

BARRINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE NARRATIVE PROPOSED 2014-2015 OPERATING BUDGET BARRINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Introduction

“The Barrington Public Schools will empower all students to excel.”

This mission statement, as defined in the 2012-2017 Strategic Plan for the Barrington Public Schools, has a very clear focus on student learning and reflects the community’s expectation that students in the Barrington Public Schools will receive a world class education. Vision, values and belief statements complete the framework for the comprehensive strategic plan that defines priorities and clear goals for continuous improvement. The Barrington School Committee takes very seriously its obligation to provide a world class education for all students, to align and sustain resources to meet district goals and to maximize the return on the investment in education for Barrington taxpayers through strong, responsible fiscal stewardship. The district Strategic Communication Plan presents a clear, concise work plan for communicating effectively with our community and this budget narrative represents one component of that plan.

An integral component of the district strategic plan is the Multiyear Technology Plan. This plan outlines an investment in technology designed to improve teaching and learning for all students from pre-K through Grade 12. Technology based administration is required for the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments, scheduled for spring 2015, and the plan meets the technology equipment needs for the PARCC assessment. The Barrington School Committee supports the decision of the Committee on Appropriations to designate technology funding resources for 2014-2015 in the Capital Budget.

The proposed 2014-2015 Operating Budget provides the fiscal resources necessary to invest in key areas of the district strategic plan and to continue and improve current programs to meet the education needs of students in the Barrington Public Schools. The following three new initiatives for 2014-2015 will enhance the quality of education and strengthen effective communication with our community:

- All Day Kindergarten program implementation
- Mathematics Instructional Support at Barrington Middle School
- Strategic Communication Plan implementation

Overview of the 2014-2015 Proposed Operating Budget for the Barrington Public Schools

The 2014-2015 proposed operating budget of \$46,375,464, without additional aid, represents an increase in spending of \$1,038,000 or 2.29%. The anticipated increase in State Aid and potential additional State Aid for All Day Kindergarten reduce the net impact to Barrington taxpayers to an increase in spending of \$265,511 or 0.59%. As a point of reference, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the period ending December, 2013 was 1.7%. The budget development process includes a large number of components and a few merit further discussion.

A significant reduction in Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) obligation for the Barrington Public Schools, from \$21 million to \$7 million, was realized as a result of the changes in plan design eligibility requirements. (Note: Town of Barrington Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2013).

The Equalized Net Per Pupil Expenditure (PPE) for FY 2012 is \$13,467. Barrington is ranked #32 of 36 public school districts on a scale from highest to lowest PPE in Rhode Island. The highest public school PPE is \$39,486 (New Shoreham) and the lowest is \$12,294 (Cumberland).

The School Committee Fund Balance Policy specifically governs any budget surplus. It provides guidelines for budget decisions relative to the appropriate use of the funds and the maintenance of adequate reserves sufficient to ensure that programs and services continue for students when unanticipated expenditures, emergencies and/or fluctuations in revenue sources occur. The use of surplus funds to support the operating budget would conflict with this policy, would have a potential negative impact on the Town of Barrington bond rating, and could create a structural deficit (one time revenue source that funds an ongoing operating expense in the current year's budget thus creating a deficit of that amount in the following year's budget). School Improvement Capital Reserve Funds are designated for use on non-recurring expenditures.

School Improvement Capital Reserve Fund investments for FY08-FY13 included such projects as the Barrington High School parking lots, the Nayatt School and Primrose Hill School roof replacements and the Sowams School parking lot. Every five years, districts are required to complete a comprehensive evaluation of their schools. The outcome of this rigorous process, known as the Rhode Island Department of Education Necessity of School Construction Application, is formally presented to the Rhode Island Board of Education for approval. Upon receipt of that approval, districts become eligible to receive Housing Aid Reimbursement from the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Since the above projects were approved by the Rhode Island Board of Education, Barrington was eligible to receive Housing Aid Reimbursement (current rate is 35%). The use of Capital Reserve Funds also eliminates the additional taxpayer cost to issue bonds with the applicable bond interest.

Middle School/Immediate Health and Safety Projects Update – In 2011, the General Assembly imposed a three year moratorium on the approval of new projects with the exception of those necessitated by health and safety reasons. In 2012, the Stage II application for \$2.4 mil in Immediate Health and Safety items and support for new construction for Barrington Middle School was confirmed by the School Committee and preliminary approval by the Rhode Island Board of Education.

Exceptional school districts develop exceptional students.

High expectations for student achievement and quality instruction remain a focus of the Barrington Public Schools. In April, 2014 U.S. News and World Report recognized the quality of education in the Barrington Public Schools with the following accolades:

- Barrington High School was named a Gold Medal High School, ranked #440 of the top 500 high schools, representing the top 2.6% of high schools in the United States.
- Barrington High School was ranked #178 in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education.

District - wide recognitions reflect a dedication to excellence in teaching and learning as a school system. This dedication provides a firm foundation for success for all students. The district strategic plan provides the opportunity to sustain performance, focus continuous improvement initiatives where they will have the greatest impact, and maximize taxpayer return on the investment in education.

Barrington Public Schools website: www.barringtonschools.org.