

Minutes of the Litchfield Budget Committee Meeting

Held on December 11, 2012

The Litchfield Budget Committee held a meeting on Tuesday, December 11, 2012 at Campbell High School, 1 Highlander Court, Litchfield, NH 03052.

PRESENT: R Peeples (Vice Chairman), B Spencer, A Cutter, C Pascucci, D Barka (School Board Representative), G Lambert (Board of Selectmen Representative), B Cochrane (Superintendent), T Lecklider (Principal, LMS)

ABSENT: J Harte (Chairman), A Cutter

Mr. Peeples called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

2. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

3. PRIOR MEETING MINUTE APPROVAL

MOTION: by Mr. Pascucci

Move to approve the minutes of the Litchfield Budget Committee meeting on December 4, 2012 as written

SECOND: by Mrs. Couture

VOTE: 4-0-2, with Mr. Lambert and Mr. Peeples abstaining

The motion carried.

MOTION: by Mr. Pascucci

Move to approve the minutes of the Litchfield Budget Committee meeting on December 6, 2012 as written

SECOND: by Mr. Spencer

VOTE: 3-0-3, with Mr. Lambert, Mr. Peeples, and Mrs. Couture abstaining

The motion carried.

4. TOWN BUSINESS

Mr. Lambert reported that the Board of Selectmen had a discussion regarding increasing the Budget Committee membership via warrant article. Mr. Lambert indicated that they requested feedback from the Budget Committee.

Mr. Spencer commented that if the Board of Selectmen put such an article forward it should be because the Budget Committee is requesting a change. He believes that increasing the Budget Committee membership via warrant article should not be a decision of the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Spencer indicated that although it may be an article he would support on the ballot, increasing the membership would not help. He added it is difficult to find people who want to serve on boards and committees.

Mr. Pascucci commented that if the article were placed on the ballot he would support it. He indicated that in the past it was difficult to get people to run for these positions, but that is changing. He noted that he made a comment [a few years prior] that the Budget Committee should be larger and have an odd number of members.

Mrs. Couture agreed that the Committee should have an odd number of members. She commented that if there is going to be a change to the size of membership, it should be a decrease as opposed to an increase. She indicated that a larger board or committee makes things more difficult to get done. Mrs. Couture commented that we are currently deferring business because people are, at times, not available.

Mr. Peeples commented that he does not see a need for increasing the Budget Committee membership at this time.

Mr. Lambert reported that there was a concern over the size of the Committee and the fact that it contains an even number of members. Mr. Lambert explained that any member of the Board of Selectmen can request an article for discussion. Any citizen can request a warrant article. If the Board of Selectmen or School Board declines to submit the warrant article, then citizens can draft a petition article with 25 or more signatures. Mr. Lambert commented that if this suggestion became a warrant article, someone could vote to remove it at Deliberative Session.

Mr. Lambert left the meeting at 7:20 p.m.

5. SCHOOL BUSINESS

Dr. Cochrane informed the Budget Committee that Mr. Martin would be arriving late due to LEA negotiations.

Mr. Peeples directed Committee members to stay on task during the budget presentation.

Mr. Barka reported he sent enrollment numbers to the Budget Committee. He commented that he is aware the Budget Committee may be discussing rescheduling budget voting on some district budgets previously presented. He asked Committee members to consider not scheduling the voting after Christmas.

Dr. Cochrane provided a school district computer analysis of computers in the district by age. He noted that the totals exclude school offices and the SAU office. The information reflects how many computers are in the schools for student and staff use.

Laptops:

- CHS – 50 that are 4-6 years old
- LMS – 110 that are 4-6 year old; 40 that are 6-8 years old
- GMS – 71 that are 4-6 years old

Desktops:

- CHS – 110 that are 1-2 years old; 62 that are 3-5 years old
- LMS - 25 that are 3-5 years old
- GMS – 80 that are 6-8 years old

Dr. Cochrane indicated that the percentage of computers by age is as follows:

- 1-2 years old 20%
- 3-5 years old 16%
- 4-6 years old 42%
- 6-8 years old 22%

Dr. Cochrane commented that 64% of computers in the district are 4-8 years old (351 laptops and desktops combined). He noted the laptops/desktops that are 4-8 years old would need replacement. The laptops are not upgradable or are expensive to upgrade. He indicated that we use laptops for mobility. Dr. Cochrane commented that if we move to thin client, students will need accessibility. He noted that teachers work during the school year, from home and from different rooms. He indicated when you have staff who have had laptops and they are taken away, there is a noticeable decrease in productivity.

- **SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET REVIEW**
 - a) Litchfield Middle School

Budget Committee members welcomed Mr. Lecklider to the meeting.

LMS Salaries

Mr. Lecklider noted that the number of regular teachers budgeted are as follows:

- 5th grade – 5 teachers
- 6th grade – 5 teachers
- 7th grade – 4 teachers
- 8th grade – 4 teachers
- 7-8 grade – 4 teachers.

Mr. Barka asked if the same number of teachers has been budgeted, why is there a \$55,000 decrease in the salaries line item. Mr. Lecklider indicated the decrease can be attributed to attrition and/or retirees.

Mr. Spencer commented that current staff numbers were used to budget for next year. Mr. Lecklider concurred.

Mr. Spencer indicated that it was expected that the budget had been adjusted with all new positions. Dr. Cochrane noted that he will ask Mr. Martin to provide the information for the Budget Committee.

Mr. Spencer queried about the Summer Reading program. Mr. Lecklider indicated there are approximately 40 students in the program. He noted the program had been funded by Title I last year.

Mr. Spencer commented that it was not included in the budget before and that it looks like a new program. Mr. Pascucci commented that the detail reflects it is a School Board addition. Mr. Lecklider indicated it is not a new program to the school as it was funded by a grant.

Mr. Pascucci asked if the program ran this past summer. Mr. Lecklider answered that the program ran this past summer. Mr. Lecklider indicated there are two summer programs: one is this Reading program; the other is a summer program for students who need extra support or who failed a subject and is required to be promoted to the next grade level. Mr. Lecklider noted that the latter is self-funded and the Reading program was funded by a grant.

Mrs. Couture asked if the funding was lost and if we still continue to receive any Title I funds. Mr. Lecklider indicated that we lost funding for the Reading program, and the Title I funds we continue to receive are allocated to other areas.

Dr. Cochrane indicated there were significant decreases in Title I that we can expect to continue. He explained the philosophy is to increase instructional time and put more time in Reading in the regular school year. The summer program is meant to improve Reading and prevent regression.

Mrs. Couture asked if charging a fee for the Summer Reading program was considered. Mr. Lecklider indicated that because there is a screening process it can be challenging to require a fee for the program. Mrs. Couture commented that many parents would be willing to pay a fee for the program.

Mrs. Couture queried about Conferences/Workshops and asked if the part time receptionist also attends the Administrative Assistant Conference. Mr. Lecklider indicated that is the case.

LMS Budget

Regular Programs Repairs/Maintenance

Mr. Peebles asked about the cost to repair the laminating machine. Mr. Pascucci commented that this was the same entry in the prior year's budget.

Mr. Lecklider indicated that most of the cost budgeted in that line item is for the laminating machine. He explained that it is a unique piece of equipment to repair.

Mr. Pascucci asked if the machine can be replaced. Mr. Lecklider was not sure of the cost of a new machine. Dr. Cochrane commented that this type of laminating machine has large rollers and other intricate machinery.

Regular Education Supplies

Mr. Spencer commented on the number of students based in the calculation and indicated it is not the same as the projections. Mr. Lecklider commented that the fourth grade enrollment increased significantly. He noted that the eighth grade class is the largest class with 139 students.

Mr. Peeples asked what items make up general supplies. Mr. Lecklider indicated that supplies such as pencils, paper, staplers, staples, markers, colored pencils, whiteboard markers, etc. He noted that the history is consistent.

Regular Education FACS Equipment Replacement

Mr. Lecklider pointed out that an electric range that is 25 years old is not working well and needs to be replaced.

Regular Education Music

Mr. Pascucci asked about the piano tuning cost and commented that he recalled that \$100 for each tuning would be budgeted. Mr. Spencer indicated after a lengthy discussion the cost was \$150 for each tuning. Mr. Peeples agreed. Mr. Lecklider indicated that we reduced the amount of tunings last year to reduce the line.

Equipment Additional

Mr. Peeples asked about the xylophone that was reduced in the budget. Mr. Lecklider indicated that the LMS Band is involved in competitions across the state and there are various demands on a variety of instruments. He noted that was a reduced the Administrative Team made.

Dr. Cochrane announced that there will be four music student recognitions at the School Board meeting tomorrow evening. These students were chose to play at the State Music Festival. One of the students is a freshman. Mr. Lecklider indicated that the freshman was in Honors Band last year at LMS.

Regular Education – Textbooks New

Mr. Lecklider commented that Dr. Cochrane outlined some of the budget goals this year, of which CCSS was a large portion. He noted that there will be CCSS trade books and literary resources budgeted under New Textbooks. The focus of CCSS is content reading and writing across the curriculum and text complexity, for which lexile measure is used. Mr. Lecklider indicated that we are aligning to CCSS and looking to bring in resources to raise the bar for our students.

Mr. Spencer queried Project Safeguard. Mr. Lecklider indicated that it began four years ago when Litchfield partnered with Merrimack. He explained it is a one day conference for parents and students that deals with at risk and adolescent topics. He noted that in year two we did not partner with any district. He indicated that we rented space in St. Anselm's College in late May and the program has been successful every year. Mr. Lecklider commented that it is a very good, educational program that aligns well with the DARE program in grade 5. He indicated that asking students to fundraise for something they may not choose to become educated in is challenging. It is becoming more challenging to sustain the program.

Mr. Spencer commented this is the first year it has been requested in the budget. He noted that Litchfield is facing a large tax increase and this may not be the time to request this program.

Mr. Lecklider commented that it costs approximately \$5,000 to run the program and the PTO has pledged some financial support. He indicated that fundraising is done through a dance, a pizza fundraiser, donations, etc., but it is getting more challenging.

Mr. Peeples asked if using CHS has been considered. Mr. Lecklider indicated that the program needs a lot of space as there are breakout sessions. He noted it would be difficult if CHS is in session. Mr. Lecklider commented that parents and students enjoy the experience. He noted that most surrounding towns have some form of this program. Dr. Cochrane commented that even partial support would alleviate much of the fundraising.

School Administration

Travel

Mr. Peeples asked if Mr. Lecklider attended the national conference this year. Mr. Lecklider noted there is a conference in January and the ASCD Conference in March.

Mr. Peeples asked if Mr. Lecklider would attend the conference(s) this year. Dr. Cochrane indicated that all administrators have at least one conference in their contract. He noted that the ASCD Conference is valuable if we want our principals to be administrative leaders.

Staff Appreciation

Mr. Peeples asked about staff appreciation. Mr. Lecklider indicated that when we have professional development at the beginning and end of the year, we provide lunch. He noted that lunch is provided during teacher appreciation week.

Custodial Supplies

Mr. Peeples asked if the same square footage was used in the calculations last year. Mr. Lecklider indicated it had not changed.

Mr. Spencer commented that he received the breakout of the electric bill. He noted that the total budgeted is high.

Repairs/Maintenance

Mr. Pascucci commented that the 8th grade hall has not been done. Mr. Lecklider indicated that is the only hallway left to complete. He noted that vct is healthier and easier to clean.

Mr. Pascucci asked about the countertops that are budgeted. Mr. Lecklider indicated that the countertops in the student bathrooms and staff bathrooms need to be replaced as they are peeling and the laminate has worn away.

Mr. Pascucci asked if the carpet in the hallway and computer room is a hazard. Mr. Lecklider indicated that it is bubbling and is a tripping hazard.

Mr. Peeples asked about the 8 door closers and 8 water bubblers. He asked if all the bubblers needed to be replaced. Mrs. Couture indicated the School Board reduced four of the bubblers. Mr. Lecklider indicated that the bubblers are original and although they are maintained, they are leaking and not working well. Mr. Lecklider commented that the door closers are magnetic and

need to be replaced.

Mr. Pascucci commented that the parking lot sweeping and catch basin cleaning costs are too high.

Mr. Spencer asked how frequently the DARA Officer teaches the program. Mr. Lecklider explained it is a 6 week program consisting of one period per week (a 45 minute block). He noted each homeroom gets instruction for 6 weeks. (45 min. x 5 x 6 weeks) The program begins after Spring break and graduation is in early May.

Mr. Spencer asked if LMS uses the Student Resource Officer. Mr. Lecklider indicated that he is called when needed, consult with him and work with him.

- **SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET VOTING**

- a) Special Services

MOTION: by Mr. Pascucci

Move to defer voting of Special Services budget, GMS budget, and Technology budget until some time after December 14.

SECOND: by Mr. Spencer

VOTE: 4-1-0, with Mr. Barka opposing

The motion carried.

6. MEMBER INPUT

Mr. Spencer commented regarding Special Education transportation. He indicated that last year First Student was contracted for all district transportation. He commented that this year the increase does not make sense.

Dr. Cochrane commented we know that we are required to provide transportation for special education students. He explained it is offered to First Student first and budget as if they will be providing all the transportation. He noted that we budget at the cost quoted in November (of this year) knowing that anytime between now and the next budget year, we may have to make adjustments. Dr. Cochrane indicated we may not be able to share transportation costs with another district.

Mr. Spencer commented that we are using First Student to send the students to different towns and it is difficult to rationalize why the cost should be higher next year. Dr. Cochrane commented that we cannot guarantee it will be the same or higher and we budget as if we do not get efficiencies. He noted that we do not want to budget the cost we hope we will get with no reserve fund next year.

Mr. Spencer commented that it is obvious you will not spend what is budgeted. Mr. Barka commented that Mr. Martin indicated that First Student is not providing one of the buses and asked if that could be the reason the numbers are different.

Dr. Cochrane commented we are tight on the busing. He noted that the area agreement we had with Hudson and Nashua resulted in students arriving late and missing significant instruction time. Dr. Cochrane indicated we are trying to get as much use out of the contract as we can. He explained if we are paying a fee for students to go outside the district to take a course, we have to provide transportation. Dr. Cochrane offered to provide information regarding special education transportation for Mr. Spencer.

7. PUBLIC INPUT

Jason Guerrette, 11 Perry Court, commented that there were statements that there is not enough Title I money to fund other programs. He suggested asking to see the Title I revenue and where the funding was allocated. Mr. Guerrette commented that we should not ask parents to fund a portion of the Summer Reading program because if a child is failing the subject you cannot ask for payment for remedial education. Mr. Guerrette commented on the items stated to be budgeted for general supplies. He indicated that each year parents receive a list of what the student is expected to bring to school (pencils, notebook, etc.). He commented that there are other items in the supplies account that were not mentioned. Mr. Guerrette indicated that Mr. Lecklider misspoke Nature's Classroom is not educational. He asked why Project Safeguard does not partner with other districts. Mr. Guerrette commented on vet vs. carpet tiles. He indicated that carpet tiles are less expensive and a significant savings.

- **Upcoming meetings**

The next meeting of the Budget Committee will be held on December 13, 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 8:35 p.m.

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

Date approved: **December 18, 2012**