

Newfound Area School District

Budget Committee Meeting

Minutes

November 14, 2013

6:30 pm

Newfound Regional High School, Room 106

Budget Committee Members: Harold "Skip" Reilly, Alexandria William Joseph, Bristol
Sharon Nelson, Groton Fran Wendelboe, New Hampton
Stan Newton, Hebron
Absent: Jeff Bird, Bridgewater Simon Barnett, Danbury
Paul Rheinhardt, School Board Representative

District Staff: Stacy Buckley, Superintendent
Michael Limanni, Business Administrator

Meeting called to order at 6:46 PM by Fran Wendelboe followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. A moment of silence was observed for the recent passing of Executive Councilman, Ray Burton.

OLD BUSINESS

Fran Wendelboe handed out the resume of the applicant for the position of Budget Committee Clerk. There were no questions from members of the committee.

Motion made by Sharon Nelson to appoint Kimberly Bliss to the position of Budget Committee Clerk. Seconded by Harold "Skip" Reilly. Motion was approved 5 yes, 0 no, 0 abstentions, 3 absent.

NEW BUSINESS

Budget Committee Clerk was sworn in by Fran Wendelboe.

Review of minutes:

- Page 1, remove "made by" from first bullet per Sharon Nelson
- Page 2, remove "that was going to be" from 3rd line, 7th paragraph and add "for whom" to 4th line, 7th paragraph, per Sharon Nelson
- Page 3, add "In" to beginning of 2nd sentence, 2nd paragraph.

Motion made by Stan Newton to accept the minutes as amended. Seconded by Sharon Nelson. Motion approved 5 yes, 0 no, 0 abstentions, 3 absent.

Fran Wendelboe posed a question to Michael Limanni about adequacy aid. Mr. Limanni explained that the state has formula used to calculate that number for each district. He stated that the Department of Education (DOE) website has published new calculations that would negatively impact the Newfound Area School District (NASD). The tax cap offsets our loss in adequacy aid and budget. He stated that he

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has spoken with the department of revenue and the potential for a 3% drop (about \$340,000) was possible, but that an “easing adjustment” should be granted.

Stacy Buckley handed out the school board approved FY15 budget to the committee members. Fran Wendelboe pointed out that the proposed FY15 budget of \$20,310,865 is very close to the goal of \$20,000,000 budget that was discussed two years ago.

Fran Wendelboe posed a question to Stacey Buckley about her philosophy on potentially moving grades 7 and 8 to the high school and reorganizing the middle school to become an elementary school, thereby closing BES. Mrs. Buckley responded that she has prepared a presentation for the school board for November 25th that outlines her recommendation for any potential reorganization or reconfiguration of NASD.

William Joseph asked Michael Limanni about projected enrollment numbers by grade.

Stacy Buckley discussed the possibility of Hill withdrawing from Franklin and potentially attending NASD for grades 7-12 (approximately 70 students). Mrs. Buckley pointed out that there are still many steps to take before any decisions are made in the matter.

Harold “Skip” Reilly praised the reduction in budget, but suggested another \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 drop to be more in-line with other surrounding districts.

Stacy Buckley discussed the challenges in preparing a budget with a new administrative team at the SAU. Some important things to note in the budget:

- Realignment and improvement of instruction. She wants to focus on the students and instruction while keeping costs down.
- This year the budget was zero-based and every expense line has been justified by school principals. This will give a baseline in great detail in preparing future years budgets.
- Added the position of Curriculum Director to the budget to help align the district K-12 with the same goals and to increase communication between buildings. Curriculum mapping has begun, but time is limited and more dialogue is still needed.

The board discussed the importance of communication and dialogue from K-12 and also 12-K to ensure common goals throughout the whole district. William Joseph asked about document and information sharing programs to which Michael Limanni explained the district’s use of Google Docs.

Fran Wendelboe asked Stacy Buckley if the money was available in the budget after January 1, would the position of Curriculum Coordinator be approved by the school board for the remainder of this school year. Mrs. Buckley responded that a start date of July 1 would provide a better candidate pool for the position and it is preferable to wait until then.

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Budget continued...

The final budget includes hiring two special education teachers. These positions were added to encourage teachers supporting other teachers in adjusting for special education students rather than relying on paraprofessionals in the classrooms.

Harold "Skip" Reilly asked about placement of special education students with special education teachers. Stacy Buckley clarified that her philosophy is that learning disabled and special education students should be in the regular education classrooms with supports.

Increase to budget in the technology plan in the amount of \$53,000. Change in philosophy this year to no longer allow technology requests during the school year. Requests for improvements to technology will go to the technology committee that will review requests to ensure consistent implementation throughout the district of programs and platforms. William Joseph discussed disparities that have existed in the past with Michael Limanni. Mr. Limanni emphasized that consistency in implementation of new technology is his aim.

Sharon Nelson asked about Common Core curriculum and the Smarter Balanced computer-based testing. Stacy Buckley provided information about her prior district piloting the testing. NASD will begin the computer-based testing in 2015. Sharon Nelson expressed concern that the test will lack narrative answers. Stacy provided the committee with direction to the DOE website where they can sample the assessments.

Discussion about Common Core Standards. Stacy Buckley and Michael Limanni provided information on the new standards and clarified that these are standards only and may be exceeded by the district.

Harold "Skip" Reilly asked for clarification on lines 10.2311.330.1.1.00-3.7.00 – Budget Committee, pg. 36 of the school board budget. Stacy Buckley clarified that the amounts are each schools' proportionate share of the obligation to pay the Budget Committee Clerk. Michael Limanni explained the detail in running the budget through the new system. The print out now shows each location's proportion of a whole budget item, rather than lumped together.

Stacy Buckley pointed out an increase in transportation in the amount of 3% pursuant to our provider contract.

Health insurance will go up by a maximum of 9.6%.

Oil Tank replacement in the amount of \$110,000 pursuant to district CIP. December 22, 2015 is the deadline to close underground tanks lacking secondary wall containment and leak monitoring systems. NMMS has a sump pump but will need double-walled fuel lines to and from the tank as well as a

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monitoring device for sump and interstitial leaks. NRHS tank needs replacement. Current tank has met its life expectancy and has interstitial leaking (inner tank into outer tank). This line item will be paid by a transfer from the district Facilities Management Trust. Harold "Skip" Reilly asked if Honeywell may be responsible for the NMMS repairs, but Michael Limanni clarified that Honeywell made energy efficiency improvements and did not work on the actual fuel tank.

Other changes that came from the school board include:

- Decrease 1 additional paraprofessional due to student moving out of district (for a total of 19.2 reduction)
- Received 6 retirement notices – increased budget by \$65,000 for retirement stipends
- Decreased some teacher salaries to allow for hiring of lower salaried level teachers
- After school program, though grant funded, NASD must fund transportation – \$35,000
- Health insurance premiums reduction in the amount of \$126,000 from reimbursement due to premium holiday

The final increase to the budget was for a School Resource Officer (SRO) in the amount of \$72,500, but the school board has addressed this issue by taking it out of the budget and making this item a Warrant Article. Chief Michael Lewis is in the process of trying to add an officer to his force to accommodate an SRO position.

Harold "Skip" Reilly discussed that he does not support an SRO position. Stacy Buckley expressed that she felt an SRO is more about building relationships and being proactive than physical protection. William Joseph is also not in support of an SRO position if it means adding a police officer to the Bristol Police Department at such a significant cost to NASD.

Something not included in the budget were increases to salaries for support staff, specialists and admin. It has come to light that an inequity exists at the support staff level. There are long-term employees that are being paid significantly less than new hires as well as some other disparities. \$100,000 was put into the budget to analyze about 100 employees (custodial, paras, food service etc.) and realign their compensation. This \$100,000 pool is in lieu of an across the board raise. Michael Limanni pointed out that this budget item falls within the tax cap.

Michael Limanni handed out a print-out on the FY15 Tax Cap (attached herewith). Highlights from his handout:

- FY14 Tax Assessment was \$12,124,954 which means that FY15 cannot exceed a 2% increase (\$12,367,453)
- Total Revenue from sources other than taxation total \$8,495,588
- Total Revenue to the district is \$20,863,041.
- Total Budget for FY15 is \$20,310,865 which leaves \$552,176 to reach the tax cap threshold.

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Fran Wendelboe asked about warrant articles that could potentially push the budget over our tax cap. Michael Limanni stated that the tax cap is firm. Mrs. Wendelboe asked about teacher negotiations and how that might push the budget closer to the tax cap. While Stacy Buckley cannot discuss specifics because negotiations are still ongoing, she expects only one more meeting. Michael Limanni ran a theoretical 1.5% increase in teacher salaries (excluding nurses and guidance) which totaled \$235,856, which is below the tax cap.

There was discussion about nurse staffing levels. Stacy Buckley stated that though it seems hard to accept a full-time nurse for a school of 52, there are other circumstances that justify the position. It is hard to predict when and if students will get injured or need medications, so a nurse is generally necessary regardless of school size. We currently have 5 nurses, one in each school.

Harold "Skip" Reilly asked about guidance staff. Stacy Buckley provided that there are 3 at NRHS, 1.4 at NMMS, 1 at BES, 1 at NHCS, .4 at DES and 1 at BHVS. Mr. Reilly expressed his concern that there are too many guidance positions in the district. Mrs. Buckley stated they are analyzing the positions and function of guidance at NRHS and guidance in general throughout the district. Sharon Nelson pointed out that guidance is no longer just career counseling but also responsible for providing services such as anti-bullying.

PUBLIC INPUT

No public present.

William Joseph made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Harold "Skip" Reilly. Motion approved 5 yes, 0 no, 0 abstentions, 3 absent.

Meeting adjourned at 8:57 PM. Next meeting scheduled for Thursday, November 21, 2013.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kimberly Bliss
Budget Committee Clerk