 2-5. With an average class size of 21 students, 11 of the 113 elementary school classrooms exceeded guidelines in FY11. Anomalies in the system, such as an unusually large 4th grade at Bates, 2nd grade at Hardy, 1st grade at Hunnewell, or 3rd grade at Schofield can lead to a localized perception that there is systemic overcrowding; however, with 39 elementary classes below guideline and 63 at guideline, the reality is that the School Department has been able to manage the overall enrollment to effectively meet guidelines. Next year, class size on average is expected to decrease slightly to 20.7 students, but it is likely once again that a small number of classes will exceed guidelines in the elementary schools.

Middle School Enrollment

Actual Middle School enrollment in FY11 was 1,138, or about 16 students more than projected. Thirteen of these students were in Grade 6. In FY12, enrollment is expected to increase by 45 students to 1,183. All three middle school grades will be larger next year than they are this year, by ranges of 2.4% to 5.3%. To accommodate this increase, the number of FTEs will increase by 2.0, with: .20 staff being added in each of Art, English, Industrial Technology, Mathematics, General Science and Social Studies; .30 being added in Languages; and .50 being added in Guidance.

High School Enrollment

High School enrollment, projected to increase in FY11 by 65, actually increased by 71 to 1,295. Although Grades 10 -12 were at or slightly above projections, there were 6 fewer students in Grade 9 than expected. In FY12, High School enrollment is projected to increase by 48 students to 1,343, Enrollment will be up in grade 10 (by 70 students) and grade 12 (by 50), but down in grade 9 (by 19) and grade 11 (by 53). To accommodate the overall increase, staffing will increase by 3.30 FTEs, with .40 FTE increase in each of Languages, Mathematics and Social Studies staff, .50 in Sciences, .60 in English, and 1.0 FTE in Guidance.

Enrollment Projections

The Town's birth rate has fluctuated in recent years. As of October, 2010, the birth rate was somewhat lower than the three-year average used to calculate the enrollment in last year's report. Based on current projections, total enrollment in the Wellesley Public Schools is expected to peak system-wide in FY12 and then go into a gradual, steady decline for several years thereafter. However, as noted above, reductions in sections are already taking place at the elementary school level, and that trend should continue for several years. At the Middle School enrollments are expected to reach a plateau of approximately 1,190 students in FYs 13 through 15, after which enrollments are projected to decline. High School student enrollment is expected to peak at about 1,500 in FY18, at which point it too is projected to decline.

Enrollments & Class Size

The School Department has managed the pressures of changing enrollments and class size well – no insignificant task, given that it must manage elementary enrollment of nearly 2,400 students across six grades in seven school districts. In the past few years, the upper grade levels at several elementary schools have experienced increases in average class size, and the share of classes under guideline shrank rapidly. But this has not translated into significant increases in classes *over* guidelines at the elementary level. Instead, the share “at guideline” grew rapidly, stabilizing somewhat this year with the enrollment driven loss of a section. Although 11 elementary school sections are currently over guideline, the situation is not dire: seven are over by one student, and three are over by two students, and one is over by three students. Three schools are experiencing no issues with guidelines, and at one all but two sections are under guideline. Based on current trends and assumptions and existing guidelines, the School Department is projecting that as many as 20 fewer elementary school sections will be required in FY16.

The School Department’s class-size guideline for the Middle School and the High School is 22 students (15 for College Prep level core academic classes at the High School). In FY11, the average class size for all academic, non-College Prep, courses at the High School is 20.8. In FY11 in the Middle School, it is 22.1 for Grade 6, 20.9 for Grade 7 and 22.6 for Grade 8 for core academic courses.

Cost Saving Measures/Other Changes

The recommended budget includes a number of adjustments and measures implemented in an attempt to bring the budget within the guideline range. Increases to several fees are included, such as increased tuition at the pre-K program, higher athletic fees at the Middle School and High School as well as an increased activity fee at the High School. Once again, library books and membership in one educational cooperative have been eliminated from the budget with accompanying savings of \$41,420 and \$24,500 respectively. A change in the transportation program provided for one private school in Wellesley will save \$47,700. A reduction in the elementary art program will save \$52,425 while a reduction in the High School Fitness requirement for graduation will save \$46,600. At the High School, the library secretarial position has been changed to a teaching assistant position with a savings to the budget of \$6,416. To offset the utility costs of the schools, a \$200,000 balance in the Community Use Rentals revolving account has been applied to the utilities budget. Salary and turnover adjustments to the original recommended budget were \$583,965.

Advisory will make its recommendation at or before Town Meeting.

ARTICLE 14. To see if the Town will vote pursuant to Section 53E½ of Chapter 44 of the General Laws, as amended, to authorize/reauthorize the establishment of one or more revolving fund(s) for the purpose of funding the activities of certain departments of the Town including a new revolving fund for Wetlands Consultant fees; or take any other action relative thereto.

(Board of Selectmen)

Please see the Report, page 48, for a summary for the proposed authorization/reauthorization and/or establishment of revolving funds. Advisory recommendations are below.

MOTION 1 - This motion reauthorizes existing revolving funds

Advisory recommends favorable action, 13 to 0.

MOTION 2 - This motion authorizes a new revolving fund, the Tree Bank.

Advisory recommends favorable action, 13 to 0.

MOTION 3 - This motion authorizes a new revolving fund, the Turf Field Fund.

Advisory recommends favorable action, 13 to 0.

ARTICLE 19. To see what sum of money the Town will raise and appropriate, or otherwise provide, for engineering services, for plans and specifications, for construction, reconstruction, remodeling, rehabilitation and/or modernization of a new DPW office facility; to determine whether such sum shall be raised by taxation, through borrowing and/or by transfer from available funds; or take any other action relative thereto.

(Board of Public Works)

Please see the Report, page 53, for a summary for the proposed authorization and appropriation for a new DPW office facility. Further information is also provided in the Report of the DPW on page 105 of the Advisory Reports. Advisory considerations and recommendation is below.

Advisory's Considerations

Advisory has reviewed the information provided by the DPW on the proposed building project and concludes the following:

1. Advisory agrees that the current facility housing the DPW administration has many **major** deficiencies and does not provide adequate or appropriate facilities for the staff to perform daily tasks and provide the services required of the DPW:
 - Significant portions of the building infrastructure have exceeded the specified useful life, requiring constant and costly repairs. Other systems are outdated and are no longer able to be upgraded.

- The labyrinth floorplan and overcrowding of the multi-level building impedes work interaction, work flow and public service. Further, there are significant barriers to access.
 - Renovation of the current building would be a more costly alternative, would require extensive work to meet accessibility requirements and provide no improvement in work space layout or adjacencies.
2. Advisory agrees that the proposed building project conforms to the cost specifications and general plan outlined in the project plan presented at the 2010 ATM providing the basis for the appropriation of funds for design development. In other words, the BPW has provided a project proposal that meets the objectives specified in the appropriation at the cost estimated. Furthermore, the bids received reflect the favorable conditions in the construction market resulting in a bid even below design estimates (at 90% design documentation).
3. However, upon review of the detailed design and space configurations of the proposed building many on Advisory noted the following concerns:
- The proposed increase in square footage from the current program space of 4,400 sq. ft. to 6,727 sq. ft. has not been adequately justified. For example, the annual savings from consolidated training and frequency of use may not justify the proposed training room space (886 sq. ft.). This concern was abated as the BPW recognizes that this is a Town facility that could be made available to other departments in Town for temporary or permanent space if the need arises and as the changes occur in the DPW's projected uses.
 - The ratio of General Building Space to Total Program Need (1.9:1.0) is on the high end of what is typical for municipal buildings such as this, further leading Advisory to question the overall size and design of the proposed facility. However, newly built Public Works facilities in Needham, Newton and Belmont were comparable and the general building space reflects the limitations imposed by the DPW site.
 - The total square footage of the proposed building is driven by the plan to house the Engineering Division in adjacent spaces on one floor. Some on Advisory have not been convinced that the benefits of this adjacency offset the increase in cost caused by this increased footprint.

Taking these factors into consideration, the majority of Advisory has concluded that need for a new facility and the favorable cost estimates received on the proposed building outweigh the concerns noted and the costs associated with re-design and delay. Re-design cost estimates would likely exceed \$300,000 and, further, carry construction cost risk as the market trends toward improvement.

Passage requires a 2/3 vote.

Advisory recommends favorable action, 12 to 1.

ARTICLE 20. To see what sum of money the Town will raise and appropriate, or otherwise provide, for engineering services, for plans and specifications, for construction, reconstruction, remodeling, rehabilitation and/or modernization of a new DPW recycled materials loading structure; to determine whether such sum shall be raised by taxation, through borrowing and/or by transfer from available funds; or take any other action relative thereto.

(Board of Public Works)

Please see the Report, page 55, for a summary for the proposed authorization and appropriation for a new DPW recycled materials loading structure. Advisory's additional considerations and recommendation is below.

Advisory Considerations

Advisory has completed review of the project proposal, including the expected value, cost, and risks associated with of construction of the new loading structure at the Recycling and Disposal Facility (RDF).

The key factors for the majority support were as follows:

- The projected revenue increase is expected to equal or exceed the annual cost of the debt and provide significant revenue benefits thereafter. The annual debt cost is estimated to be approximately \$50,000 assuming a 4% interest rate. New net revenue generated is expected to be at least \$50,000 (up from the current annual net revenue of \$25,000) with a potential of increasing by \$125,000 or more annually in the future. Also, an annual savings of approximately \$10,000 from lower wood disposal costs is incremental to these net revenues.
- The project is a good example of opportunities that yield incremental revenue for the Town with minimal capital and operational risk.
- No additional labor resources are needed to generate this additional income because of the efficiencies enabled by the new structure.
- While the ability to generate the projected revenue depends on the availability of this waste stream and the market price, the BPW is confident that market conditions and mixed cardboard/paper waste supply will continue to warrant this investment well into the future. Currently, the RDF routinely denies requests to take additional recyclable mixed cardboard/paper waste and further knows of additional municipalities or commercial providers from which additional mixed cardboard/paper waste product could be obtained. While the selling price is market driven and has varied from \$58 to \$120 per ton in the past 5 years, the BPW considers \$82 per ton to be a conservative estimate going forward.

A minority of Advisory expressed concern about appropriating funds for new building projects that are not driven by an outstanding need or urgency at a time when budgets are under significant pressure. While generally supportive of the project as defined, the minority concluded that it would be more prudent to assess the investment next year.

Passage requires a 2/3 vote.

Advisory recommends favorable action, 11 to 2.

ARTICLE 30. To see if the Town will vote to designate Brookside Road as a scenic road, pursuant to Chapter 40, Section 15C of the Massachusetts General Laws; or take any other action relative thereto.

(Planning Board)

The summary information below, including Advisory's considerations and recommendation, is intended to substitute for the version that appears in the Report, pages 63-64. The text that has been changed or added is underlined.

The purpose of this Article is to designate the portion of Brookside Road from Oakland Street to Wellesley Avenue a scenic road pursuant to MGL Chapter 40, Section 15C and subject it to the Town's Scenic Road Regulations along with the six other roads, or portions of roads that are currently regulated. They are: Pond Road; Waterway/Brookway Road; Squirrel Road; Cartwright Road; Cheney Drive and Benvenue Street. Brookside Road is an unaccepted street. The adoption of this additional designation does not alter the Zoning Bylaw.

The adoption of this article would require that any alteration within the current right-of-way that includes cutting down or clearing of trees, or the removal or alteration of stone walls, receive prior approval by the Planning Board, after a public hearing. Private property is included in the protected layout of some other designated scenic roads, but in this case, application of the regulations would be limited to the right-of-way.

Brookside Road runs in a north-south direction from Oakland Street to Wellesley Avenue and continues to the Town line with the Town of Needham. Brookside Road is rural in nature and has two major abutters, The Wellesley Country Club to the west and Town of Wellesley (Town Forest) to the east. Other abutters include: Brookside Gardens (community gardens), MWRA (Sudbury Aqueduct), and a residence at 392 Wellesley Avenue. This residence is owned by the Wellesley Country Club.

A citizen's petition, signed by 120 residents, was sent to the Planning Board in August of 2010 urging the inclusion of Brookside Road as a scenic road. The Planning Board considered the criteria for designation contained in Section 3.1 of the Town's Scenic Road Regulations and determined that the criteria were met. The regulations require consideration of whether the road contains or is characterized by any of the following:

1. bordering trees of exceptional quality, in terms of type, age, specimen size or spread, density of stand, or related flora;
2. bordering trees which themselves constitute, or are a significant part of, natural or man-made features of aesthetic value, including by way of illustration trees having spring flowering or high fall color potential; trees which are part of vistas paralleling roadways or which create a frame of reference for more distant views; and trees whose presence contributes substantially to the rural or woodland character of a roadway, particularly in comparison to more developed or urbanized adjacent areas;
3. bordering stone walls.

At the Planning Board public hearing on this article, there was some opposition expressed to the designation, questioning whether the criteria for designation as a scenic road are met by the trees or other features on this road. No inventory of trees is available and there are currently no stone walls located on Brookside Road.

Proponents of the designation feel that this road offers significant aesthetic value to both drivers and pedestrians and that the trees meet the criteria for scenic road designation.

Advisory's Considerations

Advisory recognizes that citizens who proposed scenic road designation for Brookside Road may initially have focused their attention on the features of this road because of a building project proposed by an abutter, the Wellesley Country Club. We believe, however that this road designation has merit, independent of consideration of any particular project on abutting property, on which it should have little or no impact.

The Planning Board has determined that Brookside Road meets the criteria for designation as a scenic road due to the aesthetic value of the trees framing Rosemary Brook and the Town Forest and that the trees contribute to the woodland character of the roadway. Advisory agrees that it is reasonable, pursuant to the Town's Scenic Road Regulations, to require the Planning Board to approve, after a public hearing, any removal of trees in connection with alterations to the right-of-way that may be proposed by the Town or by the private abutters.

Advisory recommends favorable action, 11 to 0

ARTICLE 34. To see if the Town will vote to amend the Zoning Bylaw to create a Tree Protection and Preservation Bylaw which establishes regulations regarding the preservation and replacement of trees over a specific caliper located on private property within the setbacks, and to establish a Tree Bank to be administered by the Department of Public Works – Park and Tree Division; or take any other action relative thereto.

(Planning Board)

Please see the Report, page 66, for Advisory's summary of the proposed amendment to the Zoning Bylaw for the creation of a Tree Protection and Preservation Bylaw, and page 117 for the Report of the Planning Board on this Article. A full text of the Bylaw will be provided prior to Town Meeting and appears on the Planning Board page at www.WellesleyMa.gov. Advisory's recommendation, based on its consideration of a draft dated 3-04-2011, is below.

Advisory's Recommendation

A majority of Advisory supports adoption of this Bylaw as a reasonable effort to limit the negative public impact of significant construction or demolition activity on mature trees based on the following:

- The majority believe that the Planning Board has, in its draft, properly balanced the rights of private property owners with the public interest in preserving mature trees during construction;
- The *Tree Preservation and Mitigation Plan* has been designed to encourage builders and property owners to fully consider the impact of any significant construction activity on protected trees located in the Tree Yard;
- The Bylaw does not restrict property owners' options with regard to trees on a given property, but rather adds a level of economic incentive to preserve protected trees or mitigate the overall impact of tree removal.

A sizeable minority believes that this Bylaw outlines a complicated process that would impose an unreasonable burden on private property owners. Many believe it is not appropriate to impose an obligation on some private property owners to maintain trees as a benefit to abutters and the public at large. Some specific concerns included:

- The Tree Yard, as defined in the Bylaw, is too deep, in many cases, and exceeds an area in which public impact is significant;
- The Bylaw would impose uneven burdens on property owners. Property owners who currently have a large number of mature trees in Tree Yards face significant costs to document the trees and implement plans to protect them during construction, even if no significant impact is anticipated. Those who own few mature trees would have a lesser burden. Owners not doing the specific types of construction outlined would face no obligation regarding trees.
- The amount of the Tree Bank contribution or the criteria for determining it are not specified, but are to be determined subsequently by the Board of Selectmen;
- While a small group of citizens actively engaged with the Planning Board in support of this Bylaw, there has not been broad public expression of opposition or support.

Passage requires a 2/3 vote.

Advisory recommends favorable action, 7 to 6.

APPENDIX A: SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS March 2011 Update

Overview: Programs and Services

State and Federal law mandates that Wellesley provide special education services to its residents, beginning at age three and continuing through age twenty-two or high school graduation whichever occurs first. The law mandates that all children with special needs receive those services that allow them to access and progress in public education; moreover, if a student's needs are such that a town cannot provide for them in a public setting, then the law requires that the town find and pay for an appropriate private school for the child.

Special education services are provided for children with a spectrum of needs from mild to very severe. A range of programs (including classroom-based support, support in learning centers, partially- or fully- contained local programs and out-of-district programs) and services (e.g., screening and evaluation, speech/language and physical therapy, and psychological services) are needed to meet the needs of a growing population of students with disabilities.

Current trends affecting both the range and volume of the special education services the Town must provide include:

- An increased preschool population with special needs.
- An increased number of children with significant disabilities, including medically-fragile children, multi-handicapped children, and children with diagnoses along the autism spectrum or pervasive developmental disorders.
- Growth in the number of students with significant emotional and/or behavioral issues.

All decisions regarding a student's eligibility for services, as well as the appropriate level, type, and venue of such services, are determined after a rigorous evaluation process by a team of educators, special education professionals, and parents. The results of this process are presented in an Individualized Education Plan (an "IEP") for that student. Parents and students are entitled to an independent education evaluation at public school expense if they feel that the testing done by the school is not "comprehensive and appropriate." If parents disagree with a proposed IEP or placement, the regulations provide for a dispute resolution process before a hearing officer. Hearing decisions are made using a standard of "free and appropriate education." If a hearing officer finds in favor of the parents' request, the school department is financially responsible for the requested placement and for the parents' attorney fees.

Instructional Special Education

The majority of students on IEPs have mild to moderate disabilities, spend most of their school day in regular classrooms, and receive the most routine services within the special education programs such as speech therapy, individualized or small group instruction in a learning center, occupational therapy or physical therapy.

Inclusion Program

The Inclusion Program covers students with intensive special needs who require significant support from specialized staff such as behavioral analysts, deaf educators, speech/language therapists or occupational therapists, to name a few. In many cases, the Inclusion students also require a dedicated teaching assistant. Inclusion students spend large parts of their school day in "substantially separate" programs and activities, but in some cases also participate in regular classroom activities when their specialist schedules permit. Expenses for the Inclusion Program cover individualized materials and assistive devices, specialized training for staff assistants, and outside services needed to support the medically-fragile students.

Whenever possible, if the Town has a critical number of students with similar special needs, new programs are instituted locally as they are more cost effective than out-of-district placements. Tuition for a private day school setting is often extremely expensive, ranging from \$30,000 to over \$120,000. Wellesley has done a commendable job growing and improving the district's Inclusion programs. As examples, two programs--the Middle School Language Class and the Middle School Intensive II Inclusion program--were created by the School Department in FY08 for students with intensive special needs who were aging up from programs at Hardy, Sprague, and Upham. The FY09 budget funded an additional ISS classroom at Sprague School to accommodate four rising kindergarten students. Similarly, in FY10 an additional inclusion classroom was added to accommodate students entering the high school from the Middle Schools Skills program. The implementation of a new Therapeutic Program at the elementary school level began in FY11 and the FY12 budget request plans for the expansion of that program. If these programs did not exist, the students would not be able to be educated in Town and would be placed in more costly out-of-district programs.

Out-of-District Placements

As part of the special education mandate, students between the ages of 3 and 22 with special needs who cannot be educated in the Wellesley schools are enrolled at the Town's expense in educational programs at other public (collaborative) or private schools. The State Division of Purchased Services sets annual tuition rates for these services.

Transportation

Special education students must be provided transportation to the Wellesley schools or to out-of-district placements should they need it. Funding for transportation covers salaries for the transportation coordinator, transportation attendants and van drivers for the school's thirteen vans, and expenses associated with the van program (fuel, maintenance etc) and outside vendor transportation services, as needed.

Special Education Budget

The total special education budget is separated into two components: *Instructional Special Education* and *Special Tuition, Transportation and Inclusion (STTI)*.

The *Instructional Special Education* budget includes services for the majority of students identified as having special educational needs. The special education costs associated with these students are incremental to the cost per student of regular education and are included in the general education operating budget

The *STTI* budget includes the staff salaries and expenses to educate the students with intensive special needs who receive instruction through the "*Inclusion Program*" in the Wellesley schools and the expenses (tuition) for the students who are placed "*out-of-district.*" In addition, *STTI* includes the "*transportation*" costs (e.g., van driver salaries, expenses related to contracted transportation services) for any special education students who require transportation, whether they are on IEPs, attend vocational school, or have "504 Plans" (a modified form of special assistance). Many of these children require and receive special education support during the summer as well.

Funding Special Education

Budgeting for all of the special education programs, including the out-of-district tuitions, for the next fiscal year is based on students who have been identified as having special needs on October 1st of the current fiscal year. The School Department then factors in students who will age out of current programs and students who may require out-of-district placements because their needs cannot be met within the district.

The cost of educating students in special education programs is primarily born by the taxpayers in the local community. In FY10 and FY11, substantive offsets to special education budgets were provided by federal stimulus funds. However, these funds are not available in FY12 and going forward.

Federal Funding

Federal Special Education Entitlement - This federal entitlement grant funds 8.53 full-time equivalent (FTE) professional education staff and 7.96 FTE teaching assistants. The FY11 grant total was \$1,101,314, which also covered the cost of retirement and other benefits. The FY12 budget assumes the grant will fund the same positions.

Early Childhood-Special Education Allocation - This federal entitlement grant funds a 0.33 FTE occupational therapist. This grant also funds retirement and other benefits and for FY11 totals \$29,770. The FY12 budget request assumes the same grant amount.

Education Jobs Grant - This is a new one-time federal grant from the U.S. Department of Education for the purpose of preserving or creating jobs in the education field. The grant award for Wellesley totals \$528,228 across the entire FY12 School Budget. \$95,081 is allocated to fund positions in the STTI budget.

State Funding

In FY04, the Massachusetts State legislature funded the “circuit breaker” special education reimbursement program to provide financial support to local governments for the cost of students in both inclusion and out-of-district placements. Under the program, school districts receive partial reimbursement for the costs of these programs. The FY12 budget as of March 14, 2011, assumes a reimbursement rate of 40% of the cost to educate any student above a threshold, which equals four times the statewide average per pupil cost. (The FY11 statewide average per pupil cost is \$9,659.) The threshold used for the budgeted FY11 reimbursement is \$38,636. (As a point of comparison, the FY 10 budget assumed a reimbursement rate of 70% of the cost to educate any student above a threshold of \$37,328. Due to the State budget crisis, the FY10 reimbursement rate was reduced from 70% to 40%, and this continues to be the assumed rate for budgeting purposes as of the date of this report.)

Circuit breaker funding is subject to the following limitations:

- Circuit breaker funding does not fund any transportation costs.
- Circuit breaker funding is calculated on a child-by-child basis, not on an aggregate basis; therefore, circuit breaker funding is triggered only if an *individual* child's tuition exceeds the threshold. For example, in FY10, if the town pays \$55,000 tuition for a student to attend an out-of-district institution, and the state were to reimburse 70% of the \$17,672 cost above the threshold of \$37,328, the town pays \$42,630 and the state pays \$12,370 for this student's placement.
- Since the state does not pro-rate the formula, the state used a threshold of \$37,328 regardless of when during the year a child goes into an out-of-district program.
- Circuit breaker funding is a reimbursement program that is based upon the prior fiscal year's expenditure. Therefore, the projected circuit breaker funding for next fiscal year is a projected reimbursement for expenditures in the current fiscal year.

The chart on the next page shows the circuit-breaker funds Wellesley has received over the last few years. The FY09 reimbursement was \$2,157,003; the FY10 circuit breaker reimbursement was initially estimated to be \$1,318,321 but due to budget cuts and the change in the reimbursement formula, this estimate was reduced. The FY11 projected circuit breaker offset is

budgeted at \$1,088,419. For FY12, Wellesley is budgeting for a \$1,576,011 circuit breaker reimbursement.

In addition, the School Department may apply for “extraordinary relief” under the circuit breaker funding program if the current year “circuit breaker eligible” costs exceed the prior year’s eligible costs by at least 25%. This funding typically is received in the fiscal year in which the expenses are incurred. The last time Wellesley was eligible for “extraordinary relief” funds was in FY2006 when the Town received \$272,051.

Fee Revenue

Regulations require that preschool classes include roughly equal numbers of special needs and typically developing children. Tuition revenue received from the families of typical developing children enrolled in the program provides a modest offset to the cost of the preschool program.

Special Education Spending

	FY09 Budget	FY09 Actual	FY10 Adj Budget	FY10 Actual	FY11 Adj Budget	FY12 Request
# OF STUDENTS						
Instructional	609	620	632	593	634	581
Inclusion	132	167	168	161	171	180
Out of District	93	68	83	74	84	79
<i>Total Students</i>	834	855	883	828	889	840
Students Transported	141	158	153	144	143	139
SPED STAFF (FTE)						
Teachers	47.60	46.60	48.60	49.00	51.00	53.30
Professional Support	38.37	37.97	37.97	39.07	40.67	42.67
Classroom Support	115.55	121.05	120.15	124.25	125.70	133.30
<i>Total FTE</i>	201.52	205.62	206.72	212.32	217.37	229.27
Instructional	6,217,193	6,458,429	6,910,188	6,411,762	6,511,932	6,255,431
STTI						
Inclusion	3,374,052	3,328,834	4,502,974	4,074,328	4,971,635	5,466,354
Out of District	6,010,741	5,762,130	5,077,926	5,606,718	5,516,212	7,030,248
Less: Circuit Breaker	-2,040,466	-2,157,003	-1,318,321	-658,792	-1,088,419	-1,576,011
Less: ARRA funds		-685,484		-742,492	-325,000	
Transportation	927,230	849,058	1,004,456	844,041	910,984	968,774
Total STTI	8,271,557	7,097,535	9,267,035	9,123,803	9,985,412	11,889,365
<i>Total SPED Budget</i>	14,488,750	13,555,964	16,177,223	15,535,565	16,497,344	18,144,796
AVERAGE TOWN COST PER STUDENT (\$)						
Instructional	10,209	10,417	10,934	10,812	10,271	10,767
Inclusion	25,561	19,933	26,803	25,306	29,074	30,369
Out of District	42,691	42,936	45,296	56,830	48,843	69,041
Transportation	6,576	5,374	6,565	5,861	6,371	6,970

FY12 Budget for Special Education

The FY12 budget includes a total cost for Special Education of \$18,144,796 which represents approximately 30% of the proposed school budget. Within the FY12 Special Education figure is a \$6,255,431 cost for Instructional Special Education and \$11,889,365 for STTI.

Controlling STTI costs has been helped to some extent by the efforts of the School Department to educate more students with intense special needs within the Wellesley Schools through a growing Inclusion Program, where the cost of educating these students is generally significantly lower than placement in out-of-district programs. As the inclusion program grows, and larger cohorts of students recognized, hopefully greater efficiencies will be realized. It is important to bear in mind that while the costs of the inclusion programs are typically lower than the out-of-district tuitions, inclusion programs require highly specialized instruction and equipment and low student to teacher/staff ratios and are therefore expensive programs to run. As the depth of the needs of the students coming through the programs intensifies, the costs will continue to rise.

In the area of special transportation costs, Wellesley has been most successful in curtailing rising costs by implementing its own van program. Wellesley owns thirteen vans which provide 88% of the transportation needs to Wellesley's special needs and vocational students, eliminating the need for more expensive contracted services, at a cost savings to the Town of over \$1.7 million dollars. In looking at data for peer communities, on average, Wellesley's transportation costs are lower than most of these towns.

The following table shows the most recent available benchmarking data for out-of-district spending (before circuit breaker funding) by town from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Wellesley continues to rank high within this peer group but, Wellesley is no longer ranked first in this category. It is important to note there that the change of placement of one or two students or the introduction to a system of one or two students can significantly impact a town's out-of-district spending. While the percentage of Wellesley students receiving special education services is on par with the state average (16.9% in Wellesley, 17.1% state average), Wellesley's costs, particularly for out-of-district placements, continue to be higher than the majority of peer towns.

Average Out-of-District Per Pupil Spending		
<i>(based on Department of Elementary & Secondary Education Data)</i>		
Town	FY09 Actual	FY10 Actual
Brookline	70,996.14	114,508.06
Lexington	87,273.14	91,183.60
WELLESLEY	\$ 73,123.79	\$ 69,820.68
Westwood	66,875.07	65,760.39
Newton	62,376.97	62,952.10
Winchester	39,421.81	59,514.18
Needham	56,760.96	52,299.56
Weston	52,265.49	47,840.46
Wayland	39,326.56	41,386.83
Natick	30,885.50	32,860.78
Belmont	52,361.59	52,886.49

In FY10, the Wellesley Public Schools underwent an outside assessment of SPED programs by the firm of Consulting Partners, Inc. FY10 also saw the addition of a new permanent Director of Student Services who has undertaken the task of interpreting the consultants' assessment to find additional efficiencies in Wellesley's programs. Additionally, the FY10 and FY11 budgets included a retainer for a SPED attorney; Special Education involves an increasingly complex and regulated area of education law with increasing demands on school budgets. While it is difficult to quantify the impact of the SPED attorney on spending, the School Administration feels the attorney has provided district personnel with an enhanced knowledge of special education mandates and regulations believes the Wellesley schools will continue to benefit from this ongoing expenditure.

Summary

Wellesley continues to provide excellent programs and services for the educational, emotional, and physical needs of students in its special education community but the cost to the Schools and the Town continues to grow. The School Administration has undertaken several successful efforts to slow the pace of the rate of growth in Special Education spending: the development of the Inclusion program, the ownership of the Special Transportation van program, the creation of the Out-of-District Coordinator role, and the retention of a Special Education attorney. These efforts have all had a positive impact on the SPED budget. The development of the Response to Intervention (RTI) program, a program of instructional interventions to provide support to students to avoid SPED referrals, will serve to increase efficiencies within the SPED budget.

As a result of the review by Consulting Partners, the School Administration and in particular, the Director of Student Services, has committed to certain initiatives within the existing framework to see where changes may be possible: development of consistent program strands and continuum, analyze data on referrals for special education evaluations, analyze the out-of-district placement trends, explore program options in collaboratives, and begin the planning for the development of new in-district programs. Work still remains to be done on analyzing various SPED programs in neighboring and peer towns for benchmarking purposes and comparison of services. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) will conduct a Special Ed program review in the 2011-212 academic year.

Special Education is an increasingly complicated area and as a result SPED budgets are increasingly difficult to project and fund. As mandates have increased the funding has decreased, with the burden falling to cities and towns. The only real relief for school systems will come when the State and Federal governments are forced to carry a larger share of the load, for example, by assuming the medical costs the schools now bear for seriously compromised students or through more substantially funding mandates such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004. Until some relief is found, Wellesley, and all school districts, will continue to feel the pressure to find more efficiencies and cost-saving measures.