

Minutes of the Litchfield Budget Committee Meeting

Held on December 13, 2012

The Litchfield Budget Committee held a meeting on Thursday, December 13, 2012 at Campbell High School, 1 Highlander Court, Litchfield, NH 03052.

PRESENT: R Peeples (Vice Chairman), B Spencer, C Pascucci, D Barka (School Board Representative), G Lambert (Board of Selectmen Representative), B Cochrane (Superintendent), S Martin (Business Administrator), L Rothhaus (Principal, CHS), J Patterson (CHS Athletics Director)

ABSENT: J Harte (Chairman), A Cutter

Mr. Peeples called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

2. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

3. PRIOR MEETING MINUTE APPROVAL

There were no minutes for approval.

4. TOWN BUSINESS

Mr. Lambert had no report.

5. SCHOOL BUSINESS

Mr. Barka reported that the School Board agreed on four warrant articles:

- Operating budget
- Collective Bargaining Agreement
- Retention of Year End Funds up to 2.5%
- Inclusion of Tax Impact Statement with Warrant Articles.

Mr. Spencer asked about the tax impact on the article to retain year end funds. Mr. Martin indicated that no money is being raised or appropriated. He explained that it would reduce what the district returns to the town. He noted that the amount that can be retained is determined by the DRA.

Mr. Spencer asked if the future tax impact would be stated on the article. Mr. Martin commented that we can show that it reduces the expected year end fund balance.

Mr. Spencer commented that if you are presenting it to the voters, you have to include the full tax impact. He indicated that the district is making a mistake including this article in the warrant.

Mr. Martin indicated that the School Board decided to include it rather than include the articles to replenish the capital reserve funds. Mr. Barka commented that the Board's concern is that we may deplete our current capital reserve funds and will not have any reserve funds next year.

Mr. Pascucci commented that town elections are in March and if the district overspends the budget the Board can ask for the funds. Mr. Lambert clarified that the March election cannot be used to ask for the funds. He noted there is a specific procedure to follow and must be agreed to by the Budget Committee and a judge or the DRA. Mr. Spencer indicated that if the budget is overspent, the district will be required to go to deficit appropriations.

Mr. Pascucci commented that heard comments from the School Board meeting last night that if the district has no money winter and spring sports will be cancelled. He believes that sports will not be cancelled.

Dr. Cochrane commented that he would rather bring in a realistic budget with funds in reserve if they are needed. He indicated that in a larger budget there is some discretionary spending. Dr. Cochrane noted that he is open to budgeting aggressively as long as the students are not negatively impacted. He commented he would like to keep the budget down, do what we can for students, and have extra in case it is needed.

Mr. Spencer expressed concern that if the budget is not more conservative there is a risk of getting the default budget. Dr. Cochrane commented that he agreed with Mr. Spencer's reasoning.

Mr. Pascucci queried the rationale for including the article to retain year end funds as opposed to the articles for the capital reserve funds. Mr. Barka indicated that there were three articles: a health trust fund to help offset health insurance and taxes from PPACA; replenish the special education capital reserve; replenish the building maintenance capital reserve fund. He explained that the Board were concerned with asking the taxpayers for more money.

Mr. Spencer asked when the default budget will be presented to the Budget Committee. Mr. Martin indicated that it may be presented to the School Board on Wednesday night.

- **SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET REVIEW**

- a) Campbell High School

Budget Committee members welcomed Mrs. Rothhaus and Coach Patterson to the meeting. Mrs. Rothhaus provided information regarding CHS students that were chose to present to the Connecticut Association of Public Schools (CAPS) last month. She explained the students were accompanied by Mrs. Rothhaus and teachers from CHS provided a presentation on core competencies and personalized education at CHS, as well as student engagement, multiple pathways, and ideas for 21st Century schools. Mrs. Rothhaus indicated that the presentation wa successful and very well received.

CHS Salaries

Mr. Spencer asked about NEASC reductions in the budget. Mrs. Rothhaus explained that NEASC is the accreditation process and two teachers Chair the committee. She noted that the VLACS coordinator was reduced as well and the Superintendent believes this can be coordinated through the Guidance department. Mrs. Rothhaus explained that VLACS is an online learning resource that helps students, including those who may not be able to attend school for some reason, attain required credits. She commented that anyone can take a class through VLACS.

Dr. Cochrane indicated that VLACS provides online learning for students at no cost. He explained that it is a state funded charter school. He noted the two coordinator positions were created with the stipend. Dr. Cochrane commented that students who are behind in credits required to graduate and students who want to accelerate their program participate in VLACS. He explained when the program was originally proposed there was after school support and students were supervised. He commented that the program does not currently work for students who are struggling. Dr. Cochrane indicated that other online systems can be considered next year.

Mr. Lambert commented that a reference was made to home schooled students. Mrs. Rothhaus explained that there was a student who had Lyme disease that could not attend school. She used VLACS to satisfy her credits.

Mr. Peebles asked if there is a self-service model. Dr. Cochrane indicated that we would like to strengthen the role of the guidance counselor and make this one of the responsibilities.

Mr. Lambert asked if home schooled students or if out of district student would be eligible for this service. Dr. Cochrane indicated that in terms of special education students, the district is obligated to do assessments and evaluations beginning at age 3, even if they are in a charter school. Homeschool students can access the program on a partial basis, but in some cases have to coordinate with a guidance counselor.

Mr. Lambert commented that the state mandates districts must provide an education for all children under the age of 18. He asked if there are any additional programs in the budget for homeschool students. Dr. Cochrane indicated there are no additional programs in the budget. Homeschool students can access all programs at the high school, including NECAP testing, extra-curricular activities, and co-curricular activities. He explained that homeschool students can work with a guidance counselor to be partially schooled. He noted in the latter case, the district receives approximately 2/3 of the adequacy aid.

Mr. Lambert asked what happens to the remainder of the aid. Mr. Martin commented that there are no remaining funds. Dr. Cochrane indicated that we are expected to fund homeschool education out of the budget.

Mr. Spencer queried about Mrs. Cassily, the English teacher. Mrs. Rothhaus indicated that she is on unpaid sabbatical leave to get her Doctorate and is returning next year. A temporary teacher was hired to fill the position.

Mr. Spencer commented that student enrollment has decreased at CHS. He asked how that will be addressed in the future. Dr. Cochrane commented that when class size decreases, we can operate with half a teacher fewer. He noted that if we gain 20 students we will not need another teacher. If we gain 40 students, we will need to hire a part time teacher. If we gain 60 students, we will need to hire a full time teacher [for math and science].

Mr. Spencer commented that if enrollment continues to decline you can consolidate. He indicated that Dr. Cochrane mentioned during the discussion regarding Hooksett students that we can absorb students into the system without any costs. Dr. Cochrane commented we would need to cost out for every 10 additional students. He explained if we took 30 students there would be no cost; however, there may be some costs with 60 students. He noted that we would be able to have discretionary funds at 30% - 40%.

Mr. Spencer commented that there are good class sizes at the high school. Dr. Cochrane indicated that when the 8th grade class at LMS (which is the largest class) moves up to the high school, we will not have to hire additional teachers. He noted with the loss at LMS, there may be reductions.

Mr. Peebles inquired about co-curricular salaries. Mr. Martin indicated that what is required under the CBA is what is budgeted. He noted that reductions are listed in the District-wide budget.

Mr. Pascucci asked if the amounts in co-curricular salaries are specific to the CBA. Mrs. Rothhaus explained that a formula is used by the stipend committee to determine the amounts of these stipends. Dr. Cochrane indicated that an appendix in the CBA specified each position and its standard cost.

Mr. Spencer asked about the total reduction for co-curricular activities. Mr. Martin indicated that the Board has made a bottom line reduction and will provide direction regarding funding of the activities in May/June.

Mr. Peebles asked about the additional five days for a guidance counselor. Mrs. Rothhaus commented that over the summer there are many students who want to change classes.

CHS Budget

Athletics

Mr. Spencer queried about the athletic trainer RFP. Mr. Martin indicated that he will develop the RFP from the data provided by Coach Patterson. Mr. Spencer requested to see the RFP when it is completed.

Dr. Cochrane informed the Budget Committee that there are some line items budgeted for wrestling that should have been reduced to zero. He noted it was not intentional if there are any lines for wrestling remaining.

Mr. Peeples asked about the cost budgeted for wrestling officials. Coach Patterson noted that we are required to pay that cost.

Mr. Spencer observed that in 2011 and 2012 the game officials line was over budgeted by \$3,000 - \$4,000. He commented that may be the case of 2013-2014. Mrs. Rothhaus indicated that we budget for officials in the event our athletic teams go to the playoffs or championships. Coach Patterson noted that the NHIAA has increased the cost of game officials as well.

Mr. Spencer commented that supplies have been over budgeted in prior years and the funds are usually not all spent.

Mr. Spencer asked if there will be any funds spent on equipment replacement. Coach Patterson indicated that the volume has increased in our weight program and we need equipment.

Mr. Peeples asked if there are two stipends in co-curricular for cheering and spirit. Mrs. Rothhaus indicated that Cheering was changed to Spirit. Coach Patterson indicated there are two seasons.

Athletic Transportation

Mr. Spencer asked how the transportation budget increased to \$61,000. Coach Patterson indicated that bus rates increased seven cents per mile and driver rates increased sixty-three cents per hour. He noted that some trips will be a further distance as well.

Mr. Spencer commented that the total appears to be high.

Mr. Spencer asked about the field lighting. He commented that when CHS was being built, there was a discussion regarding lighting being bothersome to neighbors of the school. He indicated that lighting in the fields appears in the budget and is an issue for the neighbors.

Coach Patterson commented that Homecoming only happens once a year and is one of the better community events here. Mrs. Miller indicated that letters were sent to neighbors in advance advising them that the field would be lit and no one complained or responded with an issue.

Mr. Spencer asked about the costs budgeted for the Ropes course. Mrs. Rothhaus indicated that there was money in the Venture account and an ELO was run last year. She commented that we created an ELO for credit to assist students who wished to graduate. She noted that regular education students that needed credits took the course. Mrs. Rothhaus indicated that we decided we would like to fund it each year. She commented it is budgeted under Physical Education.

Regular Education

Contracted Services

Mr. Spencer commented that there has never been any money spent in this account. Mrs. Rothhaus indicated if we have a student who becomes ill, we will use the funds.

Mr. Pascucci asked how contracted services works with VLACS, as in the example of the student who became ill mentioned by Mrs. Rothhaus. Mrs. Rothhaus indicated that student is still in school, but may be hospitalized and in need of tutoring.

Supplies

Mr. Spencer observed that Supplies were under spent in 2011 and 2012. Mr. Martin commented that there has been much under spend in the accounts last year because of donations (i.e. printer cartridges).

Mr. Peeples commented that supplies are budgeted at \$26.50 per student. He asked what items are considered supplies. Mr. Martin indicated that the new projections are not available at the time the budget is prepared and the Bureau of Labor and Statistics inflation factor for supplies was used to determine the cost per student.

Mr. Lambert commented that the calculation for determining the cost should be provided. Mr. Pascucci commented that perhaps the cost per student is not accurate and it should be reconciled.

Mr. Peeples repeated his inquiry about the items that are considered supplies. He noted that a community member informed the Committee that a list is sent home to LMS parents indicating what a student should bring to school (pencils, pens, erasers, etc.). Mrs. Rothhaus indicated the supplies include paper, staples, staplers, tape, etc.

Mrs. Couture commented that much of the class work is project based (i.e. poster boards, markers, rulers, etc.). She indicated that a list goes home in September, but those supplies are used up by November. No other lists are sent home.

Mr. Pascucci asked if what was spent for supplies can be provided. Mr. Martin indicated that expenditures are reported in the monthly business report, which is provided to the Committee each month.

Mr. Spencer commented that even if the budgets are assumed to be low, the consistent end result is that the budget is under spent. Mr. Martin commented that transfers are also made during the year for books, equipment and software. He noted that schools can transfer funds only within their own accounts.

Art Education

Mr. Pascucci asked if the Art All State Fees were a new budget item as they were not listed in last year's budget. Dr. Cochrane indicated that the fees are not new and explained that their purpose is for student portfolios and to defray some of the costs for students who try to qualify for All State Art Honor Student.

Business Education

Mr. Spencer commented that the amount budgeted is high.

English Education

Mr. Spencer commented that the amount budgeted is high.

Mr. Barka queried about the workbooks. Mrs. Rothhaus indicated that they are consumables.

Physical Education

Mr. Spencer commented that the amount budgeted is high.

FACS

Mr. Pascucci asked if any Reality Babies were reduced. Mrs. Rothhaus indicated that the babies were reduced because we were reminded we have to make room for the CBA. She commented that the Reality Babies are important to leave in the budget. She noted that we will use flour babies and rotate the inventory of Reality Babies.

Mr. Pascucci queried about the importance of the Reality Babies. Mrs. Rothhaus indicated that they are important because they are computer programmed to react like a real baby (i.e. feeding time, diaper change, etc.). She explained that students have to use a key to take care of the babies and the computer program tracks the actions. Mrs. Rothhaus indicated that if the student is not caring for the baby the student will not pass the course.

Mr. Peeples queried about the two ranges that were budgeted under Equipment Replacement. Mrs. Rothhaus indicated these ranges are in very poor shape and will not last long.

Mr. Pascucci commented that the range budgeted for LMS was only \$400. Dr. Cochrane indicated that one of the ranges is wheelchair accessible. She explained that convection ovens speed up the process for prepping and cooking.

Tech Education

Mr. Spencer commented that the amount budgeted is high. He indicated that amount of money has not been spent in the past. Mrs. Rothhaus indicated that because we have the default this year, the teacher was not able to purchase the specific printer that is needed.

Mr. Martin commented that there is broken equipment that has to be replaced in the woodworking shop. Mrs. Rothhaus commented that one band saw was replaced and additional equipment is needed.

Mr. Peeples asked if the head on the planer is actually going to be replaced. Mrs. Rothhaus commented that the line item was reduced and they will not be able to replace the planer head.

Budget Committee members commented about reductions to the CHS budget. Dr. Cochrane commented that the budget may be higher than the past actual expenditures, but is lower than the requested budget. He indicated that when looking at what was spent and what is requested, it is wise to find what is reasonable. He asked Committee members what a realistic number would be. Dr. Cochrane noted that there is some spending that is necessary, but somewhere between the actual expenditures and the requested budget there is a reasonable number.

Mr. Spencer suggested a bottom line reduction of \$80,000. Dr. Cochrane commented that with the reduction the CHS budget would be \$55,000 more than what was spent last year and agreed that an \$80,000 reduction was warranted. He indicated that there is a teachers contract this year

and we should be grateful to get more than the year before.

Mr. Spencer commented that the appropriate way to apply the reduction would be to the CHS bottom line.

Mr. Martin reminded the Budget Committee that the MS-27 is their responsibility and the Committee will need to provide direction on the functions to which the reductions will apply.

Music Education

Equipment Additional

Mr. Peeples asked about the source elipsodial lights that are budgeted. Mrs. Rothhaus indicated that CHS has never had all the lights in the Auditorium and we would like to be at 100%.

Social Studies

Mr. Pascucci commented that he supported the purchase of pocket Constitutions for the students.

Building Services

Mr. Spencer asked what items are included in the \$40,000 School Board reduction. Mr. Martin indicated that is a general reduction and there were no specific items reduced.

Utilities

Mr. Spencer commented that the electric and propane line items are in acceptable limits.

Mr. Pascucci asked about the deferral of the parking lot seal coating in relation to the GMS parking lot paving, if approved. Mr. Martin indicated both were budgeted, but if the GMS paving is approved, the CHS seal coating will be removed from this budget.

Transportation

Mr. Martin indicated that vocational transportation is increased because we are adding a physical bus. He noted that one bus was reduced from Special Services.

4000 Account

Mr. Martin indicated that he emailed the budget account to the Budget Committee. He noted that there is one large expenditure budgeted – a heavy duty storage building for \$14,000.

Mr. Spencer asked about the purpose for the storage building. Mr. Martin indicated that the storage trailer is over filled and we are in need of additional storage for equipment that is outside.

Mr. Spencer asked if the shed we have is shared. Mr. Martin indicated the shed is shared by grounds, buildings, and technology. He noted the storage building request is being driven by grounds and dead storage for the high school.

Mr. Spencer asked if we can use impact fees for the storage building. Mr. Martin commented that he will ask the town. He noted that Mr. Bennett is currently working with the town.

Mr. Spencer commented that he is concerned with the GMS budget bottom line as he feels it is high. Dr. Cochrane indicated that Mr. Cutter provided information about his research regarding other online vendors from which to purchase textbooks. He noted that we have not been able to duplicate it as the quantity is not available.

Mr. Spencer commented that he felt that supplies and other accounts were over budgeted for GMS and suggested that if he were making a motion he would propose a bottom line reduction. Dr. Cochrane commented that given the situation and potential CBA, he would be willing to give up some things in order to fulfill the strategic goals.

Mr. Spencer commented that he understands that CCSS is adding to costs in the GMS budget. Dr. Cochrane offered to re-examine the budget without costs relating to core initiatives. He commented that it is not wise to reduce or remove anything strategic.

Mr. Peeples thanked Mrs. Rothhaus, Coach Patterson, Dr. Cochrane and Mr. Martin for their time.

6. MEMBER INPUT

Mr. Barka commented that he would prefer to vote on district budgets next week than during the holiday week so that school district administration does not have to attend during the holiday break.

Mr. Peeples indicated that some members are travelling this week and they asked to defer the voting. He noted that voting will resume next week.

Mr. Pascucci commented that there is only one school district warrant to question – the retention of year end funds up to 2.5%. He expressed interest in comparing the benefit of the article to existing practices.

Mr. Peeples commented that there are two articles to discuss: the CBA and the fund retention article.

Mr. Spencer complimented the Superintendent on his acceptance of the suggested bottom line reduction to the CHS budget. He commented that the Committee should discuss attrition when the District-wide budget is reviewed as there is most likely money there.

NOTE: Discussion on attrition.

Mr. Spencer indicated that he has a solution to get to a seven member Committee. He suggested that the School Board representative abstain from voting on their budgets and the Selectmen's representative abstain from voting on their budgets.

7. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

- **Upcoming meetings**

The next meeting of the Budget Committee will be held on December 18, 2012.

MOTION: by Mr. Spencer

Move to adjourn.

SECOND: Mrs. Couture

VOTE: 6-0-0

The motion carried unanimously.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Minutes by: *Michele E. Flynn (Recording Secretary)*

Date approved: **December 18, 2012**