

TOWN OF WISCASSET
BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
May 8 2008,

The meeting was called to order by Chair Steve Mehrl at 6:36 PM at the Town Municipal Building,.

Budget committee Members in attendance: Chairman Steve Mehrl, Judith Colby, Sherri Dunbar, Robert Fairfield, Richard Hanson, Tony True. Members absent were; Karl Tarbox, Pamela Dunning and George Greene. School Budget Committee Chair Eugene Stover was also present for the meeting.

Chair Steve Mehrl went over the key points on the agenda. Acceptance of the agenda for the meeting was moved by Judy Colby, seconded by Pamela Dunning. Motion passed 5-0.

Chair Steve Mehrl read three emails: One from Town Manager Arthur Faucher advising that Question 41 (\$444,950 Undesignated Fund Balance 2007) had been removed from the June Ballot and two emails from School Superintendent Jay McIntire addressing the School Budget/meetings being held to discuss the Warrant Articles.

Chair Steve Mehrl brought attention to copies of the Special Town Meeting Warrant that had been provided to each member. The wording in the two of the last four questions (mandated by the state) IMO cause a contradiction to the Articles 2-12 and make the whole exercise of the warrant questionable. Each of these questions will have to be amended to the outcome of the meeting on the 17th after which they are disregarded in the resultant single question being presented to the voters. This once again making the whole process of the School Budget inexcusably flawed. This is not the fault of the School Superintendent or the School Board but the fault of a Management at Augusta

Having set the stage of bewilderment, Chair Steve Mehrl asked School Committee Chairman Eugene Stover to share the information package he had brought for the Budget Committee. Mr. Stover explained the first two charts, which were similar to information having been reviewed before. The third chart exhibited the cost per pupil, and in-so-doing portrayed the costs per pupil for Tuition Students to be closer to the cost of Wiscasset students. (Alna – \$10,993; Westport - \$13,107 and Wiscasset - \$13,665). Discussions followed about what the costs are that the Tuition Towns have above the state allowed tuition that they must also bear. This brought forth the realization of the numbers being used but not being reflected as the per pupil costs. e.g. \$13,107 minus \$8702 = \$4,405 that reportedly Westport Island (this example) pays. Questions resurfaced of the raw data cost per pupil when viewed as: \$9,665,930 minus \$1,810,000 (tuition payments) = \$7,855,930 divided by 565 students = \$13,904 for a Wiscasset Student and a cost of a tuition student being: \$1,810,000 divided by 208 students = **\$8701.92**. Credibility of the process was broken at this point. None of the charts the Mr. Stover presented could surmount the cost per pupil figures even though a considerable discussion did ensue over the information.

Additional Note (05/10/08) I need to revise the information above Jay McIntire clarified this morning that Westport Island and Alna own and operate their own busses. The entire conversation above has been lined through as an invalid listening on my part. As we move to a approved version of the minutes both this paragraph and the lined out information should be struck. Steve

Dick Hanson provided last weeks copy of Boothbay's warrant which brought into question the application of the whole School Budget warrant process being applied differently by different towns. Dick also provided an email from Jay McIntire discussing Special Tuition Rates for 2007-2008. Committee Members were asked to review this material as well as the last hand out provided by Mr. Stover defining the cost centers.

Chair Steve Mehrl and Committee Members thanked Mr. Stover for his participation and enduring our questions.

Frustration and apathy for the process was expressed by several members due their not seemly being an avenue that can address the School Budget Process. The School Administration has put forth an effort to create a budget; the School Board has put forth an effort to reduce the initial budget and now the whole process is opened to the open town meeting floor with the product being swept up into a two question ballot with no figures mentioned and then adjudicated by secret ballot. The outcome of the frustration is that several members expressed no desire to attend any more meetings on the subject. It seems that the numbers are as difficult to understand as the processes they support.

Chair Steve Mehrl and a representative number of the committee will endeavor to meet with Superintendent McIntire and the School Finance Director to address numbers for better understanding and report back to the committee.

Having no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:06.

Minutes prepared by Chairman Steve Mehrl