

Public Meeting for SAU63 School Budget Committee February 8, 2024

Members present: Jeff Jones (Chair), Leslie Browne (Vice Chair), Jonathan Vanderhoof, Charlie

Post, Caitlyn Maki, Bill Ryan, Adam Lavalley, Jennifer Bernet, Michelle Alley

Meeting begins 7:07pm

Jeff Jones calls to order.

Jeff thanked everyone for coming out and asked that all questions be asked at the end. This was a part of the ground rules he set for the public meeting. He said he didn't want to overwhelm the public but did want to provide enough information for everyone to understand everything required for the operating budget for the 24/25 school year.

{Slide show is attached for reference}

Jeff began reading through each slide listing bullets and points. He mentioned that in October the budget committee took a closer look at the budget. He pointed out that the budget was up around 4% and working through the budget it is now at an increase of 2.35%.

Jeff read through article 4 on the slide entitled *Article 4: District Operating Budget*. He reminded the public that both the school board and the budget committee agree to recommend this article. He said that the Collective Bargaining Agreement is not included in the \$14,271,384 million budget as it will be included in warrant article #5- if it gets approved.

On the *Understanding Budget and Taxes* slide, Jeff said that this gives the public the best estimate of revenues Base Adequacy Aid per student, free and reduced lunch and other revenues listed on the slide. He also said that this does not include any money obtained in a favorable ruling in the Conval HS lawsuit.

Jeff read through *FY25 vs FY24* slide. He added that the number the public sees is based off a formula from the following:

- From special education funding (included on *special education*) slide
- The slide *other areas of increase* slide listing things like health insurance, NH retirement, software, transportation. These are other areas of the school budget that increase the overall number. He did mention the picture on the slide showing the newly resurfaced track and that was one of the *other areas of increase* this school budget.
- He went on to read through the slide *Areas of Decrease* where money was saved. Here he defined areas that allowed the budget to decrease in size including things like, non-teacher hires, and lower salaries for new hire teachers.

Moving forward Jeff read over the *SAU63 vs Peer Group* slide. He said that it is good to show other districts that are similar in size to us or similar even if they are not nearby. Charlie asked if Jeff should explain the per pupil differences on this slide of \$20K and other slides of \$24K. Jeff replied that not everything is included in this number, but it's the best comparison. On the *Five-Year Trend* slide, he

commented that for unspent funds, money can go back to help with taxation for next year and asked if there were any comments. There were none.

Moving forward into the Warrant Article Slides on slide *titled Article 5: Collective Bargaining Agreement between School Board and Teacher's Association* Slide contained information on the collective bargaining between school board and the Teachers Association. Jeff stated that these numbers are not included in the numbers but were recommended by both WLC School board and Budget Committee. Mentioning further that all warrant articles were presented and were recommended by the school board.

Jeff continued reading through the slide *Article 7: Appropriate to Capital Reserve Fund for Building/Equipment & Roadway*. He then continued to read through the slide *Article 8: Appropriate Additional Funds for Building/Equipment & Roadway*. He explained that if we have a balance at the end of the year, we reserve the right to reserve 100k. Adam Lavallee clarified that the school board has the right to reserve the funds not the Budget Committee. This ended the slide presentation.

Jeff said that there was a warrant article submitted by the public.

Kristie LaPlante said that there were 25 signatures of both Wilton and Lyndeborough registered voters that will be going in front of the district public hearing. The warrant article states, *to see if the school district will vote to authorize, indefinitely until rescinded, to retain year-end unassigned general funds in an amount not to exceed, in any fiscal year, 5 percent of the current fiscal year's net assessment, in accordance with RSA 198:4-b, I*. Jeff said we haven't had a chance to look through it. Adam said that the budget committee can only recommend and that there would not be a vote here today. Leslie, Bill, and Jennifer agreed.

In closing before public comments, Jeff urged those in attendance and listing that the full operating budget was available online and if interested to look through the information available.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Thomas Shultz of Wilton gave gratitude for the budget committee and commented that the budget percentage increase is about a third of the town's budget. He continued by saying good job to the committee for keeping the numbers down. He asked the committee for the total increase from the Collective Bargaining Agreement. Kristie answered that the collective bargaining agreement holds a 6.68% increase.

Thomas said the town budget is 6.5 million. He mentioned a Department of Education study that showed our school enrollment has dropped 18.5% and doesn't show signs of abating. He questioned what our school enrollment rate will be in 20 years. He listed birthrate and age as causes for the areas continuing population decline. He asked what plan we have in place to help our school enrollment.

Jeff Jones said that we do talk about this quite a bit especially due to the scale of the district. He asked if anyone on the committee would like to address this. Adam Lavallee stated that the last couple of years doesn't show a decrease and that we are up from 10 years ago, down from last year, but higher than the year before.

Jonathan reflected in the cost per student. Saying that if we pass the CBA, our baseline budget is up if we pass everything this year. He continued by saying that without the continued growth in our population- this is a big concern.

Brianne Lavallee of Lyndeborough spoke to how the district was one of only a few that had NH that had student growth over the last 20 years.

Jeff said that this is a real spend vs the DOE number.

Alyssa Lavoie of Lyndeborough stated that it appeared as though it had separated as a different means of funding. She continued that there were no line items currently and that this was more emergency funding. She said that Lyndeborough had never established this with a contingency fund and that you can't assign one unless it's assigned to a specific project. She suggested that there is a need to identify which project it would be. She also said that a contingency fund is best practice. She voiced concerns we are using a loophole on a CIP rather than using it for what it is meant for.

Jonathan said that technically it is not a CIP and that is not what the funds are for. A CIP is not specially restricted to roadways etc.

Grant Bujack of Lyndeborough stated he wanted to clarify something when he was on the schoolboard. He said that the original CIPs were built with one line item for multiple reasons. He described this to get a hold of every single need; like the 60K expenditure for the windows in the gym that were not put into the budget. He continued that we should go back to having a line item in there as soon as or later you run into another set of gym windows and ask the voters for a lot of money.

Rachel Chumbly of Wilton asked if we are still paying off items like the lawn mower? Jeff said that in general- the district doesn't take debt to finish a project and that most things are fully paid. The CIP has the bigger ticket items. Rachel asked if the items we've paid off are reflected in the budget. Jonathan said that we wouldn't see something from last year in the budget, but you would see other things that come up. Rachel commented that she felt that the budget keeps going up.

Mark Chamberlain asked about the cost of the fuel that heats the building. He listed the propane and other heating items, and why we are not getting a similar discount. Kristie answered that we are getting it. We are currently locked in for this year and she doesn't know what the heating cost would be for next season. Mark asked if the tennis courts were finished. Kristie said that it had been hampered by weather and that she would check into it.

Tom Shultz asked what the time frame is for the state report and that it did show an 18.5% drop.

Brianne said that they posted a 20-year look back study. Tom asked if you have 74% -are you planning for growth? He said that we need to plan for a drop or a growth. Geoffery Allen of Lyndeborough said that there is a strategic planning committee that looks at this type of information. He said that two meetings ago they were cast at looking at future enrollment.

Charlie Post said that 20 years ago the district didn't have a consolidated district.

Brianne agreed and that the number is on the DOE website.

Geoff said two meetings ago they were cast at looking at future enrollment

Tom stated that they may have lumped Lyndeborough and Wilton.

Leslie stated our numbers have been combined for years.

Tom said that when he went here in 79 – spoke of the decrease he looks like.

Brianne Lavallee of Lyndeborough said when she graduated there were about 50 kids.

No online comments.

Jeff continued the meeting by asking the committee if there were any items to discuss. Leslie said we are ready for the district meeting. Jennifer thanked everyone for participating and it was nice to see a full room. Jeff ended by saying he hoped to see everyone in the next three weeks. He also said that if you really like what you see you can be a member of the committee next year.

Bill motion, Lavallee 2nd

Adjourned 7:52 p.m.

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