

Minutes of the WPCNA Meeting: 05/08/18

Education House, 5 Homeside Lane

Guest Speaker – Joseph Ricca,
Superintendent: White Plains City School District
Subject : White Plains School Budget 2018-2019

WPCNA Board Members attending:

Andrew Custodio	Co-President
Chris Price	Co-Vice President
Ruthmarie Hicks	Recording Secretary
Tom Osbeck	Treasurer

WPCNA Board Members not in attendance:

Bill Brady	Co-President
Ron Palmer	Co-Vice President

Andrew Custodio brought the meeting to order. He confirmed for us that our County Executive, George Latimer will be the speaker for the June 2018 meeting and that after that we will take a break in July and August, resuming in September.

Talk by Joseph Ricca:

(Note that the PowerPoint used throughout the presentation is available at the following link:

<https://www.whiteplainspublicschools.org/cms/lib/NY01000029/Centricity/Domain/56/Adopted%20Proposed%20Budget%20Ricca%20Community%20Presentation%204-9-2018%20JR.pdf>

As recording secretary, I will insert myself into the talk enough to refer to slide numbers throughout the minutes. They added a great deal to the talk and since they are online – this is the most effective way to make sure readers have sufficient information.)

The district's mission is to educate and nurture each and every student.

One of the priorities of governance is to provide stable services that parents and students can rely upon. Beyond immediate services, there is long-range planning with respect to instructional priorities, demographic changes, facility and capacity studies, among other things. (Slide #4)

Fiscal Challenges & Financial Resources:

Today, there are fiscal challenges that make it challenging to maintain our

instructional core. These include Tax levy caps, less aid from the Federal and State Governments, the new tax laws on deductions, certiorari claims and much more. (slide #5). This forces the district to carefully draw distinctions between needs vs. wants. White Plains is maintaining its instructional core and is not cutting the way many other districts are. White Plains is not eliminating things like clubs and extra curricular programs. The district has to find ways to save such as increasing efficiencies and sharing services, but this is not eating away at the core programs. The district is staying within the tax levy cap with a 2.08% increase this year and a tax rate increase of 2.88%.

Recording secretary notes on slide show:

A summary of the district's five year budget, tax rate and tax levy is on slide #7.

The largest source of revenue is local real estate taxes at nearly 84%. (slide #8)

A summary of the tax levy cap and average increases over time is on slide #9. The impact to the average homeowner is on slide #10.

It should be noted (slide #11) that 79% of the outlay is dedicated to instruction.

Enrollment Trends:

Enrollment trends (slide #14) show an increase in student population this past year of about 0.6% over the previous year. The actual numbers go up and down slightly, but have remained quite stable.

New/Expanded Programs:

Some programs that are being added or expanded (slide #15) Some highlights include:

- - Multivariable Calculus (an advanced class)
 - There will be additional teaching support for English as a new language at three schools
 - American sign language will also be offered for the first time.
 - There is also an increase in teaching assistants and a continuation of a program in 1:1 device initiative.

There is an ongoing commitment to science and technology. Every student takes a regents level science class in the 8th grade and a continuing emphasis on STEM.

Safety and Security:

There was a safety audit last summer. One of the keys to security is to be prepared

BEFORE there is an emergency and the school system is constantly maintaining and improving security. *The extensive systems that are in place are on slide #17.*

Maintenance Projects & Capital Projects 2017-2018:

(Shown on slides #18 - 20)

One emphasis is to provide cooling in large common spaces such as cafeterias which can help on very warm days. This allows the students to circulate through cooled areas when it is very hot.

Maintenance Projects for 2018-2019: (slide #21)

Highlights:

All schools – magnetic door hold open devices
LED lights for Mamaroneck Ave School

Other Budget Factors: (slide #22)

Highlight – Health insurance is only increasing 3-5% due to health care consortium.

Administrative, Program, and Capital Budget/Contingency Budget: (slides #23-26)

BALLOT HAS THREE PROPOSITIONS: (slides #27-35)

Proposition 1 is approving the budget with the 2.88% tax increase.

Proposition 2 is the capital reserve fund. The fund was established to fund improvements without bond issues and tax increases. Proposition 2 asks if the district can move money from the reserve fund for use in capital projects. There is \$17 million in the reserve, the proposal is to use up to \$10 million. (see slides #30-32)

Proposition 3 is a transportation proposal: (slides #33-35)

The district will reroute ridership and reduce the number of buses. Maintain ride times of no more than an average of 35 minutes. These new efficiencies will allow the district to institute transportation for high school students over 1 mile from the high school with no parental fee.

Questions, Answers, Comments:

Q - How are graduation rates and college admissions for the district?

A - The graduation rate is in the high 90s and admission to Ivy League schools is strong. With admissions in the district this year including all but Princeton and Brown.

Mark Levu - Battle Hill

Q - With respect to student population - how do you come to those numbers?

A - Demographers. Based on building, births etc. It is pretty accurate.

Q – Are parents informed when there is a safety issue like a lockdown?

A – Parents are informed, but law enforcement and emergency services come first.

Q – Chris Price - Highlands – There have been teachers strikes around the country. Are we working to mitigate this sort of issue here?

A – We maintain a good dialogue with our teaching staff and we have to realize that most of these strikes are taking place in states where salaries are nearly half of what they are here.

Q - Ann Marie Encanarco - Highlands – Some parents are complaining about getting their 3rd choice when it comes to school choice. How common was that?

A – 92% of families got first 1st choice. Very few got 3rd choice. It's unfortunate, but it happens. But it is rare.

Q – Chris Price – Highlands – The state may provide more resources but what is the process? Maybe we should working to bring more money back to White Plains?

A - There is a very archaic formula to distribute state aid. No one wants to play with it because there are winners and losers. Unfortunately, we are lumped in with more upstate areas. We aren't considered an “expensive” region, which is ridiculous.

Q – What about solar panels?

A – This was considered in the past, but the cost rose significantly. It is being looked into again.

Q – Grant writing? Are we requesting additional grant funding?

A – We receive a great deal in grant money. We are always applying for more.

Q – What do new students have to do to prove they live in White Plains?

A – Parents have to provide proof. There are some fraudulent claims, but not that many. The level of scrutiny is limited by expense.

Q – Ruthmarie Hicks – Hillair - I would assume that spending too much on enforcing district boundaries becomes self-defeating. At some point, doesn't it become more money than it is worth to the district?

A – Yes, at some point it becomes counterproductive.

