

Newfound Area School District

Budget Committee Meeting

Minutes

November 21, 2013

6:30 pm

Newfound Regional High School, Room 106

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

District Staff: Stacy Buckley, Superintendent
Michael Limanni, Business Administrator
Public: Vincent Paul Migliore

Meeting called to order at 6:32 PM by Simon Barnett followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

Review of minutes. No changes made.

Motion made by William Joseph to accept the minutes as submitted. Seconded by Sharon Nelson.
Motion approved 5 yes, 0 no, 0 abstentions, 1 absent.

Jeff Bird asked about the current enrollment numbers. Stacy Buckley handed out a summary of enrollment.

Simon Barnett asked for a clarification from Michael Limanni about the risk pool premium holiday. Michael Limanni explained that LGC (now HealthTrust) retained a portion of premiums paid in but due to recent changes in regulation, they are no longer allowed to retain as much in their risk pool. The result is that those buying into the program are granted a risk pool premium holiday and will receive partial refund to redistribute between the employees and the district.

Sharon Nelson asked about insurance premiums for teachers. Stacy Buckley responded that health insurance was part of teacher negotiations, but that impasse has been declared. NATA and NASD will be going to mediation over the contract. Michael Limanni noted that the only increase in wages included in the school board approved budget is the \$100,000 budgeted for support staff. No increase to teacher

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salaries, only the 9.6% anticipated increase in their health insurance premiums have been added (currently split 87/13 with district). Any other wage increase will have to be a warrant article.

Harold “Skip” Reilly inquired about the reason for an increase in school portion of his recent tax bill. Paul Rheinhardt pointed out that last year there was a modest increase in the budget due to a raise to paraprofessionals, increases in teacher contracts, and an increase health insurance premiums that were about \$250,000.00. He also noted the voters approved a retained surplus fund of about \$350,000.

William Joseph asked Stacy Buckley about her upcoming presentation to the school board. Stacy Buckley stated that it will include data and projections on school enrollment with recommendations to the board on any action.

Michael Limanni defined Average Daily Membership (ADM) verses enrollment. ADM includes students that the district is responsible for that aren’t necessarily attending one of our schools (example provided, there are about 25 students in out-of-district placement). Our ADM for 2012-13 was 1203 students. Student count as of October 1, 2013 was 1207. Stacy Buckley clarified that ADM is only calculated once a year and includes how many students were in attendance on an average day, while enrollment is calculated once monthly and includes how many students are enrolled in the district.

Stacy Buckley pointed out that the budget is still “live.” With a new administrative team evaluating student enrollment and class scheduling, there is still the chance that items could be cut from the budget. She went over the challenges that exist with small schools such as DES as well as the detail in schedules of NMMS and NRHS.

Sharon Nelson expressed a need to have gifted students challenged while balancing the needs of students in need of special services. Stacy Buckley pointed out that in such a small district any reduction in staff will lead to reduced offerings to students.

In regards to revenue, Michael Limanni wanted to put district adequacy aid in perspective. He pointed out that Danbury brings in about \$700,000 in adequacy aid to the district, while Bridgewater and Hebron do not bring in any. The community of Danbury benefits from the change in calculation of adequacy aid from the state of New Hampshire. Our state school tax rate is calculated on ADM, not property values.

Stacy Buckley reviewed a new spreadsheet for the tax-cap calculation. The district received adequacy aid figures for next year and they are less than expected. She pointed out that there was an error in the amount for the School Resource Officer (SRO); the \$72,500 was changed to a figure prorated for just the school district. She stated that Chief Lewis indicated the SRO position would likely be a warrant article for the town of Bristol, so if the position is not approved by the town, there may perhaps be a current officer taking on SRO responsibilities but there is no guarantee.

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Harold “Skip” Reilly reiterated his non-support of an SRO position. Sharon Nelson stated she supports a different kind of relationship with an SRO in the district, rather than one just available for physical security/defense.

Michael Limanni went over the tax-cap spreadsheet previously given to the committee. He provided an estimated breakout of adequacy aid by town. Pointed out that this is a significant source of revenue but it is declining. All state aid is based on the estimated ADM. Our ADM was estimated by the October 1, 2013 attendance. Stan Newton asked for an explanation of what adequacy aid actually is. Michael Limanni explained that it is a redistribution of funds based on equitable need (for example, free and reduced lunch numbers). Stacy Buckley compared the definition of adequacy aid to the former “donor town” procedure. Adequacy aid changes every year and some districts, including NASD, are losing money.

Sharon Nelson asked about nurse and guidance staffing at each school. She shared her experience at a school comparable to DES with a part-time nurse and guidance counselor. Stacy Buckley responded that guidance is being analyzed. Nursing is more challenging as parents feel their children need services (ex. diabetics, food allergies) and teachers are less willing to accept more responsibility with children due to liability issues. Teachers are trained in first aid, but are not necessarily equipped to deal with issues such as multi-handicapped students in need of feeding, diapering or toileting. Currently there is one nurse in every school.

Simon Barnett asked if the budget handed out would be impacted by the tax cap spreadsheet figures. Stacy Buckley stated that it would not. Mr. Barnett asked what the last increase for teachers was. Stacy said she would have to reference the warrant article. Michael Limanni clarified that the figure of 1.5% included in last week’s minutes was a hypothetical situation that Fran Wendelboe had inquired about and does not indicate anything actually in process.

William Joseph asked about a threshold figure for closing a school or any reasoning behind it. Vincent Paul Migliore (School board chair attending as a member of the public) responded that it was premature to address that issue before seeing Stacy Buckley’s presentation at the next school board meeting. Vincent Paul Migliore suggested reviewing cohort data compiled by the District Data Task Force. He also pointed out that he feels the population decline will not level off based on past years trends. He also pointed to the K-8 Committee findings that the district has more classrooms than needed. Michael Limanni stated that the issues are actually very complex and it is important to view the communities and district as a whole. Mr. Limanni stated that the pupils lost this school year have not all come from one school and it is important to analyze growth-decline rates per community.

Jeff Bird asked about the condition of the buildings in the district. Stacy Buckley noted that NRHS and BHVS are in the best condition, but the most important issue is that our buildings are old. BES does not have a handicap ramp. NMMS does not have a ventilation system. Many of our older buildings do not

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meet code and are not in great shape, in general. Stacy Buckley pointed to her research for her upcoming presentation.

Jeff Bird brought up that no one seems happy: tax payers, teachers, etc. Paul Rheinhardt pointed out that this is something the board is looking at. Bringing teacher pay to above average may help the issue. Stacy Buckley also noted that parents are apprehensive about enrolling students when facilities look the way they do.

Vincent Paul Migliore asked that everyone watch Communities & Consequences video.

Simon Barnett brought the discussion to budget line items and asked if anyone had any questions.

Sharon Nelson asked Michael Limanni about pg. 13 account # 10.1420.731.1.00 Athletic Equipment-High School. The account description may be wrong, per Michael Limanni. It is used to purchase equipment for teams, and specifically this year, weight room equipment. Ms. Nelson also asked about pg. 14 Summer school line items. These funds were in an enrichment account last year, and have been moved into a correct account for summer school. She also asked about the Truant Officer line and it was explained that the district does not have a specific truant officer. The procedure for excessive absences was discussed.

Simon Barnett asked what would happen if no teacher contract was passed. Stacy Buckley clarified that no evergreen clause is in place, so the teachers would get nothing and their wages would remain status quo.

William Joseph asked about maintenance on the school security systems. Michael Limanni stated that there is no contract for support on the system, so if there is an issue the funds would come from a facilities account. Mr. Joseph also asked about the \$154 budgeted for tractor repair. Michael Limanni clarified that there is no district location code, but the items for district expenses are broken out by school, so the \$1000 budgeted for tractor repair has been broken out by school location.

Sharon Nelson asked about the homeless student definition and transportation costs. Stacy Buckley explained that there is a very broad definition of "homeless" and the district is subject to an unfunded mandate to provide transportation to students that are homeless. For up to 2 years, a student has the right to continue in the school they were attending when they became homeless for stability purposes.

Simon Barnett asked about the out-of-district coordinator position. Stacy Buckley pointed out that the position is grant funded and will be continued next school year as a part-time position. The individual has also been working to bring students back "in-house."

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Sharon Nelson asked about the psychologist position on pg. 21. Stacy Buckley explained that our school psychologists do qualification testing for special education placement. This year, instead of contracting the position, an individual was hired to split time between NRHS and NMMS. Currently the elementary school psychologist position is contracted, but we will be looking to hire an in-house elementary position next year. Harold "Skip" Reilly asked for clarification on the salary and benefits being split between two schools on the psychologist position. Michael Limanni explained that even though it looks like two positions, the total salary and benefits for that individual are broken out by location code.

Simon Barnett recommended that the committee go home and review the budget item and prepare for the next meeting with issues on specific line items.

PUBLIC INPUT

None.

Paul Rheinhardt made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Sharon Nelson. Motion approved 5 yes, 0 no, 0 abstentions, 1 absent.

Meeting adjourned at 8:09 PM. Next meeting scheduled for Thursday, December 5, 2013 at NRHS, room 106.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kimberly Bliss
Budget Committee Clerk