

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



<u>BOE Committee:</u> Louisa Ho (Chair) Scott Powell	<u>Administration:</u> David Aderhold Larry Shanok Lawrence LoCastro	<u>Guest/Public:</u> Mary Pierson, Transportation
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November 15, 2016

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 PM at Central Office. Topics covered included:

Transportation: Mary Pierson, Transportation Coordinator, reviewed the opening of school activities. There is always some turmoil at the start of a school year, but this year things settled down quickly. The major state reporting program, DRTRS, requires a lot of documentation and analysis, but was recently completed ahead of the state deadline.

With the notice this past summer from West Windsor Township to end Transportation's long-term lease arrangement of the Wallace Road facility, this matter has figured greatly in administration's future thinking. The Superintendent was successful in having the August 2016 date moved to June 30, 2017. In terms of planning for buses, employees, repairs, fueling and other details, June is right around the corner and finalizing plans essential.

Presently, the district has 15 drivers and 23 buses. Fourteen of these buses will reach the maximum age limit of the State of New Jersey this June. A very real issue is determining how many buses the district should retain come next July and September. That in turn dictates how many drivers are needed. Issues such as fueling and repairing the vehicles and accommodating the drivers when not driving must be solved. Location of the office staff must also be addressed.

Last year's budget cycle concluded that having some in-house bus capacity is good from several dimensions: flexibility to deal with emergencies and an ability to serve as a baseline capacity for field trips and athletics are among those elements. Recent actions by the State of New Jersey to make it more difficult for drivers to qualify to drive school buses emphasize the value of such flexibility. In that regard, the current budget includes \$300,000 for potential new vehicles from capital reserve.

Come July, the district will have seven large buses and two small buses. Since buses are sometimes out of service, especially during the two State of New Jersey inspection cycles, a couple of spares are a prudent way to deal with the sudden unavailability of a bus.

Last summer, the district utilized two large buses and four small buses to serve the district's special education students. If two large spares and two small spares are prudent, as many as four small buses must be purchased to provide the same service in 2017. With the lead times for vehicle acquisition, these must be ordered soon.

Another consideration is having an ability to serve students in the times when large numbers of them are going on athletic or field trips; these trips use large buses, sometimes as many as ten. Next fall, if the district is to fully use 15 drivers and take the above considerations to heart, the district would need a total of 11 large buses and 6 small buses. This suggests that the total bus purchase program may call for the purchase of 4 large buses and 4 small buses.

Considerations of the environment suggest that new buses utilize gasoline rather than diesel fuel. To date, there has been little enthusiasm for in district placement of these 17 buses. Out of district placement will increase driving time by our drivers. None of the present location alternatives allow the district to continue to repair some of its buses in a district run facility. The Committee suggested some possible sites. Location is starting to dominate our thinking now that we have largely thought through the issue of how many buses are needed.

Review Agenda Items: The agenda is straight forward and the committee supports approval of the agenda.

2016-2017 Audit Services: Larry LoCastro reviewed the advantages and cost of committing to an auditor for the June 30, 2017, audit. Wiss has agreed to commit to the next audit at an increase of 1%. The Committee sees acting on this issue as a prudent step and it will appear on a future agenda.

2017-2018 Budget: Ongoing discussions continued. While a category such as health expenditures may not need a significant increase, facility associated charges need an increase. Position control analysis has begun by Human Resources and the Comptroller. As always, personnel costs are the major spending issue for the budget.

Some data comparing expenditures was reviewed. The district's per pupil spending is well below that of Princeton and Hopewell Valley. Not surprisingly, per pupil administrative and facility costs are also clearly lower than at those two high performing districts. Another driver of our lower per pupil costs is our student: teacher ratio. While the two other districts have raised costs by lowering their ratio over the past twelve years, the district has constrained the growth in costs by inching the ratio higher.

The Committee noted that higher inflation is likely in the coming years. The actions taken over the past years leave the district relatively well positioned to deal with higher inflation in a "2% cap" environment. Districts presently in financial straits will be particularly vulnerable when inflation moves higher.

Other Business: The Superintendent updated the committee members on the progress in identifying candidates for the open positions in the district

The meeting adjourned at 8:18 PM.

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, December 6, 2016, 7:30 PM @ Central Office

Topic for Next Meeting

Review Agenda Items
2017-2018 Budget
Transportation Update

Future Topics:

Impact of Recent Legislation
Policies
Transportation