

NEWFOUND AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

First Deliberative Session

February 4, 2012

10:00 am NRHS Auditorium

APPROVED AS AMENDED

School Board Present: Lloyd Belbin (Bristol), Mary Campbell (Hebron), Suzanne Cheney (Alexandria), Jon Johnson (Danbury), Louis Lieto (Groton), Vincent Paul Migliore (Bridgewater), Paul Rheinhardt (New Hampton)

School Budget Committee Present: Simon Barnett (Danbury), William R. Joseph (Bristol), Richard Kirby (Hebron), Sharon Nelson (Groton), Harold "Skip" Reilly (Alexandria), John Voelbel (Bridgewater), Francine S. Wendelboe (New Hampton)

School District Moderator: Ned Gordon

SAU Present: Marie Ross (Superintendent), Dan Rossner (Business Administrator)

Names Of People Who Signed In To Speak: Slim Spafford (Groton), William Corbiel (Alexandria), Fred Robinson (Danbury), Janet Cote (Bristol), Sherry Boynton (New Hampton), Andy O'Hara (Bristol), Paul Manganiello (Bristol), Marsha Elder (Alexandria), Don Milbrand (Bristol), Miles Sinclair (Groton), Steve Favorite (Bristol), Neal Martin (Bristol), Jim Phelps (Danbury), Dean Cascadden (Bristol), Carol Haber (Bristol), Archie Auger (Bristol), Susan Duncan (Bristol), Brendon Kernan (New Hampton), Susan Colby (Bristol), Kenny Braley (Alexandria), Mike McKinney (Bristol), Jenn Barnett (Danbury), Stephen Godek (Danbury), Dylon Collins (Bristol), Tim Farmor (Danbury), Todd Westfall (Alexandria), Thomas Arnold (Bristol), Zachary Gilpatric (Bridgewater), Eric Rottenecker (Bristol), Ruby Hill (Danbury), Kerry Mattson (Bristol)

Moderator, Ned Gordon, called the meeting to order at 10:00am

- ▲ Pledge of Allegiance
- ▲ Review of order of meeting and logistics
- ▲ Introduction of School Board Members by Mary Campbell
- ▲ Introduction of School Budget Committee Members by Francine Wendelboe

ARTICLE 1: To choose all necessary School District Officials for the year ensuing.

- ▲ This article will be addressed in the various towns during town voting, March 13th. Voting locations and times are in the First Deliberative Session Workbook and on the SAU4 website.

Paul Rheinhardt motioned and John Voelbel seconded to discuss Article 7 now rather than later.

- ▲ Janet Cote, Bristol said she didn't think it was fair to move this article forward since so many people came for the day and not just one item.
- ▲ *Motion approved by voice vote.*

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 \$21,597,525, Twenty One-Million, Five Hundred Ninety-Seven Thousand, Five Hundred Twenty-Five dollars? Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$21,700,092, Twenty-One Million, Seven Hundred Thousand, Ninety-Two Dollars, 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.

- ▲ Francine Wendelboe thanked the audience and moderator. She talked about how the School Budget Committee got to the figure in the article, including the work done by the District Data Task Force. She

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- 53 talked about academic progress and spending levels, the reduction in enrollment and the reasons behind
54 considering a \$20 million budget. She noted that they agreed to go with the School Board's number of
55 \$21,597,525 and are in complete agreement and she hopes the voters will be in agreement as well.
- 56 ▲ She further talked about the different handouts that have been going around regarding staff and class
57 sizes and clarified the numbers. She said she spent time in the schools this past week and many times
58 there is a teacher, an aide, and a student teacher from Plymouth State in the classroom. She noted there
59 is a reduction of 15.4 teaching staff and 5 paraprofessionals in the new budget and that is in line with
60 the reduction in enrollment.
- 61 ▲ Francine Wendelboe talked about the restructuring of the Danbury Elementary School to be able to
62 keep the school open and noted that this budget, as presented, will keep DES open.
- 63 ▲ She also talked about moving the 5th graders to the middle school, about the school capacity being 500
64 and there are only 300 students there now. She noted the 5th grade would be in an entirely separate wing
65 from the 7th and 8th grade. She noted Dr. Ross has laid out a comprehensive education plan to address
66 all the concerns.
- 67 ▲ Francine Wendelboe noted the restructuring of the health care benefits in the new budget and how much
68 public sector employee benefits are out of line with the private sector. She noted that there was no way
69 to restructure the teacher's health benefits because the contract wasn't open for negotiations. Francine
70 Wendelboe went over the changes to the support staff's healthcare benefits. She noted there are other
71 plans to cover children that are more cost effective than the District's plan.
- 72 ▲ She further discussed the impact to the tax payers that the committee considered and opened the floor to
73 questions and comments.
- 74 ▲ Steve Spafford, Groton, talked about the lack of education of the kids in the school for the money being
75 spent. He suggested they need to start teaching geography and history again.
- 76 ▲ Mike McKinney, Bristol, noted the work done on the budget. He talked about the savings coming from
77 support staff benefits of \$700k, moving more of the burden from the School District to the employee.
78 He noted that 100 people with coverage will be affected, but in truth the savings will come from about
79 80 people. He went over the numbers and who the support staff really are; classroom aides,
80 paraprofessionals, food service people, custodial, and administrative staff. He pointed out that 85% of
81 those employees live in the District. He talked about the "real world" factors and the impact on the
82 support staff. He went over the new costs to these employees for the changes in their health care
83 benefits. "The cost we are asking these people to absorb is crushing." He said you have to give people
84 time to work through it and not just make these cuts in one fell swoop. He went over the tax
85 breakdown, as noted in previous reports by Dan Rossner.
- 86 ▲ William Corbiel, Alexandria, talked about the cost of the District health insurance which covers him
87 and his wife. He asked about the costs of the sports programs and the insurance and why weren't they
88 cut first. He asked if the health insurance change for the support staff included Dr. Ross and Dan
89 Rossner. Dr. Ross responded, no, they do not fall into that category. He noted that not all the support
90 staff work part-time, many are full-time and year-round. He noted that at the last budget meeting Dan
91 Rossner noted that they compensate employees \$1,500 for not taking health insurance and asked if that
92 has been cut. He also asked if any thought has been gone into how this drastic change will affect the
93 families using the health benefit now. He also mentioned that there is Healthy Kids for health benefits
94 but it takes tax dollars to pay for that.
- 95 ▲ Dan Rossner went over the costs for sports at the high school. He doesn't have insurance broken out by
96 each sport; there is a general liability package. He said the budget does not include a cut to the \$1,500
97 insurance buyout, those costs are included in the proposed budget and that it is an incentive not to take
98 the insurance.
- 99 ▲ Jennifer Barnett, Danbury, knows there are people on the support staff that don't get paid for vacations,
100 etc. and wonders, if there isn't enough money in the paychecks to pay for their benefits, how is that
101 taken care of.
- 102 ▲ Dan Rossner talked about how that would work, either it would be taken in subsequent checks or the
103 employee would need to write a check to the District. Jennifer asked "How many people in the real
104 world pay their employer to work?"

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- 105 ↗ Fred Robinson talked about information gathered by the District Data Task Force. He noted we have 6
106 buildings in the district, and where we actually rank in the data when divided by the amount of
107 buildings in the district by the amount of teachers, and support staff. He noted that when you take the
108 total number of employees divided by buildings, Newfound ranks #2. He said that members of the
109 District Data Task Force have admitted there are discrepancies in the data and it is a first attempt at
110 gathering the data. He talked about the costs personally and financially to the district, families, and
111 students.
- 112 ↗ Stephen Godek, Danbury, asked for the savings if the DES was closed.
- 113 ↗ Francine Wendelboe said DES is \$1.1 million cost this year. And it would be a \$6 to \$700K savings.
- 114 ↗ Janet Cote, Bristol, talked about savings to the taxpayers. She talked about the individual taxpayers cost
115 to pay for an individual staff member's health benefits. She said the tax payers are still paying more
116 than 50% for a family plan.
- 117 ↗ Dillon Collins, Bristol, said that correlation and causation are not the same thing. You can't lower the
118 budget and expect to do better as a school. He noted there's a lot of talk about taxes being too high for
119 the community. He asked if it was ethical to lower the burden on the taxpayers while increasing the
120 burden on the staff.
- 121 ↗ Sherry Boynton, New Hampton, asked to put a time limit on speakers. She asked if when we are done
122 speaking on this article, are we done or can we bring it up again? The moderator said after the final vote
123 is taken, then he would entertain a motion so that it can't be brought up again at today's meeting.
124 Regarding the speakers, the moderator said he will cut people off if he feels they are going too long.
- 125 ↗ Tim Farmor, Danbury, said every year he's paying more taxes and hasn't gotten a raise in two years. He
126 feels bad about the cuts, but this is the reality; taxes are out-of-pocket expenses for everyone.
- 127 ↗ Andy O'Hara, Bristol, asked about sending 8 disciplinary students to Plymouth every day for the year,
128 what is the cost per student. Dr. Ross talked about the IEPs, that not all are disciplinary. She noted they
129 brought 5 students back. She said the cost is \$35k for education and \$7k for transportation. Dr. Ross
130 noted they don't charge extra for special needs students. Mr. O'Hara asked if this could be done here
131 for less money and then use the teachers we have. Dr. Ross said there are other districts as noted by the
132 District Data Task Force that do that but that is not available in this district. She did note they have
133 looked into it to provide alternative learning areas to bring students back and save money but currently
134 don't have the money or structure to do that.
- 135 ↗ Todd Westfall, Alexandria, said the reality for him is that he is now self-employed with no insurance
136 because his company restructured. He wants the District to treat people fairly. He has an obligation to
137 pay for education, but not to employ more people than we need or pay for more insurance than other
138 districts do. It needs to be fair and equitable. We need to be competitive. According to the District Data
139 Task Force, we pay the second best benefits, but we need to treat our employees fairly. The reality is
140 that cuts need to be made. The cuts to staff are supported by other studies; overstaffing and overpaying
141 do not equate to better education. We are not getting the results as other districts of similar size that are
142 paying the same or higher. The District Data Task Force information is backed up nationally and this is
143 not the way to get a good education for our kids.
- 144 ↗ Paul Manganiello, Bristol, said the reality of the insurance packages for the district and municipality of
145 Bristol is a bailout.
- 146 ↗ Tom Arnold, Bristol, offered an amendment *"To reject the \$21,597,525 budget and vote for a*
147 *\$20million baseline budget. \$1,597,525 less than recommended by the School Board and Budget*
148 *Committee. Future budget increases shall be tied to specific increases in academic performance."*
149 Donald Milbrand, Bristol, seconded.
- 150 ↗ Tom Arnold, Bristol, spoke to his amendment. He talked about the analysis done by the Budget
151 Committee; he values independent thinking and analysis and if \$20 million is good for other areas, it's
152 good enough for us. He talked about the burden being put on non-bargaining unit employees and it is
153 time to look at the bargaining unit and other areas to cut. He believes in value and paying for
154 performance.
- 155 ↗ Donald Milbrand, Bristol, said he seconded the amendment because he believes the School Budget
156 Committee came up with the number by looking at all the lines. He talked about the role of the

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- 157 Selectmen and how they decide how to spend the money. He is confident that the School Board can
158 decide how to make the right cuts and spend the money. He encouraged the School Board to run the
159 schools the best way they see fit.
- 160 ▲ Eric Rottenecker, Bristol, believes they need to get it down to \$20 million. He talked about the
161 academics and believes the low numbers are because of the high level of special education needs in the
162 district. He said it's unfortunate that the teachers won't renegotiate their contracts. There are a lot of
163 people struggling to pay their own insurance and they have to pay someone else's 97%.
- 164 ▲ Steve Favorite, Bristol, said he spent some time in Missouri during the floods and asked a lot of
165 questions on how they run their budgets. He came back and took a look at what is done about
166 substitutes. He noted \$145k was spent for substitutes this year. He asked the pay for subs and Dan
167 Rossner explained the rates. Mr. Favorite said if you just took the figures, it equals about 12 teachers
168 out per day; he said he's talked to some subs who are in the schools almost every day. He said this is an
169 area that needs to be addressed.
- 170 ▲ Simon Barnett, Danbury, wanted to clarify that the School Budget Committee is recommending the
171 \$21,597,525 because they couldn't get to \$20 million.
- 172 ▲ Deidre Conway, Alexandria, President of Newfound Area Teachers Association, said the comments that
173 the teachers weren't willing to make changes are untrue; they weren't asked to renegotiate.
- 174 ▲ Neal Martin, Bristol, talked about making insurance payments; he doesn't think they need to do more
175 than pay their taxes for those that lose their benefits.
- 176 ▲ Todd Westfall, Alexandria, thinks the amendment is too deep a cut. He thinks they could be at a \$20
177 million budget based on the data, but to get there in one year would be a detriment to the students. He
178 said "do not think non-support for a cut equals support for an increase."
- 179 ▲ Kerry Mattson, Bristol, said the \$20 million did not come out of District Data Task Force information;
180 the School Budget Committee pulled it out of the sky and he thinks the amendment is a bad idea and he
181 wants the School Board to address where those cuts would come from.
- 182 ▲ Dr. Ross explained how she and Dan Rossner came up with the cuts that would need to take place to
183 reach a \$20 million budget: close DES, cut 26.5 teachers, cut Junior Varsity sports, cut healthcare,
184 move the 5th grade to the middle school. She further discussed class size regulations and how they came
185 up with the cuts. She noted that the Budget Committee went through each line of the budget and the
186 votes that were taken and their counts. She talked about the savings through the Honeywell project and
187 now they are down to cuts in personnel to get to the \$20 million and they voted to go with the School
188 Board budget.
- 189 ▲ Chris Doll said we as communities elected them to do a job. He said this is step one to get to a lower
190 budget; lets stick to \$21.5 and see how it goes.
- 191 ▲ The moderator asked the crowd if they were ready to vote on the amendment by voice vote on the
192 amendment.
- 193 ▲ Louis Lieto, point of information, asked about the second component of the amendment saying that
194 future budget increases would be tied to academic performance. The moderator wasn't sure how that
195 would be enforced.
- 196 ▲ The moderator took a voice vote of the audience and he ruled the amendment was defeated. He brought
197 the discussion back to the original article.
- 198 ▲ Miles Sinclair, Groton, proposed an amendment "*To amend the dollar amount in article #7 Operating*
199 *Budget to \$21,947,525*" Seconded by Susan Colby, Bristol.
- 200 ▲ Mr. Sinclair spoke to his amendment. He wants to be fair; the bulk of the savings in the budget are
201 being made on the support staff and that is unfair, they are being fed to the lions. He thinks they should
202 grandfather existing employees and change for new employees. He noted that the president of the
203 teachers union said the contract was settled. He further explained his experience with unions. He talked
204 about the status quos and the teacher's contract meaning no change in their contract, but the contract
205 expires in July. He said the door has been left open to renegotiate and have any increases or decreases
206 retroactive to this time frame. This gets back to the disproportionate share to the support staff. \$700k is
207 being saved by lessening the benefits to the support staff. His \$350k amendment would help to lessen
208 the burden on the support staff.

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- 209 ↗ Dan Rossner put up the slide with the current health plan information for the teachers and support staff.
210 He explained the slide for the audience. Miles asked the audience to look at the plan on the left and
211 who has only \$5 co-pays and no out of pocket deductible. He then went back to the issue with the
212 contracts, and said that teachers have a sweet health plan and if they opened up the negotiations and
213 made modest concessions, they could put less of the burden on the support staff. Due to the economic
214 conditions, it is time for those concessions. He talked about municipal cuts made in other towns and the
215 need to react to the current conditions.
- 216 ↗ Dean Cascadden, Bristol, talked about cost containment and cost shifting in health insurance and the
217 need to change plans to make people better consumers of health plans. He thinks this change is too
218 much too fast. He talked about losing employees who have been with this district for years and noted
219 the lack of quality employees he gets in the Bow District where he works because of the lack of
220 compensation.
- 221 ↗ David Hill, Bristol, said that both of the amendments haven't changed the default amount. The
222 moderator noted they can't change the default amount.
- 223 ↗ William Corbeil, Alexandria, asked if the money being added in would go to the health insurance for
224 the support staff. The moderator noted there was an expression of intent but the School Board can
225 spend how they want.
- 226 ↗ The moderator called for a vote on the amendment by voice. He could not tell so he called for a hand
227 vote. The vote was too close to call. There was a call for a ballot vote, approved by more than 7 voters
228 standing. There was discussion about rules of how the voting works, amendments, discussions etc.
- 229 ↗ Recess on Article 7 until after the vote on the amendment. Continue onto Article 2.

230

231 **ARTICLE 2: EXPENDABLE TRUST FUND: BUILDING MAINTENANCE:** To see if the Newfound Area
232 School District will vote to raise and appropriate up to the sum of sixty thousand dollars (\$60,000.00) to be
233 added to the Expendable Trust Fund: Building Maintenance, and to authorize the use/transfer in that amount
234 from the undesignated fund balance available July 1, 2012 for this purpose. The School Board and the Budget
235 Committee recommend this article.

- 236 ↗ Louis Lieto addressed the article. He noted it is a recurring article to be used for unexpected elements
237 that occur in the School District and noted some instances where it has been used. He further explained
238 the article and that the School Board and School Budget Committee agree on it.
- 239 ↗ The moderator asked for questions or comments.
- 240 ↗ Carol Huber, Bristol, asked if there is any money in that line item now. Louis Lieto said it is at zero and
241 has been used on the life safety measures in the last year.
- 242 ↗ The moderator asked the audience to vote on closing the debate. Audience voted in favor for article 2 to
243 appear on the ballot as written.

244

245 **ARTICLE 3: TAX CAP (By Petition):** Shall we adopt the provisions of RSA 32:5-b, and implement a tax cap
246 whereby the governing body (or budget committee) shall not submit a recommended budget that increases the
247 amount to be raised by local taxes based on the prior fiscal year's actual amount of local taxes raised, by more
248 than 2%?

- 249 ↗ Barbara Greenwood, Bristol, explained why she proposed this article. She knows the School Budget
250 Committee worked hard to come up with this budget. She understands the need to provide a budget that
251 will adequately educated our young people, but there were other departments that are part of the town
252 that have an impact on the tax dollar and she wants to achieve a balance that will support the people in
253 our town and allow the children to get a good education.
- 254 ↗ Archie Auger, Bristol, asked if this article is open to amendment specifically regarding the percentage
255 of the increase. The moderator said the percent could be amended but the language should stay the
256 same.
- 257 ↗ Dean Cascadden said in principle he is against the tax cap because this type of meeting gives people a
258 vote, but this disenfranchises the voter and it's not appropriate for our type of government.
- 259 ↗ George Corrette, Bristol, talked about the amount raised by local taxes and would question if its 2%
260 limit on the entire budget or the amount to be raised by local taxes. The response was the local amount.

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- 261 ▲ Duncan Westfall, Alexandria, responded to Dean Cascadden saying that this is a change to the language
262 but it could still be amended higher.
263 ▲ The moderator called for closing the vote. Audience voted in favor for Article 3 to appear on ballot as
264 is.
265

266 **ARTICLE 4: (by petition)** To see if the voters of the Newfound Area School District will direct the School
267 Board to undertake a study of the feasibility and suitability of adding a junior high wing on to the high school,
268 removing the Bristol Elementary School to the building currently used as the middle school, removing the SAU
269 offices to the building currently used as the middle school, and establishing a K-6 school at each of the four
270 elementary schools – Bridgewater-Hebron, Bristol, Danbury and New Hampton. The study shall be conducted
271 by a committee composed of at least one member of the School Board, one member of the School Budget
272 Committee, one member of the Board of Selectmen from each town or their designee, and such other members
273 as may be appointed by the committee. Within 180 days after the date of its formation, the committee shall
274 report its finding to the voters of the District through a meeting called by the Board for that specific purpose.

- 275 ▲ Ruby Hill, Danbury, spoke to both article 4 and 5. She said she’s talked about the reason for keeping
276 students at the elementary level longer for educational and financial reasons. She noted they were just
277 studies to find out the benefits.
278 ▲ The moderator called for closing the debate, audience voted in favor and Article 4 will appear on ballot
279 as is.
280

281 **ARTICLE 5: (by petition)** To see if the voters of the Newfound Area School District will direct the School
282 Board to undertake a study of the feasibility and suitability of changing the District configuration to be one of
283 four local districts and one cooperative district, with each local district providing a K-8 education for their own
284 students and the cooperative district providing a 9-12 education for all students from the four local districts,
285 said districts being Bridgewater-Hebron, Bristol, Danbury and New Hampton. The study shall be conducted by
286 a committee composed of at least one member of the School Board, one member of the School Budget
287 Committee, one member of the Board of Selectmen from each town or their designee, and such other members
288 as may be appointed by the committee. Within 180 days after the date of its formation, the committee shall
289 report its finding to the voters of the District through a meeting called by the Board for that specific purpose.

- 290 ▲ Susan Duncan, Bristol, asked if either or both were adopted, would the School Board follow through
291 and do what the voters ask.
292 ▲ Louis Lieto asked if she meant would they follow through on the recommendations.
293 ▲ Susan Duncan asked if they are interested in looking at alternatives. Louis Lieto said the Board took a
294 positive step with the District Data Task Force in getting information that will help them to better run
295 the district. He can’t say what will happen in the future since there is an election with 3 positions open
296 and he can’t answer if they would follow through at this time.
297 ▲ The moderator called for closing the debate, audience voted in favor and Article 5 will appear on ballot
298 as is.
299

300 **ARTICLE 6: (by petition):** Shall we rescind the provisions of RSA 40:13 (known as SB2), as adopted by the
301 Newfound Area School District (SAU4) on March 21, 1997, so that the official ballot will not longer be used
302 for voting on all questions but only for the election of officers and certain other questions for which the official
303 ballot is required by law?

- 304 ▲ Steve Spafford, Groton, said he wants it to stay the way it is now, not go back to the way it used to be.
305 He supports disposing of this article.
306 ▲ The moderator called for closing the debate, audience voted in favor and Article 6 will appear on ballot
307 as is.
308

309 **ARTICLE 7: OPERATING BUDGET (CONTINUED)**

- 310 ▲ The moderator noted the ballots were counted 266 no, 256 yes, the amendment is defeated. He also
311 noted there were two that were unreadable and if counted the margin would have been 8 votes.
312 ▲ Marcia Elder, Alexandria, wants foreclosures to be considered, how many towns are already owed taxes

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313 from people that are delinquent and can't pay taxes. They also need to consider the drop in house
314 prices.

315 ▲ Zack Gilpatric, Bridgewater, wants to know what happens when the support staff can't afford to come
316 to work. What happens to the budget then if we're already sending kids to Plymouth for IEPs? What are
317 the other financial consequences cutting the budget has? Dr. Ross said it's hard to predict what will
318 happen.

319 ▲ Steve Spafford called the question. Moderator refused to take the motion until people have had a chance
320 to be heard.

321 ▲ Karen Porrazzo, New Hampton, made an amendment "*To increase the budget \$258K with the intent to*
322 *have the 5th grade remain at their prospective elementary schools.*" The moderator said she could
323 express an intent but can only amend the dollar amount. Seconded by Brandon Kernan, New Hampton.

324 ▲ Karen Porrazzo spoke to her amendment. She spoke about her special needs daughter who has been
325 supported through the Newfound district. She talked about volunteering in the 5th grade greenhouse and
326 the programs provided to 5th graders who volunteer their time and the skills the students learn in this
327 environment. She noted that there is no other tax in NH than this and the funds need to come from
328 somewhere. She understands the special needs students take a lot of the tax dollars and it is appreciated.

329 ▲ Brandon Kernan, New Hampton, does not support moving the 5th grade to the middle school. He said
330 there is no comprehensive plan in place. He said he's asked questions and was told "they will do the
331 best they can". He talked about the discussion of reducing an ICT teacher in the elementary schools and
332 a part-time music teacher, that this would reduce education for the lower grade levels. He doesn't want
333 his children to be guinea pigs while they figure things out.

334 ▲ Vincent Paul Migliore, Bridgewater, provided a statement:

335 "What I think we've got here is a Gordian Knot. Bold Action has now become necessary. For
336 those who may not recall – a Gordian Knot is a complex knot tied by a Greek king. According
337 to legend, Alexander the Great undid the Gordian knot by cutting through it with his sword.
338 He took bold action to solve what had otherwise been a long and arduous problem for all
339 others. By extension, to "cut the Gordian knot" is to solve quickly any very complex problem
340 or to get to the heart of a problem.

341

342 I assure this assembly, your elected representatives spend hours and hours on what is best for
343 this district. We spend your tax dollars on legal expertise when appropriate to get advice and
344 direction. We employ highly qualified professionals in our administration to manage the
345 personnel and operations they employ on all our behalf.

346

347 In numerous years past, I have often heard from those who've advocated the school board's
348 (usually) higher budget numbers, that we should rely upon our elected officials' judgment who
349 spend so many hours working these issues. I find it inconsistent for those of you who want to
350 raise the budget another 250K in a year when once again your Budget Committee and School
351 Board agree on a reasonable yet significant but overdue reduction to correlate with years of
352 declining student population, and grossly out-of-line benefits by comparison with other
353 districts.

354

355 Let's be clear, it's YOUR RIGHT to do this. I welcome your attendance here to exercise this
356 franchise and am glad to see this turnout. So vote accordingly. Know however, that it shall be
357 in the hands of next year's school board, whom you elect March 13th -- and whether you desire
358 to see a change there as well --- WHETHER we will actually spend the additional funds or all
359 of the budget you so vote here today, and if those who vote on election day agree with that.

360

361 I remind you, it was a majority vote who decided it was time to make this reduction. The net
362 effect of your choice could simply be to make the taxpayers PAY that bill, but your new board
363 could chose simply not to spend it, returning it to the towns the following year. While
364 according to the Dept of Revenue, the towns cannot use those funds for other purposes, any

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365 unspent credits applied back could end up as being tax-neutral, since you would be putting
366 elected officials in an enviable position of being able to budget for other items without
367 technically raising your taxes.
368

369 For example: New fire engines, New policemen, Other projects of interest to the selectmen.
370 Those – as just a few possibilities – could occur instead of an actual decrease in taxes, because
371 of this vote here, today.
372

373 I, as one member of the board scheduled for next year, do not want to RIF any teachers, in fact
374 I want to add music and art to make our offering more well-rounded. So just because our sole
375 employee – the superintendent – complied with the board’s directive to come up with a
376 methodology to fund the district at 21.6M doesn’t mean we will: 1) close Danbury, 2) cut 15
377 teachers, 3) combine 5th graders, or Only modify healthcare paid insurance for the employees
378 of part-time workers, as currently proposed in the budget. We may just start all over again
379 after we know what the amount will be. I hear you on the 5th grade issue! We may just start
380 over in spite of what finally gets funded by the vote today and at the polls.
381

382 So vote your choice today and on Election Day March 13th, for whatever you believe to be
383 right, keeping in mind what those whom you elected believed in the majority – this was the
384 right thing to do.

- 385 ▲ Dr. Ross addressed the comment that they don’t have a comprehensive plan to move the 5th graders to
386 the middle school. She talked about her background and the 5 through 8 model. She went over the
387 proposed schedule if the 5th graders were moved, that they would be self contained within the middle
388 school building. She further discussed programs available to 5th graders, art, music, physical education
389 and the hours of instruction. She also talked about the lack of gym space at New Hampton and
390 performance scores. She said they can guarantee a wonderful education while being respectful of the
391 budget. She talked about staff reductions and other issues.
- 392 ▲ Kenny Braley, Alexandria, said it pains him to think that when this happens his daughter will be moving
393 to the Bristol school. She goes to the Bridgewater school and they’ve been happy with it. His concern is
394 that the jump from going from the 5th grade to a middle school and being around 7th and 8th graders. His
395 taxes are going up while his paycheck goes down.
- 396 ▲ Susan Colby, Bristol, is speaking for the children and is in favor of the schools. She noted that her
397 current 4th grader is not ready to be a middle schooler. She asked about the numbers of students when
398 combining the classes. Dr. Ross noted the class size. Susan Colby said they need a task force to see
399 what other schools are doing right. There are problems already, and taking money out won’t fix
400 anything.
- 401 ▲ The moderator called for a vote on the amendment. He could not judge by voice or hand and called for
402 a standing count. The audience voted 203 Yeah, 251 Nay. The amendment was defeated.
- 403 ▲ The moderator called for a close on the debate. The audience voted in favor and Article 7 will appear
404 on the ballot as is.
405

406 The meeting adjourned at 2:10 pm.

407 Respectfully submitted,

408 Amy Lyn Kench, Clerk
409 Newfound Area School Board
410 Newfound School Budget Committee
411

412 URLs accessed by Vincent Paul Migliore : <http://www.sau4.org>
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