

1 **Wilton/Lyndeborough School Board Minutes of meeting – January 22, 2024**

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

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

6 **Public Comment:**

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

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

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

13 **VOTE:**

14 Bill | No

15 Jon | Yes

16 Jennifer | No

17 Jeff | No

18 Leslie | No

19 Michelle | No

20 Adam | No

21 Diane | No

22 Charlie | Yes

23 Caitlin | Absent

24 **TOTAL VOTE 7|2**

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

27 **VOTE:**

28 Bill | Yes

29 Jon | Yes

30 Jennifer | Yes

31 Jeff | Yes

32 Leslie | Yes

33 Michelle | Yes

34 Adam | Yes

35 Diane | Yes
36 Charlie | Yes
37 Caitlin | Absent

38 **TOTAL VOTE 9|9**

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

40 **OPEN BUDGET DISCUSSION**

41 Jeffrey Jones gives the floor to Kristie LePlante. Kristi mentioned that everyone should
42 have been given a memorandum listing reductions totaling \$156,525 worth of cuts for
43 the 2024-2025 school year. (See attached Memorandum)

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

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

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

68 Leslie said that that the 80K has no impact on students. Jennifer believed that we
69 shouldn't mess with the special education money and agreed with Leslie to cut the items
70 that do not have to do with special ed.

71 Jonathon said that there have been multiple times mentioned where positions haven't
72 been filled. Peter said that there are less educators available and that salaries are
73 significantly lower than other schools in the area. Jonathon stated that we had the
74 money, and it wasn't the lack of financing or funding. Peter said it was due to applicants.
75 He continued that they can't get enough certified people and that it wasn't a budget
76 number.

77 Peter said it is more about looking at retention and recruitment. Peter continued saying
78 that while he isn't appreciative that it takes a four-month process, he is appreciative of
79 the process. He continued saying that risk aversion – Special Ed is very averse to risk. Like
80 the 70K Ned is talking about. He continued saying that there is risk, and we need to deal
81 with it.

82 Adam said that this is not like years ago and that we now have an administration that is
83 working. He said that we could have given back money to have a parking lot but now
84 that the unexpected fund balance isn't as big, people are seeing their total bill go up. He
85 continued to say that the school has been very responsible, and he doesn't know why
86 we are operating under the assumption that this school isn't being responsible. Adam
87 said that he thought another reason the district hasn't been able to find staff is that
88 people want benefits and reducing to part- time. He said that there are a lot of citizens
89 that are not friendly to public education. He also said that he heard from teachers who
90 wanted to leave, specifically because of budget committee members. Peter then said
91 that he had a long hard discussion about maintenance position and that they posted it
92 back on July 1 (2023). He said that the solution was very effective. He believes, moving
93 forward, that this solution works for the school.

94 Leslie made a motion to reduce the budget by \$80425 from the staff retirements,
95 facilities employee, IXL supplemental, and transfer of i-ready proposed cuts leaving
96 \$14,271,384 leaving an increase of 2.3%.

97 Charlie said he had his up before the motion and that in order to make the budget more
98 palpable, that this was the purpose, to cut and make it better for the public. He said he
99 had concerns about an 8% increase in budget, plus with the large teachers increase. He
100 continued to say how this evolved into personal attacks and profanity. He said this is our
101 job to make a budget that passes. Adam said that he sees absolutely no reason to do
102 this, and this admin will not spend it if they don't need it. He went on to say that this will
103 do nothing to anyone's tax bill and that there is no reason to do it. He continued to say
104 that it's disingenuous and then went to the school board to lobby to hire a cop. That will
105 cost the same amount.

106 Michelle asked the administration to explain staff retirements. Kristie said max exposure
107 we didn't have the quantity and we were able to reduce and offset. Jeff said that this
108 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.

Jonothan said he was shocked that there was push back and cuts asked, and Jeff replied that wasn't true. Jonathon said that we have 95K transfers, not cuts and that he wasn't going to support this motion and that it doesn't accomplish anything.

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

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

Charlie said he had his up before the motion and that in order to make the budget more palpable we needed to cut and make it better for the public. He 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. He mentioned that the cuts are equivalent the SRO hire and that it is disingenuous to make these cuts.

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

Jeff said that he is drafting the slides and the story we want to tell. For me, it's special education which has a big increase. Continuing, he said that contractual obligation and retirement were other areas of focus and he ended asking if these were the areas everyone would like to focus on. Jonathon asked if there was a zero impact on retirement and if they gave us an increase in retirement. Kristie replied that any age increase is in the warrant article. Jon said he wasn't sure if the worksheet for unbudgeted expenses will be included. *(motion from a previous budget committee*

145 *meeting*) Michelle said she thinks we voted on that at a prior meeting. Jeff said it will be
146 a part of what we will present.

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

158 Leslie's motion above was seconded by Jennifer.

159 **VOTE:**

160 Bill | Yes

161 Jon | No

162 Jennifer | Yes

163 Jeff | Yes

164 Adam | No

165 Leslie | Yes

166 Michelle | Yes

167 Charlie | Abstain

168 Diane | Yes

169 Caitlin | Absent

170 **Vote Passes 6 | 2, 1 Abstain, 1 Absent**

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

172 Jon motioned to approve; Michelle seconded.

173 Diane | Yes

174 Michelle | Yes

175 Charlie | Yes

176 Leslie | Yes

177 Jennifer | Yes

178 Jon | Yes

179 Bill | Abstain.

180 Adam | Abstain.

181 Jeff | Yes

182 **Voted 7 Yes | 2 abstain | Caitlin Absent**

183 **Motion to approve January 10, 2024 minutes, Jon Motion (2nd?)**

184 Discussion between Charlie, Jon, Diane about what should be said no amendments
185 made.

186 **VOTE:**

187 Diane | Yes

188 Michelle | Abstain

189 Charlie | Yes

190 Leslie | Yes

191 Jeff | Yes

192 Adam | Abstain

193 Bill | Abstain

194 Jeff | Yes

195 Jon | Yes

196 **VOTED: 6 Yes | 3 Abstain | Caitlin Absent**

197

198 **Public Comment:**

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

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

205 Don Rankin – Exemplary getting the whole budget together. Felt some things were
206 counterproductive but commend administration for answers. We can't keep getting can
207 down the road. Kids are our future.

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

212 Charlie motioned to adjourn Diane seconded.

213 7:43 p.m. end.

214