

WESTON BOARD OF EDUCATION

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Weston Board of Education
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January 29, 2009

To: Boards of Selectmen and Finance

From: Ellen H. Uzenoff

RE: Letter of Transmittal - Board of Education's Budget request for FY 2010

Dear Board of Selectman and Finance Members:

The Weston Board of Education respectfully presents the enclosed 2009-2010 Budget for your consideration and review. The 2010 fiscal plan was developed by our school administrators and presented to the Board of Education at three workshops earlier this month. After careful review, consideration and modification, the Board voted to request a budget of \$45,129,890 at its January 20, 2009 meeting. This budget request represents a 2.62% or \$1,154,287 increase. We believe that this request is both fiscally responsible and provides for the educational programs that Weston values.

The FY 2010 budget request for the Weston Public Schools is the product of a thoughtful analysis of program values, genuine concern for the economic pressures that impact many of the members of our community and our ability to reduce and contain costs without significantly impacting the educational program. I would like to thank the Boards of Education, Selectman and Finance for guiding this process. The dialogue between the Boards and our non-elected leaders since the spring of 2008 has been focused, informative and thoughtful. For me, it highlights the fact that regardless of our positions, Weston is a community that is strengthened when it comes together around the same goals and outcomes.

The greatest stressor on our budget is in the area of health benefits, which based on our consultants' projections, will increase by \$763,945. In addition, the CT State Department of Education projects a 25% reduction (\$155,000) in our Excess Costs Grant for special education in 2009-10. Without these two contributors, the Board of Education's budget request would be less than 1%. There are two factors that have yet to be decided that may enable us to reduce the health benefits line. First, the Town and Board of Education released a joint request for proposal that may reduce the overall cost of the health benefits program. The results of this bid process will be available prior to our meeting on February 25, 2009 with the Finance Board. Second, the projected FY 2009 balance in the Board of Education's Internal Services Fund is \$1.9M. Favorable claims experience in FY 2008 account for more than 50% of this balance. Given the

volatility inherent in a partially self-insured program, the Boards may decide to offset a portion of the projected increase for FY 2010 with the fund balance.

As you review this document you will notice that many numbers are in red. This represents the reductions in staffing as a result of adjusting class sizes to the upper end of the district's guidelines, developing a needs based budget from zero and implementing many cost containment measures and efficiencies that contain or reduce costs. Know that we will continue to explore opportunities to save taxpayers' dollars through contract negotiations with both staff and outside contractors, operational audits and by collaborating with our neighboring districts and the town.

It is important to note that the Board of Education reduced 8.7 FTE staff positions in the 2008-2009 Budget. The 2009-2010 Budget reduces 8.52 FTE additional staff positions. During this two year period, student enrollment has only decreased by a projected 8 students and 13.35 FTE certified teaching positions have been eliminated.

I hope that you find this fiscal plan to be an informative decision-making tool. Please let me know if you have any questions or need additional information. The members of the Board of Education and administration look forward to working with you in the coming months to develop a budget that will enable us to deliver the educational programs and services that Weston values. We firmly believe that it takes the entire Weston community to make this happen. The challenge before us is to sustain and enhance the quality of the Weston educational experience.

Sincerely,



Ellen H. Uzenoff
Board of Education Chairperson

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Enclosure