

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND  
AND  
PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

COMMISSIONER OF  
EDUCATION

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APPEALS OF WEST WARWICK  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE (FINANCES)  
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DECISION

DATE: February 16, 1993

The purpose of this hearing is to establish the minimum funding requirements of the West Warwick School System for the 1993-1994 school year. The Commissioner appointed a special visitor, Dr. Frank Pontarelli, to examine the financial situation of the school system. Dr. Pontarelli, who is the Director of the Financial Division of the Department of Education, has substantial academic expertise and practical experience in the field of school finance. He was given authority to request and require the production of all documents and materials needed to complete his examination. His mandate was to prepare a report on the minimum financial requirements of the West Warwick school system and to testify at the hearing on these requests. The parties to this dispute not only had the right to question Dr. Pontarelli but also had the right to present any other witnesses on documents which they might feel to be appropriate.

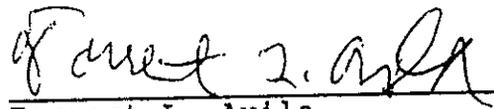
The report of the special visitor was presented at the hearing along with substantial supporting documentation. The conclusion of the special visitor was that West Warwick needed an additional appropriation of \$1,435,081 to be added to the original appropriation of \$21,927,709 in order to fund the applicable collective bargaining agreement and to fund other obligations incurred in the providing of services required by law. *Exeter-West Greenwich R.S.D. v. Teachers' Ass'n*, 489 A.2d 1010 (R.I. 1985). No evidence or testimony contradicts the report of the special visitor. Indeed the superintendent of schools testified that for the last several years the West Warwick school committee has been laboring under severe fiscal constraints and that there is now

nothing left to cut. Nothing contradicts the testimony of the superintendent.

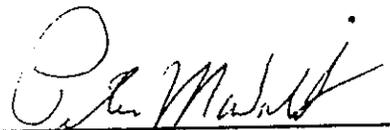
We have examined the report of the special visitor and its supporting documentation. We adopt the report of the special visitor as our findings of fact and annex this report to this decision.

CONCLUSION

West Warwick is required to provide the West Warwick school committee with the total sum of \$23,362,790 in order to allow the committee to fund the applicable collective bargaining agreement and to provide the services required by law.

  
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Forrest L. Avila  
Hearing Officer

APPROVED:

  
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Peter McWalters  
Commissioner

DATE: February 16, 1993

DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

INTER-OFFICE MEMO

TO: Peter McWalters

FROM: Frank Pontarelli

RE: West Warwick

Basic Facts:

Initial Budget Submitted 1/92 for 92-93	\$24,089,000.
Latest "adopted budget" agreed to by school committee and town council	23,362,790.
Total Revisions	-726,210.

Expenditures:

1990-91	\$21,080,702 + 3939 =	\$ 5,352.
1991-92	\$21,096,830	
Deferral	<u>800,000</u>	
Total	\$21,896,830 ÷ 4016 =	5,452.
1992-93	\$23,362,790 + 4085 =	5,719.
State Per Pupil 1992		5,901.
(\$805,934,876 + 136,576)		

Observations:

1. If \$1,435,081 warrant is not added to the \$21,927,709 approved at the town meeting, the per pupil drops to \$5,368.
2. The increase from 1992 to 1993 is primarily due to a contract settlement of 3.15% and steps.
3. The only new personnel from local funds are 9 in the noncertified part-time due to contract requirements and 4.48 in the certified due to increased enrollment.
4. The town council is not disputing the amount of \$23,362,790.
5. West Warwick has 2.9% of the school population. If total state expenditures remained at the 1992 level of \$805,934,876, the West Warwick school budget should have been in the vicinity of \$23,372,111. for 1992.

Conclusion

Based on the above facts and observations, it is my recommendation that you order the town to increase the 1992-93 budget to \$23,362,790. an increase of 6.6% over the real 1991-92 budget. This would require a local appropriation of \$13,242,196. which is \$1,841,638. higher than the 91-92 appropriation of \$11,400,558. However, had the appropriation in 91-92 included the \$800,000. of deferrals, the true increase would have been 8%. Considering the fact that from 91-92 there was no true increase to the school budget, and from 91-93 there was an average annual increase of 4% with an enrollment increase of 3.7% from 91-93 and teacher salary increase of 7.5% plus steps in the same period, the amount requested of \$23,362,790 does not appear unreasonable.

FP:lh