

WILTON-LYNDEBOROUGH COOPERATIVE SCHOOL

Budget Committee Meeting Minutes Monday, February 18, 2019 – 6:30 p.m. WLC MS/HS Media Room (Rescheduled from 02/12/2019 Due to Snow Cancellation)

Committee Membership: Chair Leslie Browne (Facilities Committee Rep.), Vice Chair Christine Tiedemann, Secretary Lisa Post (Strategic Planning Committee), Pam Altner, Jennifer Bernet (Strategic Planning Committee), Kevin Boette, Dennis Golding (School Board Rep.), Edwina Hastings (School Board Rep.), William Ryan (Facilities Committee Rep.), Alex Loverme (SB Budget Committee Representative).

1. Chair Browne called the Budget Committee to Order at 6:35 p.m.

2. Public Comment:

- Tracey Ewing, Wilton: Mrs. Ewing asked the Committee to kind to taxpayers because it has been a brutal year.
- Deb Mortvedt, Wilton: Mrs. Mortvedt thanked the budget Committee and said “great job!” She indicated that the District Meeting presentation should include a slide regarding the funding promises made last year for Kindergarten versus the actual revenues received. She stated that if this information is not included, she will request the information from the floor.
- Charlie Post, Lyndeborough: Mr. Post stated the Committee did a great job taking back the power that Budget Committee really has, supporting this part of this whole process and that as a Committee you stood your ground which was very important. What is also important to realize, as Alex previously said at the last meeting, is the parents are mad at the Administration and that is what this is all about. Even if they raise the budget a half-million dollars, that is not going to change whether a teacher stays or leaves; it is going to be based on what and where the need is it. It is not really a money thing and it’s unfortunate that the Committee bore the brunt of that and probably will again. Mr. Post thanked the Committee for the good work they did this year. Chair Browne responded throwing money at a problem rarely fixes it and Alex LoVerme agreed and stated now it makes it an expensive problem.

3. Review and Approval

a. 01/29/2019 BC Meeting Minutes

A Motion was made by Christine Tiedemann to accept the minutes as amended; Seconded by Edwina Hastings.

Voting: All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

b. 02/07/2019 Public Hearing Minutes

A Motion was made by Edwina Hastings to accept the minutes as amended; Seconded by Christine Tiedemann.

Voting: All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

4. Budget Deadlines

a. Friday, February 22, 2019 is the last day for Warrant Articles and MS-27 to be posted.

Chair Browne questioned the Committee who had signed and indicated that Kristina Fowler would make arrangements if they were not able to sign between 8:00-4:00 p.m. tomorrow.

b. Saturday, March 2, 2019 is the last day for Annual Reports to be distributed.

5. Discussion and Deliberations: Operating Budget/Warrant Articles

Chair Browne stated that there were concerns voiced by the public that were not necessarily addressed to us but did recognize their concern that when we recommend a change to the budget in the past there has been a change to the line item in some way and was not done this year yet. Chair Browne asked the Committee for their thoughts on the public’s concerns. Mrs. Post stated that the Budget Committee had done its due diligence by asking the Superintendent and the Board to come up with potential areas of reductions for our number and they did not do it until after the Public Hearing. If we had this document when we were in our conversations and deliberations I think the Public Hearing would have been quite a different story. The fact that it was

WILTON-LYNDEBOROUGH COOPERATIVE SCHOOL

provided after hearing is troubling to me because the superintendent is not willing to work with the Budget Committee which creates hard feeling between the School Board and Budget Committee when they don't negotiate on the numbers together. You can't have the kind of negotiations we had last year where the Board asked us to present our number line-by-line and then hammering us for doing exactly what they asked for. Going forward areas of potential savings should be provided and discussed ahead of time requesting separation of want vs needs. This would alleviate some of the public's anxiety at the Hearing this year. The learning curve is: last year we gave them the line-by-line breakdown and it didn't work out well; and this year we did not give them the line-by-line accounting and it did not go well either. Additionally, it was one Board member who spoke out about the line items over and over again that added to the already sense of unease in the public from the start. There will always be someone who disagrees and wants it different, but I do think that if we pushed to have Superintendent Lane attend our meetings, develop a relationship and have discussions, which was done with previous Superintendents, things like this would not be happening. I hope the Committee will work to develop this relationship in the next budget season.

Mr. Bernet was concerned with the 5-4 vote of the School Board that it was a little close for comfort and looked for Mr. LoVerme for confirmation of the vote. He stated that Chairman Dailey's vote was the tie breaker. Mrs. Post added that the Budget Committee's vote was 5-4 as well and Chair Browne indicated that she was the deciding vote. Jennifer Bernet noted the concern of two School Board members from the reading the meeting minutes. Mrs. Tiedemann questioned Mr. LoVerme regarding the 5-4 vote asking if those who disagreed wanted to spend more or less. Mrs. LeBlanc wanted more added Mr. LoVerme and they did not want to see any cuts or cuts in teachers. Mrs. Tiedemann stated that she did not want to see teachers cut. Mrs. Post stated that if you look at the document provided by Mr. Lane, it states the retirements and those positions that will not need to be filled. If we had this document in advance it could have prevented some of the anxiety felt by the Board members and public over cutting teachers. Mrs. Post expressed that the scales were tipped, because the Committee and the Chair requested this information from the Superintendent and he stated there were no areas of potential cost reductions. Mr. LoVerme stated when working on budget in the past, he reached for the stars and would not make cuts until he knew the number and guessed that he already knew his numbers and wasn't ready to present them until the final numbers came out. Mr. Boette suggested that if you don't have to, why bother since this is negotiations and the car dealer doesn't start out with his lowest number. Mrs. Post responded that the Committee started the deliberations this year by saying that we were looking for a somewhat flat budget. There was a huge discussion over the meaning of a flat budget so knowing that, he knew what we were looking for. As a matter of fact the Superintendent early on said "if I keep it like that will the Committee will be okay with it." As we went through the process the budget kept on increasing and no longer was a flat budget. Mr. Boette stated that is what they wanted. They always do that and there is always money left over and some of their predictions were off on energy prices. The energy costs are staying steady so a lot of the projected increases are not happening. He stated you have a few teachers retiring this year at the top of their pay scale and they are not going to be replacing them at the top of the pay scale which is an automatic reduction that doesn't show up. Mrs. Post stated that could have quelled the upset at the public hearing if that was said. The upset that we heard from the public was way beyond our budget. It was all the snafus that recently happened at the school and they said "we are taking it out on you because we want to." If we have this information to share with them to say here is where we are looking, here is where we can cut and here are some options, but we didn't have this information and it increased their angst. Mrs. Hasting stated that we knew these things, which is why I wanted to start with a lower number and work up. Mr. Boette felt there was a lot of compromise on this budget from both sides and stated that we are not taking anything away at all and that you will find there will be money left over next year. I don't think we are going to be wanting of anything. It might be closer to your final number and might not have as much money going back to the towns but I think they will do fine. Chair Browne stated that she does not think they will see the increase in the energy items they budgeted for and will save money with retirements and that you are going to hold off on some

WILTON-LYNDEBOROUGH COOPERATIVE SCHOOL

purchases until the end of the budget cycle instead of the beginning. She thought the current budget number was fine and wanted to be clear that we actually are not changing the number before District Meeting. We do not have time because if we changed the number we would have to hold another public hearing. She indicated that the MS-27 has the number that will be on the warrant article, and we are not going to change that tonight. Chair Browne wanted to have this meeting to discuss the public's input to be ready for District Meeting whether or not there is a change. Mrs. Post stated that is why she put together the revenue packet that was handed to the Committee and asked the Committee to submit their questions. She and Chair Browne planned to attend the meeting but did not have a date yet. This information was intended to have on hand at the District Meeting if asked. It also provides a deeper understanding of how the numbers flowed and worked to more accurately project for the future. Mr. LoVerme commented that if you have ten teachers retire, they are not going to hire ten teachers with 3 years of experience. If you look at the Superintendent's history, he tries to hire the most qualified person for the position. For the replacement of the Art Teacher, he came in \$15K higher than the teacher he replaced. He did not know how many people applied, but apparently that person was the best qualified for the position. Mrs. Hastings thought that School Board members were able to know who applied and see their resumes. Mr. LoVerme stated that it is three people who make the decision the Superintendent, the Principal and one other person, but he hires the best qualified for the position that has applied and there might not be as much savings as you think. Chair Browne stated that it is the building Principals who are in charge of who works in their schools. They are the ones who make the recommendations.

Chair Browne read Mr. Ryan's email to the Committee regarding the Public Meeting since he was unable to attend but he is in agreement with our discussion tonight.

"I have reviewed the minutes and thought hard about changing the final number and even if I were present I would stay with the figure we presented at the Budget Hearing."

"We worked long hard hours for months asking for information and pouring over numbers. As far as being transparent we offer Public Comment every meeting and feel if we adjust the number now we are telling the people who attended that we had in fact NOT done our due diligence to determine an honest fair operating budget. Another factor in my thought is the high flying spending that went on following the March 10th District meeting and the first of June. If the board is honestly doing their job they would review purchase orders as they had done for years and decided to discontinue this practice for whatever reason."

Mr. Boette asked if we should have a vote on this. Chair Browne responded that we don't need to vote because we are not changing anything. Mrs. Post stated that a change won't be presented by us but potentially by someone from the floor. The Chair indicated if somebody wanted to increase the budget in anyway, it will be done from the floor and it is ultimately up to the taxpayers. She said we are putting forth a budget that the school can operate on efficiently, as well as, with some respect to the taxpayers as Wilton is going to face a very big increase this year. She stated that she will bring up the fact there will be relief in next years' budget as the bond falls off. Mr. Boette suggested that ideally it does not all drop off because needed repairs have been put off. Chair Browne stated the bond is \$340K and \$179K is expected to be put in the Capital Reserve Fund. Mr. LoVerme stated that because it is dropping off, it is not the School's money moving forward and stated that there are people who do not realize this. The taxpayers will get some relief because we are hoping to reduce our operating budget. Mrs. Bernet echoed that it would have been nice to have the information early. Mrs. Post agreed and said even it if wasn't as extensive, it would have been a good to look at and guide us and develop that working relationship we had with the previous Superintendent. Mr. Boette added that the superintendent presented the information and that was it. There was no two-way discussion. Mr. Boette suggested he may not have had a Municipal Advisory Budget Committee before and stated there is a difference between an advisory and us. We are in charge of recommending and presenting the budget. Mr. LoVerme stated we (the School Board) knew up front that you (the

WILTON-LYNDEBOROUGH COOPERATIVE SCHOOL

Committee) wanted a flat budget. Mrs. Hastings commented that there was an hour-and-a-half long discussion on the meaning of a flat budget, but ultimately, we are not in charge of the budget. Mr. Boette agreed that we are responsible for recommending the budget but not spending it. They are not going to lack for anything. He stated that the Capital Reserve Fund is a shock absorber if we have a SPED student unexpectedly move into the district. We are not cutting spending. Mrs. Post stated she spoke with a taxpayer today who was concerned with the budget and went on the DOE website and from 2008 to now at WLC there is a 32% drop in enrollment and that the budget is going up so we have to take that into account and believes our number reflected that and were generous with the budget. Mrs. Hastings agreed but expects to receive some push back at the District Meeting. Hearing no other discussion on the operating budget, Chair Browne moved to a discussion on the warrant articles. Mr. Boette asked if the Warrant Article on the re-appropriation is going through and Chair Browne replied the School Board agreed to take it off leaving only two Warrant Articles with a tax impact: 04 Operating Budget, 05 Capital Reserve Fund (Warrant Article 06 Transact Other Business has no tax impact). Ms. Hasting asked if she could comment regarding the tax increase in Wilton at the District Meeting because people should be aware of the town's increase in budget. Chair Browne replied that Budget Committee members can make any comments they want and she can certainly speak. Mrs. Post added that Committee members can go to the floor as taxpayers and speak up if they are not speaking for the Committee. Mr. Boette added that if they are doing a good job at presenting the budget they should be addressing the town's increase. Chair Browne stated the important point to make to the public is that \$175 doesn't sound like a lot of money this year but keep in mind that every year it just keeps going up and our school portion of the budget is a lot of money that adds up quickly. Mr. Boette stated his taxes have tripled since he moved to town. Mr. LoVerme added that Mr. Dailey indicated that if everything passes in Wilton, taxes will go up almost 8% not including the school taxes. Chair Browne stated Wilton's operating budget is 4.4% and if all warrant articles pass in the town it will be approximately a 7.7%. Mrs. Post added that if you add in the districts operating budget increase, Wilton's taxes will rise to 8.8% and then you have to add in the additional increases from State Ed and County Taxes and Mrs. Hastings added that with the FMLA, that alone will go up .5%

Mrs. Post referenced the Kindergarten revenue per student is paid as a half day at \$1,818 even though they are full-day students and the additional Keno revenue of \$1,100 is what they gave to schools as an incentive to adopt full-day Kindergarten hoping that the Keno funds would provide additional increases in funding. They thought that more funds would be paid out from Keno revenue but it did not pan out as many towns adopted Keno. We still got our \$55,000K as they promised Mrs. Post, but because it was a new program, the State used the attendance number from the first day of the school as an ADM of 50 students which is different from the 53 reported to us by Superintendent Lane which may lead to \$6,000 decline in revenue. She stated when looking at the attendance/enrollment numbers we have to consider the importance of the State reporting numbers (hand out provided: Municipal Summary of Estimated Kindergarten Aid FY19) and stated that if the information we receive from the District does not match the State's numbers, our revenue numbers won't be accurate. Mr. Boette suggested that it should be the SAU who provides us these numbers that the revenue will be paid on and there can be an asterisk or footnote indicating they have more students, however, they will not be included in the ADM revenue calculation. Mr. Boette reiterated that we have to pound on Concord and Washington because Washington does not fund Special Education and preschool and these are the things they force us to do and don't pay for anything. He stated they committed to 40% and never hit that number, it's like 17%. Mrs. Post stated it will be interesting to see in a few years if the Kindergarteners academic achievement improves as they anticipated a with full-day Kindergarten program. Mr. Boette noted that at District Meeting last year there was zero evidence presented that showed a benefit of full-day Kindergarten over half-day and stated that pre-K is coming and we will have to fund that. Mrs. Post stated that the enticement would eliminate day-care costs for parents for 3-6 year olds and would lead to the institutionalization of our children and felt it was a sad. Going to a private day care is quite different than going to a public school. Mrs. Post reviewed the packet of information distributed regarding revenue and stated that for FY2020 and FY2021 the base Adequacy Aid per pupil will be raised to \$3,708.78 per ADM. An additional aid for Free/Reduce Lunch will increase to \$1,854.58, SPED aid will increase to \$1,995.21 with

WILTON-LYNDEBOROUGH COOPERATIVE SCHOOL

an IEP, and ELL will increase to \$725.63 and \$725.63 will be paid for each 3rd grade student whose achievement score was below the proficient level on state testing providing the student was not counted in the Free/Reduced, SPED or ELL aid. Ms. Post reviewed the Final FY18 Municipal Summary of Adequacy Aid dated March 21, 2018 and stated that there is a 3 and 2-year look back to calculate aid and the last year look-back is used to calculate the last 5% of revenue paid in April/May which is the final number of students that came in and went out of the district and Free & Reduced lunch counts. If we understand how to look at this we can more accurately project some of these revenues and can also provide the ability to question some of those revenues if our District numbers are not matching the States. Ms. Post suggested the Committee become more number centric and dig into these numbers. Mrs. Hastings added the other pieces are test scores and the new programs the Commissioner of Education is starting. There are three new programs and one of them is the NH Career Program where they are using Charter Schools. We can do a lot at the State level to try and make that happen to get our test scores up and proclaim educational health in the district and that does not have to be in public school. Mrs. Post stated that she was hoping that we would have been able to meet with the DOE in Concord regarding revenue prior to the District meeting but think it would be good to do anytime. If you can't attend the meeting, please look over the information and submit any questions to me so we may bring your questions to the meeting. Chair Browne confirmed with Mrs. Post that these documents are the ones suggested by the DOE to be reviewed prior to the meeting. Mrs. Post stated that Mr. Leclerc would like the questions in advance so he can be prepared with answers and that there is no confirmation of a new meeting date after the last meeting was cancelled. All the information provided came from the State DOE website. Hearing no other discussion, Ms. Browne moved to other business.

6. Other Business

- a. Schedule Next Meeting: To be determined at a later date.
- b. District Meeting is scheduled for Saturday, March 9, 2019 at 9:00 a.m. in the WLC Cafeteria and Chair Browne asked the Committee to be present a half-an-hour earlier. Mr. Boette stated that he was contemplating presenting from the floor a change back to Friday Night for the District Meeting since he has not seen an uptick in attendance on Saturdays. Chair Browne said that the SAU tracks District Meeting attendance and Mr. Boette requested the Chair ask the SAU provide that information to us. There was a discussion of attendance and the Chair stated that if there is a hot topic, people show up, otherwise it is the same 40 people attending the meeting. Ms. Post stated that with the low budget number being presented, people will be happy with that number and won't come to the meeting. Mr. Boette thought there would be a motion to raise the budget on the floor and that if people are concerned with the taxes, they should attend the meeting and stay until the end.
- c. District Meeting Snow Date is scheduled for Monday, March 11, 2019 at 7:00 p.m.

7. The Budget Committee adjourned at 7:21 p.m.

A Motion was made by Kevin Boette to adjourn the meeting; Seconded by Christine Tiedemann. Voting: All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,
Lisa C.M. Post, Secretary