

Finance Commission Minutes

Thursday May 14, 2026 6 pm

Winthrop Public Library / Hazlett Room

Meeting called to order @ 6pm by Chair Matt Gorkowicz

ROLL CALL:

Present: Karin Chavis KC, Kim Dimes KD, Paul Reardon PR, Matt Gorkowicz MG, Christian Buonopane CB, Joe Hanlon JH, Michael Gillespie ML, Bill Gault WG, Jim Letterie JL

Absent: Shannon Poulos, Max Tassinari

Not on Zoom, Recorded by WCAT

Motion by KD to accept minutes of 5/7/2026, second by CB

Yes vote / KC, KD, PR, MG, CB, ML

Abstain / JH

Chair introduces Lisa Howard LH, Superintendent of Winthrop Public Schools / School Department; Also present is Dylan Cook DC, CFO/School Business manager

LH Discusses her office, functions what everyone does, they work with principals of each building/school to create a strategic budget and roadmap for the year as well as long term goals

LH notes budget will go live on 7/1 - been negotiating 4 contracts: Teachers, ESPs, Nurses, Secretaries; reached tentative agreement

Budget highlights:

1. Central Office Budget: works to design with actuals to reflect real spend / forecast
2. Gorman Fort Banks Budget:
 - a. Some repairs need to be done at playground, preemptive
3. Winthrop Middle School Budget:
 - a. DC: Biggest increase also to custodians, merged as WHS/WMS share purchasing of supplies by custodian, also matching decreases
 - b. JH asks about decrease in teacher budget for WMS, LH explains there is an open position for next year
 - c. JL asks about salary increases, they are steps, not COLAs. MG

4. Winthrop High School Budget:

- a. Custodial budget increases are just a result of accounting recording practices to reflect WMS and WHS combined purchasing
- b. BC notes nursing supply increases, science consumables match actual levels -> also result of prepayments running out
- c. Much bigger as WHS contains 4 grades, teacher levels relatively similar to others

5. Cummings School Budget:

- a. Most expensive school for utilities by far
- b. DC notes they are working to repair valves/actuators + bldg management system that will lower utility bills
- c. JL, KC, LH point out that ATC is historically higher in term of operational costs attributable to more usage than other schools especially in summer
- d. DC and LH explain that it can be difficult to perform repairs given weather / usage of buildings, repairs themselves very laborious
- e. LH reminds that certain expenses going from 0 to a value were prepaid, or result of a curriculum not being utilized/paid for

KC points out that ATC's electricity cost is higher than WMS/WHS combined, attributable to solar credits, usage, also notes that GFB has a 1 to 1 nurse

6. District Wide Budget:

- a. Covers people / providers that work with all 4 (at least >1) school within WPS
 - i. Ex: Drivers, speech pathologist
- LH notes that special needs supply line item has increased due to needs and grants (providing insufficient coverage), also notes increase in special education legal fees/services
- Also discusses cost of homeless bus transportation, more intricate than it seems. Notes that when WPS has to contract out bus drivers due to staffing issues costs can be higher
- Requested 1.9 instead of 2.5 for tuition, anticipating leftover circuit breaker money to offset
- LH notes curriculum director/asst superintendent salary went down due to departure, Brian Curley serving in interim, may assume role permanently in which WMS would need a new principal
- DC notes that field maintenance has increased due to wear and tear along with computer maintenance that is not covered / no longer will be covered by grants
- Discuss Miller Field costs, renting/custodian pay, upkeep to maintain integrity of field/equipment

General discussion continues about chromebook replacements, internet service,

- Discuss contingency line item, as well as Town manager vs requested budget
 - If Town Manager budget (less) is chosen, LH indicates that cuts may be made in certain line items such as supplies
- Supt. Howard reminds that the contract agreement between the teacher's association and school committee is tentative and was recently settled
- Will be meeting with Supt. Howard again on 5/28

Meeting adjourned unanimously

Minutes by:

Christian Buonopane