

Minutes of meeting – January 22, 2024

Budget committee members in attendance: Attended by Jeffrey Jones, Bill Ryan, Jonathan Vanderhoof, Jenifer Bernet, Leslie Browne, Charlie Post, Michelle Alley, and Diane Foss – School Board representative. Adam Lavalée joined online. (Caitlin Maki was absent.)

Location: WLC Library, Wilton, NH

Meeting to order by Jeff @ 6:00 p.m.

Public Comment:

Brianne Lavalée– Please see attached copy of letter read at meeting.

WLC STUDENT (White) – Expressed that as a student at the school he did not see where any money could be cut from the budget.

Bill Ryan asked for the floor from Jeff Jones. Bill asked Charlie if he had been recording the minutes. Charlie replied that he had been recording. After some debate, Charlie resigned and made a motion to vote for Bill as the Secretary and seconded by Jonathan Vanderhoof.

VOTE:

Bill | No

Jon| Yes

Jennifer| No

Jeff | No

Leslie |No

Michelle | No

Adam | No

Diane | No

Charlie | Yes

Caitlin | Absent

TOTAL VOTE 7 no's |2 aye's. Motion fails.

Michelle Alley asked if someone could make a motion to make her secretary. Leslie made a motion and Jennifer seconded.

VOTE:

Bill | Yes

Jon| Yes

Jennifer| Yes

Jeff | Yes

Leslie | Yes

Michelle | Yes

37 Adam | Yes
38 Diane | Yes
39 Charlie | Yes
40 Caitlin | Absent

41 **TOTAL VOTE 9 aye's | 0 no's. Motion passes.**

42 Michelle Alley – takes over as Secretary. ****all notes below were made by Michelle****

43 **OPEN BUDGET DISCUSSION**

44 Jeffrey Jones gives the floor to Kristie LaPlante. Kristi mentioned that everyone
45 should have been given a memorandum listing reductions totaling \$156,525
46 worth of cuts for the 2024-2025 school year. (See attached Memorandum}

47 Leslie Brown asked regarding the 20 hours per week facilities position reduction
48 (listed in the memorandum)? Kristie answered that a high school student is
49 working this job and it's going very well. She continued that if they can keep this
50 student then this will work. Leslie asked would the IDEA grant be covered. Ned
51 Pratt replied that the short answer is yes. He went on to say that if you refer to a
52 couple meetings ago that he still wasn't sure what the grant would have. He
53 mentioned that since his last review of needs, several new students with
54 extensive needs had moved into the district. Ned mentioned that he is currently
55 figuring out what they can provide and if students will need to go out of the
56 district. It could increase up to 450K if they had to go outside of the district. He
57 said that the law requires the least restrictive environment.

58 Adam Lavallee asked what if we have to tuition all our IEP students out. Jennifer
59 Bernet brought up the special education cut proposal on the memorandum
60 asking Ned transferring of funds back into the IDEA Grant would not be a prudent
61 thing to do given the situation and that the expense might come up later, and it
62 would be better fiscally to keep it as it was? Ned acknowledged that any cut
63 made is a slippery slope.

64 Charlie Post and Ned discussed previous comments made on the three new
65 students and if all IEP students were sent out of district for services. Diane and
66 Ned discussed the school psychologist. Ned stating that the psychologist 56K
67 budget is made of two people. Diane said that our town is responsible for
68 providing adequate education and anything mental health would do. Since we
69 have so many young people after Covid that still struggle. Adam urged that the
70 administration has earned the trust. Jeff Jones clarified the budget committee's
71 position that they are not talking about cutting from the special education budget
72 but that we are talking about moving money back to the grant. Diane said that
73 she is worried the school will not get enough grant money.

74 Jennifer believed that we shouldn't mess with the special education money.

Jonathan said that there have been multiple times mentioned where positions haven't been filled. Peter said that there are less educators available and that salaries are significantly lower than other schools in the area. Jonathan stated that we had the money, and it wasn't the lack of financing or funding. Peter said it was due to applicants. He continued that they can't get enough qualified candidates and that it wasn't a budget number. Peter said it is more about looking at retention and recruitment. He continued saying that risk aversion – Special Ed is very averse to risk.

Adam said that this is not like years ago and that we now have an administration that is working. He said that we could have given back money to have a parking lot but now that the unexpected fund balance isn't as big, people are seeing their total bill go up. He continued to say that the school has been very responsible (with spending), and he doesn't know why we are operating under the assumption that this school isn't being responsible. Adam said that he thought another reason the district hasn't been able to find staff is that people want benefits and reducing to part-time. He said that there are a lot of citizens that are not friendly to public education. He also said that he heard from teachers who wanted to leave, specifically because of budget committee members.

Leslie made a motion to reduce the budget by \$80,425 from the staff retirements, facilities employee, IXL supplemental, and transfer of i-ready proposed cuts leaving \$14,271,384, an increase of 2.3%.

Charlie said he had concerns about an 8% increase in budget, plus with the large teachers increase. He continued to say how this evolved into personal attacks and profanity. He said this is our job to make a budget that passes. Adam said that he sees absolutely no reason to do this, and this admin will not spend it if they don't need it. He went on to say that this will do nothing to anyone's tax bill and that there is no reason to do it.

Michelle asked the administration to explain staff retirements. Kristie said max exposure we didn't have the quantity and we were able to reduce and offset.

Jeff said that this budget has been gone through and good job trying to find some things here. He went on to say that he thinks this is the lowest BC can get it and that it would be a disservice to keep cutting it. Jeff said that he is comfortable with the budget as it is and that the budget was in great shape.

Michelle asked the administration to explain I-Ready line in the memo and how it will affect the student body. Kristie said it was personalized learning and approved by ESSR and that they are comfortable with 18K coming out. Peter said the 18K is reasonable. We are not looking at an 18K increase.

Jonathan said he was shocked that a zero dollar increased budget wasn't provided in October, and Jeff replied that wasn't true. Jonathan said that we have

113 95K transfers, not cuts and that he wasn't going to support this motion and that it
114 doesn't accomplish anything.

115 Diane said regarding the original zero increase budget request, that there was
116 quite a bit of discussion about it. She said that it is very difficult to have a zero-
117 increase budget.

118 Motion to accept the \$80,425 reduction by Leslie, seconded by Jennifer.

119 **VOTE:**

120 Bill | Yes

121 Jon| No

122 Jennifer| Yes

123 Jeff | Yes

124 Adam | No

125 Leslie |Yes

126 Michelle | Yes

127

128 Charlie |Abstain

129 Diane | Yes

130 Caitlin | Absent

131 **Vote Passes 6|2**

132

133 Leslie asked how much was unspent in the next round of ESSR. Kristie
134 answered that she will have the information at the next School Board meeting.
135 Jeff said we will need to get together tax information. Kristie reviewed the
136 estimated increases. Wilton home values impact is \$152. *(The current average*
137 *residential home's assessed value in Lyndeborough is \$307,500. For a property*
138 *in Lyndeborough valued at \$307,500, the estimated tax increase on just the*
139 *Operating Budget would be \$129. The current average residential home's*
140 *assessed value in Wilton is \$364,500. For a property in Wilton valued at*
141 *\$364,500, the estimated tax increase on just the Operating Budget would be*
142 *\$152.)*

143 Jeff said that he is drafting the slides and the story we want to tell and for him it
144 was centered around special education, which has a big increase. Continuing, he
145 said that contractual obligations and retirement obligations were other areas of
146 focus and he ended asking if these were the areas everyone would like to focus
147 on. Jonathan asked if there was an impact on retirement obligations built in
148 because of the proposed collective bargaining agreement. Kristie replied that any
149 age increase is in the warrant article. Jonathan said he wasn't sure if the
150 worksheet for unbudgeted expenses will be included. *(motion from a previous*

151 *budget committee meeting*) Michelle said she thinks we voted on that at a prior
152 meeting. Jeff said it will be a part of the available materials.

153 Charlie said comparing districts that they will have a much higher cost. You
154 should compare it to like schools. Rather than just using state averages. We are
155 close but think that's the number we should use. Jeff responded that we don't
156 have an apples-to-apples comparison or a good comparison between our district
157 and others. Jennifer said it could be a good thing to have comparison with the
158 state average. She said that as a voter it's good to compare, not apples to
159 apples, but as a citizen it's good to see that data. Jonathan said it would be good
160 to put a number up to represent cost per pupil while Adam said that we can't get
161 that from other schools. Jonathan clarified he is asking for our school not others.
162 Adam said that it will make it look horrible to other schools and Leslie said that
163 the goal is to present a picture. Jeff said that he would have a look at them.

164 **Approval of December 12, 2023, minutes:**

165 Jonathan motioned to approve; Michelle seconded.

166 Diane | Yes

167 Michelle | Yes

168 Charlie | Yes

169 Leslie | Yes

170 Jennifer | Yes

171 Jonathan | Yes

172 Bill | Abstain.

173 Adam | Abstain.

174 Jeff | Yes

175 **Voted 7 Yes | 2 abstain**

176 **Motion to approve January 10, 2024 minutes, Jonathan Motion, 2nd was**
177 **unrecorded**

178 Discussion between Charlie, Jon, Diane about what should be said no
179 amendments made.

180 **VOTE:**

181 Diane | Yes

182 Michelle | Abstain

183 Charlie | Yes

184 Leslie | Yes

185 Jeff | Yes

186 Adam | Abstain

187 Bill | Abstain

188 Jeff | Yes

189 Jonathan | Yes

190 **VOTED: 6 Yes | 3 Abstain**

191

192 **Public Comment:**

193 Briane Lavallee – Wilton thanked the committee for working very hard to come to
194 a compromise. She looked at the cost of schools around us. Comparing the cost
195 per student at WLC with Mascenic and Merrimack and others. Most schools that
196 we are comparable play sports. Mascenic was the only one below us.

197 Sarah Chadzynski – Lyndeborough – Thanked everyone for their hard work. We
198 are a model in our community.

199 Don Rankin – Exemplary getting the whole budget together. Felt some things
200 were counterproductive but commend administration for answers. We can't keep
201 kicking the can down the road (school maintenance). Kids are our future.

202 Mary Goulding mentioned she took good notes on January 12 meeting and made
203 note that when taking notes every word should be there. She said that the
204 Budget Committee should remember why they are there and that she is keeping
205 her language clean after asking Kristie to do all the work.

206 Charlie motioned to adjourn Diane seconded. All ayes.

207 Meeting adjourned at 7:43 p.m..

208

209

210 Submitted Michelle Alley with subsequent edits from Jeff Jones