

BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING – JANUARY 9, 2014

Official

BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING

Hooksett Town Hall

35 Main Street

Thursday, January 9, 2014

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Miville called the meeting to order at 6:30

Pledge of Allegiance

ATTENDANCE

Chair M. Miville, K. Van Horn, T. Jennings, C. Morneau, S. Peterson, C. Akstin (School Board Rep.), JR Ouellette, J. Pieroni, and T. Lizotte (Town Council Rep).

Excused: F. Bizzarro.

Absent: Central Water Precinct and Village Water Precinct

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

December 19, 2013

T. Lizotte motioned to approve the minutes of December 19, 2013. Seconded by JR Ouellette.

Vote unanimously in favor

PUBLIC INPUT

OLD BUSINESS

School District Budget Review

J. Pieroni motioned to recommend the revised budget of \$28,803,304.53 for the School District Operating Budget 2014-2015. Seconded by C. Akstin.

J. Pieroni: Last week I recommended the Budget Committee challenge the School Board to come up with a 1% decrease. They have submitted a .05% reduction. In looking at the per pupil cost of education in NH, it show Hooksett for 2012-2013 at \$11,067 and the State average is \$13,627.00 The high school district we send students to is the lowest in the State. The reality is if we start to take money out of the elementary education, we will fall into the lowest in the State. We will also shift money from elementary education to high school education which is currently the lowest in the State.

I think this would be one time for the Budget Committee to lock hands with the School District and support the revised budget. We, as a district have been critical of a district that spends the least on education and we ourselves are below the State average.

C. Akstin: In my notes, I had the same numbers which shows the budget is fiscally responsible and would not like to see any more money shift away from the K-8 to support an increase in high school.

T. Lizotte: I agree with Mr. Pieroni's numbers but if you look at on the ranking side, there are some schools in the \$10,000 range that rank very high in the success of educating and testing to see a relatively good output. Although the money is a differential, putting more money into it doesn't always guarantee a better outcome. We don't have to go the full load to the top number. Consistently year to year, with the education delivery system, it is a funnel and year to year, no matter how much you funnel to the school, you end up with a fund balance. No matter how much money you add to the system, it doesn't mean they will gain anything. If we believe there will be a fund balance of for example \$800,000, we can weigh that and try and keep a piece of that in the taxpayer's pocket. Just because for example they cut guidance, doesn't mean they won't end up finding funds to hire that counselor.

J. Pieroni: We are not going to take money from the high school, so the only place to reduce is K-8. I'm saying don't go beyond what the School Board has already done. I think we should give credit to the School Board to spend more money but they didn't spend it and return it the general fund. You shouldn't be punishing the school for returning funds rather than spending it. The increase this year is tuition, buses and salary increases which were approved by the voters in the past year. The School Board cut this back, and we are not throwing a lot of money at this budget.

C. Akstin: Karen Lessard also said there was a \$700,000 fund balance in 2012-13 and she does not anticipate a fund balance this year. We also funded the tuition line at 100% with the agreement that we wouldn't spend any unexpended funds from the tuition line.

T. Lizotte: The School Board did cut the teacher as well. I would like to hear more debate.

N. Haas: Dollars don't tie to students test scores. There is no explanation why Charter Schools are doing so well and costs are less. Are we spending lower than the norm in the State? We should be proud because we have some of the best schools. With the tuition in high school, we get the best bang for our buck. What do we do in the future to get the greatest value when submitting these budgets?

C. Akstin: They do review the test scores with us and we are often ranked higher than the State. I do believe that value is important to our administration.

S. Peterson: I never thought that the School Board would even cut anything so I am happy with the ½ percent cut.

C. Morneau: I was hoping for closer to 1% but I am not a school administrator so I don't know how they will get there. I think if the budget was reduced they would get there and move money around as needed. If we as a Board decide to stay at the ½ percent, I would not support it.

K. Van Horn: I understand that if there is a will there is a way but I went through the budget line by line and I couldn't get to 1%. I kept getting to the \$130,000 range over and over again.

T. Lizotte: I wanted more discussion. I'm leaning towards Mr. Pieroni's article. The ranking for Hooksett and Cawley has an index rating of 369 schools and Cawley is 100 which is not stellar when you see Bedford is ranked 18. As long as we all feel comfortable that the tuition that is left over will be returned and the new School Board will uphold their commitment to return that money to the taxpayers.

T. Jennings: I don't agree with the sentiment that test scores are telling of whether a school is successful. We are in a difficult year due to decisions previously made by the School Board. I don't think the taxpayers are accepting of any tax increase but don't know what else to do.

M. Miville: I don't like the fact that the voter has no choice with a default almost the same as the proposed budget.

T. Jennings: I think year after year, voters have voted for a default budget, those that I spoke to don't want to see any increase.

M. Miville: In July I stated that as a Budget Committee member I propose a \$100,000 cut in order for the public to get their say. To me it was procedure comment that public input was not handled properly, although I feel \$100,000 is an option, I will not recommend that. I think since July, the public and most of the involved voters are prepared to vote at this time. My statement in July was only to get public input generated and I think that was accomplished.

Roll Call Vote

S. Peterson Yes

JR Ouellette Yes

K. Van Horn Yes

T. Jennings No

J. Pieroni Yes

N. Haas Yes

c. Morneau No

t. Lizotte Yes

M. Miville No

C. Akstin Yes

Vote 7:3 motion carries

OTHER BUSINESS

PUBLIC INPUT

ADJOURNMENT

JR Ouellette motioned to adjourn. Seconded by S. Peterson.
Vote unanimously in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Lee Ann Moynihan