

White Plains Council of Neighborhood Associations  
February Meeting

Wednesday, 4/8/2025

Location: Zoom Meeting

Time: 7pm

Attendees: Michael Sanchez, Michael Dalton, Tom Osbeck, Veretta Addison, Ellen Berger, Barry Cramer, Anthony Fiorenza, Bob Friscia, Dan Letizia, Robert Kahn, Mark Martino, Michael Matarese, Charlene Raynor, Valerie Simmons, Howard Waldman, Shawn Woodford, Debra Zipf

Guest Speakers: Anthony Ricca, Ed.D. – Superintendent of White Plains Public Schools

Ann Vaccaro-Teich, Ed.D. – Assistant Superintendent for Business & Operations

1. The Meeting was called to order by President Sanchez. President Sanchez welcomed the guest speakers and introduced Dr. Anthony Ricca – Superintendent of White Plains Public Schools
2. Dr. Ricca began his remarks by saying that the White Plains School Board voted the prior evening to approve and adopt the proposed school budget for the 2025/26 school year.
3. The new budget does include changes...and remains below the budgetary “cap”. The School’s leadership uses “conservative” assumptions and projections when assembling the budget.
4. A key element allowing us to achieve a budget below the tax “cap” is Planning. The School’s leadership is committed to fiscal responsibility, and we recognize that the budget needs to be sustainable.
5. We have taken many steps to reduce the tax dollars needed to run the School System. We have worked to reduce the School System’s total debt service; we have paid off leases and many 1-time expenses. Our goal is to achieve savings and keep the high standards to run the School System.
6. Planning.... we ask ourselves “what’s working? What needs change? What needs to be abandoned? We strive to continuously improve what we do.
7. The adopted budget is \$203 million dollars. The allowable “cap” increase from the prior year is 1.67%. Our budget came in under the allowable “cap” with an increase of 1.06%.
8. The budget’s total appropriation is \$278 million. \$206 million is raised from property taxes (74% of the total). The NY State and Federal governments are planning to contribute \$49 million to the budget. There are questions about whether the Federal contribution of \$4.5 million will be sent from Washington. The State funding of roughly \$45 million appears to be secure.
9. The School’s budgeting philosophy is “use the resources that are already available...before asking for more.” 75% percent of the System expenditures is directly related to staffing...50% to instruction & 25% to employee benefits.
10. An important consideration going forward is the issue of how new taxable properties (like many of the new downtown residential apartment towers) take advantage of “Paid In Lieu of Tax” (PILOT’s) incentives that the County and White Plains use to attract residential building developers. Developers can lower their on-going property taxes on these projects by making direct “up front” payments (PILOT’s) to the City and County in order to not pay property taxes for some fixed period of time after the building is occupied. It is not entirely clear that a part of these PILOT payments will flow to the City’s School System.

11. M. Dalton asked Dr. Ricca if the PILOT's and the resulting loss of school tax revenue could become a problem for the School District. Dr. Ricca replied, "it could potentially become a problem because Developers/Owners of these buildings would not be making any school tax payments to the City...and yet there may be children coming into the school system from these buildings. At this time...it is unclear if the monies generated by the 1-time PILOT payments would cover the loss of revenue generated by school taxes on these buildings each year.
12. The Population Growth for the School System is "stable". Forecast data shows that enrollment in the School System is "flat" for the next decade with 6800 students attending White Plains public schools.
13. Regarding Staffing.... teacher salaries in White Plains are in alignment with the Collective Bargaining Agreement.
14. Regarding the Trump administration's actions to pull back funding for DEI programs in school's....at this time...the School System has not had any funds "pulled back".
15. Regarding the Trump administration's desire to close the Department of Education....at this time...there has been no impact to the School System.
16. The White Plains High School has an extensive list of athletics programs which are very popular. The High School has 129 "Scholar Athletes".
17. The School System has "unified" the start time for all schools. This has resulted in \$2 million cost savings.
18. The White Plains Bus Company has ordered and will be rolling out new school buses in the coming year.
19. The School System's Food Service program provides 28% of the students with breakfast and 59% of the students with lunch.
20. M. Dalton asked Dr. Ricca if the School System experienced the same dramatic rise in utility costs that most homeowners have experienced in the past several years. Dr. Ricca replied that the School System has seen some increased utility costs.... but the School System has made large investments in new highly efficient HVAC systems in school buildings...and these new HVAC systems have helped keep utility costs under control.
21. B. Friscia asked Dr. Ricca how much of the NY State Lottery money flows back to White Plains Schools? Dr. Ricca explained that the Lottery funds NY State Aid to schools. White Plains is budgeted to receive \$4 million state aid from the Lottery.
22. B. Friscia asked Dr. Ricca why there always seems to be building & construction projects going on at the High School and other school buildings...is all this construction work justified? Dr. Ricca replied that construction work is performed "off hours" when a school is not in session.... which means construction work is performed even on weekends. Dr. Ricca went on to say that keeping our building in good repair and maintained properly saves the School District in the long run.
23. The White Plains School Budget is scheduled for a public vote on May 20<sup>th</sup>. Please get the vote out!
24. If the School Budget is not approved by public vote on May 20<sup>th</sup>.... the School System will be forced to adopt a "contingency budget" .... which is \$3.3 million less than the proposed budget. A reduction of \$3.3 million will result in school programming cuts.

25. Dr. Ricca concluded his presentation and there were no further questions.... President Sanchez thanked Dr. Ricca & Dr. Vaccaro-Teich for attending the CNA meeting and taking questions from its members.
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#### CNA Workshop – Action Review

26. M. Sanchez suggested that we conduct next year's CNA Workshop in June...rather than April. In early April...there was still quite a bit of winter Flu & Colds still around. Pres. Sanchez and Z. Salino were both ill on April 8<sup>th</sup>...and there were others who could not attend because of illness.
27. There were quite a few A/V equipment issues during the April Workshop. Next year.... we must verify that the A/V equipment is fully operational prior to the start of the Workshop.
28. E. Berger explained that a part of South Lexington is in the Highlands neighborhood. She suggested that someone from the Highlands neighborhood Association should contact residents living in the part of South Lexington that is part of the Highlands neighborhood.
29. E. Berger suggested that CNA members should reach out and conduct more small group discussions with residents of potential new neighborhood associations. Ellen suggested that the CNA create a spreadsheet doc with the contact information for all Association presidents. This spreadsheet doc could then be sent out to prospective new Associations residents...allowing those residents to touch base with any of the Neighborhood presidents.
30. D. Letizia reported that the seating arrangement was an issue. Perhaps rearranging the table configuration would result in a better seating arrangement.
31. Valerie Simmons (a visitor from the Lake Street neighborhood) is hoping to form a new Association in the Lake Street area...including residents in 4 apartment buildings. She asked if she could reach out to CNA members to speak with them. She explained that she plans to hold a "picnic" get together for Lake Street residents who would be interested in forming a Lake Street Association...and asked if any of the CNA members would be interested in attending the "picnic". Several of the CNA members replied that she could call and speak with them at any time and that they would be happy to attend the Lake Street "picnic" she is organizing.
32. President Sanchez then thanked the attendees and closed the meeting.