Warwick School Committee Special Meeting
Open Session Minutes
Thursday, April 17, 2025
https://youtube.com/live/wWy1pzakX9Q?feature=share
April 17, 2025 Budget Hearing Documents

Call to Order
The Warwick School Committee met in Open Session at Veterans Middle School on Thursday, April 17, 2025. Chair Galligan called the meeting to order at 5:11PM

Roll Call

Shaun Galligan, Chair, Present	Leah Hazelwood, Vice Chair, Present	Michelle Kirby-Chapman, Absent
David Testa, Present	Sean Wiggins, Present	

Pledge of Allegiance

Moved by seconded by Mr.Testa seconded by Mr. Wiggins to go into closed session for discussion and/or action regarding those items of business exempt from open meetings under General Laws of Rhode Island, RIGL 42-46-5 (a(1),a(2),a(4),a(8),a(9))
Motion Passes (4-0)
Ayes: Galligan, Hazelwood, Testa, Wiggins

Mrs. Kirby-Chapman present for Open Session

Return to Open Session at 5:32PM - Moved by Ms. Hazelwood, seconded by Mr. Testa and Mr. Wiggins
Motion Passes (5-0)
Ayes: Galligan, Hazelwood, Kirby-Chapman, Testa, Wiggins

Moved by Ms. Hazelwood seconded by Mr. Wiggins to seal the minutes of Executive Session
Motion Passes (5-0)
Ayes: Galligan, Hazelwood, Kirby-Chapman, Testa, Wiggins

Votes taken in Executive Session - none

Public Comment on Agenda Items
Brigette Camacho - son Oakland Beach Kindergarten - budget in consideration as far as aids in the classroom. Urge you to consider funding for the TAs. Son needs to move and self regulate himself. TAs are so helpful. Please consider funding for the TAs.

Tracey McDermott - TA - for years and years we would get a binder that had every single employee listed, every single position was listed. It was a public document. Everybody's salary was listed. Moving forward, I would appreciate a copy of that. Page 1 - budget staffing reduction WTU, Administration and WISE. In the past, that was also part of the presentation, a general list of positions being cut. Cut $3M in salary, we need to know what positions are being cut, we should know that ahead of time.

Sandy Letourneau -Mentor RI - role model with the community. Pleased to see that Mentor RI stays in the budget. Adison Adams - mentee in the program- bond with my mentor. Mentor program is like another family. Always showed love and care. My mentor Kerry. Amazing feeling to see Kerry each week. Couldn't be more grateful for this program. Bill Connors - Warwick resident for 62 years, mentor program for more than 30 years. Having been a mentor to numerous students. Worthiness of the mentor program itself and the importance it serves to our Warwick students. Kind words and praise we have received from parents. Additional adults support people in their corner. Beneficial cause, this is for both mentees and mentors. We are giving back and contributing to a wonderful program.Truly serves our community well and feel grateful that the youth of this city are benefiting and we are all better for it.

Alisa - parent of a nonverbal autistic child, 3 years now in WPS. Classroom TAs stepped up. We need to continue to fund the TAs.

Darlene Netcoh - one budget item 57311 Turnitin Software. This Program is vital to those of us who teach English, but also other teachers. It catches plagiarism. Whatever we order next year has to have AI detection. More and more students are using AI. We need AI detection.
Urging the School Committee to pass this entire budget as presented to you. Do not chip and cut. Disappointing that we don't see all the FTE. We do need to know what jobs are on the chopping block. Mr. Crowley did a great article in the Beacon. If you are confused about what's needed for funding, read his article.

Melissa Lamothe - parent, speech language pathologist - understand cuts need to be made, salary and staffing. I'm here to speak about the idea of consolidating classrooms as part of the budget for cost savings. Park, we have small class sizes, some classes have 12 some of have 13. Make one larger class, sounds reasonable, 1 or 2 with an IEP or 504, challenging behavior. No longer reasonable, half or more of a classroom of students that need mile, medium, intensive levels of support. Not realistic and in the best interest of the students. Consider when you make these staffing cuts, consider the idea of rejecting classroom consolidation.

Jennifer Cardillo - Chair WSEAC - Options are on the table to cut funding for special education services. Asking you to reconsider

New Business

Chair Galligan asked to move New Business #2 first.

2. Discussion/Action: Estate of Gerald J. Habershaw, by Administratrix, Beth A. Zielinski Habershaw v. CITY OF WARWICK, Case No. 202307297 - Motion to approve mediation recommendation as presented in Executive Session - Moved by Mr. Wiggins, seconded by Mr. Testa approval

Motion Passes (5-0)

Ayes: Galligan, Hazelwood, Kirby-Chapman, Testa, Wiggins

1. Discussion/Action: FY26 Superintendent Recommended Budget - Moved by Mr. Testa, seconded by Ms. Hazelwood, Mrs. Kirby-Chapman and Mr. Wiggins approval

Mr. McCaffrey - proposed budget for FY26 difficult decision thank everyone for their hard work and dedication.

Chair Galligan - first and foremost that the public should know that tonight is a unique night. We are going to go through our typical process and after tonight the budget goes on for the first time ever to another approval level of authorization. That party can approve it, make modifications and changes. I would like to express my thanks to Superintendent Dambruch, Interim Superintendent Mr. McCaffrey, Mr. Crowley, Interim Finance Director and all budget owners.

The contract language that allows for layoffs in excess of 20 decline in student enrollment - language comes uptick with students with IEPs, 504, etc. I would not suggest or be comfortable in suggesting you revoke that provision at this time.

Mr. Galligan motion to decrease 52203 Teacher/Admin Pension ERSRI at $15,600,000 by $3,000,000 - Moved by Mr. Testa, seconded by Ms. Hazelwood and Mr. Testa approval

Motion Passes (5-0)

Ayes: Galligan, Hazelwood, Kirby-Chapman, Testa, Wiggins

Mr. Testa went through specific line items.

Mrs. Kirby-Chapman - looking at the cuts for WISE, I've seen this before, there's less and we all said no to TAs and maintenance. Surprised that this is the list again. I'm not ok with these cuts. I don't want to vote for this part of the budget.
Motion to withdraw the proposed headcount reductions
Mrs. Kirby-Chapman - motion that we put the WISE headcount back in. I do not entertain the WISE cuts - seconded by Ms. Hazelwood.
We have been here before, but not at the cost of the kids, but yet here we are. We have already been asked to vote on this and we said no.
Ms. Hazelwood - I have concerns about these cuts. These positions haven't even been seen by the public, they don't know what's being cut and while you can look at numbers, I have been in these roles, numbers don't always show. You have to be transparent. When you hide what you're doing you will have opposition. I won't support this.
Mr. Galligan - I agree with my colleagues, these are difficult cuts, after talking with administration, I have to trust that they are doing their jobs. We were asking for a $5.6M increase that included these cuts.
Mrs. Kirby-Chapman - how many TAs did we cut and how many did we bring back?
Mrs. Barber - for students, we don't have control, hard to predict who would need a one-on-one
Mr. Galligan - if we throw all this back in we would have $1.8M
Ms. Hazelwood - with the budget commission, we may have needs they won't meet. I was elected to take care of what happens in the classroom. We may end up in a position where we may have a lot of needs and not have the people to meet them.
Mr. Testa - language of the budget commission resolution, if we pass the budget and a five year plan that is approved, if a need comes in November, there won't be a budget commission in November.
Mr. Wiggins - we are in trouble and we have to make uncomfortable decisions we have to make. Our job is to get to a point where our deficit is lower and get out of the budget commission sooner than later. Staff reductions are not a surprise. We have to do what we are told to do. We were elected to make difficult decisions.

Attorney Henneous - 3 minute recess until 7:43PM
Returned from recess at 7:49PM

Ms. Hazelwood - I withdraw second motion to Mrs. Kirby-Chapman. It would be an ethics violation.
Mr.Galligan - looking for a second. No second, motion dies.

Mr. Testa made a motion for the $3,000,000 reduction in the ERSRI pension allocate $1,000,000 to 52204. $1M to that $3,276,000 keeps us funded where we are now. Seconded by Mr. Galigan approval. Mr. Wiggins and Ms. Hazelwood had to recuse themselves

Motion Passes (3-0)
Ayes: Galligan, Kirby-Chapman, Testa

Motion made by Mr. Testa to reduce UCOA 51336 by $100,000, seconded by Mr. Wiggins approval

Motion Passes (5-0)
Ayes: Galligan, Hazelwood, Kirby-Chapman, Testa, Wiggins

Motion to move approval to the City of Warwick and the Budget Commission for authorization FY26 Superintendent Proposed Budget in the amount of $198,162,060.00 - moved by Mr. Testa, seconded by Mr. Wiggins approval

Motion Passes (3-2)
Ayes: Galligan, Testa, Wiggins Nays: Hazelwood, Kirby-Chapman,

Public Comment

Darlene Netcoh - I noticed when you were cutting things, one interesting item stood out, why 3 copiers being rented for Drum Rock when it's being torn down.
Actual positions on a list somewhere that are to be cut, public should have access to that information
This year all salaries lumped together in one line item, in the past broken down
School budgets are different than city budgets, educational piece unless you are in education you won't understand
Mayor now also trying to appoint 2 members to the School Committee. Maybe schools should just be a city department.
Don't know what this commission is going to do. Caution giving them more power than they already have

Tracey McDermott - thank you to Mr. Testa who went through line by line and answered all of my questions. Thank you to Mrs. Kirby-Chapman and Ms. Hazelwood for trying to help out those WISE union members and cuts.
However, you keep saying transparency over and over again, but no one knows what positions are being cut, that's not transparency. We don't know what positions you are talking about.I'm a taxpayer and I pay for those positions. That is not transparent.

Mary Townsend - WISE Union President - on behalf of students, having conversations about making cuts on TAs especially one on ones, legal obligation by RIDEto meet the needs of every student coming into this district. I would assume a budget commission can override
Eliminations clarify how many were eliminated, we were back at the table interviewing to refill those positions

Julie Connors Costillo - class overage and weighting we are allowed 26 students in a classroom, percentage exceeds 30% there is an overage that is paid per student, per day. Considering cutting positions, something you may want to be aware of. More staff than making a few extra dollars.

Dylan Tevyaw, Custodian - AI is something to be aware of and look into. Something they need to avoid, negatively impacts their ability to work. Smaller class sizes are better

Nikki Greene - District Lead Math Interventionist, Holliman Elementary - not able to attend in person, submitted her comments by email. School Committee - Budget Commission Documents

Future Meetings

Policy Subcommittee Meeting - Tuesday, May 6, 2025 - 4:30PM
Building Committee Meeting - Wednesday, May 7, 2025 - 7:30AM
Monthly School Committee Meeting - Tuesday, May 13, 2025 - 6:30PM
Fiscal Subcommittee Meeting - TBD
Health & Wellness Subcommittee Meeting - TBD

Adjournment Moved by Ms. Hazelwood and Mr. Testa, seconded by Mr. Wiggins to adjourn the meeting

MOTION PASSES (5-0)
Ayes, Galligan, Hazelwood, Kirby-Chapman, Testa, Wiggins

Meeting adjourned at 8:11PM