

Newfound Area School District

Budget Committee Meeting

Draft Minutes

Thursday, November 19, 2014

Bridgewater-Hebron Village School, Library Media Center

Budget Committee Members: Simon Barnett, Danbury
Christen Dolloff, Bristol
Jeff Bird, Bridgewater
Stan Newton, Hebron
Jeff Levesque, School Board Representative
Harold "Skip" Reilly, Alexandria
John Jenness, New Hampton
Sharon Nelson, Groton

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

Members of the Public: Tom Caldwell, Bristol
John Sellers, Bristol

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

Approval of Minutes

Sharon Nelson noted a typo on page 2, "brining" to "bringing." Add "if" demographic study was ordered. Correct "Christin" to "Christen."

Verbiage on page 2 changed to "was approved by the board to be paid."

Stacy Buckley clarified that the demographic study was, in fact, not approved by the school board. Instead, it had been tabled.

Motion made by Sharon Nelson to approve the minutes of the November 13th meeting as amended.

Seconded by Jeff Bird. So voted.

Discussion of NATA Contract and Recommendation

Simon Barnett entertained comments and discussion on the proposed contract. Jeff Levesque noted that the school board and NATA have published their support for the contract in the paper. He highlighted the concessions teachers have made, including insurance changes. Sharon Nelson stated her support of the contract, but doesn't feel a press release is necessary. Simon agreed that a press release is probably unnecessary as the committee's official support, or non-support, will appear on the ballot in March. Stacy Buckley reviewed all of the concessions in the contract.

The committee discussed the actual raise for teachers. They will receive 4.6% first year, 4.72% second year.

Skip asked about insurance stipends for spouses both working for the district. Stacy emphasized that the contract spells out that spouses are ineligible for the stipend if both spouses are covered under the district policy.

Jeff Bird stated that morale among teachers has been an issue in the past and stated his support of doing a press release stating support of the teacher contract.

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Jeff Bird made a motion to officially state the committee's support of the teacher contract with a press release, seconded by Christen Dolloff. Sharon Nelson reiterated that she supports the contract but still doesn't see it as an essential part of that support. Motion passed unanimously.

School Board Input

School Board Rep Jeff Levesque had nothing for the committee because the school board has not met since the last committee meeting.

2015-2016 Budget Proposal Review

Michael Limanni provided an adequacy aid calculation worksheet to the committee. Stacy highlighted some of the changes in adequacy aid and the subsequent tax cap calculation.

Currently, the proposed budget falls \$174,548 below the tax cap. Mr. Limanni also noted that this year the default budget does fall below the proposed budget, contrary to years past.

Jeff Levesque ran down some of the items the School Board cut from the budget in order to meet the tax cap. He noted that the cuts impact both students and infrastructure.

Jeff Bird asked about the replacement of the NMMS roof being cut from the budget. He was curious if the cut was prudent given the state of the building. Michael Limanni stated that he has relied on the recommendation of the facilities manager.

Stan Newton asked for the reason why the school board decided to cut such an important facilities expense. Jeff Levesque explained that the School Board had to cut about \$600,000 from the budget to meet the tax cap. Michael Limanni then noted that the state estimated adequacy aid has since come in higher than was expected, so now there is \$174K to reach the tax cap, but things can still adjust from here. Sharon Nelson asked about clarification of using the emergency funds in the case of the NMMS roof. It was explained that, in case of emergency, the school board would have to convene and ask the budget committee to release the fund balance money for the expense.

Discussion of capital improvement plans. Capital improvement funds allow for budgeting and long-term planning of big ticket items.

Skip Reilly asked about the warrant article for facilities maintenance. Mr. Limanni said that about \$110,000 is being used for a mandatory replacement of oil tanks at NRHS and BES, which was taken out of the last budget cycle. Skip asked about using facility reserves, which has been passed on past year warrant articles, for the NMMS Roof. Stacy noted that a warrant article would have to pass the voters and the school board would need to approve the expenditure.

Discussion about the fund balance.

Simon Barnett asked if the budget committee can submit warrant article. Stacy Buckley replied that, no, the article would have to be petitioned or raised at deliberative session. Jeff Levesque reminded the committee that motions from the floor at the deliberative session could jeopardize the teacher contract. Sharon Nelson asked about the grants for phone safety mentioned by Mr. Favorite at the last meeting. Mr. Limanni noted that he has been seeking grant funds, but it is not as easy as Mr. Favorite had implied. In regards to cell towers, Mr. Reilly cautioned that there may be other regulations set by the SEC and that towers have proved unpopular in this area.

Sharon Nelson made motion to add the cost of the middle school roof back into the proposed budget.

Michael Limanni discussed the calculation of the default budget. It starts with last year's budget, then addresses contractual changes (bussing, health insurance, worker's compensation, etc.), and obligations to facilities expenses.

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John Jenness asked about the future of NMMS. He offered his opinion that taking care of NMMS would go a long way considering the public and the impression that the board is not listening to those that wish to keep the building. The condition of the schools matters. *Mr. Jenness seconded Sharon Nelson's motion to add the cost of the NMMS roof.*

Skip Reilly asked about BES closure in lieu of NMMS. He noted that NMMS has more potential than BES for reconfiguration. Mr. Limanni noted that the facilities committee is taking a thoughtful look at facilities and there is going to be a thorough long-term plan substantiated with research.

Motion restated: Sharon Nelson moved to expend an additional \$93,000 to repair the roof on the middle school. Seconded by John Jenness. Passed Unanimously.

Stan Newton asked about the figure to paint the buildings. Stacy Buckley noted that the figure estimated was for a contractor to paint all school hallways and interior doors exclusive of BHVS. The school board voted to reduce the amount originally proposed from about \$25,000 to \$15,000. Mr. Reilly asked about the estimate for the roof and if actual costs could come in differently. Mr. Limanni stated that these figures are quotes, but they have not gone out to formal bids. Simon Barnett asked about taking other items out of the budget to make up the difference in painting. Mr. Limanni reminded the committee that this is a bottom line budget and the school board will make the final call for appropriation of funds. Stan Newton asked about the priority of what gets painted and Stacy Buckley noted that the facilities manager would likely make the decision. He also asked about a figure for repair of the fields at NRHS. Stacy noted that there are funds in the budget as a starting point to maintain the fields, but to repair them completely would be a huge expense. He asked whether it is permissible for citizens to put together a plan and volunteer their time to repair the fields. She said it absolutely is permissible, with a thought out plan.

In discussion of putting more of an emphasis on NMMS, Jeff Levesque asked which would have a bigger impact; refinishing gym floors or painting. Mike Limanni stated that small improvements can have a big impact on school pride.

Stan Newton made a motion to add \$10,960 into the budget to refinish the NMMS and NRHS gymnasium floors. Seconded by Sharon Nelson. Skip stated he does support these ventures, but that the committee should be going through the budget to cut some of the "fat" out. Passed Unanimously.

Jeff Bird asked about administrator salaries, specifically principals. Stacy noted that every administrative raise (principals and SAU staff) was cut from the budget.

Simon Barnett agreed with Mr. Reilly's suggestion to comb through the budget for the next meeting.

Review Next Meeting Date and Location

The next budget committee meeting will be held at New Hampton Community School on December 4th.

Review Agenda Topics for Next Meeting

John Jenness wanted to ask about the amount of money going back to the towns left from this year's budget. Michael Limanni and Stacy Buckley gave a quick synopsis of the situation, but will bring a handout to the next meeting.

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Public Input

John Sellers appreciates the acknowledgement of the budget committee to spend money thoughtfully.

Adjournment

Skip Reilly made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Christen Dolloff. So Voted. Meeting adjourned at 8:29pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kimberly Bliss
Budget Committee Clerk

DRAFT