

1                   **WILTON-LYNDEBOROUGH COOPERATIVE SCHOOL DISTRICT**

2                   **BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

3                   **Wednesday January 10th, 2024**

4  
5           **I.       Budget Committee meeting called to order at 6:07**

6           Members present: Jeff Jones (Chair), Leslie Browne (Vice-Chair), Bill Ryan, Caitlin  
7           Maki, Charlie Post, Jonathan Vanderhoof, Diane Foss (SB Rep) joined remote at  
8           6:15

9  
10          **II.       Approval of Prior Minutes**

11          Review delayed until the next meeting.

12  
13          **III.       FY25 Full Budget Review**

14  
15          a.   Special Education

16           Jeff Jones said that the big driver of this year's increase was special education  
17           which was over \$300,000.

18           Ned Pratt called in via phone about the special education budget. After a delay  
19           due to travel. He referenced the two separate memos he covered in previous  
20           meetings. Jonathan Vanderhoof asked about the increased grant funding and if  
21           they could offset more of the costs. Ned said that the increased costs were for  
22           out-of-placement and speech therapy services and were fixed.

23  
24  
25          b.   Wages and Benefits

26           Jonathan Vanderhoof asked if there were any significant additions or  
27           subtractions. Kristie LaPlante said that there were not. Charlie Post asked the  
28           business manager what the current agreement numbers were with the teacher's  
29           contract. Kristie LaPlante said the increase for FY'25 would be \$629,281 which  
30           would have a 4.52 percent increase impact to the budget if approved at the  
31           public meeting.

32           Jonathan asked what the total salary budget was currently, and she responded  
33           \$6,778,676. Kristie stated that the proposed salary increases, and the current  
34           working budget would be a total increase of 7.43%. She stated that the remaining  
35           increases in the proposed contract would be:

36           Year two \$279,200

37           Year three \$254,776

38           Jonathan asked what the range of salary increase was in the proposed contract.

39           Kristie said she didn't have that information currently available. \$450,145 of the  
40           proposed teachers' contract warrant article was wages.

Jonathan asked for a roster of the class sizes and staff because the Budget Committee had only received a student population roster from the district office previously and a master schedule was not sent out. Jonathan pointed out that absent a master schedule it was difficult to review that section.

c. Business Office, Curriculum Coordinator

Jonathan Vanderhoof asked about the Professional Services line and if it was underfunded. Kristie LaPlante stated that it was a result of a HSA fee change in the contract. Leslie Brown asked about the YTD information and if that had been updated regarding this budget. Kristie LaPlante said it had not.

d. Transportation

Jonathan Vanderhoof asked if there had been cost increases for transportation given the driver shortage. Kristie LaPlante said there was no increase.

e. Technology

Jeff Jones said that the technology proposed budget included a decrease of \$18,798. Jonathan Vanderhoof asked if line 430 was correct due to the drop. The technology director said that was a result of a reduction in software licensing costs.

f. FRES, LCS, WLC & Facilities

Kristie LaPlante said there was a question about line 189, this was a result of putting that line back in the budget for a play kitchen set where the cost was \$800. Jonathan suggested that cost should be covered from the unexpended funds this year. Jonathan asked about stipends for the coaches. Kristie LaPlante responded it was an increase of \$10,000. Tom Ronning said that the increase was to get more coaches to participate. Jeff Jones said it was in line with other schools in the district.

Mr. Ronning asked to increase two lines in the new budget because they are currently over budget \$1,500 and \$1,000. He asked for an increase in the budget for next year. Leslie Brown said that the athletics department has been underspending and would like to see this increased. Jeff asked about the costs for the Hall of Fame displays and activities. Mr. Ronning said that he proposed the increase to upgrade the awards dinner costs to \$1,140. Jonathan Vanderhoof thought the budget was too high and wanted to cut costs. Mr. Ronning said that costs had been cut.

Jeff Jones had a question about facilities costs in the CIP regarding maintenance. There is currently \$48,000 in the CIP and the place holder was \$27,000. This funding was reduced for the locker costs and will be discussed at the next School Board meeting. Jeff Jones stated that the CIP is still not complete and that last year the Budget Committee received the final version just prior to the meeting and he did not want to see that again.

There was discussion about the new oil boilers which would be funded through ESSER funds. Jeff Jones said the BC did not approve the CIP and that the line stating that needs to be removed. Kristie LaPlante said she would remove that line.

87 g. Food Service

88 Megan Nantel stated that she did not anticipate an increase above 3% in food costs  
89 given overall inflation. She would like to see more fresh foods introduced to the menu  
90 and that would drive increased participation. The schools are currently averaging 100  
91 lunches per school per day and she would like to see that increase by 50%. No  
92 further action had been taken on the unpaid balances. Kristie LaPlante said she  
93 would be working on that issue in the coming weeks.

94  
95 h. Warrant Articles

96 Charlie Post asked if there was an increase over last year in any of the other warrant  
97 articles. Leslie Brown thought the proposed capital improvement fund would increase  
98 by \$100,000. Discussion about the impact was this would yield an overall budget  
99 increase of .71%

100  
101  
102 IV. Operating Budget Discussion

103 Charlie Post expressed concerns about the net increase in the proposed budget of  
104 over \$1million and a 7.5% and didn't think that would be acceptable to the voters. He  
105 had talked to people about the proposed salary increase and people wanted to know  
106 what cuts would be made to offset the increase. He said that the budget needed to  
107 come down by a point or a point and a half. Charlie asked why the Superintendent  
108 was not at this meeting, Jeff Jones said he had a conflict. Charlie said he expected  
109 the Superintendent to be present at this meeting as asked so that we could get his  
110 feedback. He said that the school district leadership is in a better position to propose  
111 the cuts since we never received a master list.

112 Jonathan Vanderhoof expressed concerns about the last time we proposed an  
113 increase of over one million dollars, it was rejected and the budget was cut. He said  
114 he thought people would support the budget, but it was the committee's responsibility  
115 to bring a budget that would be accepted.

116 Caitlin Maki thought that the current budget was acceptable and had concerns about  
117 how we would cut \$139,000. Bill Ryan said that the BC's responsibility is to bring  
118 forth a budget. He said the budget was responsibly presented and the warrant  
119 articles including the teacher's contract was not our responsibility. He went on to say  
120 that the 2.9% increase was responsible.

121 Leslie Brown said that the public would support the schools but the last time a  
122 million-dollar increase was brought forward it was cut.

123 Charlie Post talked about a letter from a member of the public expressing concerns  
124 about the increased costs for the school district.

125 Diane Foss said the way to make this work would be to cut positions and wanted to  
126 know what positions to cut. Jonathan responded that 's why we needed the  
127 Superintendent at this meeting and we need a master list.

128 Diane questioned that given the current staff vacancies, why would we cut positions  
129 now?

Charlie said that given the extended vacant positions maybe we didn't need to fill all of them. He thought that the taxpayers would expect to get savings through efficiencies that we can we capture to offset the large increase in the teacher's contract. He thought we could get those reductions through attrition.

There was discussion about cuts at a previous meeting and the impact at this upcoming meeting.

Jeff Jones made a motion: To accept the operating budget as is \$14,351,809 and not request the administration to make further cuts. Bill Ryan seconded the motion.

Discussion: Leslie asked if the administration had further cuts that could be made, Kristi LaPlante said they had not considered further cuts. Jeff Jones pointed out that the administration had reduced the original budget proposal from \$14,512,112 to it's current level.

Jonathan said that the Teacher's Contract might pass. Charlie asked that we wait and hear from Peter Weaver who is the executive of the district on further proposed cuts. Bill Ryan said he could defend a 3% increase to the public. Caitlin said she understood all of the points made but had concerns about the tax increase.

A vote was held, 4 No Votes: Leslie, Charlie, Jonathan, Caitlin and 3 Yes Votes: Jeff, Bill and Diane. The motion failed.

## **V. Public Hearing Prep**

Next meeting to discuss the new budget and hearing preparation is on Monday January 22 at 6:00 pm.

## **VI. Public Comment**

Briane LaValle – Lyndeborough, NH

Mrs. LaValle said: I was not here for the majority of the meeting I just came in for the end of it. I will say that I'm concerned that we back in December had a meeting and discussed finalizing the budget and not making large cuts and I it was specifically stated in the meeting like everyone comfortable with moving forward with the process and now we are talking about making cuts to staffing. That's very concerning to me as a parent in this district. As somebody who is in all three schools on a regular basis I don't know where you are going to cut from without taking away from the students, and quite frankly after hearing the numbers that the towns are presenting, I don't think we're that far off. Every single person that lives in these towns we all feel the inflation we go to the grocery store we feel it. I calculated the numbers back all the way back to 2013 and if you use the inflation calculator, we are below what we would be at if we grew with inflation from 2013 into now so I'm tired of hearing that we are spending too much money, I'm tired of that. I went on the DOE website a couple of days ago, I looked at our numbers and where our cost per student we are below the state average at FRES, we are below the state average in the middle school we are slightly above the state average at the high school and on average we are below the state average. So, I understand that we need to be responsible with the money. I totally agree with that and we should not spend frivolously. But as somebody who is

173 in the schools on a regular basis we are not spending frivolously. And it's very  
174 frustrating to have our business administrator constantly working to get us to a  
175 number and then when we come to these meetings her being told start over and pull  
176 stuff out. It's not that itself is not responsible because its not a responsible use of  
177 time for our employees which does ultimately cost the taxpayer money. We cant just  
178 think of it as dollars and we can't only rely on volunteers because as somebody who  
179 constantly here volunteering it's only so many people that show up to do it so it's  
180 very frustrating to hear that we are talking about cutting staff and I'm very very  
181 surprised to see you guys find a place to cut that doesn't directly impact every single  
182 one of the students here. Thank you.

183  
184 Mary Golding – Wilton, NH

185 Mrs. Golding said: As a taxpayer and voter I do expect an increase in wages for our  
186 teachers and staff. Just as a homeowner I expect an increase in fire and police and  
187 all that. I also expect my property value to go up by having great schools and people  
188 wanting to move here. I also expect an increase in my own wage as I am sure none  
189 of you are actually working for the same amount of money you had two years ago,  
190 last year, year before right. You get raises right? Right, that's what we are doing  
191 here. Also the cost of living increases are applied to those with fixed incomes in the  
192 community. I know that was brought up and I think that everybody gets an increase  
193 right? Mr. Ryan did mention that he got an increase. So anyway I think that the  
194 budget is great the way it is. I think it was very thoughtful and professionally made  
195 created and I appreciate that. I appreciate you all trying to do what's best for the  
196 taxpayer and voter but I also think that's we should do what's best for our kids and  
197 community. Thank You.

198  
199  
200  
201  
202 Tom Ronning - North Walpole, NH

203 Mr. Ronning said: As the principal of the building, I respectfully disagree with your  
204 decision OK. The reason why I respectfully disagree is because I'm going to  
205 commend my administrators right. I came here, they did an awesome job when we  
206 sat down and we presented the budget. We came, we sat down, we made some  
207 difficult decisions, difficult conversations and we made some cuts right. We didn't just  
208 come and say here's the budget, we made some cuts. I think we put forth the best  
209 budget for the district. I truly believe that and now we're looking at saying possibly  
210 other cuts. Personally, I don't know where I would make a cut. I do not know if  
211 Bridget would know where she would make a cut or anyone else right and I think  
212 that's it. I understand the position you are in OK. Being a 38 year educator, being a  
213 schoolboard member you know and having family members on the budget  
214 committee, I understand, right. But as I'm looking forward there's a situation, and I  
215 think Bill said it best. You have all of these different warrants and it comes to the  
216 community and the community looks at the budget and says here's the education  
217 and here's the school and you have that. If you want to approve that, great. If you  
218 want to approve the other ones then you can approve it. In the end that's what it has.  
219 I think to make a cut now to the school budget and say cut that when there's the

220 possibility of getting these others. I think that's a mistake because in the end you can  
221 cut the budget which could hurt the education of our district and the contract doesn't  
222 go. So then that doesn't go and whatever special warrants don't go, all of that then  
223 fails. So I think you, I just think through all of that in one package. I think that's the  
224 wrong way to look at it.

225

226

227 VII. Adjourn

228

229 Motion to adjourn Leslie Brown, seconded by Bill Ryan. Motion carries unanimously.

230 The meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.

231

232 Approved January 22, 2024