

FY 2020 Budget Questions & Answers
Westford Public Schools

| Dept. Number, Name + Account | Questioner's Name/Question | Response |
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| School Department | | |
| 300 - Education | General Budget | |
| 300 - General (Expenses to date) | Eckroth: Can we get the actual FY19 budget spending to date by line item? % of budgeted amount would be helpful. | The balances at 11/30/18 were included in School Committee packet for 12/17/18 meeting. We have also included in our attachment to this document. |
| 300 – General | Galvin: When you compare our community to the state average, is there any consideration given to the fact that the average is skewed by the high level of Chapter 70 money that supports the schools in our city's ? | Chapter 70 funds are only one source of the town's revenue to be allocated to all departments. The data that forms the basis for the state's calculation of per pupil cost is contained in the budget appendix materials. The state includes all direct school spending and indirect town department spending on behalf of the school system in the per pupil calculation. So, there is no correlation between the level of Chapter 70 aid and the level of per pupil spending. Kathy Auth and I will be glad to thoroughly explain this, and provide the Department of Education document on how this figure is calculated. http://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/chapter70/whitepaper.html http://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/chapter70/ |
| 300 - General | Sanders: Card readers. We've gone this long without them, let's hold off. I know it's capital budget, but hopefully that would bring some relief to the town budget that could be | We are awaiting the results of the security audit before moving forward with the card swipe system. |

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| | <p>reallocated to schools?</p> | |
| <p>300 - General (Fees)</p> | <p>Eckroth: The two fees I'd specifically like to look at for a potential increase next year are bus fees and WA parking fees. I know, Kathy, you said that the WA parking fees have to specifically cover costs related to the lot, but I would imagine given the years that the fee has remained stable and the fact that we employ the traffic guard/plow/etc. that this could increase? Perhaps by \$20-25? I know we have been presented the historical data for bus fees many times, but for the public's sake, I think it would be helpful to present the bus fee comparison to other district as well as the % increase in bus fees vs. the % increase in overall transportation costs to the district over the years. Kathy, you mentioned that the \$25 increase in the bus fee last year garnered roughly \$100k in revenue. I think it's important to discuss another possible increase and the trade offs this could mean vs. deeper cuts to instructional staff or other areas.</p> | <p>The current bus fee for one student is \$275 (increased in FY19). This is a \$50 increase from last year's \$225 fee. A chart showing the increase in bus fee and increase in avg cost per rider was included in 12/17/18 School Committee packet. We will survey other districts and provide comparative fee information.</p> |
| <p>300 - General (Transportation)</p> | <p>Sanders: Transportation. Seems like a bad time to say "let's buy 40 buses", but I want to understand the pros and cons of, at some point, owning our own buses. It's never going to seem like a good time to bite that off, but yet plenty</p> | <p>Many years ago I was a member of a citizens advisory committee that studied various models for providing bus transportation under difficult fiscal conditions. The committee determined that contracting with a private bus company was in the best financial interest of the town. Yes, the equipment can be bonded but employee salaries, a vehicle maintenance</p> |

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| | <p>of other districts have gone that way. Plus, something like that would be bonded, so I think the impact on town debt and town budget would be complex, but important to understand.</p> | <p>function, insurances (health and liability coverage, worker's compensation) can be very costly to the operating budget. Assignment of risk (liability) is also a very important issue with school bus transportation.</p> |
| <p>300 - General (Transportation)</p> | <p>FitzPatrick/Has there been an analysis of the costs of busing and how the bus fee has been calculated? Is there an analysis that also shows the cost of outsourcing buses as compared to busing in house?</p> | <p>Please refer to the previous question.</p> |
| <p>300 - General (Technology)</p> | <p>Sanders: Technology: all four grades at WA have Chromebooks. WiFi has been upgraded. Let's go easy on technology this year.</p> | <p>Devices are purchased from the capital budget (one-to-world and five-year replacements). All technology purchasing is driven by the needs of the curriculum. Each year we start with a detailed look at what is scheduled for replacement. We also consider whether any new devices need to be included based on our Digital Learning Plan.</p> |
| <p>300 - General (Outsourcing)</p> | <p>Zheng: Is it possible to explore contracting non-instructional services (like food services, custodian services) instead of using employees? Not sure if this is going to have any impact on this budget.</p> | <p>Our food service function is self-supporting and not funded via our general fund budget. At the present time the student participation rate is in excess of 70% which is extraordinary. Most school systems that contract for food service operation have a student participation rate far lower than 70%.</p> <p>I have always, and will always be a strong proponent hiring and managing our own custodial staff. We have lean staffing but have invested in automated equipment to increase productivity. Our staffing levels are far below industry standards(see staffing benchmark data in budget appendix). Our buildings have a reputation of being the cleanest in the area because the oversight starts in the Central</p> |

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| | | Office and continues with the Principal of each building. Our custodians do much more than keep our buildings clean...something you will not find with contract cleaners. Many of our staff are Westford residents and taxpayers. I will be glad to review the benchmark staffing data with you. |
| 300 - General (Fees) | Zheng: Is it possible to generate some revenues with facilities, to help cover some custodian costs? | For many years, we have rented our facilities to outside groups, using the revenues to cover the custodial overtime the rental requires as well as a portion for facility overhead such as electricity. The heaviest of our after-hours building usage is generally by or for our own student groups and activities. Town committees also use space in our buildings on occasion, and we have historically not charged them for this usage. |
| 300 - General (YTD spending) | Benoit: Would like 5-year Q2/mid-year historical data of function categories. 5-year YTD trends | A schedule showing mid-year Q2 or Q3 balances for FY15 through FY19 has been prepared using available previously reported information. (Mid-Year Balances FY15 to FY19) |
| 300 - General (New Facilities Staff) | SC: Where are we on facilities director? | The position has been re-advertised and applications have been received, but is yet to be filled. |
| 300 - General (Cuts) | Eckroth: Would like Bill's list of potential cuts to come with \$ amounts, but would like SC to prioritize. | I will be submitting my list of possible reductions to the school committee, following several rounds of discussions the district's Leadership Team. Since this is now the school committee budget, the committee will approve or disapprove of my recommended reductions. |
| 300 - General (WPS Risks) | Greene: In the 11/16/18 Superintendent's Fiscal 2020 Budget Request, Risks, "Funding emerging Town and School needs at the expense of existing staff, programs, and | We are increasingly funding school safety needs and carry the full salary of the School Resource Officer in the school budget. Additionally, we are now funding 75% of the Town/School Facilities Director and Administrative Assistant. We also |

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| | services.” Please detail which specific “Town and School needs” are impacting the budget and which “existing staff, programs and services” are at risk. | completely fund the town’s Network Manager in the school budget. Health care costs impact the entire general fund budget. |
| 300 General (Technology) | Greene: Where is the cost for the class of 2023 chromebooks? How much will this cost be? | The cost of the Chromebooks for the incoming freshmen is \$112,500 and is in the Capital budget, not the school’s operating budget. However, in our operating budget we have the Chromebook cases in 2430 for \$12,500. |
| 300 General (Technology) | Greene: What will happen to the class of 2019 chromebooks when they graduate? | These Chromebooks will be repurposed to the elementary levels. The elementary schools often get devices through this type of “cascade” effect. |
| 300 General (Expenses: 2430 general instructional supplies) | Greene: Can you give examples of what falls into 2430 general instructional supplies category? | This includes materials that need to be replaced due to extensive use. Examples include (some) graphic calculators, math cards for our math program, writing folders, sets of Scholastic magazines. The FY20 budget includes funds to provide materials for next year’s history/social studies (HSS) overhaul in order to align with the new HSS standards. |
| 300 General (Food Gardens) | Greene: What is 12239279 578090 Food Gardens expense? Which grades/schools does this apply to? | The Assistant Superintendent has done a thorough review of the curriculum budget and proposed reallocations that result in net overall reductions of approximately \$6,000. The carryforward budget spreadsheets which have been released and which you are referring to still show the \$20,000 for the Food Gardens. In the next version of the FY20 budget, the funding for the Food Gardens has been eliminated. Three years ago we partnered with an outside organization to build, grow and maintain vegetable gardens at each of our elementary schools. Students enjoy this hands-on experience and, once the vegetables are harvested by the students, they show up on the trays in the cafeteria later that day (thanks to our incredible cafeteria managers). This partnership was structured in a way that our gardens could be self-sustaining over time, which allows us to phase out this service in FY20. |

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| 300 General (Fees) | Greene: The offset to WA parking fees is \$7500. At \$50 per pass, this means that there are 150 Senior parking spots available? Is this correct? | In FY19, 331 senior parking passes have been purchased, generating \$16,400 in revenue to date. In addition to offsetting parking lot maintenance (primarily a portion of the snow removal expenses), the fees pay for the Crossing Guard, the permit decals, and other parking lot related expenses. |
| 300 General (Fees) | Pilachowski – How much revenue is generated by WA Parking Fees? | In FY18, \$14,800 was received in WA Parking Fees. So far in FY19, \$16,400 has been collected. |
| 300 General (Fees) | Greene: According to the Budget Director, at the end of FY18 the Schools had \$252,216 in unused funds that were returned to the Town. Which line items contributed to this savings? | We have attached the June 30, 2018 Fiscal Report (Q4 FY18 Fiscal Report 6-30-18) to the School Committee. This report shows the details for all of the FY18 operating budget lines. The balance in the school operating budget at the end of FY18 was \$200,913. In addition, \$38,369 was closed out from unused FY17 year-end encumbrances and \$12,933 was closed out from prior-year capital articles. |
| 300 General (1420 Compensation Reserve) | Pilachowski – What is the \$261k expense for in FY 20 budget? | The compensation reserve account includes an estimated amount to cover employee contracts for FY20 that have not been settled as of this time (12-2018). This includes four bargaining units covering approximately 178 employees who are funded by the operating budget, as well as exempt and other employees who are not part of a bargaining unit. The amount in the compensation reserve can vary substantially from year to year, depending upon which bargaining units are unsettled at the time the budget is being prepared. |
| 300 General (Technology) | Pilachowski – With the increase in technology within the school system, why do you think the budget for technology maintenance will be lower in FY 20 than in FY 19? | The expense lines in Func 4450 Technology Maintenance have been kept at the same amount as for FY19. The decrease of (\$1,463) in that function reflects staff turnover savings due to a new hire who came in at a lower salary than the person who retired. |
| 300 General (Textbooks) | Pilachowski – Please explain why the WA textbook budget in FY 20 is the exact same (for each subject) as the budget in FY 19. | The WA textbook budget in each content area is used to purchase additional copies of existing texts to accommodate any enrollment bubbles and is used to replace/rebind any copies of texts that are in very poor condition due to use. |

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| | | <p>The WA textbook line is part of the systemwide per pupil allocation. We haven't redistributed the total yet (this will be based on projected enrollment), and therefore all of the schools' instructional supply lines are the same as the FY19 budget amount. The redistribution of the total per-pupil supply amount will be done later in the budget process. Although we do still have to add or update new texts use in various courses, the overall need to do that has decreased and is reflected in our budget. The purchase of new full-sets of textbooks comes out of the district-wide textbook line and you'll see over the past several years that amount has decreased (from \$145,702 in 2016 to the budgeted amount of \$51,400 in FY20).</p> |
| 300 - General (salaries) | <p>FitzPatrick/ Over the summer it was reported that administration received raises and pay adjustments based on market basket towns. Was comp reserve used? Are these increases reflected the detailed budget</p> | <p>The compensation reserve was used. New salaries for administrative staff are reflected in the FY20 budget at the FY19 rate, with an estimate for FY20 increases in the compensation reserve account for FY20. Any salary adjustments for FY20 will be within the townwide parameters.</p> |
| 300 - General (Subs) | <p>FitzPatrick/ Wasn't the FY19 teacher sub amount reduced in order to achieve the town managers recommended FY19 budget? Is that new amount in the detailed budget? If so, why not continue with that new amount? Are subs used for all positions that interact with students or just classroom teachers and aides?</p> | <p>The budget for long-term subs was \$325,000 for FY15 through FY17. It was reduced to \$295,000 for FY18 and reduced again to \$225,000 for FY19 and FY20. We have already spent 60% of the long-term sub budget in FY19 for approximately 35% of the school year. Long-term subs cover classroom teachers who are out on approved FMLA leave (maternity, long-term illness/surgery, etc). The sub costs in Function 2325 are for teaching positions only. We do bring in subs for nurses and teaching assistants, but these costs are reported in the state functions for those categories (2330 for teaching assistants and 3200 for nurses).</p> |
| 300 - General (Subs) | <p>Eckroth: Understand teacher subs (daily/long-</p> | <p>Daily subs are budgeted for based on the relative number of staff at each school. The systemwide budget for daily subs has</p> |

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| | term). | remained constant for many years. The budget for long-term subs is \$225,000 for FY19 and FY20. This is a cost that is difficult to budget because we don't know at this point in time who will be taking a long-term leave in FY20, nor do we know how much of each leave will be paid vs. unpaid. Additional year-by-year comparative information on substitutes is provided. (Daily Sub Charts FY12-19 & LS Sub Charts FY12-19) |
| 300 - General (Textbooks) | FitzPatrick/ In the detailed budget, why wouldn't the text book line item continue the downward trend and instructional software continue on an increasing trend? | <p>Although we do still have to add or update new texts use in various courses, the overall need to do that has decreased and is reflected in our budget. The purchase of new full-sets of textbooks comes out of the district-wide textbook line and you'll see over the past several years that amount has decreased (from \$145,702 in 2016 to the budgeted amount of \$51,400 in FY20).</p> <p>The overall instructional software line has increased over the past several years: in 2016 the actual spent was \$67,988 and the budgeted amount for FY20 is \$105,503. There will be a bit of a "saw tooth" effect in this line over the years because our online subscriptions expire at different times (our various contracts run anywhere from 1 year to 6 years, depending on the company).</p> |
| 300 - General (Superintendent) | FitzPatrick/ Why the big jump in advertising in the superintendent's budget | This budget has remained constant at \$12,000 since FY18. In FY17 we budgeted \$15,000, and for several years prior to that it was \$20,000. This line mainly funds our license for "School Spring" which is an employment service specific to the education industry, but it also covers any other advertisements that are necessary through the Superintendent's office. The average actual expenditure for FY16 to FY18 was \$6,390; however the expenditure will occasionally be higher if we need to purchase more expensive |

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| | | media ad placements for hard to fill positions. A chart shows the reduction in this line over time is attached. |
| 300 - General (comparative data) | Galvin: In the communities that you selected for comparison with Westford in school spending, did you also look at the per capita incomes in those communities ? | The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) selects comparable communities most similar to a district in terms of grades span, total enrollment, and special populations. DESE comparable communities for Westford include: Franklin, Hopkinton, Lexington, Milton, Natick, Needham, Sharon, Shrewsbury, Wachusett, and Wellesley. Westford’s profile through DESE is available at: http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/analysis/default.aspx?orgcode=03260000&orgtypecode=5 |
| 300 - General (salaries) | Galvin: Item # 12111052-511330 - The school department budget reflects an item captioned “classroom teachers at the Miller School”. This item shows a total salary increase from 1,491,926 to 1,590,484. Is this increase related to a contract settlement? If not can you please explain. | This increase reflects current staffing at FY20 rates and reflects the personnel in each school at the present time. The total number of staff in each school will shift from year to year based on student population and need. |
| 300 - General (salaries) | Galvin: Item # 12121056-511330 - The school department budget reflects salary increases at the Blanchard Middle School from 3,247,948 in 2019 to 3,360,270 in 2020. Is this increase related to a contract settlement? If not can you please explain | This increase reflects current staffing at FY20 rates and reflects the personnel in each school at the present time. The total number of staff in each school will shift from year to year based on student population and need. |
| 300 - General (salaries) | Galvin: Item # 12122056-511330 - The school department budget reflects salary increases at the Stony Brook School from 3,689,847 to 3,825,069. Is this increase related to a contract settlement? If not can you please explain | This increase reflects current staffing at FY20 rates and reflects the personnel in each school at the present time. The total number of staff in each school will shift from year to year based on student population and need. |
| 300 - General (salaries) | Galvin: Item# 12131040-511330- The school department budget reflects salary increases at Westford Academy from 9,257,980 to | This increase reflects current staffing at FY20 rates and reflects the personnel in each school at the present time. The total number of staff in each school will shift from year to year |

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| | 9,643,419. Is this increase related to a contract settlement? If not can you please explain. | based on student population and need. |
| 300 - General (salaries) | Galvin: Item # 12110070-511330 - The school department budget reflects a salary increase under the item 2310 "Teacher Specialist" from 264,353 to 329,551. Is this increase related to a contract settlement ? If not can you please explain | This increase reflects current staffing at FY20 rates and reflects the personnel in each school at the present time. The total number of staff in each school will shift from year to year based on student population and need. |
| 300 - General (salaries) | Galvin: Item # 12115070-511330- The school department budget reflects a salary increase for special education teachers at the Crisafulli school from 333,734 to 364,647. Is this increase related to a contract settlement ? If not can you please explain | This increase reflects current staffing at FY20 rates and reflects the personnel in each school at the present time. The total number of staff in each school will shift from year to year based on student population and need. |
| 300 - General (salaries) | Galvin: Item # 12121070-511330 -The school budget reflects salary increases related to SPED at the Blanchard Middle School from 333,429 to 432,551. Is this increase related to a contract settlement ? If not can you please explain | This increase reflects current staffing at FY20 rates and reflects the personnel in each school at the present time. The total number of staff in each school will shift from year to year based on student population and need. |
| 300 - General (salaries) | Galvin: Item# 12122070-511330 - The school budget reflects salary increases related to SPED professional salary at the Stonybrook Middle School from 614, 955 to 651,259. Is this increase related to a contract settlement ? If not please explain. | This increase reflects current staffing at FY20 rates and reflects the personnel in each school at the present time. The total number of staff in each school will shift from year to year based on student population and need. |
| 300 - General (Technology) | Zheng: There are conflicting studies on how early is too early to engage students in technologies in schools. This is one of the area we need to see if technology spending on K-2 | Across the district, we focus on ensuring that the use of technology adds value to the learning and is meaningful. This means that often, younger students are using the devices at stations. In guided math, for example, teachers use the data collected from programs such as Dreambox, to plan their small |

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| | <p>level is beneficial at all.</p> | <p>group direct instruction and to provide specific, individualized, targeted practice for students at the stations.</p> <p>Additionally, as students at the end of grade 3 are expected to be able to type 15 words accurately per minute and a full page for an MCAS open response answer, they do need some practice on the devices in the lower grades.</p> <p>At grades 1-2, the goal for each class is to have 6 iPads and 6 Chromebooks to be available to students as and when they are needed. For the most part, we have been able to provide Chromebooks to grades 1-2 that have been cascaded from other schools. Consequently, many of the the devices used by the younger students are older but still functioning well.</p> |
| <p>300 - General (School buildings)</p> | <p>Zheng: Our school system is unique in the way that we have 6 elementary schools, while for example, Lexington only has 3. What can be done to increase efficiency or if there are overlapping positions on school staff level for the 6 elementary schools?</p> | <p>The 3 elementary schools in Lexington are larger schools (physical buildings) with larger enrollments. Westford’s Permanent School Building Committee carefully planned schools based on the K-2, 3-5 grade configuration model. Each school’s capacity is 400-500 students. I have reviewed research that indicates that there is no significant difference in student achievement given different grade configurations, however the research strongly favors smaller, not larger elementary schools.</p> <p>With respect to our staffing, we have 1.5 administrators per elementary school and 1.5 administrative assistants. Several years ago I conducted a survey of the office staffing of schools and the survey results indicated virtually the same level of school office staffing. It is important to note that we reduced our Assistant Principal positions from 1.0 FTE per elementary school to .5 FTE per elementary school in FY05, along with 4.0 school administrative assistant positions, and that these</p> |

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| | | positions have not been restored. |
| 300 - General (School start times) | School start time is very important in the way that it increase student health and reduces stress. I do understand there is a price tag to that but we should explore fees to generate some revenue to offset, and hopefully with reduced stress and increased health, we can also offset with some health/psychological spending. | There will be an increased cost to special education transportation if we change the school start times for the 2019-2020 school year. We cannot charge fees for special education transportation. If start times change, it is unrealistic to assume that there could be some immediate level of reduction to the need for the health/psychological services that we are currently providing. |
| 300 - General (Pre-First) | Zheng: Pre-1st at least for 18-19 school year is getting way too small, like 5 students at Miller. Is it still a viable program? Should pre-1st be abolished entirely or be combined? | The Pre-1st enrollment at the Miller School is very low this year and not sustainable at that student/teacher ratio. The average at the three K-2 schools for a number of years has been 15-17:1. The viability of many programs continues to be reviewed in our budget cutting process. |
| 300 – General | Galvin: In the Superintendent’s “Budget Request Summary” reference was made to the fact that it was “impossible to reallocate funds to chronically underfunded accounts.” Please explain this. | We do not have the discretionary funds available in many other accounts that could be reallocated to other chronically underfunded accounts. |
| | School Enrollment | |
| 300 - Enrollment | Liewei: School enrollment. We have less students from K to 3 (260, 348, 370, 329, the average is 326.75). We have more students from 9 to 12 (435, 397, 440, 437, the average is 427.25). If the trend stays the same (ignoring the new complexes), we might lose student enrollment by some number (say X students per year), e.g. X=100 from recent statistics | It is hard to predict if any decline in enrollment will partially offset the increased enrollment projected from new developments. The 85 students from Princeton properties are all in our school system (the grade distribution is in the budget presentation). Over the last 5 years the number of births in Westford has remained relatively stable (135-150 annually). Given this, the |

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| | <p>(427.25-326.75), or say N * X in N years. Will this N * X compensate for (some of) the anticipated enrollment growth from large complexes? Matching with anticipated demands... The Princeton apartment complex alone might bring in 85 new students (are some of them in our schools?). It's estimated that additional 300 to 400 students from other complexes, e.g. Robbins Rd/Westford West/Abbot Mills/Wendell Place/19 Littleton, etc. Some complexes are not in construction. Once completed/moved in, some kids may take some years to reach school ages. Do we have a rollout estimate, e.g. 300 to 400 new students (total) in four years?</p> | <p>in-migration factor of families with school-aged children (occupying existing housing stock) will continue to impact our school system enrollments.</p> <p>The 300-400 new students are expected over several years, and should become a reality, given the number of bedrooms in the various newly constructed units. In checking with local realtors, they continue to state that the demand for housing in Westford from families with school aged children continues to exceed available market supply.</p> |
| <p>300 - Enrollment</p> | <p>FitzPatrick/Enrollment has continued the decline coming in lower than projected numbers even with the Princeton properties opening? Are there other factors and trends (ie birth rates, cost of living in certain towns, etc) that are being seen that could affect projections for the new growth? Are enrollment declines seen across the state or in our market basket towns?</p> | <p>Enrollment declines across the state have generally been greater than in Westford. The number of births in Westford has stabilized in the 135-150 range (annually). Of significance is the number of families with school age children moving into town to occupy existing housing stock. Our historically high enrollment was 5,325 students about 10 years ago. Given that we have been hovering around 5,100 students , there has been no precipitous drop in our PreK-12 enrollment.</p> |
| <p>300 - Enrollment</p> | <p>Zheng: Between the two middle schools, we are losing 110 students for 19-20 school year, even with the assumption of adding 10 students per grade for new development, we are still losing 80 students. That is almost as a 7-9% reduction in enrollment. Even without a single penny in funding increase, it is translated to almost 10%</p> | <p>We will be making a recommendation on some level of staff reduction at one of our middle schools for FY 20.</p> |

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| | increase per student. Resources need to be examined and reallocated for the two middle schools to bring per student spending down. | |
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| | Student-Teacher Ratio/Staffing | |
| 300 - Student-Teacher Ratio/Staffing | Eckroth: One request (when possibly discussing class ratios) is to have up-to-date enrollment totals for all K-5 classrooms. I know at least at Abbot two of the 4th grade classrooms are quite high now, 23+. I'm sure Bill is aware and accounting for the growth but knowing where we are district wide would be helpful. | The January 1, 2019 enrollment spreadsheet is being prepared as of 1/2/2019 and will be presented in our supplemental budget materials for review and discussion. |
| | Growth | |
| 300 - Growth | Liewei: Most of the new students might come from inside 495, e.g. not all schools would face the same challenge/impact. Do we need to re-allocate resources among all schools? Do we see a need to expand school size in terms of physical space (if yes, do we have a budget for that)? | We have a Redistricting Committee working on the future housing of students (given the new housing developments). The redistricting plan will be implemented for the 2020-2021 school year. This will involve the reallocation of students, staff and resources, but it is not expected to have a major budget impact. The budget impact will come more from the increased number of students (staff, materials, bussing, etc.) as opposed to the need to redistrict. |
| 300 - Growth | Galvin: In the assessment that was done on new housing units in town, does the School Department view the number of 3 bedroom apartments as the more reliable indicator of children in a residence ? | No, as seen at the Princeton Properties, there are 85 current students residing in the 176 1-bedroom and 2-bedroom units. |
| 300 – General | Galvin: In the projection that was offered with regard to projected housing units, a number of | The information in my budget presentation comes directly from the planning department (647). Not all units will be |

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| | 647 dwelling units was estimated. Some of these are prospective units. Would you agree that the actual number is closer to 550 units and of those only 48 are three bedroom ? | occupied for the 2019-2020 school year. Once again the number of units to be built and respective number of bedrooms(with the exception of two recent projects) is from the planning department. |
| | Special Education | |
| 300 - Special Education | Eckroth: Question regarding the request of 2 regular special education vans and 1 wheelchair van to accomplish the start time change for the 19/20 school year. Would that \$148,000 be a one-time spend because we would be purchasing those vehicles and therefore, could that be considered a capital request/capital spend? | The \$148,000 would be a recurring annual expense. It covers the cost of three additional van leases, maintenance and fuel costs for each van, and staff salaries (three drivers and one monitor). A schedule will be provided showing the breakdown of the cost. (Est of cost off an added van 11-13-18) |
| 300 - Special Education | Liewei: We have about 756 “special education” students. It appears that about 50 of those go out of district. Are rest of 706 students go in district, any additional info on these 706 SPED students, e.g. mapping from 706 students to our specialists, etc. | Attached: DESE, Report 7/SPED Enrollment Statistics/District Summary/OCT 2018 (FY2019). |
| 300 - Special Education | Liewei: Is there a cost break down on out-of-district v.s. in-district? We might need additional resources to support additional in-district programs. Do our neighboring towns have similar challenges, e.g. is there anything we could do to send some out-of-district students to a closer town (instead of a far-away town) so that students could save some commute time? | Funding special education services is costly. The majority of the financial obligation falls on local communities, with some State funding from Circuit Breaker. It doesn’t come close to covering cost, leaving many state mandates as “unfunded”. Our in-district services and programs serve a range of needs and target those who are eligible between the ages of 3 to 22. Hiring highly qualified teachers, and targeted professional development help the district provide a continuum of support services. When it is determined by a Special Education Team that a |

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| | | <p>student can not be educated in-district, the Team works to identify appropriate programming. Per regulation we always look for the least restrictive environment to provide the opportunity for measurable effective progress.</p> <p>There are times when the placement is within a neighboring district, our member collaborative (Valley Collaborative), another DESE approved collaborative, or an approved private day or residential placement.</p> <p>Unfortunately with the traffic pattern and time of day most our students have lengthy rides to/from school (even when traveling to Valley Collaborative in Billerica).</p> |
| <p>300 - Special Education</p> | <p>Liewei: The “special education contract services” account remains underfunded in the budget assumption. By how much? What would be the impact due to this underfunding?</p> | <p>In FY19 YTD we have spent or encumbered more than \$300,000 for SPED contracted services compared to a budget of \$210,121 (143% used). We were able to marginally increase this budget line in recent years (from \$95,076 in FY14 to \$210,121 for FY18 through FY20) by transferring reductions in other lines to this line, but the total continues to be insufficient for actual needs. The deficit has been covered by savings in other areas of the total budget, but this is becoming increasingly difficult. A schedule showing the past few years totals vs. budget is attached for your review.</p> <p>The contracted service line includes expenses that we consider low incident or highly specialized for our district. Some of services include: Vision Specialist, Hearing Specialist, Orientation & Mobility, Physical Therapy, BCBA and Assistive Technology.</p> <p>Student need drives the demand for each of these services, and the needs will vary by student and by year. The rates set</p> |

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| | | by these specialist are not governed by DESE or OSD. |
| 300 - Special Education - Supporting Westford Students | Greene: In the 11/16/18 Superintendent's Fiscal 2020 Budget Request, Supporting Westford Students, what year is this data representing? For the categories totaling 1,737 students, how many students fall into more than one of these categories? | The students referenced on the chart are those receiving supplemental services at this present time. The figures in the chart represent the caseload in each area identified. Although a student may require more than one of these services, the number of supports/interventions needed is 1,737. |
| 300 - Special Education - Supporting Westford Students | Greene: In the 11/16/18 Superintendent's Fiscal 2020 Budget Request, which categories (math intervention, reading intervention, 504 plans, special education, ELL) impact budgets specifically labeled "special education"? Which categories impact budgets specifically labeled "regular education"? | Any program/service designation other than "Special Education" is considered a "regular education program" It is important to note that providing regular education intervention services often eliminates the need for referring a student for special education services. The significance of this is that once a student begins to receive special education services the cost to educate the student doubles due to the significantly lower student/teacher instructional ratio. |
| 300 - Special Education | Greene: Special Education Transportation: Is this mandated by the State? If so, is there any reimbursement from the State? Are bus fees charged under the same conditions as they are for regular ed transportation? | Special Education transportation is considered a related service in an IEP. If modifications and/or alternative transportation is recommended by a Team, the district must provide that service. This is an unfunded mandate with no option of reimbursement from the state or federal level. |
| 300 - Special Education | Greene: When a student who is already receiving special ed services moves to Westford, does WPS have the ability to review the student's placement? Isn't it possible that WPS special Ed dept might be able to handle a child's needs in house while the previous district could not? | Regulations state that receiving districts must provide comparable services to those documented in an accepted IEP, even if developed by another district. Placements in private school settings (day or residential) must be honored. Collaborative placements can be changed to the member district if comparable services are offered. Districts review all out-of-district placements on an annual basis. If the district believes a lesser restrictive setting is appropriate, the Team will make that proposal and a change will only be made with parent/guardian approval. |

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| 300 - Special Education | FitzPatrick/ What comprises the unbudgeted FY special education transport? | Special Education transportation is considered a related service in an IEP. If modifications and/or alternative transportation is recommended by a Team, the district must provide that service. This is an unfunded mandate with no option of reimbursement from the state or federal funding. In FY19, we currently anticipate going 22% over the total Special Education transportation budget. In FY18 (actual) Pupil Transportation Contracted Services was \$148,330 over budget. |
| 300 - Special Education | FitzPatrick/Why is there so much more secretarial administrative support in the SPED in comparison to other administration and at the schools? | <p>The Office of Special Education has two (2) FTEs of administrative assistant support. State and federal regulations dictate the paperwork demands in the office, such as proposing yearly reviews, sending eligibility paperwork, filing progress reports, and making copies of student records.</p> <p>All student records are maintained until seven (7) years following the student’s graduation. In addition to processing purchase orders, tracking consultant invoices, paying for tuitions, completing Medicaid funding requirements, completing state indicator reports, the administrative assistants are also directly responsible for supporting the Integrated Preschool Program. This includes monitoring daily substitutes, receiving calls from community members and processing tuition. The preschool currently has 30 staff members and 147 students.</p> <p>The administrative assistants are also responsible for maintaining student databases required for State reporting.</p> |
| 300 - Special Education | Galvin : What are “504 plans” ? | Each District is required to identify a student who may qualify for an IEP <u>or</u> 504 Accommodation Plan. 504 eligibility is determined when a student has a mental or physical |

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| | | impairment which substantially limits one or more major life functions. |
| 300 - Special Education | Galvin: What is the School Department's determination as the drivers for the rising costs of SPED services ? | <p>Some factors that contribute to special education costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● increase in eligible students ● increase in students who present with medical complexities and require specialized contract services ● increase in students on the Autism spectrum who may require behavior intervention and social/emotional support ● increase in mental health needs across the District ● unfunded mandates ● increases in tuition ● legal fees |
| 300 - Special Education | Almeida: On slide 33 of the budget presentation, it mentions two students who will require a total of \$355,857/year in services. Where does this show up in the budget? I do not see these numbers listed under new funding requests. | These are tuition expenses and are reflected in the 9100-9400 Tuition function lines. |
| 300 - Special Education | Galvin: What is the reason for the increase in "unanticipated Individual Education Plans (IEP) in FY 20 ? | <p>There are times when the District can not plan for an out-of-district placement. This may occur when a student moves into town. The FY20 budget includes a move-in which is predicted to cost in excess of \$232,000. The FY19 budget had a move in that increased the tuition line by \$123,768. Some students also suffer from an onset of a mental illness which quickly escalates from general education to an out-of-district program. Other unknowns include the number of homeless and foster care students and the complexities of their needs, included unfunded transportation requirements</p> <p>Early Intervention programs typically notify the District when a young child is between the ages of 2.3-2.6 years of age. This</p> |

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| | | allows the District to plan for our youngest population; however, early notification is not always given for a variety of reasons. |
| 300 - Special Education | Galvin: What are the eligibility requirements for IEP's and who establishes them ? | IDEA is the federal law that ensures a Free and Appropriate Public Education to eligible students with disabilities and ensures special education and related services to those students. Massachusetts General Law Ch. 71B regulates all aspects of child find, team meetings, extended year services, MCAS participation and discipline. |
| 300 - Special Education | Vetsa: we are planning 18 months ahead, and we will get quite a few developments contributing to school enrollment. Did we estimate any Special Ed costs for the attributed enrollment along with school enrollment? | Statistically with such a large number of housing units, we must expect additional Special Education costs. It is impossible to anticipate what these costs will be. The tuition projection is always based on students who are currently in our school system. We do not include an estimate for potential move-ins. We have generally considered the Circuit Breaker account as the funding source for unexpected costs related to new special education students. This practice is put at risk this year and in FY20 with increased use of current year Circuit Breaker funds. |
| 300 - Special Education | <p>Zheng: One major area with increases is that every year there are 20+ SPED students getting into our school systems, that alone can attribute to hundreds of thousands of dollars in additional spending each year, and it is not practical to maintain the same level of services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Is it possible to find ways to optimize special ed van usage so that each van is used close to its full capacity. Route design, van sharing, etc, to bring the | <p>Westford welcomes both general education and special education students each year. In the same respect a handful of students withdraw from Westford. Per regulation, we are required to provide comparable IEP services which were proposed and accepted while the student was in a neighboring district. For the most part we are able to seamlessly welcome all students within the mainstream and small group classes. Unexpected costs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students requiring 1:1 Teaching Assistants ● Students requiring specialized, low-incident services ● Students requiring out-of-district placements. <p>Unfortunately the unexpected costs have a large impact on</p> |

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| | <p>transportation costs down. And how many kids riding vans can be put back to school buses?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Keep as many students in district vs out of district given the difference of costs is astronomical. ● Keep as many students integrated inside classrooms instead of taking out of classrooms. | <p>the budget.</p> <p>Our current special education vans are fully deployed. Sometimes, “full development” means one van transporting one student with a monitor. Capacity for each route is determined based on distance, start and end times of the school day and the student’s individual ability to tolerate other passengers. Some of our students require additional modifications to the van such as: car seats, booster seats, harnesses and a monitor.</p> <p>When faced with making an out-of-district placement, we always consider least restrictive environment, proximity to Westford and the possibility of cost sharing with a neighboring district.</p> |
| | Utilities/Maintenance | |
| 300 - Utilities | Abbot roof utility savings. Would like energy numbers and savings trends. See tracking of kwh over multi-years. | We can’t provide utility savings information for individual projects, but we will provide charts showing overall consumption statistics for natural gas (heat) and electricity. |
| 300 - Utilities | Greene: Systemwide Electricity Net Metering reduction line item (14130392 521010) only has a value starting in FY19. Can you please explain what this is? | The FY16, FY17, and FY18 actuals columns show each school’s expenses net of the solar net-metering credit that was applied to that school’s account in each year, whereas the budget columns for FY19 and FY20 are shown with estimated electricity costs per school. The estimated net-meter credit for all the schools is taken off the combined total estimated gross cost of electricity for all the schools at the end. |
| 300 - Utilities | Greene: Net metering is saving the school budget about \$200K per year starting in FY19, yet the total electricity costs for the school | The FY16, FY17, and FY18 actuals columns show each school’s expenses net of the solar net-metering credit that was actually applied to that school’s account in each year, whereas the |

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| | buildings is continuing to increase. Please explain this. | budget columns for FY19 and FY20 are shown with estimated electricity costs per school. The estimated net-meter credit for all the schools is taken off the combined total estimated gross cost of electricity for all the schools at the end. The net metering credit is expected to decrease each year as the panels degrade and as the per unit cost of what is purchased from the solar provider increases per the contract. The quantity of sunlight each year is also variable and unpredictable, which affects the amount of the credit that is ultimately received. |
| 300 - Utilities | Greene: Where/How does the savings in electricity due to the Stony Brook MS solar panels show up in the budget? | The solar array at Stony Brook has produced average annual electricity savings of \$4,396 over the past three years. We have provided the summary section from the report that is filed with the Dept of Energy Resources each year. The savings would be reflected in the lower amount of kilowatts that we would otherwise have to purchase from National Grid. |
| 300 - Utilities | Greene: Why budget each school's electricity costs so much higher than actuals? Especially WA (FY18 actual \$192K FY20 \$298K) | Please see the comments for the preceding questions related to electricity and net-metering. The net metering credit bears no relationship to the actual electricity usage of each school. The Town purchases a quantity of electricity from a solar provider at a cost that is lower than the supplier rate that would otherwise be paid, which generates a credit that is applied up to several months later (and often across fiscal years) to our National Grid invoice. For budget purposes, we average the actual kwh usage for the past three years for each building and apply the Town's supply and delivery charge rate to that average to arrive at an estimated "gross" cost of electricity (see schedule that has been provided). We then estimate what the total net metering credit may be for the following year and subtract that credit from the total gross electricity estimate (for all schools). |
| 300 - Utilities - | Pilachowski – If utility costs have increased | The FY20 utilities budget (electricity, water, telephone) was |

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| 4130 | approximately \$50-60k over the last few years, why is the budget in FY 20 the same as the budget in FY 19? | developed by analyzing 3-year average usage and the projected rates for FY20, offset by an estimate for the solar net meter credits. Please refer to comments on electricity costs in a previous answer. |
| 300 - Utilities - 4220 Maintenance of Buildings | Greene: Can you explain how these budgets are tracked? For FY19 and FY20 one lump sum is budgeted for each building under a "General" line item. Are expenses tracked to a more specific use (such as the ones listed below general – HVAC, Septic, plumbing, etc) | Yes, as actual expenses are incurred, the appropriate lines in the budget are charged, but the budget is held in one "general" line for each school. |
| 300 - Utilities – 4120 | Pilachowski – If heating costs have gone up every year for the last few years, why wouldn't the FY 20 budget be higher than the FY 19 budget? | The FY20 heat budget was developed using a three year average of actual usage for each building. A schedule will be provided that shows recent years' usage for each building. It is difficult to project whether next year's winter heating season will be warmer or colder on average compared to other years, and a three-year average seems to be a reasonable methodology for projection purposes given our budget constraints. |
| 300 - Utilities - 4225 | Pilachowski – Why has there been such a difference in the budget for building security over the last few years? | The major difference in the building security budget has been the cost of the service contract for the security cameras installed at every school. |
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