

**Minutes of the
Litchfield Budget Committee Meeting
Held on December 8, 2016**

The Litchfield Budget Committee held a meeting on Thursday, December 8, 2016 at Campbell High School, One Highlander Court, Litchfield, NH 03052.

PRESENT: C Couture (Chair), K Douglas (Vice Chair), C Pascucci, R Keating, J Bourque, C Harrison (School Board Representative), S Perry (Selectmen's Representative), Superintendent James O'Neill, Frank Markiewicz, Business Administrator

Absent: D Miller, A Cutter

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mrs. Couture called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

• PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

2. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input

3. REVIEW/ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

There were no additions to the agenda.

4. REVIEW/ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

• December 1, 2016

The minutes were tabled to the December 15 meeting.

5. CORRESPONDENCE

Mrs. Couture announced that correspondence was received: letter from DRA, legal inquiry from NHMA, budget updates.

6. BUDGET REVIEW:

BUDGET VOTING:

• Campbell High School

Mr. Lonergan commented that the Budget Committee inquired about tablets for the media class. He reported that he spoke with one of the Tech Ed teachers and she teaches five different digital-based classes. She currently has 10 tablets, five of which are old and five are more current. Mr. Lonergan indicated the teacher is requesting five additional tablets as the class numbers are at 15 to 16 students.

Mr. Lonergan commented as a former English Language Arts teacher, he used to teach about rhetoric and the three types of appeals: Logos (Greek for logic), Ethos (Greek for ethics), and Pathos (audience emotions). He indicated it is interesting to watch the Budget Committee operate as you move through this process and exhibit the three appeals while deliberating over the budgets presented.

Mrs. Couture commented that she noticed there are ten French I and ten French II workbooks budgeted in the Foreign Language account. She believes they may not be needed if the 19 students take the courses through VLACS.

MOTION: by Mrs. Couture

Move to reduce Account 1031110006-610, CHS Foreign Language Supplies, by \$500

SECOND: by Mrs. Douglas

Mrs. Douglas asked if the students would still need the workbooks if they take the courses through VLACS. Mr. Lonergan commented that he did not think they would need them, but that he was not sure.

Mrs. Couture indicated that when looking at the averages of the expenditures in the past years the reduction still leaves enough in the account to purchase them if they are needed.

VOTE: 6-1-0

The motion carried.

Mrs. Douglas asked why there is an increase in the Physical Education Repairs and Maintenance account. Mr. Lonergan indicated that the Ropes course requires an annual inspection and the harnesses and ropes need maintenance.

Mrs. Douglas asked if the course is used as part of gym class. Mr. Lonergan indicated the Freshmen Advisory uses the course and the course will be used more in the second semester. He commented that it is a unique arrangement where CHS performs the maintenance and pays for the inspection although the course is located on town property. He noted that the responsibility for maintenance was discussed.

Mrs. Couture noted some of the maintenance of the trees and ropes were done by the Recreation Commission, but the harnesses and ropes are paid for by the school. Mr. Lonergan commented it has not been maintained for a while.

Mrs. Couture asked why there was an increase in Athletics in 2016. Mr. Mills commented there were more students at that time.

MOTION: by Mrs. Couture

Move to reduce Account 1031272400-519, Athletics Transportation, by \$3,383

SECOND: by Mrs. Douglas

Mrs. Couture indicated she is level funding it to the amount the Budget Committee reduced last year.

Mr. O'Neill indicated the increase is subject to the 5% increase in the transportation contract. Mrs. Couture commented that typically less is spent.

Mr. Pascucci asked what the line items are based on. Mr. Mills commented that it is assumed each year every team will make the tournaments and playoffs.

VOTE: 3-3-1

The motion fails.

- **Buildings and Grounds**

MOTION: by Mrs. Bourque

Move to reduce Account 1000262000-734, District Building Services Equipment Additional, by \$25,000

SECOND: by Mr. Keating

Mrs. Bourque commented the utility van is nice to have, but it is not mandatory. She believes the budget would be better served with the reduction.

Mrs. Douglas agreed. She suggested the van can be requested in a warrant article. Mr. Keating commented if articulated correctly in an article it will be successful. He indicated the reduction does not take away from education and instruction.

Mr. Pascucci asked what is the alternative option? Mr. Markiewicz commented that the district is looking for caps for the pick-up truck so it can be used in the winter months.

Mr. Pascucci asked if we have the tools and if they can be stored in a box during the winter. Mr. Markiewicz commented that there is not much area in which to store the tools, but it would be nice to have an area for tool storage.

Mr. Pascucci asked about the cost of a cap for the truck. Mr. Markiewicz indicated the cost is approximately \$1,000. Mrs. Bourque suggested purchasing a locked tool box for the truck.

MOTION: by Mr. Pascucci

Move to amend the motion to reduce Account 1000262000-734, District Building Services Equipment Additional, by \$24,000

SECOND: by Mrs. Douglas

Mr. Pascucci commented that his amendment would leave \$1,000 to purchase a cap for the truck. Mrs. Couture indicated it sounds like they are researching it now and may use end of year funds to purchase it.

Mr. Pascucc withdrew his motion. Mrs. Douglas withdrew her second.

VOTE: 6-1-0

The motion carried.

MOTION: by Mrs. Couture

Move to reduce Account 1000262000-442, District Building Services Equipment Rental, by \$1,100

SECOND: by Mrs. Douglas

Mrs. Couture indicated that the district managed to fund it without it being a line item. Mr. Markiewicz commented that the district has paid the electrical contractor to change the bulbs in the parking lot or in areas where the lift is needed and perform repairs that require the use of a lift, which is part of their fee.

Mr. O'Neill indicated the district is trying to reduce the use of the contractor for these items and keep them in-house by using the maintenance position and renting a lift.

Mrs. Douglas commented that if the district does not pay the contractor then there will be funds to rent a lift. Mr. Markiewicz commented there have been tasks not done because we do not have a ladder high enough to perform the task.

Mr. Pascucci asked if there are areas of the budget where the electrical contractor will not be used and has not been budgeted. Mr. Markiewicz commented we are trying to cut down the use of contractors and do more in-house. He indicated this will be a benchmark year to see how much the district will save.

Mr. Pascucci commented when it comes to facilities it is usually an easy reduction for the people in this room. He indicated he has defended maintenance of facilities over the years. He noted he is trying to be cautious with this budget.

Mr. Markiewicz indicated that a building conditions assessment is being done and we have been responding to items that have broken down (i.e. hvac, heating) and items that need immediate repair or replacement.

VOTE: 2-5-0

The motion fails.

Mrs. Couture asked about the increase in the GMS Repairs and Maintenance account. Mr. Markiewicz indicated most of the increase is for asbestos abatement and tile replacement for two hallways, a connector hallway, and the ramp to the café, as well as the last phase of window replacements. He noted the costs came from actual quotes.

Mrs. Douglas asked why GMS Boiler Repair has doubled. Mr. Markiewicz indicated we budget for what we anticipate.

MOTION: by Mrs. Couture

Move to reduce Account 1031262000-430, CHS Building Services Repairs and Maintenance, by \$24,500

SECOND: by Mrs. Douglas

Mrs. Couture commented it is most likely the HVAC Control Interface System is not needed in FY18.

Mrs. Douglas asked if the controls are working. Mr. Markiewicz indicated the controls are not working. He explained there are many solenoids and controls that talk to the system that are not communicating. He commented that dampers are not running automatically and the system has been turned off and on manually. He indicated it is a proprietary system by Honeywell.

Mrs. Douglas commented there is a building assessment being done. She asked if it would be completed soon. Mr. Markiewicz indicated once it is complete it will go back to the Capital Planning Committee to draft a five year plan. He commented we have had real issues with heat for four years and this will be a major part of the assessment.

Mrs. Douglas commented she is not opposed to it in principle, but it would be easier if it were part of the assessment. Mr. Markiewicz commented everyone is cooperative at this time and there has been some improvement. He indicated some things were fixed at GMS and LMS. He noted some of the repairs were minimal and the investigation takes time.

VOTE: 6-1-0

The motion carried.

Mrs. Bourque commented that 2015-16 was a mild winter. She asked why so much was spent on snowplowing and why the cost is increasing. Mr. Pascucci explained it is a fixed price contract regardless of how much or little snow we get.

Mrs. Couture commented that swale cleaning has been budgeted for \$2,500 at all three schools. Mr. Markiewicz commented the swales at CHS have not been maintained. He indicated the swales are breaking down. He noted we will get some work done with what is budgeted.

Mrs. Couture commented on the tree line widening budgeted along the LMS soccer field. She indicated some of this was done last year and asked if we can grind the stumps. Mr. Markiewicz indicated the work is not only for the soccer field, but for the leach field as well. He indicated that the state requires the stumps to be removed as it impacts drainage and leach fields.

Mrs. Couture asked if the labor for the scrub brush removal is part of the work to be done for the swales. Mr. Markiewicz indicated it is for the use of the prisoner program.

Mrs. Couture commented that inspections have increased significantly at CHS. Mr. Markiewicz indicated some of that was charged to contracted services and it has been moved to the appropriate account. He noted there is an offset in the budget.

MOTION: by Mr. Keating

Move to reduce Account 1011460000-720, GMS Building Improvement, by \$2,000

SECOND: by Mrs. Bourque

Mr. Keating commented there are many different ways to have a sign made for the main entrance at GMS.

Mrs. Bourque agreed with the reduction. Mrs. Douglas agreed and suggested placing it on a warrant article.

VOTE: 6-1-0

The motion carried.

- **Food Service**

There were no changes to the FY18 Food Service budget.

Mrs. Couture indicated reductions made to date total \$224,110.

Mr. Pascucci asked when the Budget Committee will see the warrant articles and labor contracts. Mr. Markiewicz indicated the School Board scheduled a meeting on December 14 to review warrant articles. He noted the Budget Committee will have them next week. Mrs. Couture indicated warrant articles will be reviewed on December 22.

Mr. O'Neill expressed appreciation for the review of the budget and the feedback. He commented the total reductions to date reduce the delta between the recommended budget and the default budget. He indicated that he looked at the deltas historically over the years and can provide that information if the Budget Committee so chooses. Mr. O'Neill expressed his appreciation for the staff and administrators who attended the meetings to provide input and information.

Mrs. Couture indicated the Budget Committee appreciates the time the staff and administrators have provided during the budget process.

7. REPORTS

- **Town Updates**

Mrs. Couture asked Mr. Perry if any decisions have been made by the Board of Selectment regarding the tax cap.

Mr. Perry indicated the recommendation from the Board of Selectmen for the budget the Budget Committee submits is what we have to go by. He noted as a board we have not made any decisions or changes.

- **Preparation for Final Votes December 15, 2016**

Mrs. Couture commented the DRA makes the final decisions on recommendations and rules and has sent information to the Board of Selectmen regarding budget recommendations that result from tie votes. She indicated the DRA has stated “a vote of less than the majority is considered Not Recommended”. She noted in the event of a tie vote, the wording on the warrant has to be ‘not recommended’.

Mr. Pascucci commented that last year he stated the recommendation should read ‘not recommended’, but the Board of Selectmen received legal information that stated the recommendation could be worded “neither recommended nor not recommended”.

Mr. Perry indicated the Board of Selectmen will have to ask the attorney.

Mrs. Couture commented in preparation for the upcoming vote, Mr. Brown sent an inquiry to the legal staff at NHMA about the Budget Committee’s role and responsibility in preparing estimated revenues and voting on the budget and warrant articles. With regard to tie votes on a warrant article, the NHMA recommends avoiding tie votes and that ties mean the motion is not adopted. The NHMA states the Budget Committee can vote to ‘not recommend’ and if that results in a tie vote, they must come to resolution at another meeting.

Mrs. Bourque commented that is the importance of attendance at the meetings. Mrs. Couture indicated work and family responsibilities happen, but this correspondence makes it more clear.

Mrs. Couture commented based on the budget totals in the 2017 Town budget we are looking at where the tax cap puts us, estimated revenues and warrant articles. She indicated the budget is \$180,000 over the tax cap and we cannot recommend all the articles. Mrs. Couture noted she would like to begin with the warrant articles next week and whichever articles we do not recommend will have to come out of the budget. She asked Committee members to think about what is important when considering recommendations of articles and where you would reduce in the budget.

Mrs. Couture commented the default budget has not been finalized and will be voted on Monday. She indicated the default budget does not meet the tax cap and all increases in benefits in the police contract are in the default budget.

Mrs. Douglas commented that has to be considered and factored in when discussing the contract.

Mrs. Bourque asked if the default budget has to meet the tax cap.

Mrs. Douglas commented it should be a formula. Mr. Pascucci commented it should be, but we know it is more difficult than that. He indicated no one in the town understands the default budget. He noted we should discuss it because we know there are things in there that do not belong.

Mrs. Couture commented it is a formula and open to discussion. She asked the district to check some things that should not be included in the default budget.

Mrs. Pascucci commented it should be read as it is meant to be. Mrs. Couture commented we get the ins and outs of the default budgets from the School Board and the Board of Selectmen. She indicated you can question it as a citizen because we cannot make decisions on it.

Mrs. Couture indicated the tentative hearing date was suggested for January 9, 2017. She commented after looking at the legal calendar it seems we have more flexibility. She asked the Budget Committee members if they would agree to hold the Budget Hearings on Thursday, January 12, 2017. The consensus was in the affirmative. She noted that a meeting will be scheduled for January 19, 2017 for voting on changes from the input at the hearings.

- **RSA 32:22; Review of Expenditures**

8. MEMBER INPUT/NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Pascucci commented with reference to Mr. Lonergan's statement about the way of work of the Budget Committee meetings and complimented Mrs. Couture on the way she handles the meetings. He indicated that she runs the meetings with logic and has done a great job by leaving emotion to the side and running meetings fairly. He noted the budget consists of numbers and numbers hold no emotion and should be based on fact.

9. PUBLIC INPUT

Robin Corbeil, 4 Nesmith Court, thanked the Budget Committee for their work.

10. ADJOURN

MOTION: by Mr. Keating

Move to adjourn the meeting

SECOND: by Mrs. Douglas

VOTE: 7-0-0

The motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Next Meeting: Thursday, December 15, 2016

Budget Hearing: Thursday, January 12, 2017

Recorded by: Michele E. Flynn, Recording Secretary