



Westport Weston
Health District

MINUTES

BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING

WWHD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

January 9, 2012

The Budget Workshop Meeting of the Westport Weston Health District's Board of Directors was called to order by the Vice Chairman, Otis Crawford, at 7:34 pm. The following voting Board Members were present: Vice Chairman Otis Crawford, Neil Coleman, Keith Stein, and Howard Maynard.

Also present were: Mark A.R. Cooper, Director of Health; John Cimarosa, Director of Finances and Special Projects; Dr. Stuart Steinman, Medical Advisor.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion by Director Coleman and seconded by Director Stein, the Board of Directors approved the December 12, 2011 Regular Minutes. Vice Chairman Crawford voted yes, Director Coleman voted yes, Director Stein voted yes, and Director Maynard voted yes.

Motion was approved 4 to 0.

Communications

Mr. Cooper explained that the thank you letter from the Southwest Regional Mental Health Board, Inc. acknowledges the payment of last year's contribution and requests \$3,700 be included in next fiscal year's budget proposal. This District has presented this request in previous budgets as a separate line item and is paid by the town.

Proposed Holiday Schedule for 2012 - 2013

On a motion by Director Coleman and seconded by Director Stein, the Board of Directors approved the Proposed Holiday Schedule for 2012-2013. Vice Chairman Crawford voted yes, Director Coleman voted yes, Director Stein voted yes, and Director Maynard voted yes.

Motion was approved 4 to 0.

Proposed Meeting Schedule for 2012 - 2013

On a motion by Director Coleman and seconded by Director Stein, the Board of Directors approved the proposed Regular Scheduled Meetings date for 2012. Vice Chairman Crawford voted yes, Director Coleman voted yes, Director Stein voted yes, and Director Maynard voted yes.

Motion was approved 4 to 0.

Director Coleman asked if the staff request for consideration of the reimbursement of educational expenses had been discussed or acted upon at the last meeting. He has done some research and found there are no states which require educational expenses be reimbursed. Mr. Cooper indicated the matter was not discussed at the last meeting. He also had researched what some towns and other health jurisdictions do, and is ready to provide that information to the Board at the next meeting.

John Cimarosa summarized the District's current financial position and provided the Board with a financial and budget update. He indicated the budget, by Statute, must be finalized by the end of April. For staff to prepare a budget for presentation to the public, some guidance from the Board is needed on what level of support to ask the towns for and whether there will be any general wage increases.

Board members have the audit result. There was a small deficit last year and another small one is expected this year; however, that will depend on how the economy goes this spring. Organizationally, there has been a number of changes to reduce costs and increase efficiency, including leaving several staff positions unfilled. Two full-time positions have been reduced to part time. Mr. Cooper indicated that it was his opinion that further staff reductions would seriously negatively impact the District's ability to meet customer expectations and meet minimum state required mandates.

There was general discussion on how past budget year presentations have gone and the need to be sensitive to each town's financial circumstances. It was noted that both member towns have given general wage increases ranging from 1.75% to 2.5%. Mr. Cooper expressed concern that some key staff may be looking elsewhere for employment and that should any decide to leave, it would be difficult to replace their knowledge and expertise of the communities we serve and that the cost of replacement in terms of operational efficiency and training would be high.

There was general consensus that the budget should be developed reflecting what the board determines to be needed from a public health and operational perspective. This should include a very modest increase of about eighteen thousand dollars. It will also be important to provide sound justifications for the District's request. It was noted that in addition to reducing staff by 26% and reducing expenditures, the District has also absorbed the loss of state per capita funding. Local health jurisdictions are being strongly encouraged to join the national public health accreditation process, which will be tied to future funding from the state and federal grants. The process will take a lot of staff effort and comes with a significant cost. Locally, it must be decided if the potential undefined benefits outweigh the known costs.

It was noted that staff have also been working on two new initiatives that may have a significant positive public health impact and save each community future funds. The ACL injury prevention initiative could potentially prevent numerous injuries while enhancing athletic performance and the DNA source tracking initiative could reduce CT DEEP pollution reduction compliance costs for Weston and Westport. The DNA initiative could also improve water quality in local shell fishing beds resulting in less down time.

There was general discussion on the District's reserves and how previous year deficits have impacted it. It was noted that the majority of the reduction was part of a planned and agreed upon spend down.

Even though there is still a positive balance, it is getting closer to the point that the District may not have a sufficient reserve level to proactively deal with any unplanned manmade or natural disaster in a manner meeting emergency contingency plan requirements and community expectations. The types of disasters and how much reserve would be needed was explored, but there is too much uncertainty to know if the District has too much or too little. The State recommends 25 to 30% of the operating budget be set aside as a reasonable reserve. Dr. Steinman added that there are emerging infection scenarios that the District should have contingency funds to purchase supplies with. Mr. Cimarosa indicated that the state and federal emergency preparation funding which has been used in the past is decreasing and is projected to end in the not too distant future. Dr. Steinman noted that most of the medical supplies have a shelf life, they will not last forever and need to be periodically replaced. Director Stein also noted that a healthy reserve is needed because the District's revenue stream has been very volatile. State funding has been stopped and the economy affects environmental fees.

Mr. Cooper indicated that he and Mr. Cimarosa will put together a budget proposal based on this discussion and give it back to the Board for review and comment before it goes anywhere. Mr. Cooper also recommended that the Board consider postponing the Budget Public Hearing scheduled for January 23 as was done last year, to give more time to better work with each town's budget process. Mr. Cooper and Mr. Cimarosa will target the second Monday in February to present the draft budget to the Board.

On a motion by Director Coleman and seconded by Director Stein, the Board of Directors approved postponing the Budget Public Hearing scheduled for January 23, 2012 until further notice. Vice Chairman Crawford voted yes, Director Coleman voted yes, Director Stein voted yes, and Director Maynard voted yes.

Motion was approved 4 to 0.

Director Maynard asked if the format on how the budget information is presented could be made more user friendly. In the current format there are about 163 lines of data and 2 totals. He would like to see revenue and expenditures per department. Director Coleman indicated it was the Board that asked for greater details. Mr. Cimarosa indicated this could be done. Directors Maynard and Coleman volunteered to meet with Mr. Cimarosa and design a helpful format.

On a motion by Director Stein and seconded by Director Maynard, the Regular Meeting was adjourned at 9:20 pm. Vice Chairman Crawford voted yes, Director Coleman voted yes, Director Stein voted yes, and Director Maynard voted yes.

Motion was approved 4 to 0.

Respectfully submitted



Mark A.R. Cooper Director of Health
Westport Weston Health District