

**WINCHESTER SCHOOL BOARD
WINCHESTER SCHOOL LIBRARY
MARCH 5, 2020**

Board Members Present: L. Picard, K. Bazan, T. Perkins, V. Cole, A. Carle

Administration Present: K. Dassau, M. Henry, I. Spencer

The meeting was called to order by School Board Chair, L. Picard at 6:36 pm.

Citizens:

Heath Pelkey had questions about the flyer that was sent out to Winchester residents which stated the cost per student was \$23,051. Was that an accurate number per student?

L. Picard advised the flyer was not affiliated with the Board. The Board will discuss it later in the meeting.

Bill McGrath came to the meeting as the School District Treasurer. He apologized for not putting in the time for the district that he should have. He has had some personal issues. He has concerns about the 2018 and prior years' audits. The Auditor's Report showed a deficit balance in ACCESS. Are there any plans to fund that?

K. Dassau explained they have reviewed the issue and turned it over to the insurance carrier for an E&O claim investigation.

Bill McGrath concerned about there being no policy in place in 2016, 2017, 2018 over capital assets as noted by the auditors.

B. McGrath advised the issue has been ongoing for two to three years; still don't have a good policy.

L. Picard advised they have since adopted a policy.

M. Henry advised we have a policy and the auditor and State were satisfied with it.

B. McGrath asked when they expect the 2019 audit to be done.

M. Henry hopes it's done by the Summer.

Amy Hill – Received ACCESS flyer in the mail. Explained it has been a source of confusion; some mailers had the zero crossed off on the numbered Warrant Article. She wanted the Board to know. To vote yes when you think you are voting on Article 20 would be a yes vote, but that's on the Town Ballot; not to be confused with the School Warrant Article Two.

Barbara Depew wanted to discuss the retention investment of her child. Too many people have spoken on negative test scores. Wants to thank the teachers, staff and administration for the retention investment her son has received. In the past he didn't speak; is now speaking out in class. He has been called a role model because of patience and investment which he was never called before. He is now confident to debate in class, write out essays, etc. She wants to advocate for staff and teachers; don't want to lose any. She thanks them for all the work they have done for her child.

Jenny Wooster asked about the yellow flier received in the mail. She is confused about the statement that there has been negotiation with administration. Have the proposed cuts changed or shifted?

Administration will speak to that later in the meeting.

MINUTES:

L. Picard MOVED to approve the School Board Minutes of February 6th, February 10th and February 20th; SECONDED by: A. Carle, VOTED: 5-0, MOTION PASSED.

T. Perkins asked for the protocol for the Minutes.

L. Picard explained the Minutes are not official until they are approved at the Board level and then they are posted to the website. The Secretary makes a copy of her notes and districts are required to have the Minutes available five days after the meeting for public minutes and 72 hours after the meeting for non-public; if not sealed.

K. Dassau spoke regarding the flyer that was distributed to residents. There is lots of spin, false representation; it is misleading and disingenuous. Explained Administration met with some citizens in response to a statement he made that anyone with a plan regarding where the proposed cuts might come from, could discuss it with Administration. The group of citizens took gross liberties. They advised in the flier that they were working in conjunction with Administration. They used the word assure - there is no assurance. Their plan is still \$800,000 short of the target. The document distributed from the School Board lists the proposed cuts. If anything is taken off that list, need to add something in.

K. Dassau explained the cost per student in the yellow flyer is not what the exact number would be; need to include grants, add in revenues, etc. It was disingenuous and misleading. The School needs to complete the DOE 25 which is broken down by Elementary, Middle School and High School and calculate the cost per pupil. That group did not work in conjunction with Administration. There was no assurance.

M. Henry advised only one district pays less per pupil than Winchester.

Amanda Nordberg feels it makes it sound like the people who distributed had the authority to do so. Is that not true?

K. Dassau reiterated what he started his original comment with; the information was misleading, showed false representation, ingenuous. The group took gross liberties.

L. Picard – Advised there is no assurance of any information in the document not received directly from administration.

Amanda Nordberg - The Board makes the recommendations of what goes in and out on the list of cuts?

L. Picard – Yes, with suggestions from Administration.

Natalie asked questions from a Facebook viewer as to the difference between the DOE25 and the MS27.

M. Henry explained the DOE25 is a summary from the previous year and the MS27 is the Warrant to be posted prior to the Deliberative Session.

Heather Pelkey- The increase is mainly in Keene High School tuitions and out-of-district placements. We can't control those things; only Pre-School through Middle School and Administration. The cuts would have to come out of this building.

L. Picard - Or transportation.

K. Dassau explained the scope of reductions is narrowed by discretionary cuts. We can't cut contractual obligations.

L. Picard – The total increase was about \$129,000 before tuition and out-of-district placements (including \$50,000 added to the budget for the Food Program.)

Mary Gagnon – Is the Board planning to refute the information sent out?

L. Picard explained they have been speaking the facts to as many people who would listen.

Jenny Wooster thinks more clarity in laypersons language, regarding an explanation of the cost per pupil, would be helpful.

M. Henry – Everything from the expense side is taken into consideration including revenues. She thinks they are seeing a pretty average cost per pupil.

L. Picard – Maybe they can add a link to the Facebook page for the DOE and a spreadsheet to show where we land with other districts.

Natalie had a question from John Parker regarding the discrepancy on the DOE25; have items coming in for year-end after July 1st.

M. Henry explained the MS27 the budget is set until there is a vote. The MS27 is the appropriations that were voted on. Can't spend revenue unless it is offset by appropriations.

John Parker asked for a copy of the MS27; feels it should have been adjusted by now.

M. Henry cannot make adjustments to the DOE25 or the MS27 that have already been filed and accepted by the DOE.

K. Dassau advised the Board/Administration doesn't have the liberty to editorialize.

M. Henry reviewed areas in the budget that are contractual items that cannot be touched.

Everything goes up, insurance, fuel, etc. Not possible, in her professional opinion, to go back in time to a budget.

Joan Franklin Title One budget – We choose to do that. How much of that impacts taxes.

M. Henry explained it won't impact the tax rate. It is appropriated and paid for with revenues.

M. Henry – Title One and IDEA – A little over \$500,000. Raised, but get back.

Joan Franklin – This is not free money; need to raise and appropriate. One district voted not to take it.

K. Dassau explained we raise the total amount, but that is not what the tax rate is based on. The budget always has volatility with students moving in and out. The rate is set in April, after our budget is done.

The Board reviewed the Payroll and Accounts Payable Manifests and the Board asked questions.

K. Bazan MOVED to approve the Payroll manifest dated 3/6/20 in the amount of \$216,209.35; SECONDED by: T. Perkins, VOTED: 5-0, MOTION PASSED.

K. Bazan MOVED to approve the Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of \$151,578.41; SECONDED by: T. Perkins, VOTED: 5-0, MOTION PASSED.

Default Budget – There is some misunderstanding about the default budget.

M. Henry – The Default Budget is last year's budget, taking out one-time allocations and adding back in contractual obligations. The Default Budget, the way it is allocated, is not set in stone.

L. Picard advised that is a true bottom line budget as we allocate where monies need to go in the Board's best judgement.

M. Henry wanted the Board and the public to know that I. Spencer has received a certification as a School Facilities Specialist after taking seven on-line classes in less than one month. There are only 12 people in the State who have received that certification.

M. Henry – If you give I. Spencer a task he is all over it!

L. Picard asked, since V. Carey was ill and not able to attend the meeting, if anyone had any input regarding Read-Across-America.

Amanda Nordberg –Amazing start off with buddy readers from other grades; each level read to the others.

Big Word Day was Tuesday. Students defined a word and had it with them all day. It was a way to start expanding vocabulary.

Wednesday – Guest Reader Day

Thursday – Dress as your favorite Book Character

Friday – Will be a rotation of activities: Preschool – Second Grade will focus on a particular book. Upper grades have grade-level activities planned.

T. Perkins advised her son loved having a buddy for the day.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS:

A citizen advised her kids loved it; able to read to their sibling. Her son is looking forward to doing the different stations.

L. Picard read in a Fifth grade class.

Amanda Nordberg – Starting another NHDI residency next week. Fifth through Eighth Grades have a choice to participate instead of doing Unified Arts. They anticipate the NHDI performance will be held on Wednesday March 18th at 5:30pm. There will also be a performance during the day.

L. Picard – SAU hosted a forum with Andru Volinsky at 3:00 about 50 people attended, including some Hinsdale residents. Felt it was a solid attendance. Eye opening presenting about what is trending in NH. Her favorite slide was how funding is distributed throughout the State and NH is one of the lowest; VT is one of the highest. Andru Volinsky is running for Governor – the forum can be found on-line; not necessarily the one held Sunday, but one from the KMS. She encourages people to check it out.

L. Picard – If the budget passes; what is the recourse? Explained she has checked with Administration and RSA. There is no criteria that allows us to call a special meeting to ask the Town for more money.

L. Picard – Next week on Tuesday will be voting for new School Board members. This is her last official meeting as Chair, at this point. Very proud of the Board; sometimes there were only three members present for meetings. This is the first year they have a full, active, involved, Board attending not only Board meetings, but also Committee meetings. Explained there is a lot of work that goes into the Board. She is very proud.

Ms. Seymour asked via Facebook about the difference between the proposed budget and the Default budget.

M. Henry advised the cost difference is \$70,000.

Gary Carle – Asked about a facilities contract for use of the building.

Ian Spencer explained the policy now allows non-profits to use the building during scheduled hours. Otherwise, it is \$30.00 per hour.

Amy Hill – Thanked the Board. Explained in her home the motto is when people go low, you go high. She doesn't want taxes to go up; this is a difficult place to be. Feels the Board has acted very dignified during this process. She thanked Natalie for streaming the meetings.

L. Picard MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 7:55pm; SECONDED by: K. Bazan, VOTED: 5-0, MOTION PASSED.

Sincerely,

Peggy Higgins
School Board Secretary

