

From: "Ottina.Kathleen <KOttina@whitman-ma.gov>" <KOttina@whitman-ma.gov>
To: Jeffrey
Cc: beth.stafford@whrdsd.org
Bcc: jeffrey.szymaniak@whrdsd.org
Date: 2024-03-20 06:46
Subject: Re: Fy 25 School Budget

■

Good morning, Jeff,

Thank you for your prompt response. I want to continue this discussion.

1. Transportation. I have been serving on the Regional Agreement Amendment Committee as a non-voting member for the past two years. It was first chaired by Chris Howard and now by Chris Scriven. I had one goal – to revise Section V - Transportation. As it currently reads: "**School Transportation shall be provided by the Regional School District and the cost thereof shall be apportioned to the member towns as an operating cost. The Regional School Committee shall determine on an annual basis whether or not non-mandated busing will be paid for by the Regional School District. If the Regional Committee decides not to provide non-mandated busing, an Article will be presented to the Selectmen's office of each town for approval by the voters.**" This is from the 1992 amended agreement. If the Regional School Committee chose to provide non-mandated busing and calculate its cost as an operating cost it would obviate the need to submit a separate article to the towns for funding. As it stands now, the Town of Whitman is bearing a disproportionate share of the transportation costs by segregating the mandated and non-mandated costs and calculating the Towns' shares using different metrics. Using the FY25 projected transportation costs (see **FY25 Transportation** attached to this e-mail) I calculate that Whitman will be paying at least \$40,565 by one metric or \$86,921 by a different metric that should be paid by Hanson. Therefore, if the School Committee determines that it will not pay for the non-mandated busing and will, instead, submit an Article to the Selectmen's office I will oppose the funding of that Article. This will be my position until the Transportation language in the Regional Agreement is changed.

2. Regarding my question on class sizes, you answered the issue of the Hanson Middle School sixth grade by stating there was an error, there will only be five sections of sixth grade. Does that mean that the FY25 budget includes salaries five teachers and the error was simply in the presentation regarding class sizes? Furthermore, you failed to address the issue of the HMS eighth grade. Running five sections of eighth grade at an average class size of 22 students (110/5) is consistent with the class sizes for both Hanson and Whitman Middle Schools. That is \$71,000 in savings that I urge you to consider.

In conclusion, I will note that I have recently come across an article from The Enterprise published May 7, 2019. The opening line reads "After a season of bitter negotiations that pitted the school district against Town Hall..." You know how that ended. The School Committee accepted a budget increase that required cutting 19 positions, Whitman's assessment increased by 8.5% and the school district's budget increased by 3.66%. None of us wants a repeat of that scene. I hope that you