

BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING – DECEMBER 18, 2014

Approved

**BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
Hooksett Town Hall
35 Main Street
Thursday, December 18, 2014**

CALL TO ORDER

M. Miville called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm

Pledge of Allegiance

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

December 4, 2014

D. Winterton motioned to approve the minutes of December 4, 2014. Seconded by C. Morneau.

Vote unanimously approve.

ATTENDANCE

Chair M. Miville, F. Bizzarro, K. VanHorn, J. Pieroni, C. Morneau, A. Boilard (School Board Rep.), and D. Winterton (Town Council Rep.)

Excused: P. Gosselin, N. Haas, T. Jennings, and S. Peterson

PUBLIC INPUT

OLD BUSINESS

J. Pieroni motioned to accept the School Budget as presented. Seconded by C. Morneau.

Vote unanimously in favor

School District Budget Review

A. Boilard: The Budget Committee needs to make a correction to increase the budget for Pinkerton tuition rate reduction of \$70,000.

M. Miville current operating budget \$28,959,622.53 for this year (2014-15)

Proposed budget \$29,488,170.88 (2015-16) and increase of \$528,548.35 over last year's Default budget 29,583,799.85 which is \$95,628.97 below proposed

J. Pieroni motioned to approve the budget \$29,488,170.88. Seconded by A. Boilard.

J. Pieroni: I will not vote to cut a dime out the School budget while there is still a stipend for the Budget Committee in the budget. If there is an increase, what is the benefit? Education is the most important thing we do and I will not take money away when there is money being spent for the Budget Committee. Secondly, the School Board did the

heavy lifting. Most of the increase is due to contracts voted by citizens, insurance and retirements, and continuing programs. I think, this year, the School Board did an admirable job and maybe even too much; but it's their call.

K. VanHorn: I agree in the net increase which is \$528,000. High School tuition is 248,000. \$106,000 is town voted contract. There is retirement and insurance increases. All total there is an increase of \$600,000. All three (3) schools were under last year's budget.

M. Miville: The School Board cut \$755,000 out of 1.3 million dollar increase. Because the budget only increased \$528,000, you are saying they did their due diligence?

K. VanHorn: I care what came to us. My point was, I looked at four lines, four groups of expenses and the net increase was \$628,000. As far as I understand, there is nothing we can do about the HS tuition; the teacher contract is established, and we can't change the retirement and insurance. I think the School Board already cut the budgets. What would we remove?

F. Bizzarro: Not having been here for most of last year, I understand you reached an agreement that any overage in the tuition line would not be expended. Where do we stand with that agreement?

J. Pieroni: Has any money been transferred from the High School tuition line? We do have to remember that is a gentlemen's agreement and we can't bind future Boards.

D. Winterton: I'm involved in three union discussions on the town side. If you wonder why there are issues, Mr. VanHorn read my notes, we have an increase in the health line. It is not our ability to change that but it is up to the School Board negotiators to change that. For example, English Language Learners page 8, the salary for ELL went from \$81,000 to \$90,000 yet the Health Insurance increased \$12,000. It is half the salary just for health insurance. We cannot continue operate a town with benefits that robust. Whether it is a change in employee contribution or the change in the quality of the plan, we cannot progress with the improving the quality of education if we continue with this path. The town needs to understand that. The State once committing to pay 40 to 45% doesn't anymore. The Health insurance is something we choose to give to our employees, do we want to run a Chevy Malibu education with a Cadillac Health insurance for employees. We are looking for nickels and dimes when there are Elephants all over the room that we can't touch.

C. Morneau: I think we have the ALPS program that was reduced. I see the reduction so what is the plan in the reduction?

A. Boilard: If the voters pass the budget, the ALPS program will change and there will be a revised program. Grades 3-5 will maybe have aides rather than teachers. At the Middle School, there are online courses that students are currently participating in. We

left money for some of the competitions and community sponsors. The testing will remain.

M. Miville: In my view, we have 17 meetings, we don't have to conduct all 17 but to have a motion in the first meeting doesn't do due diligence to the budget. We have a responsibility to the taxpayers and it's not beneficial to the process to approve a budget in the first 5 minutes. I think we should look at this budget thoroughly. We can take the School Board's word for the budget. It is the Administration, teachers, and staff job to move as much money for their district. It is up to us to see that the expenses are justified. I think we need to make sure through the review to discuss and approve. A \$528,000 increase is a .35 cent increase per 1000 to the tax rate. I think we can do better than that. I continue to hear we don't want to cut education. I don't want to cut education as well, but the increases are administration and the bureaucracy. There are one-time expenses. We need to look at the Administrative side and not touch the education side for children. I was at the School Board meetings and they didn't finish because they ran out of time and moved the budget. I think we owe the citizens more. We represent the taxpayers. The retirement, the insurance, the contracts are all increasing. That is not education. There are other things we can look at. I have requested a Right To Know request regarding this budget. I would like to wait to get those answers before I move on the budget. Also, there are only 5 members here and I don't think it is fair to move on this budget with 4 members missing. If someone cannot find where to cut, let others make their motions. On the town side, there are additional contracts coming forward and we need to look at the total package for the town. The Town is coming in below default. The Lilac Bridge is a problem and they voted to approve 3.2 million to remove the bridge. We need to expend 1.6 million out of the town general fund.

J. Pieroni: I agree that we should have a full board so we should just adjourn? What are going to do, go line by line without a full board? There is no minimum or maximum number of hours you should spend on the review. The Administration needs to be supported to support education and the quality of education.

Vote 4:3 motion carried.

ADJOURNM

*J. Pieroni motioned to adjourn. Seconded by C. Morneau.
Vote unanimously in favor*

Respectfully submitted,

Lee Ann Moynihan

Next meeting January 8, 2015 to discuss the warrant articles.