

Wakefield Budget Committee Meeting
with the school
held in the Paul School Library
November 28, 2023
Approved

Members present: Jerry O'Connor, Tom Daniels, Priscilla Colbath, Denny Miller, Howie Knight, Bob Ouellette, John Parker, Dave Mankus, Peter Kasprzyk, Josh Fuller and Mark Taliaferro.

School Administration: Superintendent Anne Kebler and Business Administrator Frank Markiewicz via Zoom, Payroll Coordinator/Human Resources Michele Lambert.

Public present: Randie Fox, Caitlin Gelinis, Sheena Robinson, Sara Fenton, Mary Soares with Clearview Community TV

Mr. O'Connor opened up the Budget Committee meeting at 6:30 to finish reviewing the school's proposed 2024-2025 Operating Budget and led those present in the flag salute.

1100 Regular Education:

Mr. Miller said he'd brought up the fact that we don't usually add five people in one year but we're not adding five. His concern is ever since we split from SAU 64 it's been a revolving door. Anne is the fourth superintendent since 2017. He said what we've heard is that you've put together the best plan and team. The community is charged up and the presentation was excellent. His concern is who's going to oversee all this. He asked if the superintendent position being cut to parttime was Mrs. Kebler's choice or the Board's choice. She replied that she intended to recommend a part time superintendent and a full time BA.

Mr. Miller asked if she was going to stay and implement this. He'd like some assurance that the team Mrs. Kebler has put together and her are going to be here to make it happen. He asked Mrs. Kebler if she had been offered the job. Mr. Ouellette said we haven't discussed that yet and he can't speak for the Board. Mr. Miller said to Mrs. Kebler, this is your team and you're plan and you've convinced everyone on this Board that watched the presentation that this is going to turn the school around. He said he's reluctant to vote for this budget unless we have some assurance that we will have a continuation of the current superintendent. Unless we have continuity promised he personally can't support the budget.

Mr. Knight agreed with Mr. Miller saying you can't approve a budget when the leadership team is uncertain. If we don't have continuity the same thing we've seen will continue to happen. Mr. Kasprzyk agreed. He questioned if she said she'd take the position and something better comes along... We've seen it before. We've had twenty to twenty five years of promising that this year is going to be the best. He sent out the statistics and we don't rank above 30% in reading, math or science. He said Mrs. Colbath said you can't trust SchoolDigger and he has the Department of Education and two other sources plus the government. They all come up with the same numbers. Mr. Kasprzyk handed Mrs. Colbath the papers and pointed out New Hampshire Department of

Education and she said it comes from US News and World Report. Mr. Kasprzyk doesn't believe in rewarding people before he sees progress. Mrs. Colbath said you're talking about all the superintendents we've had. Mrs. Kebler has been in this district for twelve years. If she hasn't gone by now... She didn't go last year or this year. She said she's not going anywhere but that's up to the school board. Mr. O'Connor said every year you're replacing a couple of school board members and it could all go in a different direction.

Mr. Miller said if Mrs. Kebler were under contract we'd have a better chance of seeing this happen. Mr. Kasprzyk suggested waiting until next year to see results and then ask for more. Mr. Daniels asked when the superintends contract comes up for renewal. Mrs. Kebler said June 30th. Mr. Daniels said after elections. Mr. Ouellette agreed anything can change. He said he agreed with Mr. Miller that you need a stable environment to keep moving forward. He doesn't know how that could happen without a stable Board and a stable program. We've been struggling for years and I think we're finally on the right track.

Mr. O'Connor said we've heard for years that we have the right superintendent now. We have the right BA now. Mr. Ouellette said we interviewed a superintendent we thought we had the best in the world. She was an amazing interview and it didn't work out. We just had a new BA and she couldn't handle the job. It's not anything to do with the Board trying to stabilize all this. People will do what they want. Mrs. Colbath said these were all new people coming in, they don't know the school. Didn't know the parents. Didn't know the area and didn't know the community. We have someone here that knows all that. She stepped into a position where she knew the problems of the district and she was able to work with the problems and put a team together.

Mr. Kasprzyk said if you have a student that didn't get over 30% you'd get rid of that student I would hope. If that student is just a distraction. There's no need to waste tax dollars teaching a kid that doesn't want to learn. Mr. O'Connor said to the parents, you can't take what's said personally, it's just a discussion. Mr. Kasprzyk said when you see the students' numbers go up you'll see your budget go up.

Mr. O'Connor said a few years ago the Town had MRI review its performance. He wondered if there's something like that that can be done with a school. Mr. Kasprzyk said the Budget Committee is supposed to be looking out for the children and in twenty years the school hasn't ranked above 50%. We're doing a disservice to the children and taxpayers throwing good money after bad. Mr. Ouellette said how do we fix that? Mrs. Kasprzyk relayed a story about kids working for him.

Mr. Ouellette passed out and read the following paper:

All numbers include salary and benefits

1. Reading Specialist – resigned June 2023 :	\$ 102,245
Will be replaced by a Reading Interventionist :	\$ 94,974
Savings:	<u>\$ 7,270</u>
2. Math Specialist – retiring	\$ 69,999
replaced by Math Interventionist:	\$ 50,240
Savings:	<u>\$ 19,760</u>
(the math interventionist used to be in the budget under contracted services. Not a new position)	
3. #1 Guidance Position – operating budget - (resigned)	\$ 113,759
(replacement cost) operating budget	\$ 67,911
Savings:	<u>\$ 45,848</u>
4. #2 Guidance Position – ESSER Funded will be in next year's operating budget	(\$ 82,477)
5. LNA - half in the operating budget	\$ 20,625
half ESSER funded will be added to the operating budget.	
Prior to that she was also half in Special Ed.	\$ 20,625
Change in the Budget	\$0
Behavior Interventionist	\$ 41,416
The Student Services Center used to be called the Panther Den and it was staffed by Mr. Spector at	<u>\$25,132</u>
Additional cost	\$16,284
Addition to the operating budget	TOTAL
	\$25,783

Mr. Miller said he'd feel a lot better if he knew Mrs. Kebler was in charge. Mr. Ouellette said he would relay that to the Board. Mr. Ouellette said he could ask to have it added to the next agenda. Mrs. Kebler said the way the community has come out and supported the team and the budget has given her a charge. She is excited about the team and she doesn't want to change her career at this time of her life. She said if it's the will of the Board she intends to be here next year. She said she'd say this again: The students doing poorly on testing are the students with disabilities and the economically disadvantaged students. It speaks for the need for the support she's requesting.

Mr. Taliaferro said we're replacing the reading specialist with an interventionist. How do we know that next year you won't come to us saying we need a specialist now? Mrs. Kebler said we'd have to see how it goes. Mr. Mankus, as a former teacher, said you hire good management, who hires good teachers and you give them the funds. Most teachers are looking for success and they're trying their hardest. They're dedicated, very dedicated considering they had their step pay cut for two years. They do their job every day and expect to get paid like everyone else. He doesn't believe anyone on the School Board or those in the school are trying to steal taxpayer money.

Mrs. Colbath asked to make a motion to put the \$41,416 back in the line with the hope that the School Board will keep that position. Mr. Mankus understood that the Committee can't change the dollar amounts. He was told that was for warrant articles. Mr. Taliaferro said Mrs. Colbath had brought up the behavioral interventionist before and it got voted down is she technically allowed to make that motion? Mrs. Colbath said the Board agreed that could be voted on after members watched the presentation. Mr. O'Connor said we can revisit any section of the budget. Mr. Taliaferro said one of the nay votes would have to bring up the vote to reconsider. Mrs. Colbath said she's not asking to reconsider but to revote.

Mr. Miller made a motion, seconded by Mr. Daniels, to add \$41,416 into line 51140 Support Salaries. (Vote 8-2-1)

Mr. Knight made a motion, seconded by Mr. Miller, to approve the 1100 function at \$6,093,235. (Vote 8-2-1)

Mr. Miller said if the Board hasn't decided to keep this position we can vote it out at Deliberative Session. Mr. O'Connor said it's a \$41,000 increase on an eleven million dollar budget it seems like it's worth taking a gamble on.

Mr. Daniels said that they were going to ask Brad why there was a decrease of \$16,700 in the maintenance and Care of Buildings. Mrs. Lambert said the door project was budgeted for 2024 and it will be completed in 2024. He has no anticipated projects for 2025. The amount budgeted would cover costs for maintenance of the plow truck, small engine and janitorial maintenance.

Mr. Daniels believes the school will present a warrant article for flooring in the classrooms and offices. Some were done this year using ESSER funds.

Mr. Daniels made a motion, seconded by Mr. Miller to move the 2610 function at \$710,631. (Vote 11-0)

The Committee discussed the technology trust fund. It says for student computers. The administration has been thinking about adding a new warrant article for hardware, switches etc. Mr. Knight recommended doing a warrant article to change the wording of the purpose. Mr. Markiewicz said it all depends on what DRA says.

Mr. Daniels made a motion, seconded by Mr. Miller, to approve the minutes of November 20th with amendments. (Vote 10-0-1)

Mr. Ouellette asked that the school go first at the December 12th meeting for warrant articles as two administrators have long drives. Mr. O'Connor said yes.

Mr. Daniels made a motion, seconded by Mr. Miller, to adjourn the meeting at 7:20 p.m. (Vote 11-0)

Respectfully submitted for approval at the next Budget Committee meeting,

Priscilla Colbath,
Secretary **Pro Temp**