

**WINCHESTER SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
NOVEMBER 4, 2021
WINCHESTER SCHOOL LIBRARY**

Board Members Present: L. Picard, T. Perkins, L. Hildreth, J. Rokes T. Kilanski
Administration Present: K. Dassau, T. Taylor, V. Carey, M. Hill

The meeting was called to order by Chair, L. Picard at 6:38pm.

L. Picard requested to move the agenda of tonight's meeting around.

The Board had no issue with that.

BUDGET DISCUSSION:

Curriculum:

V. Carey reviewed the Curriculum account and answered questions of the Board.

L. Picard asked about Field Trips.

V. Carey explained the line was reduced this year not knowing what we would return to after COVID. Advised they are not suggesting increasing that line yet, as they don't know what they will be going back to doing. She thinks it's too early to say what will happen next year. They will be having some conversation on it.

Technology:

V. Carey reviewed and answered questions of the Board.

L. Picard asked if reductions in actuals spent in 2020 IT Contracted Services had something to do with COVID. Proposed was \$18,000 and 2020/21 actual was just under \$10,000.

V. Carey wasn't sure – it is based on a contract which is a 12 month contract, so it shouldn't have changed.

T. Taylor will look at that further.

Telephone & Internet: T. Kilanski noted that the amount was up to \$60,000 at one point, then down to \$55,000, now \$62,000. Seems like a good size jump. Feels it is an astronomical amount of money to pay for phone and internet.

V. Carey explained service fees tend to increase; budgeted amounts have fluctuated, but actual amounts have been increasing steadily. There was an increase in bandwidth a few years back to support all of the devices. Every student in the building has a device and are using them regularly. They also have desktop computers and there are computer labs and all servers had to be increased to support additional devices. Had to increase upload/download speeds for student testing and assessments. Also includes cell phones and land lines.

V. Carey explained under Computers and Computer Equipment again this year there are multiple Grants available so they are proposing reducing that line. Will expect those lines to go up at some point when monies are no longer available and they are cycling through computers.

L. Picard advised her concern is if we reduce an account and then increase it, need to re-explain why. There was a conversation that came out of the Technology Committee meeting regarding developing a template that shows when we are going to need to be replacing equipment. Perhaps that becomes a working document and part of our conversation so when some of these Grants go away we have this conversation that's been going on for some time.

V. Carey advised Technology Committee will write a new three year plan this year that will include when certain things need to happen and when the Grants are set to expire so they are ready when we need to increase. The document will be part of it so everyone is aware.

This information will come back at the next meeting for approval. V. Carey advised anyone with questions should e-mail her so she can address them.

Professional Development: L. Hildreth advised she looked at the prior three year plan and what the new plan will look like. There are some things not done due to changes from COVID. Reviewed notes from the Committee Meeting. The next meeting is December 2nd.

School Administration:

All documents discussed tonight will be on the Winchester website tomorrow.

K. Dassau reviewed the proposal with the Board. The administration team meets weekly; came up with 3.5% increase for salaries for Administrative positions. Thinks they will be competitive in this area with the exception of the Speech Language Assistant and Occupational Therapist. Explained the recommendation for the Speech Language Assistant is the same adjustment made last year that was rejected. That person could be making substantially more if they were to leave. Not looking for full market adjustment, but it would make the position relatively competitive.

The Board reviewed salaries.

L. Picard feels the amount for positions where staff are retiring are competitive.

T. Perkins wanted to know if the Superintendent's position will be competitive enough as we will need to hire for that position.

L. Picard feels it is much more in line now.

V. Carey explained they were in a position many years back when the person was hired when we really needed to fill the Speech/Language Assistant position and couldn't do so. They found a person and the agreement at the time was a very low salary and paying for her training in order for her to get certified. The Board had agreed to that at the time. She stayed on and they have tried year-after-year to increase her salary to a more reasonable adjusted salary. They have worked to make this adjustment and she still is not close to where she should be to be competitive. V. Carey feels this is a really important adjustment to make.

K. Dassau advised this is a proposal – a place to start. K. Dassau advised he has heard criticism in the past that Administration gets to pick their own salary increase. Explained the Board picked the number last year and it wasn't the number they thought. Fully aware the Board could make an agreement to lower it or could raise it, if so desired. This is just a starting point of conversation.

L. Picard wants to discuss these two positions a little bit more. Explained they have been fighting for them for some time and she would love to be able to make the adjustment versus being forced into the adjustment as they were previously. Feels they really could have been in a very difficult position if they were not able to make that adjustment and find the quality people they did to replace some key positions in this last year. Doesn't want to be in that position again. Both positions are critical need.

V. Carey explained they had an Occupational Therapist for a long time in this district who retired. The rate of pay for that Occupational Therapist was above what they are asking for this market increase. The year she retired was the year the budget was adjusted with the large cut. One of the areas that was adjusted was Occupational Therapy. That person was here a long time and was retiring so they reduced what we were offering and paying for that position which is shared with Hinsdale. What we offered when we hired the

Occupational Therapist was what was budgeted. V. Carey explained they were lucky she stayed, she is licensed in multiple states – other states are paying more for those positions in many cases. They have communicated to her that they would be advocating for an increase closer to market rate as we approached this last year and this year in the budget.

After discussion, **T. Perkins MOVED to approve the proposal as presented; SECONDED by: L. Hildreth, T. Kilanski understands they want to move things along, but feels people should have a chance to look at the information longer. He wants to review it at home and bring his decision back to the next meeting; L. Picard WITHDREW her MOTION and L. Hildreth WITHDREW her SECOND.**

Brenden Hubbard asked for comparisons for the two positions that want market increases.

V. Carey can get that. If there are questions or someone needs something they should e-mail her as early as possible before the next meeting so she will have time to do research.

L. Picard advised if anyone feels they would come in and suggest something other than what was recommended, please give T. Taylor a heads-up so the Board can discuss in real numbers when they revisit.

Teacher's and Support Staff:

T. Taylor reviewed with the Board and answered questions. Some salaries need to be updated; all salaries will be fully updated for the next meeting.

T. Perkins asked about ESSER Funds for positions.

T. Taylor – ESSER funds are being used for Reading Specialists and other positions under Learning Loss. That will continue with ESSER 3 funding.

V. Carey explained they can't replace a position from in the budget with ESSER funds.

L. Picard advised the Board will need to vote on it in case the Warrant Article did not pass.

T. Taylor advised she will be moving some salaries to different lines where they belong; will confirm and bring back.

Accounting Person – 2500 Account under Business Administrator/Staff Salary.

T. Taylor is asking for the opportunity to have six hours available for the Accounting Clerk person when they are able to put in extra hours.

L. Picard sees T. Taylor here late; wants people to know she is here doing what she needs to.

L. Picard asked for an updated job description for that position.

T. Taylor will bring it back.

The new Capital Plan will be distributed to the Board to review before Facilities discussion on 11/18.

L. Picard reiterated if anyone has questions to e-mail her or Administration so they have real information to discuss at the next meeting.

The Budget meetings with the School Board will be held on 12/7 and 12/14 at 6:00pm here at the school.

L. Picard asked T. Sepe if the Selectboard would like to do back-to-back meetings on 12/5 in case there are any snow issues. Asked that she remember for the next Selectboard meeting.

T. Sepe thinks it is a great idea.

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT – V. Carey:

*Workshop day was held on Tuesday. Staff worked on Math skills, intervention tools, improving data analysis and on some new Math screening with a Math Coach and Title One Project Manager.

*This week NHDI residency for Grades One through Four will end on Tuesday 11/9. Planning an evening performance at 6:00pm. There will be guidelines for attendance. Masks will be required. The instructors love to come to Winchester.

*Math Consultant is coming in to work with teachers on discourse in Math. Will share techniques, model teaching; will observe teachers and make recommendations for improving understanding of numbers and patterns.

T. Kilanski advised V. Carey mentioned NHDI and all the good things that are happening. He was curious if Veterans Day was mentioned or if anything special is planned.

V. Carey advised there are a variety of things that happen across the classrooms in regard to Veterans Day. Often times there are card making events that then go to Veterans homes and that kind of thing. In the past couple of years they have not done full school assemblies or asked Veterans to come into the school during COVID. They hope to return to that. Teachers are deciding on the events that will happen in their classrooms independently.

T. Kilanski advised he will be interested to hear about those.

BUSINESS MANAGER'S REPORT – T. Taylor:

*T. Taylor explained on weeks where there are School Board meetings, there will be an Accounts Payable Manifest. Can be reviewed and approved at the meeting. The present schedule is not efficient with limited hours for the Accounting Clerk. Payroll can be uploaded electronically for review.

T. Perkins asked if Marie Braley can do an E-Sign so they can still see the Manifest; now can't see it once she signs it.

T. Taylor will check with Marie Braley; could do a PDF.

*T. Taylor gave the MS-25 to the Board for review and signatures. Reviewed areas with the Board including Food Service and reduction in deficit of \$223,000. At this point if the \$400,000 was applied today, there would be a positive balance of \$200,000.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

*No need for non-public session tonight. Will need very brief non-meeting.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS:

Theresa Sepe asked what the second position is.

T. Taylor - It is the Speech/Language Assistant

Theresa Sepe asked what the six-hour position is for.

T. Taylor – the Accounting Clerk.

L. Hildreth advised the Board already approved up to six additional hours for that position.

Next year it will be in the budget for a 30 hour a week position.

Kelli Kilanski asked about the process for asking questions at a Board meeting. Sometimes the public is told thank you when they ask a question and the Board moves on and sometimes the question is answered right away.

K. Dassau explained there is a School Board policy on public comments. There is a difference between someone commenting something nice about NHDI and someone bringing a criticism about staff that should be discussed at another time.

Kelli Kilanski advised she asked a question at a meeting and was just told thank you. Not sure how it worked.

K. Dassau advised the Board Policy is BEDH; there is a distinction. The Board has an agenda and discusses it. Citizens' Comments are not meant to hijack the agenda. The Board would have to

decide if they would put the discussion as an agenda item. The Board Policy is on the School's webpage.

The Board reviewed the Manifest and asked questions.

J. Rokes asked about a consulting fee for the former Director of Facilities.

T. Kilanski advised before he left, he doesn't remember money being discussed.

K. Dassau advised he wanted reimbursement.

J. Rokes asked for a copy of the invoice.

T. Taylor will get that.

K. Dassau advised he will review how they came to the decision of using Ian Spencer as a Consultant.

MANIFESTS:

L. Picard MOVED to approve the Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of \$13,709.99 dated 11/5/21; SECONDED by: L. Hildreth, VOTED: 5-0, MOTION PASSED.

L. Picard MOVED to approve the Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of \$205,329.03 dated 11/5/21; SECONDED by: L. Hildreth, VOTED: 5-0, MOTION PASSED.

L. Picard MOVED to approve the MS-25 for submission to the DOE; SECONDED by: L. Hildreth, VOTED: 5-0, MOTION PASSED.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Facilities Committee met today. The Facilities portion of the Budget and the Capital Plan will be reviewed at the meeting on 11/18.

Policy Committee will meet on November 18th at 5:30pm.

The meeting with the Health Agencies will be held at the Town Hall on Tuesday, 11/9/21 at 6:30pm.

T. Kilanski advised he had heard that at the last meeting the Board voted on getting a stipend. He has mixed feelings. Parents stood up to do Sports Boosters so students could play sports. He has volunteered to be on the School Board. He would rather see that money go to the kids.

L. Picard advised when building the budget they are supposed to concentrate on a figure, not people in positions now. Also, a stipend would be helpful if there are meetings three days a week to get kids pizza, if losing time from work, etc. Feels if someone gets paid, they are more apt to be there and do what is needed. It is a job. She thinks the conversation will come up again.

J. Rokes advised he reached out to the Chair of the Select Board. They advised that they receive the same stipend as other members. He would like to revisit this; doesn't agree, but thinks it should all be equal.

L. Picard will look into it.

L. Picard MOVED to adjourn the meeting; SECONDED by: J. Rokes, VOTED: 5-0, MOTION PASSED.

Respectfully submitted,

Peggy Higgins
School Board Secretary