



WINOOSKI SCHOOLS

We are the future.

Winooski School Board of Trustees

Regular Meeting

Wednesday, December 2, 2020, 6:30pm

Virtual Meeting

Zoom Webinar information: <https://wsdvt.zoom.us/j/98492073283>

Join by Phone: +1 929 436 2866

AGENDA

6:30pm

Attendance: Tul Niroula, Emily Hecker, Krista Parisi, Nicole Mace, Kirsten Kollgaard, Robin Hood, Mike Decarreau, Tula Kadariya, Liz Edsell, Tori Cleiland, Alex Yin, Allison Burlock, Jean Szilva, Allie Monahan, Kayla Loving, Sarah McGowan-Freije, Gurung Bhim, Rozee, Amisha, Durga Dhakal, Eunice Family, Ambar Pradhan

1. Call to Order: 6:35 pm

2. Agenda Review and Adjustments:

*Welcome to the community Liz Edsell and Tula Karadiya

3. Public Comments:

*Rahm Kadariya - What will transportation look like?

*Durga - How will the budget affect our property tax? I have been living in Winooski for several years and have property in Winooski. My income is quite limited so I cannot pay a lot of money.

*K B Bardewa - It doesn't make sense that people are asking questions right now and don't have the answer.

*Tori - We will collect questions from the community so that we can get the information we need. We will work to get answers to these questions at our next meeting on December 9th.

*K B Bardewa - Voiced frustration over asking questions that won't be answered during the meeting. Voiced that this system makes the meeting feel meaningless.

*Durga - Inquired as to how the answers to these questions will be presented to the public during the meeting on 12/9/2020.

*Mike D. - Spoke to the group about last year's process. The Board needs to gather information from the administrative team about what they need for the new budget. Tonight they will give us the outline of what we need to consider in the new budget. As far as transportation, it was in the budget last year so it's pretty likely to be in the budget this year.

*K B Bardewa - I would like transportation, not just winter, but all seasons. Some parents work and their schedules do not match with the start and end time for the school.

*Durga Dhakal - For the last few years you have provided transportation in winter to 87 Elm St and O'Brien Center. What about the families living on the other side of town? Is it for a certain group of people or is it for everyone?

*Ambar Pradhan - I don't understand everything about budgets.

*Eunice Family (Indra Rai) - I know last year during the winter months, you provided transportation one way, I would like to see two way transportation.

*Rahm Kadariya - Inquired about the funds in the school budget for transportation. Is the budget limited and only able to provide for the winter months and not the school year?

4. FY '22 Budget Work Session:

a. [Presentation and Discussion of FY22 Baseline Level Services Budget](#)

*Robin Hood (Director of Support Services and Early Learning) - I want to start with the ENDS Statement for WSD. When we are budgeting, we are thinking about the teaching and the learning and the implementation of these expectations. One thing we are proud of is that we got an announcement that 3 of our students are presidential scholars.

*Steven - How do you want us to ask our questions during this presentation? Robin, when you were going through local and community engagement, you mentioned the capital project as an example of that. Can you explain?

*Robin Hood - Part of the local engagement was engaging the community to support such a project financially and engaging them in developing, with the school district, the needs of the students including space, different environments for learning, and engaging taxpayers to support that.

*Nicole Mace (Financial Manager) - We've done a lot of tours with student groups throughout the project. We have started making connections between the leaders of the project, in terms of careers. The project involved a lot of dialogue with the community.

*Nicole Mace - Prior to developing the budget, we nail down some assumptions. The first one, as Sean discussed with the school board a month ago, due to the demands of the capital project and due to a pandemic, we will approach this as a level services budget. We will have some increases, such as salaries, benefits, utilities, etc., but will not be adding

positions.

*Liz Edsell - I was a strong supporter of the capital project and I didn't realize the assumption is we would be unresponsive to the upcoming needs of the community. What is the degree to which the budget this year is not meeting the needs of the community. Can we ask for more funding for the level of transportation the community needs. What is the process we use? Do we look for it somewhere else in the budget?

*Nicole Mace - That is the decision of the board, there are a variety of different approaches you can take. One is to increase expenditures and there are increases in tax rates as a result. Another is to make a decision to reduce expenditures in some areas, sort of reallocating some of the funds within the budget.

*Steven - How was community input included in the assumption to level fund the winter bus?

*Nicole - We assume the winter bus will continue, there was no indication from the board at this point. Public comments you just heard are part of the process for weighing different factors of whether or not to increase winter transportation routes, etc.. Community engagement started tonight.

*Steven - Could you speak about the increase of tuition for the Pre-K program?

*Nicole Mace - This 2.6% increase was the amount tuition increased over FY 21. We received numbers from the state indicating what the tuition rate will be for the next school year.

*Mike - On the HRA, we've been budgeting about 75% of the total liability and I think we've been coming in pretty close. Is that a good assumption, based on our last two years of history?

*Nicole - Yes, unfortunately the last two years are not great to go by because this past year, so many people were unable to access medical services. This year, the new statewide health benefits are taking effect in January. Under that benefit, the district pays the first dollar amount expense of the HRA.

*Mike - For those of you that are new, the HRA is how the school district pays for their portion of healthcare. The way it works is, we have to pay X amount of dollars per employee, potentially, up to the max. The guidance we got early when the employee had the first dollar is if we budgeted about 75% of the total, not everyone uses their whole budget every year.

*Nicole - In this packet, you received a budget sliced and diced in a few different ways. The level services budget will increase about \$1.08 million dollars or 5.7% in expenditures. The spreadsheet allows you to see what it looks like in all the different programs.

*Mike - Negotiations were started with teachers and probably won't finish until June. We will

have a budget passed before the negotiations are finished.

*Liz Edsell - this is an expense budget, which assumes that the only income available to use is tax payer dollars. Is there any additional grant money work being sought?

*Nicole - Yes, tonight is only the expenditure side of the budget. As we get clearer numbers from the state, as we finalize our federal budget, we'll have a better sense of the revenue picture. We do have several grants that fund work in the district. We also have over 2 million in funds to support the district.

*Kristen Kollgaard (Director of ELL) - The total enrollment is down 34 students for the year. This is partially due to a loss of a Pre-K classroom due to COVID and to decrease in refugee resettlement. With the Biden/Harris administration, they have committed to continuing refugee resettlement. Which could increase our enrollment in the upcoming school years.

*Steven - Quick question on the Pre-K numbers. I assume that's the total enrollment of Pre-K students on campus and doesn't include ACT 166 students.

*Robin - That's a mix of both. Part of the reason for decreased numbers is not just that the Family Center closed but also due to closure of different programs in other cities as a result of COVID.

*Kristen - For the instructional programs, there are a total of 119.7 FTE with an increase of 1 FTE employee. For the Instructional/Admin/Other support staff, we have a total of 96.50 FTE with a decrease of 1.2 FTE staff. As far as long term staffing, we have added 2 FTE within the district. In the WMHS, we have added a FTE for Art in FY 20, Music teacher in FY 19, and through the SIG Fund, we have been able to add a HS Guidance counselor. There is also an added halftime math coach. The non-highlighted sections are things we hope to add in the future.

*Nicole - These are figures that will help us estimate cost on the expense side such as Pre-K programs and Tech center transportation, which is what we get reimbursed for from the state for a certain portion of the cost. The state also sets an excess spending threshold that we normally don't come close to. As per the December 1 Tax Commissioner Projections, there is a projection that the yield will drop (both property and income yield). The Projections from the December 1 letter indicate that it's going to be a tough year in terms of the climate around the education fund.

*The Education Spending Per Equalized Pupil is the budgeted expenditures minus local revenues divided by equalized pupils. There is another account - Capital reserve, funds set aside funds for capital improvement, which is different from the capital project. The Capital Reserve fund is only for building improvements and the Fund Balance is independent (rainy day fund). In FY 20, an audit estimates an increase of 1.1 million in the general Fund Balance. The fund balance is built over the course of 2.5 to 3 years. When we end a school year with a healthy fund balance, it means our budget could be too high. We are building a new budget off of the old budget. It would be good to know what an appropriate amount is

to have in the Fund Balance before it becomes too much.

Special Education: Robin Hood

*In federal law, we need to provide a free and appropriate education to children in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). It starts in a regular mainstream classroom. There are a lot of Special Ed students (most) who get their services from speech/language and Special Educators within the regular classroom. We have 3 therapeutic classrooms within the district, 1 at JFK, 1 in the Middle School, and 1 in High School. There is one staff member who goes to Cornell every year to be trained in Therapeutic Crisis Intervention training. We also have students attend other schools such as Baird, Bellcate and Centerpoint in which we provide transportation to those schools. There are some students who may require hospitalization or need to be institutionalized. This may not happen through the special ed process, but through working with DCF, or a mental health agency, but we are responsible for all of our students.

*In the last three years, there hasn't been a decrease in students in Special Education. Since FY 12-13, there has been a significant increase in students in Special Education. To fall under the intensive category, a student would have an emotional disability, multiple disabilities (2 or more co-occurring disabilities), or Autism. This year, there are 28.9 students who qualify for Special Ed. This number is reflective of the needs of our community.

*Each special educator has a caseload of a certain number of students. Preschool ranges from 8-14 students, JFK averages about 12 students, Middle school averages about 8, High School averages about 12, the alternative averages about 8, Intensive needs is between 5 and 9. In JFK, there is a Special Educator in every grade level. The out of district special educator manages students in other educational settings and 6 St. Francis students. They will not get an IEP but a service plan, so we could hire a tutor for these students instead of direct services. Another position is the District Evaluator who does all the intensive evaluations for all students in the district. Each student who qualifies for Special Ed gets an evaluation every three years.

ELL: Kristen Kollgaard (Director of ELL)

*We are at about 35% of students serviced through ELL. Numbers are down this year due to resettlements. For the last 7 years through 2018 ELL numbers increased, since 2018 we have seen a decrease. We have been able to add additional ELL teachers in the program. The ratio of teachers to students is different at each level. JFK newcomer caseload is 1:10, JFK grade level caseload is 1:27, WMS newcomer caseload is 1:13, MS caseload is 1:24, and WHS caseload is 1:23.

*JFK newcomer program is for students who have been in the US less than 2 years and need ELL support. In 2016, it was the highest amount of resettlement of families to the US; Vermont resettled 350 families. In the future, we will need a newcomer program for K-2 as those students are in the mainstream classrooms. In middle school, we are in our 5th year and they support high beginner and intermediate ELL students. They provide co-teaching and pull out services. In high school, we are in our 9th year (longest running), normally ELL would have a double block in the morning and have math or social studies in the afternoon.

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During COVID, we split them into 2 pods all day with support from our ELL teachers. During these pods, there was an increase in language proficiency. We also broke them up by age level instead of proficiency levels. Vermont doesn't have an age requirement to get a High School diploma, so WSD has between 20-25 adult students in the district.

*Another change in the HS mainstream ELL program due to COVID is heterogeneous thematic pods instead of ELL skills classes to support language development. This helps by bringing in other skills such as reading & math from other classes as well as ELL support. If we continue in the future, teachers will need more PD on differentiating for ELL.

*We have 17 different languages spoken within the district. Nepali and Somali/Mai Mai are currently the largest language groups of students. Over the years, the swahili/french speaking families have grown as well as the Nepali and Somali/Mai Mai speaking families. That will continue to grow with the resettlements.

*We have 4 FTE liaisons as well as 2 part time liaisons. We also have Cleopace who is our on-call interpreter, funded with COVID funds. Instead of emailing, stopping in the hall, or texting, we have created a help desk to keep the work organized. The Somali/Mai Mai and Nepali support is the highest. This doesn't count help for organizing parent/teacher conferences, late night & weekend phone calls or early morning parent phone calls.

*Things to think about for the next meeting, how much it would cost to provide year round bus transportation, and SPED costs for the last 4 years. Another would be the cost of 2 additional social workers and contract through Howard Center.

5. Adjourn: 9:50 pm