

Newfound Area School District

Budget Committee Meeting

Draft Minutes

January 10, 2014

Budget Hearing

6:30 pm

Newfound Regional High School, Auditorium

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

School Board Members: Vincent Paul Migliore, Bridgewater Ruby Hill, Danbury
Sue Cheney, Alexandria Lloyd Belbin, Bristol
Jeff Levesque, Groton Don Franklin, Hebron
Paul Rheinhardt, New Hampton (Budget Committee representative)

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

Meeting called to order at 6:34 by Budget Committee Chair, Fran Wendelboe followed by the pledge of allegiance.

Vincent Paul Migliore introduced the School Board members followed by Fran Wendelboe introducing the Budget Committee Members.

Article 1: Election of School District Officials.

The open positions this year are for representatives from Bristol and New Hampton for 3-year terms on both the school board and budget committee.

Article 2: Teacher Contract Agreement

To see if the Newfound Area School District will vote to approve the cost items included in the a three (3) year collective bargaining agreement reached between the Newfound Area School Board and the Newfound Area Teachers Association, which calls for the following increase in salaries and benefits:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Estimated Cost</i>
<i>2014-15</i>	<i>\$277,225</i>
<i>2015-16</i>	<i>\$271,747</i>
<i>2016-17</i>	<i>\$312,479</i>

And further to raise and appropriate the sum of \$277,225 for the 2015 fiscal year, such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in salaries and benefits required by the new agreement over those that would be paid at current staffing levels.

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Paul Simard, Bristol asked about the percentage increase being offered. Fran Wendelboe elaborated that the percentages are not flat for all teachers, but are about 2% for the first two years of the three-year contract and 2.5% in the third year. She noted that salary ranges and steps vary by both years of services and certifications. She stated that this article is in addition to Article 7 (operating budget). The budget committee voted not to support this article. The school board will take a vote on support at their next meeting on Monday, January 13.

Other changes in the teacher contract dealt with co-curricular pay and teacher leave policies. The language change in authorized leave restricts leave to specific categories (sick leave, professional development, etc.) in the hope that it would reduce teacher absence and therefore the cost of substitute teachers.

Archie Auger, Bristol asked if the increase is to include both a step increase and cost of living adjustment (COLA) increase. Michael Limanni, Business Administrator stated that the real increase will vary on individual teacher. Over half of the teachers in district have enough years of service that the step increase plus COLA will be a significantly less percentage than it will for newer teachers. Individual teachers will experience different increases. The real increase over 4 years is 11%.

Fran Wendelboe provided real numbers for both a new teacher and a teacher with 10+ years of experience. Some teachers will not receive step increases because they are at the maximum step.

Article 3: Provision for special meeting

Shall the District, if Article 2 is defeated, authorize the Newfound Area School Board to call one special meeting, at its option, to address Article 2 cost items only?

The school board will make recommendation at their upcoming meeting. If this article fails, teacher negotiations will not take place again until next year. If yes vote, negotiations will take place again and perhaps another special meeting will be held.

Article 4: Appointment of trustees of the trust fund

Shall the School District vote to approve the Town of Bristol's Trustees of the Trust Funds to be the holder of the school's trust fund to be in compliance with RSA 35:2 Custody of School District Reserves?

The school board will make recommendation on this article next Monday.

Article 5: Expendable trust fund: Building Maintenance

To see if the Newfound Area School District Will vote to raise and appropriate up to the sum of \$60,000 to be added to the Expendable Trust Fund: Building Maintenance and to authorize the use/transfer in that amount from the undesignated fund balance available July 1, 2014 for this purpose.

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This item has been on the ballot in years past. The budget committee voted to recommend this article.

Article 6: School Resource Officer

Shall the Newfound Area School District raise and appropriate the sum of \$51,840 for the hiring of a School Resource Officer for the Newfound Regional High School. Said officer will be available to support all schools within the Newfound Area School District and shall be employed for the School Year only. If approved, this amount will become part of the default budget for the 2016 fiscal year.

The school board will make recommendation on this article next Monday. Budget committee does not recommend this article.

Janet Cote, Bristol stated that she would like more specifics from Superintendent Stacy Buckley on this position. Ms. Buckley explained that this article provides for a resource officer at NRHS. The position will provide physical security, but will also be available to build and develop relationships with students. The town of Bristol would hire the officer and the school district will reimburse the town for the cost of the officer.

Ms. Cote stated that the Bristol board of selectmen are unaware of this article or agreement.

Becca Boudreau, Bristol asked what the requirements are of this officer. She asked if the individual will be a certified officer or have degrees in counseling or teaching. Stacy Buckley responded that the officer would need to be a trained SRO.

Slim Stafford, Groton, asked if a police cruiser would be involved and how that would need to be paid for. Stacy Buckley stated that it is all included in the cost shown in the warrant article.

Archie Auger, Bristol, commented that he hopes that the budget committee takes the comments of the public into consideration and will review the recommendations on the warrant articles. He thinks the stance to oppose an SRO is good, because he cannot justify in his mind the hiring of another police officer. We have good sufficient staff and they should be qualified to take care of any issues that arise. He questions the legal arrangement of being in different towns. He encourages non-support of this article.

Janet Cote, Bristol, asked for clarification that the \$51,840 is the school district portion of the SRO position and whether the remainder would be absorbed by the town of Bristol. Fran Wendelboe stated that if Bristol does not vote for a new position, the school will not get it.

Bob Currier, Groton, asked about the cost of an SRO's special training and benefits. Fran Wendelboe stated that that is all included in the \$51,840 figure. The officer would be an employee of the town of Bristol, not NASD.

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Carol Huber, Bristol, asked if Bristol will bear this cost alone. Are any other towns contributing to the cost? Fran Wendelboe clarified that if this article passes, the \$51,840 will be paid by all towns in the district. The remainder will be picked up by the town of Bristol. Carol Huber responded by commenting that she commends the budget committee for voting against the position.

Janet Cote, Bristol, stated that Bristol will be paying for the time that the officer is in school and the remainder as well.

Article 7: Operating Budget

Shall the Newfound Area School district raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling \$21,802,569? Should this article be defeated the Default budget shall be \$22,264,557 which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Newfound Area School District or by law; or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only.

The budget committee voted to recommend this article. The school board will vote at their upcoming meeting.

Fran Wendelboe pointed to the explanation of the budget on page 4 of the hearing packet. She noted that with adjustments made by the budget committee, the school board recommended budget was reduced from \$20,310,865 to \$20,167,997.

Carol Huber, Bristol, asked why the food service budget has gone down. Michael Limanni, business administrator, answered that it is due to revenue issues with food service. He also noted that one of the higher cost positions retired and that resulted in savings. That position will not be re-staffed to a full-time position.

Julaine Gelderman, Bristol, addressed the replacement of equipment reduction. In her capacity as president of the NMMS PTO, she was asked if she could fund some plastic chairs that were breaking under the students. The only chairs available were metal folding chairs. She noted that teachers have stopped asking for things they will not receive. She suggests significantly higher spending on equipment. She worries about student safety and safe learning environment. She further recommends adding for books and electronic devices. She is concerned about using old text books and students lacking the electronic devices to access e-books. She asked the committee to please stop beating down teachers and administrators with the budget. Empower them to ask for what they need.

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Fran Wendelboe responded that the line item had doubled last year's spending. The budget committee voted to reduce it by \$2,000. She said that replacement of furniture line item was not touched.

Susan Colby, Bristol, commented on the reduction of a guidance position. As she sees it, times have completely changed. Physical safety in buildings has changed. She is concerned that cutting guidance counselors would jeopardize their efforts with students in need of services

Fran Wendelboe provided background on the decision to reduce guidance. These positions have been analyzed for the last couple of years. They are concerned that the school has been over staffed for a long time. She provided the state minimum standard of 1 guidance counselor per 350 high school students, and 1 guidance counselor per 500 elementary school students. Currently the district has 3 guidance counselors for 374 at NRHS. She provided ratios of students to guidance counselors at each school. Ms. Wendelboe clarified that the school board and administration would determine who stays at which school. She pointed to the data task force information on cohort district and student/guidance counselor ratios.

Jen Larochelle, teacher at Danbury Elementary School, read a prepared statement: She stated that this is her 20th year as a teacher. She described her day and the positive impact that guidance, nursing staff and paraprofessional staff have on her day. She stated that she spends her own money to enhance her students' experience and her instruction. Staff give generously of themselves and implores the committee to support teachers, students and other staff.

Sheila Miller, Bristol, commented on guidance counselor ratios. She asked when the data was developed. Also, she sees what her students are up against. She stated that there are fewer coping mechanisms than ever before for students. They may not have other resources outside of school. Fran Wendelboe pointed that the data is from the DOE from 11/12 school year. This was the most current available at the time the data spreadsheet was put together. She also pointed to the reduction in enrollment. She stated that by state minimum standards, we need 3.2 guidance counselors for the district.

Susan Colby, Bristol, commented on comparison of NASD to other districts. She asked about the number of buildings in the cohort data presented and if other districts have 6 buildings? If we have 6 buildings we need to be prepared to staff the schools. She invited the committee to visit the schools to assess the situation first hand.

Fran Wendelboe stated that every school has a nurse. The budget committee made a decision that a nurse should be in every building. Ms. Wendelboe stated that she feels that the district should choose between guidance and nursing. She provided data from cohort districts on nurses. She feels that the staffing is already more than adequate

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Jen Larochelle, teacher DES, stated that their school nurse serves as principal, guidance counselor, testing coordinator, and one-on-one aide when she is not doing something else. We can't do it with less.

Slim Stafford, Groton, asked about consolidating schools and why the district hasn't done it.

Fran Wendelboe answered his question mentioning Danbury in particular. The cost per student was about \$20,000 per student when they considered closing the school. Reconfiguration took place at DES to keep the school open at a lesser cost. She referenced to the K-8 study which was completed last year. Superintendent Buckley took on the task to look at all the schools and any possible reconfiguration as one of her first tasks on the job. Her recommendation was to remain status quo. She also stated that a new community is looking to tuition into the district. An agreement could affect next years' budget, but it is still too early to tell if that will come to fruition.

Vincent Paul Migliore, school board chair, stated that the school board supports community education. He stated that they have repeatedly reaffirmed that the board is for community. Danbury's location 12 miles outside of Bristol makes it difficult to move students to other schools. He stated that the real issue at hand is the declining enrollment. A facilities committee is being established to continue evaluation of our buildings. The facilities committee will be established at Monday's meeting. He encouraged participation.

Kathleen Connor, Hebron, stated that she was hesitant to speak as a guidance counselor in district, but she is also a parent and tax payer. She is concerned that the number recommended does not represent the reality of the situation. The figures are recommendations, but there are needs that are going to be unmet. All guidance counselors do something different. Other people are needed when children are in crisis. Teaching skills and spending time with children and getting them in the classroom. She stated that she is concerned that police, if called, will suggest out-of-district placement.

Fran Wendelboe stated that the comment made at the meeting was in regards to abused children. Ms. Connor stated her concern that the word getting out to the community is not accurate. She wants committee members and the committee to know what she does in a day.

Becca Boudreau, Bristol, stated that she has been teaching for 26 years. She asked if NASD has behavior specialists. Stacy Buckley responded that we do not. Ms. Boudreau stated that maybe that should be a consideration for the district. Maybe take the \$51,000 for an SRO and look at a behavior specialist position instead.

April Ngyuen, Alexandria, implored the budget committee to look at the suggested guidance counselor position reduction. Times have changed. She is concerned about who children go to in times of trouble. Her own daughter, a senior at NRHS, has used her counselor not only for college planning, but for gathering scholarship information, letters of recommendation, and as a person to talk to in times of stress. She stated that her daughter wants to go to school to become a guidance counselor because of

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the positive influence of her counselor at NRHS. She worries now that her daughter will have to struggle with a budget committee decision someday if they decide her job is unimportant.

Fran Wendelboe responded that the committee never stated that the position is unimportant, but instead looked at facts and figures and made adjustments to the budget as was deemed necessary.

Celine Gordon, Alexandria, and teacher at BHVS 2nd grade, stated that she hears the committee saying teaching jobs are respected, but do not feel respected. When you invest the minimum you get the minimum.

Fran Wendelboe pointed out the date of the first deliberative session is Saturday, February 1, 2014 at 10:00 AM in the NRHS Auditorium.

Final outcome for deliberative session will set what is on the ballot.

Archie Auger, Bristol, asked about the status of the percentage fund balance. Michael Limanni stated that there was money left over in the amount of about \$350,000. The money cannot just be used for anything. The fund balance exists in lieu of contingency funds.

Vincent Paul Migliore, school board chair, clarified that a surplus percentage is on the amount raised by taxes. 2.5% is the ceiling, which was closer to an actual amount of \$400,000, but the board voted to send the other \$50,000 back to taxpayers. The retained fund balance can be used for emergencies, over expenditures, or to reduce taxes. The school board needs permission of budget committee to approach the commissioner to access those funds.

Harold "Skip" Reilly, budget committee member and resident of Alexandria, asked to speak. He stated that he has served on the budget committee for 9 years. He further stated that people do not come to budget meetings. He requested help to understand the needs of those working in the district. Without input it can't happen.

Fran Wendelboe agreed and encouraged attendance at budget meetings.

There will be a budget committee meeting immediately following this hearing.

Adjourned at 7:58 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kimberly Bliss
Budget Committee Clerk