

Wilton-Lyndeborough Cooperative School District  
Special District Meeting Minutes  
November 9, 2019

**School Board Members:** Mr. Mathew Ballou (Chair), Mr. Alexander LoVerme (Vice Chair) Mr. Jonathan Vanderhoof, Ms. Carol LeBlanc, Mr. Mark Legere, Ms. Miriam Lemire, Ms. Tiffany Cloutier-Cabral, Mr. John Clark

**Budget Committee Members:** Ms. Leslie Browne (Chair) Mr. Bill Ryan (Vice Chair) Ms. Lisa C.M. Post, Ms. Christine Tiedemann, Mr. Dennis Golding, Ms. Jennifer Bernet, Mr. Kevin Boette, Mr. Jeffrey Jones, Mr. Adam Lavallee

**Absent:** Ms. Lisa Post Budget Committee

**Other:** Moderator Mr. Walter Holland, School District Clerk Ms. Mary-Jane Ryan.

**Moderator Holland called the meeting to order at 9:03 AM**

Moderator Holland welcomed attendees, stating only one article will be discussed today. No other issues or personnel issues; please bring those to a regular school board or budget committee meeting. Moderator asked attendees to please respect each other's views and opinions' and explained the amendment process, should anyone request an amendment.

Moderator Holland informed attendees a request for ballot vote was received with nine signatures:

Wilton Residents:

Deb Morvedt  
Ken Smith  
Mary Golding  
Dorothy Bullard  
Gretchen R. Hutchison  
Kelly Sue Boissonnault

Lyndeborough Residents:

Karen Grybko  
Mark Chamberlin  
Richard Herfurth

Moderator asked for present with voice without vote for Superintendent of Schools Bryan Lane, School District Business Administrator Lizabeth Baker, Gordon Graham Attorney Soule, Leslie, Kidder, Sayward & Loughman, PLLC

Gail Proctor of Wilton requested the names be read requesting ballot vote, Moderator read the list and instructed attendees to please line up and use the microphone and state name and town.

Moderator Holland read Article 1

**Article 1: Revise District Operating Budget:**

*Shall the Wilton-Lyndeborough Cooperative School District vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$184,811 to be added to the amount of \$12,739,674 previously voted at the March 2019 annual school district meeting, such sum to come from increases in the district's adequate education fund received from the State of New Hampshire in the current fiscal year with no money raised from taxation.*

*Majority vote required*

*Estimated tax impact in Wilton is 32 cents*

*Estimated tax impact in Lyndeborough is 36 cents*

*This warrant has been recommended by the school board*

*The budget committee has voted not to take a position on this warrant*

Moderator Holland recognized School Board Chair Mr. Mathew Ballou to speak on this Article

Mr. Ballou spoke on Article 1 using a slide show presentation:

In late September, the legislature approved a new budget that increase aid to schools in two areas. The first is in the adequacy grant. Our school district will be receiving \$184,811. The intention of this additional funding was to lower tax rates. What this meeting is about is to decide whether you as citizens of the town will approve the school district to expend these funds and not receive a tax reduction. The second source of funding is for special education. The school board will hold a public hearing in the coming weeks and then as a board vote to accept the additional funding of approximately \$93,000.

If you the voters agree to let the school district expend these funds the tax impact in Wilton will be that you would not receive a decrease in taxes of \$76.17 for the year.

If the vote is to approve the warrant, the citizens of the school district will not be paying more taxes than was approved by the vote in March.

When the current business administrator began in July, she found some account lines that were in the negative which did not make sense. She did an analysis of the budget and found that with the information she had in the financial system, the district would be at a deficit of \$305,633 in the areas of salaries and benefits.

The three main areas of the budget that created the deficit included:

The following expenditures not being include in the budget:

\$3,000 of the total cost for new teacher orientation

\$7,500 for summer custodial work

\$2,000 for kindergarten screening

Special education costs totaling over \$140, 000. These expenditures were all realized after the budget was voted on in March. The ESY, extended school year, were under budgeted at \$12,000. For the most part, the increased costs were due to the changing needs of our students.

Between the changing needs of our staff and the hiring of new staff there are increased costs to health and dental plans. There were also increased costs in other benefit costs as listed.

Concerns have been raised by the budget committee, school board members and the community as to how the district will ensure that funds are being disbursed appropriately. The Business administrator will create a specific line in the revenue portion of the budget. If the \$184,811 is approved for use in this year's budget, the money will be accounted for in that line and will be part of a monthly report to the school board and budget committee.

No funds from the revenue line of the \$184,811 will be expended without a vote from the school board. If no funds are expended, the entire sum will go back to the tax payers next fall.

In order to make sure that the budget can be maintained throughout the school year, the business administrator asked Principals and Directors to see what budget lines could be reduced and still meet the needs of students.

The next three slides detail what areas of the budgeted could be reduce or unfunded in order to meet the deficit needs.

- No new technology purchases other than needed to support the curriculum
- Postpone replacement cycles for technology and furniture
- Not funding professional development for administration
- Waiting to purchase new science equipment requested by new staff
- A partial replacement of the books at the FRES library

- No additional security cameras at WLC
- Supply accounts will be monitored, staff requests will be fulfilled
- Not replacing books in classroom libraries
- Waiting to continue the sprinkler installation on athletic fields
- Postponing facilities projects not required for student/staff safety
- Postponing the purchase of enhancements to financial software
- Not funding a high school trip that may have been proposed
- Postponing replacement cycle for athletic uniforms
- Not purchasing new storage units.

Taking these reductions into account, the budget deficit can be reduced from \$305,663 to an approximate deficit of \$45,000

If the warrant article were to pass, this would create a positive potential for a fund balance of approximately \$140,000. This is not a strong financial position but it would protect the district for unanticipated expenditures which the district could incur.

What if the warrant article fails?

- Taxes would be reduced in both Lyndeborough and Wilton.
- The administration would look into the budget to see what areas could be reduced further.
- The Capital reserve funds could be accessed as a last resort.
- The administration would report areas of the budget to reduce for their approval.
- The fund balance would be extremely low creating a difficult cash flow position for the district.
- The district would struggle with issues as we have this year with minimal fund balance and funds in capital reserve funds.

What happens if the warrant article passes?

- Taxes in Lyndeborough and Wilton will not be reduced.
- Tax payers will not pay more than the taxes that were approved in March
- The school board will have oversight and approval of the approved additional revenue.
- To provide transparency and clarity, monthly reports on expenditures will be given to the school board, budget committee and made available to the community.
- No budget transfers will occur for the remainder of this year as well as the 2020-21 school year.
- All funds remaining at the end of the year will go back to the citizens of Lyndeborough and Wilton.

**WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHETHER THE WARRANT ARTICLE PASSES OR NOT**

The administration will be providing information to the school board for an outside firm to look into the cause into this situation, this is a topic for our next school board meeting. From this point forward, to ensure that this is an independent effort, the administration will not be part of the

decision making process on how this investigation is to take place. The board will determine how to proceed and the scope of whatever investigation takes place. As for our say personnel matters regarding matters of reputation and discipline will take place in nonpublic session.

The public has three choices today.

Voters can approve the additional funds that will become part of the operating budget.

Voters can vote not to approve the warrant article.

The public can vote to accept a lower dollar figure but cannot increase the dollar figure.

Moderator Holland opened the floor for discussion

Peter Howe of Wilton asked if the List of actions with no transfer of funds will this action be taken if the warrant article does not pass.

Superintendent Lane replied yes.

Mark Chamberlain of Lyndeborough

Inquired about the 93, 0000. Line item for next public hearing, Mr. Chamberlain's understanding was that figure was 102,260.00. Mr. Lane responded that is correct, an adjustment had to be made per DRA.

Mr. Chamberlain agreed Budget line transfers are not a good idea and agreed with the no line items adjustments

Ruth Smith of Wilton Inquired on Items having been overlooked or not anticipated, why were they not noticed? Last year during budget meeting figures were questioned and the responses were not acceptable. Ms. Smith expressed no confidence in the Administration's ability to provide accurate information to the boards to prepare the budget.

Moderator Holland stated we are here to discuss article 1 and advised to bring any other comments and concerns to the boards.

Mathew Smart of Lyndeborough

Stated that if no budget transfer now is a good idea; why only good for two years? Why not always?

Mr. Ballou stated he would be in favor of that. Mr. Smart asked if that is something we can vote on now as an amendment. Moderator Holland repeated we are her to discuss Article one and suggested bringing this to a board meeting.

Leslie Brown stating, she would support this but suggested we try it for a few years first

Attorney Gordon responded State law is for the school board to transfer and it is accepted and expected. Preparing a budget eighteen months in advance you are bound to have changes and state law clearly states the board has that authority. The board has made a commitment not to do that, you can hold them accountable at the ballot box but you cannot change state law.

Fran Bujak of Lyndeborough

Stated New hires of staff are not controllable, it is not possible to approve a budget in March and hire staff in June not knowing what their medical selections, dental selections and pay salaries will be. We did have a large number of retirements this year.

Special Education items were identified after the budget was done, this often happens sometimes in our favor.

If we do not approve this article, we will defer 180,000 of spending to next year or the year after. These things will eventually need to be paid. This money was a gift to us and we should put it toward education.

A resident of Wilton asked if the reports will be going to the selectman.

Mr. Lane replied he has met with both boards of selectman and all will be public info. he will be supplying all reports to them. They will be on web site as well.

Bob Howe of Lyndeborough

Asked about the Capitol reserve account for Special Education, has that been spent?

Mr. Lane answered we have approximately 45,000 has not used; that is a possibility if we have a student move in we will need it with the vote of the school board to use it.

Nathanial Smart of Lyndeborough

Expressed there are two options to not accept or accept.

Why don't we reduce some things and reduce the grant as well?

Mr. Lane responded the funds from the state of NH and there will be no tax increase. the dollar figure can be modified, it can be reduced but not increased.

Robin Maloney of Wilton

Stated the Article is not very clear, expressed disagreement with the last line on page 6 of the presentation "more money does not equal a better education." Ms. Maloney expressed concern of this money going to the school board and how will the public be involved.

Mr. Lane replied the money is going to the schools not the board.

A Lyndeborough Resident asked how including those items on the list to be eliminated would affect taxes; referencing the security cameras.

Mr. Lane explained these were updates of the cameras for outside. There are cameras in the buildings, if there is an expenditure that needs to be done it will be done but with no budget transfers, it will be clear to the public. Mr. Lane offered to speak with anyone to go through the budget. There is availability. Field trip money was there in case it was needed there was no specific trip. We will minimize the effect, if funds become available we will do it.

The resident asked, what supplies do we need? Stating a teacher told students there was a school budget crisis and she could not supply pencils and paper.

Mr. Lane replied we do not know anything about that. All supply requests have been fulfilled .The only restriction that has been put on is the Art teacher here at the high school wanted to do a full year budget and I asked that she do a six month budget to see where we are. No teacher request has gone unfulfilled.

Adam Lavallee of Lyndeborough

If these funds don't go to school, there will be no buffer. This is affecting the classrooms, it is not that requests are being denied it is that the teachers are hesitant to request knowing the restrains being put on the budget. This is why we need to vote for this. If you have no confidence for the budget, how will we get through the year with no buffer?

Ruth Smith of Wilton

Asked if the tax impact reflects the school expenses and does not include the towns requirements. Moderator Holland replied yes, this is just school district budget we could get tax increases for other expenses and encouraged attendees to come back for the March meeting and participate for your town taxes as well.

Don Anderson of Lyndeborough

Stated the warrant article was not approved by three members of the budget committee so there must have been some issues there. A lot of people here are giving up work time to be here. For us to be told it costs \$30,000 a year \$170.00 a day to educate a child. Our Superintendent is salaried at \$500.00 a day. The administration has overspent and is coming to us to ask for more money. If they can't stay within the budget what makes us think they can control it now. People struggle to pay their bills and have been always faithful in supporting the school; a school that has never been in the top ten , a school that people are leaving, pulling their students out of because they are not being adequately educated and we keep paying.

Alex Loverme stated the \$30,000 figure per student is incorrect the actual amount is \$20,275.00

Deb Worsley of Wilton

Stated today we are being asked to trust the board to know what we need. I want to ask that you trust us to want to hold our budget to what we voted on. Local taxpayers should be involved.

Ms. Worsley moved the question and was 2<sup>nd</sup>

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Moderator Holland clarified what everyone is voting for gave instructions on paper ballots.

Moderator read Article 1

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**Results of ballot vote:**

**87 YES /74 NO**

**Article 1 passed by majority vote**

**A Motion to adjourn at 10:23 by Mr. Loverme 2<sup>nd</sup> Mr. Ballou**

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary-Jane Ryan".

Mary-Jane Ryan  
School District Clerk

