

WAYLAND • PUBLIC • SCHOOLS

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To: School Committee
From: Gary A. Burton
Date: January 6, 2011
Re: FY12 Budget Message

This will be my seventeenth and final budget message as Wayland's school superintendent. It has been a professional privilege to serve this community and especially its youngest citizens. I know from my time in Wayland that your children are valued by citizens of all ages. Residents have invested heavily in their education, and I have witnessed this annually with the passage of the last 16 school budgets. The public's support of local students has become a defining characteristic of this community. Over time, this has directly contributed to the school's outstanding reputation. Public respect for the district's employees has also made this a highly desirable school system in which to work.

Upon examination of my recommended budget, I believe the School Committee will find that it will appropriately serve the educational, social, and emotional needs of Wayland's public school children. This budget, like many in the recent past, does not contain everything that Wayland's educators might like, but neither does it call for further reductions that might reduce educational opportunities next year for the 2652 students it is intended to serve.

On balance, the FY12 school year should function much like the current school year. Class sizes and staffing levels will remain as they are today. Program offerings, from our full-day kindergarten pilot to numerous Advanced Placement classes at the secondary level should ensure ample opportunities for students to excel academically. Student leadership opportunities, coupled with activities that require both personal discipline and teamwork, will again be provided through a variety of extra-curricular clubs, athletic teams, and the fine and performing arts. The district's commitment to students and staff use of newer technologies and our continuing focus on improving the instructional skills of our teachers and the evaluative skills of the administrators should promote enhanced learning opportunities for students of all ability levels and interests.

The FinCom's guideline amount of \$31,096,713* is obtainable after a careful administrative examination of projected student enrollments, existing contractual obligations, established educational programs, appropriate class sizes, and fixed operational expenses.

Overall, the budget I am recommending is up 2.52% after new offsets and/or additional revenues are considered. Barring the unexpected, the budget should be sufficient to meet the daily academic needs of the students, while promoting the 21st Century learning skills of critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration.

The whole people must take upon themselves the education of the whole people and be willing to bear the expense of it.

John Adams

This budget addresses the School Committee's four strategic goal areas of curriculum/instruction, knowledgeable educators, community partnerships, and strategic management, while also supporting the administrators' six on-going initiatives in technology, "greening" the schools, reducing the achievement gap, health and wellness, Chinese language instruction, and full day kindergarten.

The FY12 budget assumes that the new high school complex, now under construction, will become operational in January 2012. Best guess estimates of increased maintenance expenses have been incorporated into the FY12 budget (though I am certain that it will be FY14 or later before actual operating costs are known). Special Education offsets have been adjusted to reflect increased "circuit breaker" funds from the state and will be spent as required on students with identified special needs. There is no impact on the appropriated budget. Likewise, adjustments have been made in expected offsets for parking fees at the high school, concert ticket revenues, and student transportation fees. In total offsets have been increased from \$786,000 to \$1,222,000 or an increase of \$436,000.

Given the public's interest in the budget process, it's appropriate to note that since FY03, many appointed and elected officials have acknowledged the unfavorable economic conditions throughout the Commonwealth and nation. This acknowledgement and the School Committee's and FinCom's desire to manage the growth of the budget continues to influence what has been annually requested by the administrators as necessary for the successful operation of the schools.

The difficult economic conditions outside the schools have certainly been felt within them, as school "wants and needs" have been publicly debated over the past few years. As a result, a partial closing of an elementary school and redistricting has taken place, new user fees for student parking, bus service, team membership, instrumental music, etc. have been instituted, class sizes have been increased, staff reductions have occurred, and employee salary increases have been slowed, deferred or held constant. Preferred student

opportunities in the forms of services (guidance, reading instruction, etc.) programs (Cape Cod and Washington trips, instrumental music, etc.), and staffing levels (which determine class sizes) have long been recognized by Wayland parents as necessary in providing their children

Without popular education, no government which rests on popular action can long endure; the people must be schooled in the knowledge and, if possible, in the virtues upon which the maintenance and success of free institutions depend.
Woodrow Wilson

with a sound school experience. I believe this continues to be the collective vision of the district and is actively supported by parents and many other residents, even after years of "budget belt tightening."

With a projected decline of only 1.1% in student enrollments, I am not recommending reducing staff levels beyond what they are today; thus, unlike last year, there will be no forced layoffs. Given the many leadership changes that have and are taking place, this becomes very important in maintaining program quality and stability. The recent three-year WTA contract settlement should also help promote positive staff morale and encourage the continued goodwill of the district's approximately 450 full and part-time employees.

Readers of previous budget messages will remember that the current budget (FY11) was, for the first time in 28 years, reduced below the previous budget by 1.7%. This was due to the cumulative effects of declining enrollments at the elementary, middle and high schools levels, a poor state economy, vocal concerns over Wayland's rising tax rate and a general opposition to Proposition 2½ tax overrides. This notwithstanding, many residents realize, too, that the operational costs associated with a school system that chooses to be "well above average" are considerable. In turn, the School Committee and administrators continue to actively seek budget efficiencies that will not diminish the collective efforts of the staff to effectively educate Wayland's youngsters.

The budget format, under the new Business Administrator's supervision, conforms with the town's MUNIS system and should allow committee members and others to more easily understand budget allocations and track budget expenditures. This alone should allow the Committee to better understand administrative recommendations and ultimately make better informed decisions. To this end, the School Committee's budget, and not mine, when approved for public presentation will become the district's educational philosophy...in dollars; everything you value educationally and want to happen next year will have been reduced to dollars and cents.

In summary, the FY12 budget I am recommending to the School Committee:

- Meets the FinCom's Guideline
- Maintains current class sizes and student/staff ratios K-12
- Preserves student programs, course offerings, and extra-curricular activities
- Level funds most non-personnel accounts
- Recommends no new or increased student user fees
- Increases offsets that are budget neutral

The good education of youth has been esteemed by wise men in all ages as the surest foundation of the happiness both of private families and of commonwealths.

Benjamin Franklin

In closing, it has been my pleasure to work in this community and advocate for Wayland's children. I believe the school system is in good order and the FY12 budget will enable the new superintendent and staff to provide Wayland's public school students with a sound school experience. You will note from the excerpts below that my final budget message to the School Committee is not much different than my first budget message 17 years ago. While it is undeniable that public schooling has changed over this time span, the expectations of Wayland residents that their children receive a superior education has not. Thank you.

Excerpts from my first budget message of January 17, 1995:

In proposing my first Wayland School District budget, I would like the Wayland School Committee members to know that I have been guided by a number of professional beliefs, personal concerns, and both Town and School Committee budget guidelines.

In my six months in Wayland, I have come to learn that the Wayland Public Schools are very special. For me to present a budget that is predetermined by a specific dollar amount before the educational needs of the students have even been considered is not good management. However, with full respect for the Finance Committee's guideline, I bring this budget before you. Wayland's schools will operate next year in a manner very similar to this year.

I am, of course, well aware that the schools in Wayland have been traditionally well financed. In fact, it is this level of funding over a period of many years that has guaranteed the current levels of excellence found throughout the entire district. Wayland is indeed fortunate in having the means to employ outstanding teachers and other staff members and, thus, in providing for a wealth of educational opportunities for its students and for many of its other community members. Continuing this tradition with the allowed budget increase is possible, but proved difficult, at best.

Finally, with this budget...I have tried to encourage a greater use of technology within our schools. While I do not believe that we should stop teaching basic skills or give ourselves over completely to computers, I am convinced that we cannot properly prepare our students to live in the future if we do not begin now to ensure their awareness of and familiarity with many different forms of technology and electronic learning. We must prepare our children (and ourselves) for the future.

Gary A. Burton
Superintendent of Schools