

Education411 Newsletter

In This Issue

- [CANDIDATES FORUM](#)
- [FINANCE COMMISSION MEETING NOTES 3/5/07 and 3/12/07](#)
- [STATE AID FOR EDUCATION MEETING SUMMARY](#)
- [VOTE OFTEN!](#)
- [MEETING DATES](#)

CANDIDATES FORUM



The Dedham Educational Partnership will be hosting a Candidates Forum for all those who will be running for the State Representative seat left vacant by Robert Coughlin. The event will be held on Tuesday, March 27th at 7PM at the Dedham High School. This will be an

FINANCE COMMISSION MEETING NOTES 3/5/07 and 3/12/07

March 5, 2007

Financial Impact of Westwood Station

Notes submitted by Kathleen Clasby

INTRODUCTION

In keeping with E411's mission, our summaries of town meetings generally focus on discussion related to school matters. Given the town's ongoing fiscal constraints, and the magnitude of the Westwood Station project, E411 will also strive to summarize discussion of the financial aspects occurring at town meetings. For a more complete review of the 3/5/07 FinCom meeting, please refer to the official FinCom meeting minutes on the [town website](#). If you have not yet read E411's 3/4/07 newsletter, you may want to do so before reading this summary. E411 meeting summaries can be found at www.education411.org.

MEETING SUMMARY

There was a very lengthy presentation given by Craig Seymour, a consultant hired by Westwood, to review the financial impact of the WS project. This meeting was a follow-up to previous FinCom meetings on the same subject. Mr. Seymour's presentation was followed by a presentation by Pat Ahearn, Selectman and Steve Rafsky, Economic Development Advisory Board. The latter focused on the impact of mitigation and Tax Increment Financing (TIF) which is currently being negotiated with CC&F.

Mr. Seymour reviewed and adjusted some of CCF's tax revenue assumptions downward, but overall agreed with most of CCF's data and conclusions. When asked by a FinCom member for supporting information in the demographic data, Mr. Seymour directed the member to the CCF report. He concluded that the benefit to

opportunity for the citizens of Dedham, Westwood and Walpole to hear the views of the candidates. The Selectmen, the School Committees and the Councils on Aging from each of the three towns have been contacted by DEP and asked to submit questions for the candidates. All questions submitted will be reviewed by an unbiased committee and final questions will be formulated. The Dedham Educational Partnership is a non-profit organization whose mission is to strengthen communication and support education processes in Dedham.

Quick Links...

- [School Budget Documents](#)
- [State Aid for Education 2/26/07 Meeting Summary](#)
- [Education411 Meeting Summaries](#)

Join our mailing list!

Join

cost ratio was 2.6 to 1 and that the only way the project could not be a positive tax gain would be if the assessed values were below construction costs.

Mr. Seymour concluded that the number of school age children associated with WS will be between 50 and 60. He used 54 in all his calculations. He confirmed he used the same demographic information included in the CCF report. He stated that he did not include the \$2M operating mitigation monies in his financial analysis due to the unlikelihood that the second trigger will be reached.

The school mitigation amount has not changed; however, the trigger has changed. The mitigation amount is \$3M Capital, \$1M for operating and an additional \$2M if the number of school age children exceeds 108 (the number was 100 on 2/28).

Mr. Seymour's projection of annual operating costs for the 54 school age children was higher than the CCF estimate. He did not include any additional Chapter 70 funds in his revenue calculations. There was much discussion about the project impact on the schools and current and future space problems. All costs discussed were "incremental costs" associated with the project. A FinCom member stated the problem with that logic is that based on Westwood's current space issues we are faced with possible "step" costs. Her concern is the project will be the tipping point and we will need to build a new Middle School. She stated the \$3M will not go very far if the town needs to build a \$30M new school. Mr. Seymour replied that the information he received from the school department and school committee was that we will not likely have to build any new schools. Selectman Ahearn replied by stating that if the space needs study or the WS project led to the need for a new school that the \$3 million would fund a consultant to design the new school and that the WS project would generate

enough revenue to cover the debt payments on that school without the need for an override. Various FinCom members asked questions and concluded with a request for additional sensitivity analysis of the numbers.

Steve Rafsky presented a 20 year projection of the project revenue and costs, including a \$20M TIF (20 year payback period) and \$10M in mitigation costs paid to the town in FY08. The projection (still moving numbers) is in FY08 the town would see \$12M in revenue (includes \$10M of mitigation), \$3.4M in FY09 and increasing thereafter to \$17M in FY27. There was much discussion, requests for minor changes to the schedule and requests for a recalculation for the 20 year projection without the \$20 million TIF and without the \$10M mitigation.

There also was much discussion about the fire, police and municipal mitigation amounts. CCF will donate land and give the town \$3.6 million to build a fire station. The number was calculated by \$300 per square foot for the 12,000 square foot building. Members stated that amount and size didn't seem big enough. It was noted that the High Street fire house is less than 12,000 square feet and the amount of \$300 per SQF as a baseline is generally accepted to be reasonable for estimation purposes. There is also \$1.8 million for new equipment which will likely buy an ambulance and ladder truck. CCF will also pay another \$1M in mitigation for capital needs related to other municipal services. There was much discussion about operating cost estimates for fire, police and municipal.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Two residents spoke at the end of the meeting. The first speaker referenced the 2/28 School Committee meeting. He expressed concern that the meeting agenda was not publicized until the day of the meeting. He expressed further concern that there were very few

residents at the meeting and there was insufficient opportunity for public participation related to the School Committee vote on the school mitigation amount. He concluded that he actually felt much better about the situation after having attended this FinCom meeting. He thanked the FinCom members for asking the tough questions and he felt reassured that the FinCom was not going to rubber stamp the project. The FinCom chairman thanked the speaker for his comments and assured him that the project was not going to be pushed through, that the School Committee vote was not the final determination, and that FinCom and many other volunteers were working diligently to ensure thorough and thoughtful analysis of the data.

A resident, living near the project, echoed these sentiments and added that the project is essentially building a city within a suburb. She added that the assumption that the 450 market priced units above retail would result in 0 kids was a mistake. She referenced a few upscale condo projects in the South End of Boston which are "bursting" with kids and overburdening the local schools there.

**March 12, 2007
Westwood Station Update &
Education Sub-Committee Report**

Notes submitted by Kathleen Clasby

The meeting was opened up by Jim Connors FinCom Chairman. He referenced an article in the newspaper where an individual was quoted as saying that the project was essentially being pushed through the system. Mr. Connors expressed disagreement with this comment and gave a brief history of the project. The plan began to gain feasibility three years ago. Various town boards have had dozens of meetings over the past three years to position the town for this project. The pace has certainly intensified since CC&F filed the permit.

The filing of the permit, which outlines the project in very specific terms, allowed for the negotiation of the developer's agreement. He stated that just because the pace has intensified does not mean that the due diligence has lessened. Various town boards have increased their number of meetings, in some cases meeting on a weekly basis when they normally meet on a monthly basis. He noted that the majority of these boards are comprised of Westwood citizens who volunteer a significant amount of their time to the town. He mentioned the Planning Board, Health, Conservation, Water, Selectmen and the FinCom members and thanked them for their hard work and dedication.

It was noted that the Westwood Station subcommittee met on Friday with Craig Seymour and Steve Rafsky to review the sensitivity analysis which was requested by the committee on March 5th. The group reviewed 7 possible scenarios modifying various revenue, expense, and project scope assumptions. Three scenarios were distributed to the members of FinCom and the audience. The scenarios included a "worst case" view which limited revenue to Phase 1 of the project, increased projected costs and doubled the amount of children attending public schools. The worst case scenario resulted in approximately \$3-5 million in annual net revenue to the town over the next 20 years. Members stated that this worst case scenario projection satisfied them that the project was justified to move forward from a financial perspective. The committee was reminded that their role was to opine on the financial impact and that they had no role related to traffic, water, or other project issues. A few other changes to the development agreement were discussed which would give the town additional controls over the project.

A FinCom member asked Selectman Nancy Hyde if residents could expect to see a decrease in their tax bill, when the

new revenue for the project is realized. Ms. Hyde commented that the town has many fiscal problems to solve before a tax reduction could occur and despite the rumors, the Westwood Station money has not been "spent". She stated that town has delayed repairs, maintenance and other capital needs for several years. She also stated the need to build up the town reserves and stabilization funds. While unable to make any promises, she did say she could foresee years where taxes would remain fixed and not increase the allowed 2 ½ %. Finally, she stated that if the project goes through, that it would be highly unlikely that the town would ever need to have an override again.

Public comment was then allowed. A gentlemen asked the committee if they knew what the financial impact would be to the town in the event that the traffic plan did not work well causing traffic gridlock in the area. Mr. Rafsky replied that the main reason the town is agreeable to a TIF is that all the roadways will be completed with Phase 1. In the event that there are traffic problems, the town and the developer will work together to mitigate the problems before Phase 2 is started.

Education Sub-Committee Report

1) A draft of the sub-committee report was distributed and discussed. The report included information and various data already reported on by E411. Please visit www.education411.org for prior meeting summaries and the links on this subject. The subcommittee voted 3-2 in favor of recommending the override to the rest of the committee. The vote was taken by the subcommittee prior to this meeting. Each subcommittee member commented on their reason for their vote. The yes voters believe that the school department clearly demonstrated its needs. They also noted that a commitment to maintaining an excellent school system is a core value for Westwood. One member voted no

because she was concerned that the override amount was too high and would place too high a financial burden on senior citizens. She also expressed concern that the override would fail and result in many teachers being laid off. She stated that she did not dispute the needs of the schools but that she preferred the override amount to be lower. A second FinCom member voted no because he was concerned with the sustainability of the new teaching positions in the budget. He thought Westwood would get a bad reputation if we hire teachers in year one and then lay them off in year two or three. He further stated that after hearing the conclusions reached on the Westwood Station project his fears about sustainability have been alleviated and that he was officially changing his vote to a yes. Final vote was 4-1.

2) A FinCom member asked John Antonucci (JA) what his plan was for communicating the need for the override to the voters. JA advised the committee of the "road show" he has been on since announcing the FY08 budget and override amount. He has given presentations at all schools, various civic groups, neighborhood coffees, etc. He is open to any opportunity to inform the public about the needs of the schools.

Public participation was allowed. A woman spoke representing the Yes4Westwood Committee. She advised the committee about Yes4Westwood's plan to publicize the override including a town-wide mailing, promotions in the school's weekly communications and telephone calls to voters. Jim Connors stated that if the Yes committee wants to help the schools they should also be working on the Planning Board election. In order to vote on the approval of the special permit (Westwood Station), Planning Board members had to attend all meetings. In the event a Planning Board seat changes, the vote cannot take place and CCF would have to file a new permit and the entire process would have to start over. The vote would

be delayed a minimum of one year. He stated that the Westwood Station project is essential to the school and municipal financing in the near term and delaying the project would limited the town's ability of stabilize its financial structure.

STATE AID FOR EDUCATION MEETING SUMMARY

On 2/26/07, Education411 hosted a town forum on State Funding of Education. The speaker was Jeff Wulfson, Associate Commissioner of the Department of Education. The meeting was attended by over 75 people, many of whom said that the forum was very informative and shed light on a FAQ in Westwood, why do other very similar towns get significantly more money in state aid than Westwood.

Please click [here](#) to read the meeting summary. The presenter's slides are also on the E411 website.

VOTE OFTEN!

Tuesday April 17, Special State Primary. Last day to change party or register to vote in this primary is **3/28**.

Tuesday April 24, Town Election. Last day to register to vote in the Town Election is **4/4**.

Tuesday May 15, Special State Election. Last day to register to vote in special state election is **4/25**.

Residents already registered do not need to re-register unless they want to change political party for the Special Primary. For more information, call the Town Clerk's Office at 781-320-1013.

MEETING DATES

Monday, 3/19 7:30PM Finance Commission, Senior Center

Tuesday, 3/20 7PM Planning Board,

High School, Fiscal Impact of Westwood Station

Thursday, 3/22 7:30PM School Committee Meeting, High School

Monday & Tuesday, 3/26 & 3/27 7:30PM FinCom Public Hearings, Middle School

Tuesday, 3/27 7PM Candidates Forum, Dedham High School

Wednesday, 4/4 at 7:30AM Westwood High School PTO invites you to a meeting with Superintendent Antonucci regarding the 2007-8 budget. The meeting will be held in the WHS Faculty Lounge. RSVP to Leslie Warner-Maloney at 781-251-9310 or lwarnermaloney@aol.com.

Wednesday, 4/4 7PM Community Budget Forum hosted by John Antonucci, High School

email: westwoodeducation411@yahoo.com

web: <http://education411.org>

[Forward email](#)



This email was sent to lbrakke@comcast.net, by

westwoodeducation411@yahoo.com

[Update Profile/Email Address](#) | Instant removal with [SafeUnsubscribe™](#) | [Privacy Policy](#).

Powered
by

Education411 | c/o 74 Sterling Road | Westwood | MA | 02090