

Newfound Area School District

Budget Committee Meeting

Minutes

December 16, 2013

6:30 pm

Newfound Regional High School, Room 106

Budget Committee Members: Simon Barnett, Danbury William Joseph, Bristol
Harold "Skip" Reilly, Alexandria Jeff Bird, Bridgewater
Stan Newton, Hebron (6:35) Sharon Nelson, Groton (6:40)
Paul Rheinhardt, School Board Representative
Absent: Fran Wendelboe, New Hampton
District Staff: Stacy Buckley, Superintendent
Michael Limanni, Business Administrator
Members of the Public: Vincent Paul Migliore, School Board Chairman
Paul Simard, Bristol

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

Review of Minutes

Harold "Skip" Reilly made a motion to accept the minutes from the December 5th, 2013 meeting as submitted. Seconded by William Joseph. Motion approved by all present.

Paul Rheinhardt noted that the attendance was incorrect for the December 10th, 2013 minutes. He was present and Sharon Nelson was absent.

Paul Rheinhardt made motion to accept the minutes from the December 10th, 2013 meeting as amended. Seconded by William Joseph. Motion approved by all present.

2014/2015 Budget Review

The board was given handouts including the current district Data Task Force spreadsheet, staffing levels and the process by which the default budget was calculated.

Simon Barnett turned to the default budget creation handout and noted that the default budget increases by \$135,222 over the current year. Michael Limanni walked the committee through the process of creating a default budget. It includes health insurance increase, removes special projects, adds back in the fuel tanks (capital reserve project), and adds in increases to fuel costs, worker's comp insurance, and transportation contract. He noted that the staffing changes approved by the school board (2 Special Education teachers, paraprofessional reduction, curriculum coordinator) will NOT be included in the default budget.

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Jeff Bird referred to an email from Fran Wendelboe regarding some suggestions for discussion. Mrs. Wendelboe suggested reducing another guidance counselor from the elementary level. Simon Barnett asked for Stacy Buckley's input on the subject. She stated that reducing those positions can increase staff turnover because the cut would likely come from all the current guidance counselors rather than removing one position all together. Most individuals that are part-time will continue to look for full-time employment, which is why turnover would be high for several part-time positions. She does not support a cut. Jeff Bird also raised a concern about staff travelling from building to building and the liability that may fall upon the district in the event of an accident.

Stacy Buckley explained the role of guidance counselors and that they have a curriculum as well as offering services to the students. Jeff Bird asked what the cost of a guidance counselor is. Michael Limanni responded that currently the range is about \$54K-\$103K depending upon which insurance plan the individual elected.

Harold "Skip" Reilly voiced his concern at the format in which the budget has been presented. Michael Limanni offer to print out any format Mr. Reilly would prefer to see and answer any questions he might have via telephone or email.

Sharon Nelson voiced opinion that the board should cut one or the other: a guidance counselor or a nurse. Jeff Bird stated that he does not support cutting a nurse position. He is most concerned with the actual impact on the schools if a cut is made. Stacy Buckley offered a scenario that an elementary guidance counselor be cut. She used the example of a 3 day guidance counselor at BES, which would mean 2 days a week the school would be without support in the event of a crisis, DCYF calls may not be made that day, or a guidance counselor may need to be brought in from another school in district to cover an emergency and then create a gap at another school. Mr. Bird asked if the guidance counselor has a legal requirement to log student actions. Mrs. Buckley answered they do not. William Joseph asked how the decision was arrived at to cut a guidance counselor at NRHS. Mrs. Buckley stated that NRHS has more supports available than the other schools in district.

Michael Limanni pointed out how spread out the district is geographically. The district has unique demographics which make changes in certain areas difficult. It is not as easy as conforming to state minimum standards is most cases. The state minimum standard for guidance is one counselor per 350 students at the middle and high school level and one counselor per 500 students at the elementary level. He also noted that in regards to the tax cap requirement, the proposed budget is pretty responsible. The district is able to reach contractual obligations and also maintain programs without hitting the tax cap. His past experience with the tax cap was very different in that parents were charged for many services and programs and the district still had trouble staying within the tax cap constraints.

Sharon Nelson would prefer to hold any motions on guidance until the upcoming January 7th, 2014 meeting.

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William Joseph asked about reduction of paraprofessionals and bringing in special education teachers. He would like to hear Stacy Buckley's vision of a paraprofessional. Stacy Buckley feels that, in the past, the NASD has fallen on paraprofessionals as a crutch. She wishes for teachers to support teachers. Paraprofessionals are always needed for multi-handicapped students in need of one-on-one support. Paraprofessionals should be a support to the students rather than crutches in the classroom.

Stacy pointed to the staffing level handout and noted that, after cuts, the district will employ 37.25 paraprofessionals. We currently have a large number of in-class general paraprofessionals instead of one-to-one. The savings of cutting 17.25 paraprofessionals is about \$400,000. The cost of hiring two new special educators is about \$75,000 each with benefits, but will be finalized when the positions are actually filled.

William Joseph voiced concern about benefit coverage that will be required under the Affordable Care Act. Michael Limanni voiced his concern about turnover and the quality of the employee. Stacy Buckley stated that in her experience, paraprofessionals often work for health insurance benefits. Michael Limanni also pointed out that comparatively, paraprofessionals at NASD are compensated at or above surrounding districts which have support staff unions. He noted, however, that it is hard to determine who is considered "support staff" when looking at the data task force handout. Support staff can include paraprofessionals, as well as secretaries, custodial staff, or food service workers.

Stan Newton asked for clarification on the positions shown on the staffing handout that are considered district wide. Stacy Buckley explained the positions of school psychologist, vision specialist, ELL specialist, speech language pathologist and occupational therapist. She explained that these specialist positions are district wide and that some personnel work in several buildings in district.

Discussion took place about Average Daily Membership (ADM). Michael Limanni explained that at the end of the 2013 school year, the ADM was 1203. The snapshot at the beginning of school year 2014 (October 1, 2013 attendance) was 1200. He further explained that ADM is the basis for the district cost per pupil calculation. The current cost per pupil in NASD is:

\$14,481 – Elementary

\$15,918 – Middle

\$15,913 – High school

\$15,293 – Average

Discussion followed about the cost per pupil in the context of declining student population. Michael Limanni clarified that the budget has accounted for a 3% annual decline in student populations. However, it is difficult to reduce the budget by a specific figure for every student that leaves the district because they are not all from the same classroom. Michael Limanni assured the committee that the administrative team is evaluating district technology plans, curriculum and overall improvement to the district at a reasonable cost to the taxpayers.

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Harold "Skip" Reilly moved for a 1% reduction in the budget to \$20,000,000. Seconded by Stan Newton. Discussion followed about teacher salaries and the potential cost savings in hiring newer teachers to replace those that are retiring.

Sharon Nelson moved to table Mr. Reilly's motion until the committee has time to review the budget in more depth and recommend specific cuts to meet his 1% goal at the January 7, 2014 meeting. Seconded by Jeff Bird. Motion approved 6 yes, 1 no, 0 abstentions, 1 absent.

Stacy Buckley reminded the committee that without a budget, the school board will be responsible for making it at their next meeting.

Public Input

Paul Simard, Bristol, spoke to the idea of a School Resource Officer (SRO). He feels that an SRO should be hired and supervised by the school system rather than by Bristol police department. He provided some history on the role of SRO's in the district and his discomfort with bringing an officer in to the high school, specifically. He submitted information for the committee to review from the Secret Service and FBI on the subject.

Jeff Bird, Bridgewater, inquired on the recent shuttering of the Bridgewater-Hebron Village School Project Promise after school program. Stacy Buckley informed the committee that Project Promise has been in place in district for 11 years, but the BHVS does not qualify for the grant-funded program. With the new after school coordinator reviewing program information, it was discovered that the BHVS Project Promise participants had been incorrectly counted as BES students. The State of NH is currently investigating the improper use of grant funds for the program. Stacy Buckley stated that she is working diligently to find an answer for BHVS parents that depend on the program and she understands the burden this places on them to find after school child care in a very short period of time.

Paul Rheinhardt motioned to adjourn. Seconded by Jeff Bird. Motion approved by all present. Meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm. Next Meeting scheduled for Tuesday, January 7, 2014.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kimberly Bliss
Budget Committee Clerk