

Approved March 22, 2023

**Advisory Committee Meeting
Zoom Video Conference
Wednesday, March 8, 2023, 6:30 p.m.**

Those present from Advisory Committee included Shawn Baker, Doug Smith, Madison Riley, Rani Elwy, Gail Sullivan, David Prock, Bill Schauffler, Pete Pedersen, Al Ferrer, Jenn Fallon, Christina Dougherty, Wendy Paul, Susan Clapham, Neal Goins, and Andrea Ward.

Meeting video can be viewed here. [March 8, 2023, meeting video](#)

Chair Shawn Baker called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm and Vice Chair Doug Smith took roll call of Advisory members in attendance.

Citizen Speak

There was no one present for Citizen Speak.

Discussion and Vote 2023 ATM Warrant Articles

Article 13 (Water Program)

Susan Clapham made, and Wendy Paul seconded a motion for favorable action on Warrant Article 13, Motion 1, as proposed by the Board of Public Works, that the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$13,477,661 to the Water Enterprise Fund, to be expended under the direction of the Board of Public Works for the purposes of operating and managing the Water Program, as set forth in the Warrant and Motion.

Discussion

- This article was previously discussed.
- Updated totals were presented.

Roll call vote was taken.

Advisory recommends favorable action on Article 13, 13 to 0.

Article 29 – Establish a Stormwater Utility Enterprise Fund

Susan Clapham made, and Neal Goins seconded a motion for favorable action on Warrant Article 29, Motion 1, as proposed by the Board of Public Works, that the Town vote to (1) establish an Enterprise Fund for a Stormwater Utility commencing on July 1, 2023; and (2) raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, or borrow a sum of money not to exceed \$2,970,059 for the purposes of operating and managing the Stormwater Utility Enterprise Fund.

Discussion

- It was felt that this Article might be challenging for Town Meeting to comprehend. A question was asked if anyone had any information about when this was done for water and sewer.
- A comment was made that DPW felt this is a more equitable system because commercial property owners (including those with large parking lots) and colleges would be paying into the fund. So, there will be additional contributions to offset the higher impervious surface areas of these users.
- A comment was made that the Public Works website has a calculator by address to assess the impact on individual homeowners.

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- A comment was made that since the stormwater treatment costs currently come out of the general tax fund, it would be reasonable to have those tax funds transferred to the Stormwater Enterprise Fund to offset the fees for taxpayers.
- A comment was made that this is good for the taxpayers because colleges and commercial properties with large parking lots will also be paying into the fund.
- Agreement was expressed with the previous comment and there are or will be more stringent requirements from federal and state government to manage stormwater runoff. The Town will need to address this, and the fund is the equitable way to accomplish this.

Roll call vote was taken.

Advisory recommends favorable action on Article 29, 13 to 0.

Article 2 - TWFP

Susan Clapham made, and Rani Elwy seconded a motion for favorable action on Article 2 to receive the reports of the Select Board on the Town-Wide Financial Plan and Five-Year Capital Budget Program.

Discussion

- The hard work of the Executive Director and Finance Director to get the information to Advisory was acknowledged.

Roll call vote was taken.

Advisory recommends favorable action on Article 2, 13 to 0.

Article 3 – Consent Agenda

Susan Clapham made, and Doug Smith seconded a motion for favorable action that the motions on file with the Moderator under the following articles be approved by a single supermajority vote, pursuant to a consent agenda under this article:

| | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Article 4:</i> | <i>Amend Job Classification Plan</i> |
| <i>Article 9:</i> | <i>Set Total Amounts that may be spent from Revolving Funds for Fiscal Year 2024</i> |
| <i>Article 10:</i> | <i>Injured on Duty Fund Contribution from Free Cash</i> |
| <i>Article 11:</i> | <i>Special Education Fund Appropriation from Free Cash</i> |
| <i>Article 12:</i> | <i>Baler Stabilization Fund Contribution from Free Cash</i> |
| <i>Article 13:</i> | <i>Water Program</i> |
| <i>Article 14:</i> | <i>Sewer Program</i> |
| <i>Article 15:</i> | <i>Electric Program</i> |
| <i>Article 23:</i> | <i>Authorize Payment of Fiscal Year 2022 Bill from Free Cash</i> |
| <i>Article 38:</i> | <i>Increase Disposal of Property Valuation</i> |
| <i>Article 40:</i> | <i>Amend Article 47.4 to Increase Dog License Fees</i> |
| <i>Article 47:</i> | <i>Appoint Fire Engineers</i> |

Discussion

- A comment was made that the Consent Agenda is a good option as it allows Town Meeting to approve 12 articles with one vote. However, any TMM can pull an article out of the Consent Agenda for a separate vote. The Moderator has approved all the articles in the Consent Agenda, and they all have a unanimous vote to recommend favorable action from Advisory.

Roll call vote was taken.

Advisory recommends favorable action on Article 3, 13 to 0 with 1 abstention.

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Article 7, Motion 1, Snow and Ice

Susan Clapham made, and Jenn Fallon seconded a motion for favorable action on Warrant Article 7, Motion 1, as proposed by the Select Board, that the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$150,000 for additional snow and ice removal costs, said sum to be taken from Free Cash as provided in the Warrant and the Motion.

Discussion

- A fixed amount is budgeted for snow and ice removal every year and, depending on the severity of the winter weather, an additional appropriation is requested.
- Money that is not spent is turned back to the Town.

Roll call vote was taken.

Advisory recommends favorable action on Article 7, Motion 1, 14 to 0.

Article 17 – DEI

Susan Clapham made, and Christina Dougherty seconded a motion for favorable action on Warrant Article 17, Motion 1, as proposed by the Select Board, that the sum of \$100,000 be appropriated from Free Cash to be expended under the direction of the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Task Force for an Equity Audit of the Town and that Town Meeting adopt an Anti-Racism and Anti-Bias Resolution as set forth in the Warrant and the Motion.

Discussion

- Enthusiasm was expressed for this effort. An additional comment was made that the schools have been working on this and it is good to see the town join them in the DEI effort. Support for the Article was expressed, and the results of the audit and the next steps were looked forward to.
- A comment was made that it appears to be more of a retention problem in town and it was felt that this is not the best way to address this. It was felt this was a lot of money and that it could be spent better in a holistic study of the town and the reasons people leave town.
- Additional support for the article was expressed, and a comment made about the issues around “belonging,” which is missing from a lot of DEI work but that the task for is addressing this issue. This is not a school thing. The schools delayed their work on creating an HR role related to retention until a more appropriate time. This is a good way to start to build a foundation for this work.
- Support was expressed for the audit, even though \$100,000 is a lot of money. The composition of the task force influenced the support for this Article. The task force members come with a lot of experience with the town. Much thought has been put into this initiative, with a subcommittee specifically directed to look at the equity audit; this is a serious attempt to get to something to work. A review of equity audits in other communities was completed, and it was felt that they are comprehensive.
- Support was expressed and appreciation of the work that the task force has been doing and the inclusive nature of the committee and the fact that it's staffed with so many residents and people from town.
- Concern was expressed about the third WHEREAS clause in the resolution, although the concern is not preventing support for the motion. Concern was expressed about the implication of saying that the Town, as an institution, has perpetuated unequal treatment in the categories listed in the resolution. It was felt it would be better if that clause were not included as the other clauses are more aspirational and speak to shared values. Concern was expressed that perhaps this clause is not necessary, and a question was asked if it could potentially have some liability issues for the Town because it is speaking about the town as an actor and using words like “perpetuate,” which

mean to continue indefinitely. It was felt the forward-looking nature of the resolution should be the focus.

- Town Counsel, Tom Harrington was consulted regarding the liability issue, and he said that the town is not at risk if the WHEREAS clause remains. The Task Force was consulted about possibly removing or changing the WHEREAS clause but they chose to keep current wording.
- An additional comment was made that despite supporting the \$100,000 for the audit, the WHEREAS clause in question could possibly send a wrong message about Wellesley. This will not be about DEI training, but it will be an investment of time and resources to support developing a framework for equity to guide the Town's policies and practices, and departments, boards, and committees towards meeting the Town's goals. It also ties in with the Unified Plan, which identifies diversity as a guiding principle and priority for implementation. Support was expressed for the operative part of the Motion and the forward-thinking nature of the Resolution, which outlines the Town's desire to be a welcoming and inclusive community. It is understood that there is a need to acknowledge the past to move forward.
- Additional overall support for the Motion and agreement with the previous speakers was expressed that it would be useful to take out this WHEREAS clause and the past. It was noted that the DEI FAQ might need to be reconciled with this WHEREAS clause for Town Meeting as there might be questions from TMM.
- Agreement with the previous speakers was expressed and the member stated that he had not experienced discrimination in Wellesley.
- Additional members expressed agreement with the speakers who supported the Motion despite the concerns about the WHEREAS clause citing historical precedents.
- A comment was made that the task force members were an impressive group.
- A comment was made that the reference to Massachusetts and Wellesley in particular could be removed without a loss of generality in terms of what is trying to be accomplished.
- A comment was made that racism in the community is active and there is a lack of understanding in many areas. It was felt that it is important to address that the country was built upon people of color who were brought here against their will. If someone is not a person of color and says there is not racism, it's extremely important for the Town to do the audit. It was felt that it is crucial that the language is active.
- A comment was made that the clause is not a concern because it is more of a declaration and a statement recognizing that we are building on a whole history and not trying to sweep it under the rug but are making it visible. It was felt that the WHEREAS clause was a recognition of where we are as a society, not just in Wellesley but everywhere. It was felt that, if we think we are not biased or engaging in discrimination --even unconsciously--then we are wrong. It's not an issue of perpetuating but more of a recognition of past events.
- A comment was made that it would have been good to include an indication in this Motion that this is just the beginning of a journey that will take time to address and to create the healing that everyone is looking for.
- An additional comment was made that this is a starting point but there is also a socioeconomic issue that gets to the point of belonging; this has to be an important goal of this study, because to be a welcoming community it has to be diverse in all aspects – socioeconomic aspects as well as racial aspects.
- A question was asked if there were any type of metrics to measure success.
- An answer was provided that determining metrics is part of the audit and is one of the things that will be identified and followed, but that the audit is just the beginning of the process.
- A comment was made that in some Massachusetts communities there have been mixed results when hiring somebody for DEI without this type of audit.

Roll call vote was taken.

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Advisory recommends favorable action on Article 17, 14 to 0.

Article 5, Motion 1

Susan Clapham made, and Bill Schaufler seconded a motion for favorable action on Warrant Article 5, Motion 1, as proposed by the Human Resources Board, that the Salary Plan as established at the 1950 Annual Town Meeting as amended, be further amended effective July 1, 2023, by striking the existing pay schedule for the non-bargaining unit, non-management personnel (Job Groups 40-49) and inserting the new schedule as set forth in the Warrant and the Motion.

Discussion

- A summary of the Motion was provided.

Roll call vote was taken.

Advisory recommends favorable action on Article 5, Motion 1, 14 to 0.

Article 5, Motion 2

Susan Clapham made, and Rani Elwy seconded a motion for favorable action on Warrant Article 5, Motion 2, as proposed by the Human Resources Board, that the Salary Plan as established at the 1950 Annual Town Meeting as amended, be further amended effective July 1, 2023, by striking the existing pay schedule for the Merit Pay Plan (Job Groups 50-69) and inserting the new schedule as set forth in the Warrant and the Motion.

Discussion

- A summary of the Motion was provided.

Roll call vote was taken.

Advisory recommends favorable action on Article 5, Motion 2, 14 to 0.

Article 5, Motion 3

Susan Clapham made, and Rani Elwy seconded a motion for favorable action on Warrant Article 5, Motion 3, as proposed by the Human Resources Board, that the sum of \$235,000 be appropriated to the Human Resources Board for the purpose of granting merit pay increases to employees in Job Groups 50 and above

Discussion

- A summary of the Motion was provided.
- A comment was made that the Merit Pay plan is not a Merit Pay plan as it is currently structured. It was felt that the Town might want to consider how to restructure by looking at things differently and more holistically, and to look across the Town in recognizing people rather than within the silos of each department. This was felt to be a better more effective use of the Merit Pay plan. This would produce a true bell curve where stellar talent is recognized on one end and less so on the other end. There are ways to retain people but it's not just the Merit Pay plan.
- Agreement with the previous point was expressed.

Roll call vote was taken.

Advisory recommends favorable action on Article 5, Motion 3, 14 to 0.

Article 5, Motion 4 – FMD

Susan Clapham made, and Bill Schaufler seconded a motion for favorable action on Article 5, Motion 4, as proposed by the Human Resources Board, that the salary plan established at the 1950 Town Meeting and amended, be further amended by inserting the new Pay Schedule for Local 49, American Federation

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of State, County and Municipal Employees Council 93 as follows and that the sum of \$143,389 be appropriated to the Select Board for the Facilities Management Department as set forth in the Article and the Motion.

- A summary of the Motion was provided.
- A comment was made that the contract is a three (3) year contract, and the increase is front-loaded in FY24 and percentage increase will go down in subsequent years.
- A comment was made that the front-loading reflects very strong negotiating in past years on the contract and the pay scale had fallen below where it should be; this brings FMD back higher on the scale relative to other communities but not all the way to the top of the scale.

Roll call vote was taken.

Advisory recommends favorable action on Article 5, Motion, 14 to 0.

Article 32 – Authorize modification of HR policies

Jenn Fallon made, and Wendy Paul seconded a motion to move Article 32 off the table. (Vote tabled at 2/22 meeting).

Roll call vote was taken and Article 32 was unanimously taken off the table.

Susan Clapham made, and Doug Smith seconded a motion for favorable action on Warrant Article 32, Motion 1, as proposed by the Human Resources Board, that the Town revise the Town of Wellesley Personnel Policy by (1) modifying the following policies: Sick Leave, Vacations with Pay, Military Leave, and (2) adding the following new policies: Working Out of Classification, as documented on file with the Town Clerk.

Discussion

- A summary of the Motion was provided.
- A comment was made that several members had asked about recruiting and retention policies and that these revised and new policies are focused on this.
- A comment was made that last year HR revised all their policies so that it is hoped this is the beginning of a new pattern of having a few updates each year.
- One member expressed disappointment and commented that they hoped difficulties in hiring will not be a topic of conversation next year when departments present to Advisory,

Roll call vote was taken.

Advisory recommends favorable action on Article 32, 14 to 0.

Article 41 – Amend 40R zoning for additional 25- housing units at “The Nines”

Susan Clapham made, and Madison Riley seconded a motion for favorable action on Warrant Article 41, Motion 1, as proposed by the Select Board, to amend the Zoning Bylaw by amending the Wellesley Park Smart Growth Overlay District to allow for greater residential density and the removal of hotels as a permitted use, as set forth in the Article and the Motion.

Discussion

- After reviewing the Development Agreement, a suggestion was made to add a sewer capacity step and a drinking water needs study to the Development Agreement.
- It was also suggested that it might be helpful to have a resident coordinator paid for by residents, to help residents connect to town services because a lot of people are coming from different communities.
- Support for this Article was expressed by several members.

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- A comment was made that there are ongoing Development Agreement negotiations, and the Agreement sets the table for the zoning change. But comfort was expressed that this is a narrow change of swapping one use for another. The structure of the housing--rental or ownership--is yet to be determined. There should be a net financial benefit to the town. There are concerns about school enrollment, but information was presented about actual enrollment compared with projected enrollments in the first phase of the development, and this seems to be tracking fairly closely. In addition, if necessary, Advisory could re-vote prior to Town Meeting.
- A comment was made that Advisory is voting only on the zoning change, not on the Development Agreement.

Roll call vote was taken.

Advisory recommends favorable action on Article 41, 14 to 0.

Article 43, Motion 1

Jenn Fallon made, and Rani Elwy seconded a motion to rescind Advisory Committee's prior vote and recommendation on Article 43, Motion 1, due to changes in the Motion language.

Roll call vote was taken and the committee's vote on Article 43, Motion 1 was unanimously rescinded.

Article 43, Motion 2

Doug Smith made, and Jenn Fallon seconded a motion to rescind Advisory Committee's prior vote and recommendation on Article 43, Motion 2, due to changes in the Motion language.

Roll call vote

- Jenn Fallon – yes
- Neal Goins – yes
- Doug Smith – yes
- Andrea Ward – yes
- Al Ferrer – yes
- Wendy Paul – yes
- Pete Pedersen – yes
- Madison Riley – yes
- Christina Dougherty – yes
- Rani Elwy – yes
- David Prock – no
- Bill Schauffler – yes
- Gail Sullivan – yes
- Susan Clapham – yes

Advisory's vote on Article 43, Motion 2 was rescinded, 13 to 1.

Article 43, Motion 1

Susan Clapham made, and Jenn Fallon seconded a motion for favorable action on Warrant Article 43, Motion 1, as proposed by citizen petition and revised on March 7, 2023, that the Town direct the Moderator to appoint a Night Use of Public Lands Study Committee to conduct an independent, comprehensive analysis of all costs and benefits of additional night-time sports or other outdoor night events on public lands, as set forth in the Article and the revised Motion.

Discussion

- A summary of the revised motion was discussed.

- A comment was made that the NRC and School Committee already voted and therefore the member does not support this motion.
- Appreciation was expressed that the citizens heard what Advisory was saying and added the NRC and other committees. A question was asked as to whether this Study Committee could work without a budget. A comment was made that some task forces have operated without a budget, but there was no opinion on whether this particular study committee could operate without a budget. It was further commented that it was believed that the Playing Fields Task Force (PFTF) was created by the users of the fields in an effort to work together. Clarification was provided that the PFTF is staffed by the Recreation Department director; he organizes all its logistics and meetings. So, by using paid staff members, PFTF is inherently using town funds to operationalize the PFTF.
- A comment was made expressing appreciation for the good faith effort to listen to the issues Advisory raised. However, it was felt that it would be better to look at specific areas such as Centennial Park and Morses Pond where changes in use are anticipated. The installation of the lights at the Hunnewell track and field will provide a year or two of experience that could help understand the impact of other lighting.
- Support was expressed for the motion, and it was felt that it was not about opposing the Hunnewell lights but was a study of using lights on public land.
- A comment was made that a more focused approach would be better than trying to do everything.
- A question was asked if there is agreement from the committees listed to be voting members and if they are behind this or whether it is aspirational.
 - Advisory did reach out to board chairs, but they would need a board meeting to be able to speak to this.
- A comment was made that the worst case scenario is a committee is established and they don't have any research. Support was expressed to see if a committee could come with good recommendations for how public lands should be used at night.
- Agreement with previous speakers was expressed and comments included a need to have a more specific focus of the study and that the NRC has the care, custody, and control of the fields and that they should be the entity completing a study.

Roll call vote

Jenn Fallon – no

Neal Goins – no

Doug Smith – yes

Andrea Ward – no

Al Ferrer – no

Wendy Paul – no

Pete Pedersen – no

Madison Riley – no

Christina Dougherty – no

Rani Elwy – yes

David Prock – no

Bill Schaufler – no

Gail Sullivan – no

Susan Clapham – no

Advisory recommends unfavorable action on Article 43, Motion 1, 12 to 2.

Article 43, Motion 2

Susan Clapham made, and Jenn Fallon seconded a motion for favorable action on Warrant Article 43, Motion 2, as proposed by citizen petition and revised on March 7, 2023, that Town Meeting vote to

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request the Wellesley Natural Resources Commission to defer the installation of sports lighting at the Hunnewell Track and Field until the Study Committee cited in Motion 1 has presented its recommendations to Annual Town Meeting 2024, to benefit from the findings of the Study Committee.

Discussion

- A comment was made that these two motions can be considered separately; the sense was not to support a motion for an action which has already been approved by the board which controls the space.

Roll call vote was taken.

Advisory recommends unfavorable action on Article 43, Motion 2, 14 to 0.

Climate Action Committee (CAC) Budget

Susan Clapham made, and Rani Elwy seconded a motion to express support for the proposed FY24 Climate Action Committee operating budget, including benefits and merit pool allocations, which will result in a 37.84% (\$44,407) increase over FY23.

Discussion

- Previously half of the director’s salary was covered by MLP and the predominant reason for overage is because the full salary of the director will now be covered by the CAC.

Roll call vote was taken

Advisory expressed support for the CAC proposed FY24 budget, 14 to 0.

Information Technology (IT) Budget

Susan Clapham made, and Bill Schauffler seconded a motion to express support for the proposed FY24 Information Technology Department operating budget, which will result in a 12.09% (\$165,514) increase over FY23.

Discussion

- A cybersecurity audit was completed last year, and the increase in the IT budget addresses recommendations and needs that were identified.

Roll call vote was taken.

Advisory expressed support for the IT proposed FY24 budget, 14 to 0.

Council on Aging Budget

Susan Clapham made, and Wendy Paul seconded a motion to express support for the proposed FY24 Council on Aging operating budget, including benefits and merit pool allocations, which will result in a 6.30% (\$31,512) increase over FY23.

Discussion

- Budget increase reflects the fact that salaries were increased to address staffing issues, and the expiration of a grant of \$10,000 by Eastern Development.

Roll call vote was taken.

Advisory expressed support for the COA proposed FY24 budget, 14 to 0.

FMD Budget

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Susan Clapham made, and Doug Smith seconded a motion to express support for the FY24 Facilities Management Department operating budget, including benefits and merit pool allocations, which will result in a 4.28% (\$373,311) increase over FY23.

Discussion

- As previously discussed, higher personnel costs for next year have resulted from frontloading the negotiated increases of the new contract with the FMD union workers. In addition, utility costs have increased.
- A comment was made that there is also a big increase because currently Hunnewell costs are low; the budget for FY24 reflects higher custodian costs once the building comes back on line in February 2024.
- A comment was made that there will be savings from the Town Hall closure, but when Hunnewell reopens, personnel and utility costs will increase.

Roll call vote was taken.

Advisory expressed support for the FMD proposed FY24 budget, 14 to 0.

Celebrations Budget

Susan Clapham made, and Wendy Paul seconded a motion to express support for the FY24 Celebrations Committee operating budget, including benefits, which will result in a 6.38% (\$300) increase over FY23.

Roll call vote was taken.

Advisory expressed support for the Celebrations Committee FY24 budget, 14 to 0.

Risk Management

Susan Clapham made, and Jenn Fallon seconded a motion to express support for the FY24 Risk Management operating budget, including benefits and merit pool allocations, which will result in a 9.67% (\$73,700) increase over FY23.

Roll call vote was taken.

Advisory expressed support for the Risk Management FY24 budget, 14 to 0.

Public Works

Susan Clapham made, and Madison Riley seconded a motion to express support for the FY24 Public Works operating budget, including benefits and merit pool allocations, which will result in a 7.32% (\$581,122) increase over FY23.

Discussion

- A comment was made that the DPW budget is large, but they have also been experiencing higher energy and supply costs and the percentage increase is reasonable.

Roll call vote was taken.

Advisory expressed support for the Public Works FY24 budget, 13 to 0.

Board of Health

Susan Clapham made, and Rani Elwy seconded a motion to express support for the FY24 Board of Health operating budget, including benefits and merit pool allocations, which will result in a 6.7% (\$88,178) increase over FY23.

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- Increases are driven by personnel costs, with a large portion of the increase accounted for by the benefit costs for two (2) new positions and some salary adjustments.

Roll call vote was taken

Advisory expressed support for the Board of Health FY24 budget, 14 to 0.

Schools

Susan Clapham made, and Wendy Paul seconded a motion to express support for the FY24 Wellesley Public Schools operating budget, including benefits and merit pool allocations, which will result in a 3.68% (\$3,117,422) increase over FY23.

Discussion

- A comment was made that the WPS budget is 2.68% over guideline. Most of the budget is level funding and salary steps. Only 0.52% is for strategic dollars and .02% is other. The changes in the state guidelines and the payment for out-of-district placements jumped from 2.5% to 14%, which is an additional \$630,000 in the budget. Without that increase and the need to account for those dollars, WPS would be within guideline. With respect to enrollment, the presentation on Feb. 8 showed how classes were staffed and what the dollars mean for elementary, middle, and high school. Reductions are made at section levels based upon the enrollment at the time. The WPS Budget Book is large (at 400 pages), but there is a lot of analysis in the file. The schools follow federal, state, and local guidelines for reporting their budget.
- A comment was made that the challenge with the school budget is what it's been in the last few years: enrollment is going down and costs continue to go up. However, it was felt most of it is required. WPS answered the question about discretionary and nondiscretionary costs, and there is virtually nothing that is discretionary. Support for the schools was expressed but concern was also voiced about the decreasing number of students and the increasing budget.
- Several members commented that 0.74% of the 3.68% increase is due to the 14% increase in out-of-district costs and without that additional expense, the school budget would be below guidelines.
- A comment was made that only about 10% of \$3 million are strategic costs that don't have to be done; support was expressed for those items, which include staff positions that are being used to help students return to pre-Covid learning levels at the middle school with the math teacher and the coach. It was felt the Teaching Fellow program with Regis is an exciting opportunity to help the school with instruction and to serve as a pipeline for future teachers as well as possibly increase diversity in hiring.
- Several members spoke in support of the school budget and felt that the line item decisions are the job of the elected School Committee. It was felt that Advisory's questions were answered, and information provided.
- Several members cited the improved transparency of the WPS budget.
- A comment was made that the schools are addressing the concerns of communication and academic excellence but that there are costs associated with this.
- A comment was made that the WPS Budget Book is a complex 400 pages, but the schools are required to follow a reporting format. It was felt this budget was highly transparent and contains a lot of detail.
- Agreement with previous comments was expressed. It was further commented that some of the items in the budget are reflective of trying to bring costs away from individual families being charged for items that the schools have a responsibility to provide, such as art supplies, library books and supplementing the cost of transportation for families. This is an effort to make everything more accessible to people. In addition, it was felt that WPS brings in as much revenue from other sources as they can and works hard to be fiscally responsible.

- Another member expressed support for the budget and cited that the reason the budget is out of guideline is beyond WPS control and was imposed by the state. However, it is still difficult to understand how the school population goes down and costs go up.
- A comment was made that line items can't be second-guessed, and that the costs don't seem out of line with respect to other districts. It is also possible that the student population will increase as the town continues to add to its housing stock.
- A comment was made that the proportion (25%) of Wellesley students not attending public school is similar to other wealthy districts in the state.
- It was commented that to have a good education is expensive.
- A comment was made that it is important to focus on the educational excellence of the students so they can compete in the world.
- A comment was made that administrative costs are about 1.8% of the total budget; it was felt that, based on some research, this is not too much and was low, relative to other public school systems. It was felt that much of what was being done -- the WMS math teacher and coach, the new AP courses, the teaching fellows -- were all focused on education and instruction. Comfort with the administrative numbers was expressed.
- A comment was made that there seems to be a lot of concern about enrollments going down and the costs going up; in labor-intensive businesses, however, when demand is down, there is a floor where further cuts can't be made. There are different schools and courses that need to be supported, and in order to support them and offer a well-rounded and robust education, staffing can't go lower. The benefit is when enrollment goes back up, those professionals can be leveraged, and more children educated with relatively the same number of educators.
- It was felt that the challenge is the strategic needs, and that WPS is not able to really invest in the things they are trying to do.
- Agreement with previous speakers was expressed and it was felt WPS had answered questions.
- Support was expressed for the strategic priorities of the School Committee. A comment was made that it is difficult to second-guess how these are developed. It was further commented that these have been extraordinary times coming out of a pandemic as well as being a very high inflationary period, so some cost increases are expected. It was agreed with a previous speaker that it is not always optimal trim an organization of good people, so staffing is not necessarily going to be in lockstep with enrollment. It was felt that the administrative expenses did not seem extraordinary.
- One member felt that he had not received adequate answers to his questions and requested additional information from the schools; he expressed frustration with the Budget Book and felt that other costs associated with WPS were not represented and that the budget is not transparent.
- A comment was made that the schools are dealing with many challenges post-Covid, such as mental health challenges and lost learning, and some of the costs associated with those challenges are not always immediately evident.
- A comment was made that, based on experience with other organizations, the budget presented was the most detailed budget seen. It was felt that some of the discretionary items are essential. Agreement was expressed with previous comments regarding the effort to bring costs inside the budget, rather than ask families to pay for these.
- A comment was made that Town Meeting might ask about rankings and it was asked how students in special education programs fit into the rankings.
- School Committee and staff were thanked for their presentation and their efforts to provide Advisory with as much information as possible and to answer Advisory's questions.

Roll call vote

Jenn Fallon – yes

Neal Goins – yes

Approved March 22, 2023

Doug Smith – yes
Andrea Ward – yes
Al Ferrer – yes
Wendy Paul – yes
Pete Pedersen – yes
Madison Riley – yes
Christina Dougherty – yes
Rani Elwy – yes
David Prock – no
Bill Schauffler – yes
Gail Sullivan – yes
Susan Clapham – yes

Advisory expressed support for the Wellesley Public Schools FY24 budget, 13 to 1.

Article 8, Motion 2

Susan Clapham made, and Madison Riley seconded a motion for favorable action on Warrant Article 8, Motion 2, as proposed by the Select Board, that the Town vote to appropriate \$196,684,147 to the Town Boards and officials for the purposes outlined in the 2024 Omnibus Budget.

Discussion

- An overview and update of the Omnibus Budget was provided, and appreciation expressed for the efforts of all town boards, the Executive Director, and Finance Director for delivering a balanced budget.
- Advisory members expressed support for the FY24 budget.

Roll call vote was taken.

Advisory recommends favorable action on Article 8, Motion 2, 13 to 0.

Article 8, Motion 3

Susan Clapham made, and Jenn Fallon seconded a motion for favorable action on Warrant Article 8, Motion 3, as proposed by the Select Board, that the Town vote to transfer the sum of \$2,500,000 from Free Cash, as certified on July 1, 2022, to reduce the tax rate (i.e., to balance the budget).

Roll call vote was taken.

Advisory recommends favorable action on Article 8, Motion 3, 13 to 0.

Liaison Reports

PBC/Wendy Paul – information on the Hardy School bid numbers will be available mid-March.

Recreation/Wendy Paul – pickleball Public Hearing was well attended and it is a nationwide issue playing out in Wellesley

BOH/Christina Dougherty– provided an update of the recent BOH meeting – there was a discussion about the opioid settlement and how best to use the \$212,000 that the town has received; there was a discussion about the MetroWest adolescent survey and a need to receive the information in a timelier way. For The Nines, state law requires a pre-placement inspection by the BOH for 40B placements – this has resulted in increased demand on staff time.

CAC/Gail Sullivan – Webinars for the new opt in code occurred; a small working group is being set up to focus on gas leaks and to take a closer look at this issue.

Schools/Jenn Fallon – presentation of the strategic plan will be on March 21; update of the election was provided.

Approved March 22, 2023

Minutes Approval and Adjournment

Jenn Fallon made, and Christina Dougherty seconded a motion to approve the February 23, 2023, February 28, 2023, and March 1, 2023, minutes and to adjourn the meeting.

Roll Call Vote

Jennifer Fallon – yes

Doug Smith – yes

Susan Clapham – yes

Al Ferrer - yes

Wendy Paul – yes

Pete Pedersen – yes; abstain from 2/23

Madison Riley – yes

Rani Elwy - yes

Christina Dougherty - yes

Gail Sullivan – yes

David Prock -absent

William Schauffler – yes

Neal Goins – yes

Andrea Ward – yes

The February 23, 2023, February 28, 2023, and March 1, 2023, minutes were approved, and the meeting adjourned at 10:18 p.m.

Meeting Documents Reviewed

<https://www.wellesleyma.gov/DocumentCenter/Index/2023>

- Article 43 commentary and revised motions
- Advisory WPS questions updated 03/06/23
- 2023 ATM Motions V10
- Q and A WPS 03/07/23
- Development Agreement 03/03/23