

**WEST WINDSOR-PLAINSBORO REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BOARD FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES**



<u>BOE Committee:</u> Anthony Fleres (Chair) Hemant Marathe Yibao Xu	<u>Administration:</u> Victoria Kniewel Larry Shanok Lawrence LoCastro	<u>Guest/Public:</u>
---	---	----------------------

**October 15, 2012**

The meeting was called to order at 6:38 PM at the Central Office conference room. Topics covered included:

Review Agenda Items: The place of the two new job descriptions in the Technology organization was discussed. Technology will have its staff in three board tiers of ascending responsibility/accountability. The agenda item is simply approving the job descriptions. The current thinking is to staff the two new jobs while leaving empty the current vacancy in the MIS manager job description. Thus there will be one additional staff member in technology when all is set.

The committee is okay with the agenda items for Tuesday.

Archway Programs Settlement Offer Query: This organization is again trying to close a trying chapter in its history from many years ago. The district supported an earlier attempt to end the process back in 2003: 67 districts approved the plan while 23 rejected it. Since the DOE insisted that 100% agreement was necessary, no agreement was finalized.

Archway is trying again to settle the outstanding issues. The financial impact on the district is negligible: the full amount is \$5,141.40 and the proposed settlement is for \$1,887.99. Every district is offered 37% of their full amount. The amount owed is from the 1996-97 fiscal year and the district has not sent children to the program in a number of years. The committee again agrees that settling is a good idea. A resolution to this effect will appear on the board agenda for approval.

NJQSAC Statement of Assurance: Despite DOE assurances that paperwork for high achieving districts will decline, this annual process is again due. Many of the Statement of Assurances involve multiple administrators but the process is proceeding toward seeking board approval at the November 13, 2012 board meeting.

NJQSAC Comprehensive Maintenance Plan: In addition to the SOA document, the annual maintenance documents are also required with NJQSAC; these were noted at the committee meeting too. As with many documents submitted each year by the district, they are formulaic but required.

An additional example of DOE's stifling documentation has been playing out with the inaction of DOE on the submitted Corrective Action Plan for the Ed Jobs monitoring. Issues not raised in the findings and required actions have been consuming large amounts of central office administrator time. The administration hopes that this turmoil will soon be resolved in line with the original DOE report rather than the issues raised after receipt of their report.

2011-2012 Audit Update: the audit is proceeding and the committee should have a draft CAFR in hand in time for review prior to the committee meeting of November 7, 2012 with the auditor. The CAFR will be on the agenda for acceptance by the BOE at the November 13, 2012 meeting.

2013-2014 Budget - Parameters for BOE Budget Discussions: The past practices have worked well, providing program consistency in the face of varying challenges. Over the past nine fiscal years the district's per pupil cost has increased by \$1,728 as compared to an increase for the State of New Jersey of \$3,092. With the last state provided actual data the per pupil cost of the district is \$1,028 below the state average (and compares to Princeton's \$3,278 above the state average, or Hopewell Valley's \$1,707 above the state average). The superintendent noted that districts that did not consistently go to the spending cap

have had to curtail programs of significance. WWPRSD has avoided big cuts that would disrupt excellence in instruction while controlling spending. When excellence has been achieved with less spending the funds have gone to excess surplus. From excess surplus solid levels of tax relief have been provided.

One of the sources of lower general fund spending has been our use of capital reserve. This has funded construction to maintain the buildings as positive learning environments. Capital reserve has also allowed the district to earn 40% matching grants on a number of projects, expanding the reach of our dollars. In comparison, the recent \$11 million Princeton referendum bond issue will not receive state matching funds and will be 100% funded by property taxes.

While capital reserve dollars for construction can only be used for construction they have contributed to lower general fund spending over the years. The balances also mean that the board can choose to do necessary construction without always adding to the property tax level.

A year ago the district had to choose the best way to divide the excess surplus from the prior year. Dividing it between tax relief and reserves established a sound basis for both modest impact on total tax levy and the follow on impact on the following year (the heavier the utilization of tax relief in "year one," the bigger the tax increase required in "year two."). The alternative to the large tax increase in the second year would be larger class sizes and fewer co-curricular activities.

It was discussed that for 2013-14 budget cycle, the overall target might be to use tax relief to keep the change in the total tax levy near zero. A combination of tax relief, adding to reserves and capital spending may make this goal achievable. Higher capital spending could formalize a place for technology expenditures within the budget process.

Also possible would be a mixed use addition to Village School: use for expanded Community Education programs to serve the community as well as addressing the deficiencies in district administrative spaces. The opportunity exists to do this at this time without impacting the tax levy.

Other Business: The impact of new federal nutrition requirements had been discussed in some detail at previous meetings. The steps taken in the district have minimized disruptions associated with them – this is in contrast to protests that have sprung up around the country and received coverage by the media including the NY Times.

It was noted that Plainsboro Planning Board was meeting tonight on the High School North field lights and Mr. Marathe left for that meeting at 7:38 P.M.

The meeting adjourned at 8:52P.M.

**NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, November 7, 2012, 6:30 PM @ Central Office**

Topic for Next Meeting  
2011-2012 Public Audit  
Review Agenda Items

Future Topics:  
Impact of Recent Legislation  
Policies