

**Willington Board of Education
Special Meeting
Budget Workshop
January 9, 2019, 6:00 p.m.
Town Office Building, Lower Level Meeting Room**

Audio Recording: yes
Notes Taken: yes

Members Present:

Herb Arico
Tracey Anderson
Chiara Bambara
Michelle Doucette Cunningham
Ann Grosjean
Stephanie Summers

Members Absent

Elena Testa

Also present: Superintendent of Schools Phil Stevens, Principal of HMS Ken Craig, and Principal of CES Rich Napoli.

1. **Call to Order:** Michelle Doucette Cunningham called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. She noted if anyone wanted to speak to please sign in.
2. **Present to Speak:** Matthew Clark asked about the assumptions of the budget. M. Doucette Cunningham noted that we would get to that throughout the meeting.
3. Introduction of the Willington Public Schools' Superintendent's 2019-2020 Spending Plan (Budget)

P. Stevens noted that this is an extremely difficult process with the financial times. He wanted to thank everyone for their support. P. Stevens made a recommendation that the BOE vote by the entire budget at the end of the budget workshops, instead of by program. You can make an amendment at the end rather than go program by program. P. Stevens would like to start with the process and priorities. He states our priorities include improving instructional practices with personalized attention, small class sizes, and extra-curricular activities. The proposed 2.94% budget is what remains after approximately \$336,000 in cuts. We started at 6.99 %. Last year the budget started at a 6.9% flat budget with no new initiatives. It ended with a 2.16% increase and it's not level services this year. Inflation is hovering around 2.5 % average. Letter from BOF requesting 0% increase if possible.

P. Stevens went through the Proposed Budget Snapshot handout and reviewed the budget assumptions, shared services, and unfunded mandates.

S. Summers asked if the percentages were a running total and P. Stevens said yes.
S. Summers also asked if we have any estimate of students for next year? 40 students for kindergarten for next year which is higher than it has been in the past at this time of year.

H. Arico asked if class sizes are based on homeroom? Center school travels as a group, so yes. Hall school does their schedule based on what the students sign up for and by class size.

4. Program 1: Center Elementary School

P. Stevens reviewed Program 1 with the BOE.

0.82 of our teachers are paid out of a grant. A secretary is portioned off to transportation and special education. The one para is the library media specialist. Symphony Math was a program purchased last year that was not budgeted for as it was paid for through a grant. It is now in the budget which is why it went up. PowerSchool is the system we utilize as our student operating system and is critical to state reporting. Telephone service is the same.

Educational supplies- cut of \$2,693. Maintained supplies in math and reading. Art supplies and instructional supplies are down 1%. Computer supplies down 13 %; PE down 65%; Music down 68%; Media center down 38%. Hoping for alternate funding to be creative.

Equipment- Significant number of contractual items: fire alarm inspections, septic pumped, lawn care. This has been cut \$1,000 from last year. Approximately \$5,000 left after these contractual items for emergency things that occur throughout the school year.

Program 2: Hall Memorial School

P. Stevens reviewed Program 2 with the BOE.

A portion of a secretary is applied to maintenance. Currently, para working in intervention. Staffing budget down due to the elimination of 2 positions. Elimination of those two positions disrupts a school. When they are integrated into classrooms, that's a big loss. Stevens says his priority in doing that was maintaining small class sizes, a district priority. We would consider moving the para position from intervention to the library to create a joint library/MakerSpace. This is a creative way to salvage a portion of those two programs. C. Bambara emphasized the importance to keep smaller class sizes since we have to cut intervention programs. The more students you have the harder it gets.

Instructional supplies are down \$6,970. Art supplies down 35%; World language supplies down 50%; PE supplies down 70%; music supplies cut 70%. Only so many non-contractual items to cut. Computer supplies kept flat in case of an issue like the server failing. Building maintenance down \$4,000. Sports and extra activities are flat. K. Craig talks about assemblies including those around multicultural diversity and internet safety the programs were cut from the budget.

H. Arico had a question on the stipend positions. The stipends are for coaches, team leaders, developing curriculum, running team meetings. We have minimal sports offerings. When we did parent the survey we got high demand for extracurricular activities and STEM programs. Trying to provide clubs at the elementary level as well. The more a student is connected to its school the better they perform. K. Craig talks about clubs lasting around 10-12 weeks once a week factoring in student interest and transportation needs. About \$50,000 is applied to stipends district-wide. K. Craig talked

about team leaders being valuable for running meetings and driving the work we're doing with our curriculum.

Program 4: Transportation

P. Stevens presented Program 4 to the BOE.

Secretary's help with bus routes, problems, and phone calls related to transportation. That's why secretaries are in this program. Bus contract is a 3% increase but does not include special transportation. H. Arico talks about the hall school choir singing at the senior center praising for a wonderful job. After school program transportation based on students that attend. P. Stevens talked about the importance of not leaving students out based on transportation issues. P. Stevens praised our bus drivers for their hard work.

S. Summers stated she would like to see more data, context, for what we've had to do over the past years that affect different departments. To me its central to the whole educational process. Looking for a trendline of what the cuts have been.

The amount of the budget that you don't have control over due to being contractual is a lot. You've consistently returned money to the town. BOE requested a chart of contractual vs fixed costs.

C. Bambara talked about the importance to show increases by staff, transportation etc. and the percentage by program of what it costs. M. Doucette Cunningham talks about how it might be hard to compare due to different people making spreadsheets for budgets. H. Arico talks about how these cuts are going to have a significant effect on our programs.

Next Wednesday at 6pm in Library for next budget workshop. **(1.15.2019 note: meeting moved to Town Office Building, Upper Level)** Next week we cover 5 different programs. Plenty more time to discuss further. Focus as much as possible on the programs we discussed.

5. Present to speak

Mark _____

1. Useless for us because we can't see what we see. Make something available for citizens.
2. One document your calling cuts, another I can't see you're calling them cuts. These are the requests, ones I can't see are actual year over year actual figures.
3. Security, should cover buildings
4. Transportation for after-school clubs, not twice as many clubs, you could not spend that money.
5. \$50,000 stipends, we need to see a breakdown of that. That's a lot of money

M. Doucette Cunningham stated the budget is available on the Willington website. All sections are up. If you do care to look at the detail you can look at it online. We encourage you to come back and ask questions.

T. Anderson thinks its devastating. I think we're going backward. We are cutting positions that support areas we were trying to increase like STEM and MakerSpace. Our children shouldn't have to suffer because of a situation we have no control over. Everything keeps getting more expensive and we have to fix it.

A. Grosjean said it is hard to see all the cuts, come up with some creative solutions. Work through other programs and see where we can go.

H. Arico said we can talk more thoroughly when the whole budget has been laid out.

S. Summers recognizes the creativity in our school district, but it comes to a point where it is hard to be creative in thinking with limited funds.

M. Doucette Cunningham stated we have a shift in our priorities and are willing to cut a program to save money. She is not satisfied with the justification. As a community, we need to start communicating what our priorities are. We take public info seriously and enjoy hearing from them. Even if you can't be here, email us, your voice will be heard.

6. Adjournment at 8:15 p.m.