

## Wakefield Budget Committee Meeting

November 18, 2019

### APPROVED

Members present: Jerry O'Connor, Priscilla Colbath, Denny Miller. Elizabeth Conner, James Reinert, Paul Romano, Tracey Kolb, Charlie Shine and Frank Zappala

School Board present: Jennifer McCawley and Sandy Johnson

School Administration present: Jerry Gregoire, Anne Kebler, Marie D'Agostino, Jim Lampron. Jenn Specter, Brennan Peaslee and Joe Williams.

Public Present: Dave Lee, Vin Wallace and Jim Miller with Clearview Community TV

Mr. O'Connor called the meeting to order at 6:30.

#### **1200 Special Education: Increase of \$2,458,444 - 7.06%**

Student Services Director Mrs. Kebler handed out her Special Ed report and she told the Board they are meeting their target. Dr. Tyrie asked them to do a study in 2017 about identifying goals they needed to meet. It was determined that they were over identifying in two areas and each year they have been reducing those numbers. Out of district placements have been reduced by four students so right now there is only one student out of district. Autism numbers increased and that is why they put in the new Partner Program. If it had not been for having the Partner Program, three of the seven students would have been out of district placements. There is an upfront cost to this program but by catching them in the primary grades this will reduce the need for future out of district placements.

Mr. Kebler went on to answer questions that were posed at the first Budget Committee meeting she was unable to attend due to weather. She said they have reduced the Occupational Therapist time. She is hoping to go with an employee as opposed to contracted services. The Speech, Language Pathology line was also reduced. She provided an explanation of the IDEA grant which drives Special Education along with a website for more information. Mr. O'Connor said we appreciate all the work Mrs. Kebler does. She also explained what 504 entails. Ms. Conner asked a question on line 26, she said the proposed wages are \$394,548 and when she looks at page 47 the wage detail report total is \$385,102. Why are they different? Mr. Kebler believes this is why her increase changed from 6.93% to 7.05%. There was a discrepancy. Mr. Miller asked how many hours a day the Occupational Therapist and Speech are budgeted for. Mrs. Kebler responded they follow the school hours, seven hours a day.

Mr. Reinert asked what the process is for acquiring a contracted service person. Mrs. Kebler explained the process. Next year they will need to go out to bid and there are only two organizations that are close enough to bid. That's another reason to have an employee. Mrs. Kebler will come back with the amount of the rate reduction from Strafford Learning Center to answer Mr. Reinert's question. Mr. D'Agostino, answering, Ms. Conner's question said there are

support personnel added into that number. Mr. Romano asked what percentage of parents object to the IEP given by the school and appeal through the appeal process? Mrs. Kebler said a team including the parents are part of that decision she has not done a due process in Wakefield and has only had one mediation in her career and the case was settled. Mrs. Colbath asked if ABA Tutors work in the autism program. Mrs. Kebler said each student in the Partner Program has an ABA Tutor and they are trained to work with two students, they are not therapist and do not require a degree although they prefer them to hold a bachelor's degree and are required to have a significant amount of training.

**Mrs. Colbath made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Kolb to move the \$2,458,444. (Vote 8-1)**

**2320 Administration Expenses: Increase of \$35,853 – 13.20%**

Mr. O'Conner said the Superintendents salary went from \$89,887 to \$111,100, a 21.60% increase. Mr. Gregoire said that's an increase from a part time to a full time superintendent. Part time was three days a week. Mr. Gregoire said it was reflected by the previous superintendent that it was a job that couldn't be done well with a part time person and he concurs. Mrs. Kolb said it was expressed to the Board repeatedly by the previous superintendent that she was stretched to do anything but put out fires. So when the Board did their research there were only about eleven positions that were paid less than \$110,000. And of course when you have a full time position you have to budget for health insurance and retirement. And we did eliminate the \$7,500 for the search for a superintendent from the budget. A retired Superintendent can now only work twenty five hours and still collect retirement benefits at the same time. If our superintendent moved on we wouldn't be able to replace him for less than this.

Mr. O'Connor said if you compare the workload of three schools like Milton to just one pre K-8 it seems like there would be a pretty big difference in the work load. Mr. Gregoire said they manage their high school students also. Mr. O'Connor said most of that is managed by the high schools. Mr. Gregoire said we manage things outside of building like making sure we have the right registrations. Mrs. Colbath said there are nine other districts in New Hampshire that have one school and send the high school students out of district. Only three of the superintendents are full time and the highest amount one of the full time superintendents receives is \$80,000. When the current superintendent was principal he made \$91,515 and last February when he became superintendent his salary was increased by \$18,475 Mr. Gregoire prefers to call it an adjustment based on the change of roles. Mrs. Colbath said it hasn't even been a year and you're asking for a 2% raise. Mr. Gregoire replied yes. Mrs. Colbath said looking at statistics from other schools she believes he was hired for way too much.

**Mrs. Colbath made a motion, seconded by Mr. Miller, to leave the Superintendents salary as it is now with no raise for 2021 because he received one in February. The amount of the deduction would be \$1,307 salary FICA and retirement. (Vote 8-1)**

Mrs. Kolb said in 2017/2018 some of the unaffiliated did not get raises and last year they were minimal. So we have to play catch up to keep up with the current salaries. Mr. Miller said about five years ago when we created our own SAU a presentation was made to the voters how much this was going to cost us and how many hours people would work. And now we're five years later and we cannot live with a part time superintendent we need full time. He asked for an

explanation of what was wrong with the original analysis and why we have to go full time. Mrs. Kolb said she never realized there was a transition at the time but it was amazingly chaotic, disorganized and a tremendous amount of money was lost the first two years. The Board handled it. Situations had to be changed, Mrs. D'Agostino was brought on board, and money was no longer lost. The superintendent was adamant that it was a full time position. The way the SAU and school is run now compared to two years ago is stunningly different. It was a sinking ship and the school is much better with a full time superintendent. A qualified BA saved us over \$150,000 in one year alone in fines and mismanagement. Mr. Gregoire said when we first went through this as a Transition Team or Plan there were some assertions made that may not have been accurate. He said he knew that the Transition Team planned to have a part time student service coordinator and a part time student services director combined. That's what was proposed initially and the board changed it. There were things wrong with the Plan and it just wasn't working. We were in financial straits and that was when we had a full time BA. The plan said full time BA and Part time superintendent and that's flipped now. He said the office is running smoother with full time. The SAU staff are working well together and it's saving us money.

Mr. Zappala said looking ahead, are you planning to develop standards for looking at salaries for the superintendent like you do for teacher as things run smoother? As far as he can see they didn't apply that standard in regards to this salary. Does the School Board intend to apply an average cost as you do with a teacher? Mrs. Kolb replied they actually did look for average costs for superintendents. We look for average costs constantly. She has the average cost of the state's tax rate and evaluations because as a budget committee member she wants to know this. She said we are constantly looking at the average rate for all positions at the SAU. Teachers are 15% below average. We constantly come in below average for salaries. Mr. Zappala apologized for his question not being understood. His question was, does the school board intend to use the same standard at the upper management level not that we look at evaluation and try and figure what we can pay? The salaries appear to be much higher than these services in other schools. Mrs. Kolb said we can look at the list and make sure we come in below average as we have been doing.

Ms. Conner asked why the retirement tripled. Mr. Gregoire said there was no retirement fee deducted for the previous superintendent. Mr. Reinert asked Mr. Kolb if her saying we're constantly trying to bring up because we're below average. Is there a plan that will impact the taxpayers to bring the rest of the staff in line? She said we're not looking to increase anything above 2%. Mr. Reinert said it looks like the highest paid teacher is at \$65,000. Where would you like to see that go? She said Wakefield is consistently approximately 14.67% below the state average. It has been for the past five years. Because the Teacher's contract wasn't approved we're closer to 20% below the state average. How far below average does Wakefield want to be? How much do you want to pay the teachers? How low do you want to go, 10%, 20%? Mr. O'Connor said the position we're taking about is an unaffiliated position. Mr. Gregoire said it is still subject to negotiations. Mr. Romano asked, have you negotiated the teachers' contract or what stage are you in. Mr. Gregoire said no. Mr. Romano asked if he had had any trouble recruiting teachers because of the large disparity. Mr. Gregoire said yes it can be challenging. It's hard to attract people to this area. He said there have been times he's interviewed six or seven

people and they have all gone elsewhere and we're had to do a second round of interviews because we can't draw them in. Mrs. Colbath said you have teachers that have been there years and years. You don't have teachers leaving constantly. You may have had to do a second interview but you've always filled the position. You haven't had to fill a position with subs for very long. Mr. Gregoire said he didn't think he implied that and if he did it wasn't his intention. His point is there have been times when it's been a little more competitive trying to fill that position with the right person not just a warm body. Mr. Colbath said your teachers stay for years so you don't have a big turnover. Looking at state averages for teacher pay, you've got to look at towns more like us not cities. Mr. Gregoire said he didn't want to just settle. Mrs. Colbath said most of the teachers you hire stay so you must be getting good teachers because you're not getting rid of them. Mrs. Colbath said the Transition Plan called for a part time superintendent, a full time financial manager or part time BA, full time students' services director, a full time administrative assistant and a part time bookkeeper.

Mr. Zappala wanted to know who the parties were that were negotiating. Mr. Gregoire said the teachers union and the School Board and one or two administrators. Ms. Conner wanted to know why there was an increase in health insurance as the Superintendent was already covered in his past position. Mrs. Kolb answered the prior superintendent did not take health insurance. Mrs. Colbath read the health insurance plans that did exist in the Plan. Mr. O'Connor said that we had Mike Tursi, Bill Lander both our former superintendents, helped us with the Plan. The DOE reviewed and approved it. Many people worked on that Plan and it was supposed to work with the savings. It doesn't seem like it was given a fair chance. Mr. Gregoire said it certainly wasn't working. He said he was watching us losing money. (Blank in the tape) Mr. Miller asked if the SAU was working when we were part of SAU 64. Mr. Gregoire said it was. Mr. Miller said it was working but we moved away to save money. Mr. Gregoire said he thought it was a combination of things. Mr. Miller said maybe we should consider going back to Milton and saving some money. Mrs. Kolb said you've never seen a group of people trying to make Wakefield the best that it can be. The windows are guillotines. There have been proposals to do the windows for ten years.

Mr. Reinert asked if the part time superintendent was getting retirement. She was not. Mr. Reinert said between the 2019 budget and the 2021 budget in wages, insurance and retirement there's a \$90,000 increase. The prior superintendent didn't have retirement or health insurance so the increase in those lines from a part time to a full time costs us an additional \$90,000 and he's sure there are other costs in there. \$90,000 to him is a lot of money for one position on top of what was previously budgeted at \$80,000. Mr. Gregoire said on page A77 you can look back at the costs of the SAU going back to 2014. In 2014 you had a cost of \$519,555 and this year in the budget we're in right now the cost is \$514,227. He said so this year we are saving money. We're spending less than in 2014 then we were with SAU 64. Mrs. Kolb went on to say that the present BA receives less money than the previous BA and that the pool of people out there is very small. We changed from a full time BA to a Part time BA and reduced the cost of the Principal and Vice Principal. If it was working they wouldn't have changed a thing. They're there to improve student outcome. Mr. O'Connor asked Mrs. Kolb if she read the Plan. She replied they never gave it to us. Did you go to any of the public hearings? Did you get involved with the Plan at all before you decided it wasn't going to work? She said she was on the Board with Steve Brown

and he never issued a Plan. They would have left it exactly like it was but they had lost \$40,000 in IRS fines. The superintendent came and advocated for Mrs. D'Agostino. Mrs. Colbath said you had experienced people at the SAU. You'd expect to pay more for experienced people. As far as the cost of the SAU, you no longer have to pay \$36,000 a year for rent. Are you comparing apples to apples or apples to oranges? She said a lot of items are now combined with the school and in the school budget like electricity postage, propane, custodian phones. So a lot of the items in the SAU 64 budget are not in the SAU 101 budget. Mr. Gregoire said our custodians are not figured in from our school with the SAU budget. He's saying we're paying less for the SAU here than we did for the SAU 64 budget. Mrs. Colbath said you are not including the items that are coming out of the school budget now, Rent was in there. Mrs. D'Agostino said they will have to research rent. She said that rent would not have been included under the SAU expenses. Mrs. Colbath said it was. Mrs. D'Agostino said she didn't realize there was rent. Mrs. Colbath said you are \$163,384 over the withdrawal budget and \$112,079 over our share of the SAU 64 budget of 2015.

Mrs. Colbath said she agreed with them about the first year, you had the bus situation, food service. You had a lot in that first year. You also had a part time superintendent that handled it along with the rest of the SAU, it wasn't easy but it was done. Now those things are all ironed out and there are seven districts in this state that have part time superintendents. I don't know why you need a full time superintendent. Mr. Gregoire said he handled food service, he handled transportation and he handled all the technology. He said it wasn't handled out of the SAU because there wasn't the capacity for it. Ms. Conner asked if there was no overhead costs, heat and lights affiliated with this department. That is in the School part of the cost for utilities under the operation and maintenance. Mrs. D'Agostino made a correction, the superintendents salary went up 1% not 2% so the amount is \$1,100. Mrs. Colbath asked about the benefits. Mrs. D'Agostino said the increase for all non-affiliated is \$27,098 with a savings of \$19,850 by going to the consumer driven plan. The difference is \$7,248. This is before the rate increase and now they'll be an even greater change in the yellow plan. Mrs. Colbath asked, if I wanted to make a motion not to give the superintendent a raise what would that figure be including benefits? Mrs. D'Agostino said she'd figure that out.

Mr. Reinert said he thinks of the school as another department of the town; the police chief, fire chief, city or town manager and superintendent and asked if the superintendent salary and benefits fell in line with the others in Wakefield, except the fire chief who is part time. Mrs. Kolb said the average salary for a superintendent in New Hampshire is \$163,036 but the range typically falls from \$133,174 to \$196,724. Mr. Reinert said the Superintendent of Rochester, which is considerably larger than the town of Wakefield, is \$135,000. Mrs. Kolb said they may have more than one. Mr. Reinert said many more schools and probably quadruple the population and he makes \$135,000. We keep hearing this isn't Rochester and we can't afford Rochester prices and this is skirting on that line. Mr. Gregoire said that there is also an assistant superintendent and curriculum people and departments that manage themselves. Mr. O'Connor said the teachers negotiate and the results get put on the ballot and it's decided by the voters. Mrs. D'Agostino said the salary and benefit deduction from the superintendent salary would be a total of \$1,307.

**Mr. Romano made a motion, seconded by Mr. Miller to move the \$306,068. (Vote 8-1)**

### **2410 Principal: Increase of \$16,734 – 5.21%**

Mrs. Colbath said for the same reason she cut the superintendent line, the assistant principal received an increase of \$9,882 when going from a teacher to the assistant principal and the principal received an increase of \$13,643 going from assistant principal to principal last February. Mrs. Kolb said the 2% is the cost of living increase and you can't let the positions get too far behind or we have to play catch up. The increases for support salaries are higher than 2% because they are below the industry standards. The principal support salaries are for two people, one full and one part time. Mr. Gregoire does not feel it's a fair representation for those who have changed rolls like Assistant Principal to principal because there are more responsibilities. The move is significant. He doesn't consider this a raise but a change of positions and their salary equates to that. Mrs. Colbath said and they are still inexperienced. Mr. Romano asked if the retirement line covers both positions. Mr. Gregoire said the rest of the lines for benefits, PD, tuition equate to the two positions. Mrs. Colbath said in 2017 Mr. Gregoire's salary was \$84,989 and at that time he had been with the district for four years and had six years' experience prior to coming to Wakefield. Now you hired an inexperienced principal for \$86,700. Mr. Gregoire said he would expect if they hired a new experienced principal that was new to the position that we would likely be offering that person a 2% raise would be reasonable.

**Mrs. Colbath made a motion, seconded by Mr. Miller, to cut the salary and benefit increase from the principal and assistant lines by \$3,889. (Vote 7-2)**

Mrs. D'Agostino cautioned Mr. O'Connor about using a definitive number on the lines because things are still evolving and things will change. Mr. O'Connor asked if she was referring to insurance costs and things like that. Mrs. D'Agostino said we are now getting solidified numbers. She said they put estimates in the budget and now they're getting actual numbers. Mrs. D'Agostino said version 4 will have a different total. Mr. O'Connor said these are the numbers you propose to spend next year. Mrs. D'Agostino suggested saying the line will be reduced by approximately \$3,889 that would work rather than giving the exact number of the function. Mr. Reinert said hypothetically you could still give them the raises even though there was a motion made to take them out so it doesn't really matter. We already made motions to accept other lines that could also change. Mr. O'Connor said we usually have a pretty solid number and he doesn't know what will change in the proposed budget. Mrs. D'Agostino said as an example there will be a \$500 increase in software as we just got an estimate. Mrs. Colbath asked if there were items in this budget that don't say this is an estimate. Mrs. D'Agostino believes at the last meeting they said they were still getting numbers. This is preliminary. Mr. O'Connor said we usually hold a meeting in December for insurance numbers and any changes to the budget that come in late. Mrs. Kolb said to be clear, we worked hard to have actuals and three year averages. Mr. Romano said with a budget this size the cuts we have made are very small. He asked if the Superintendent and Principal have contracts with the School Board and if there is a savings in that function can they still give them raises? Mr. O'Connor said it's a bottom line budget and

they can take that money from anywhere in the budget and still give them raises. They do have contracts with the school board.

**Mrs. Colbath made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Conner, to move the \$334,100. (Vote 9-0)**

**2510 Fiscal Services: Increase of \$9,004 – 3.71%**

Mr. O'Connor said the BA and Superintendent used to be in the SAU function and is this change part of the States guidelines. Ms. Conner asked for an explanation of the increase in the BA's salary. Mr. Gregoire said that was a salary adjustment. He said there is a shortage across the state of BA's. There was an agreement prior to his time to bring the BA up to fair market value when she was hired. If we had to look for another BA and we went down to twenty five hours and there's a shortage. When she's not working here she fills in in other school districts. Ms. Conner asked, is this a part time position that was increased by \$9,300? Mr. Gregoire responded that's correct. She works thirty hours. Mrs. Colbath asked who she had an agreement with. Mr. Gregoire said Dr. Tyrie. Mrs. D'Agostino said she was approached on an emergency basis to replace the prior BA she was offered a salary and because it wasn't budgeted it was indicated that she would come in at \$60,000 because she chose not to take benefits. That was part of the understanding. She worked for a few months at the lower rate with a commitment that she would be adjusted in the future. When the budget was prepared for this year it was not adjusted. She went to the board in July because there was a change in the school board members and she didn't know if they were aware of the promise made in lieu of benefits she would be adjusted to a salary of \$60,000. To date she has not been made whole. Mr. Gregoire asked if we had a copy of that agreement. Mrs. D'Agostino said she didn't have one that she trusted the person, Mrs. Kolb said she does not look at this as a raise but a correction. We could not possibly hire a BA for the '20 budget there is no insurance or retirement budgeted for this position. She said the position the school was in when it was handed to Mrs. D'Agostino was incredulous. Mrs. Colbath asked Mrs. D'Agostino if she was collecting retirement now. She said yes. Mrs. Colbath asked if she had insurance from her retirement and she replied, that's my business, it's confidential. Mrs. Colbath said she appreciates that but to say retirement isn't budgeted in the position is misleading. Mrs. Colbath said the SAU 64 BA in 2018 was getting \$60,000 full time and he had to prepare three budgets, Milton, Wakefield and the SAU budget, you only have one budget. She said Mr. Castle wasn't certified, she was his mentor. Mr. O'Connor said he worked for MRI not the district. We paid MRI for his services. He said you're, he believes, you are only the second certified BA we've had. The prior ones he had assumed were but were not.

Mr. Zappala asked if she was going to be protected by an actual written agreement this time to protect the budget and the person. Mrs. Colbath said there is a critical shortage of Special Ed Directors also. She said in good conscience, she can't send a \$9,300 increase - 17.99% for a part time person to the voters. They're going to say you're crazy for a part time position. Ms. Conner said her concern that this kind of adjustment sets a precedent. If a teacher comes in and does not take health insurance she could demand a higher salary. Mr. Gregoire explained the buyback. Ms. Conner said but it's a lot less. She's afraid it may cause some animosity from others who may think they deserve more. Mrs. D'Agostino said when she came here three years ago the offer was \$60,000. She took an average of what the BA's with her experience and background

were getting and rounded it up to \$100,000 if she was full time and 60% of \$100,000 is \$60,000. Mr. Kolb said to justify the \$9,300 to the taxpayer Mrs. D'Agostino saved well over \$100,000. Anybody would pay \$9,300 to avoid the amount of money that was hemorrhaged before she got here. And that person was making \$70,000 plus health and retirement. She's sorry it wasn't in writing and many things came to light after the fact that the board wasn't aware of. Mr. O'Connor said we appreciate that. We always appreciate people that do a good job. He said a couple of meetings ago James brought up the fact we're trying to be responsible with taxpayers money and that's a difficult position to be in. Mr. Romano said this person from his limited knowledge has done an excellent job. She's been responsive to us. I respect the fact that she was promised something and not delivered and that particular school board is no longer here. He thinks a promise was made and he wouldn't have any problem justifying the amount to the voters if he was asked. He feels you have to do the right thing and carry out the amount that was promised to this person. He supports this line item. Mr. Gregoire said it was not the school board that made that promise it was the former superintendent.

Ms. Conner said is the support staff getting a 4% raise? She wondered why some were getting 2% and others 4%. He looked at 2% for nonaffiliated administrators and tried to bring up support staff to be more in line with what they should be getting. Only one person in the SAU works eight hours a day, two work seven hours a day and one is split between Special Ed and finance. Mrs. Colbath asked Mrs. D'Agostino what she held for degrees. She has a BA and Masters in Business Administration and a Masters in Human Resources. Mrs. Kolb said if you made this a thirty five hour position for \$61,000 and paid health and retirement how low would that salary be? Mr. Miller asked if Mrs. D'Agostino ever contacted Dr. Tyrie and asked her to confirm, in writing, the promise she made to you. She did not. Mrs. D'Agostino said she asked her several times last year when they were preparing the budget If she was going to correct my salary and she offered to her several times in lieu to take the insurance and I indicated several time that that was not what we had planned on doing. She said what they agreed upon was that she was to get the salary vs the insurance. Mr. Miller asked if anyone from the school board call her to confirm the agreement. Mrs. D'Agostino said at this point it would be a he said/she said. What happened in the past happened in the past. She said we need to move forward and if the community wishes not to approve this that's another decision I have to make, and that's not a threat. Mrs. Colbath said it doesn't sound like there was a meeting of the minds, what she told you, what you heard or what you believed or what she believed. Doesn't sound like there was a meeting of the minds. Mrs. Colbath said she was going to take this down to 9% this year and 9% next year to get you up to where she said the agreed amount was.

**Mrs. Colbath made a motion, seconded by Mr. Miller to take 9% out of this line down to \$4,650. (Vote 2-7)**

Mr. O'Connor said this is to encourage the school board to do this in two steps.

**Mr. Zappala made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Kolb to move the \$251,709 (Vote 8-1)**

Mrs. Colbath asked if line 208, Software, was the line you took administrators salary increases from last year. Mrs. D'Agostino said the \$56,000 was not spent on software because they had to pay a penalty to the IRS of \$43,000. Mr. Gregoire said that was back in '19. Last year that money was used to pay his salary from part time to full time. He said in five years their financial



software will be obsolete. It is their intention to use this money next year to finally pay for that software. People were new to their positions and wanted to get comfortable in them.

### **2610: Operations and Maintenance Increase of \$46,297 – 8.60%**

Mr. O'Connor asked if the 5.64% raise is for one person. Mr. Gregoire said that is for several custodians. Mrs. Colbath asked if they were each getting a 5.64% raise. Mr. O'Connor said so is that divided up amongst them? Mr. Gregoire said the \$6,396 is divided by four custodians. Ms. Conner asked if some are getting more than others percentage wise. Mr. Gregoire said the percentage is the same 5.64%. Ms. Conner asked if it was normal for them to get that kind of raise. Mr. Gregoire said we're trying to keep the good people we have bringing them up to a fair market value. Ms. Conner said didn't we do that last year? Mr. Gregoire said they did not. Mr. O'Connor said it seems like we're getting hammered over salaries on our poor tax base. He's not sure that people who are paying the bills are getting pay raises enough to cover these pay raises. Ms. Conner said certainly not 5/6%. Mr. Gregoire said he looks at the \$6,396 divided by four people who are on the lower end and do a good job.

Mr. O'Connor said I think we know everyone is doing a good job but we also need to keep in mind those who are struggling to pay their bills are getting squeezed on all sides with reevaluation and increase in taxes. It's not that we don't think we have great employees doing a great job. We hear from the town side that people aren't making enough or they shouldn't have to pay their deductible and we should be paying for disability insurance for them. A lot of people who are paying the bills aren't able to enjoy those amenities for themselves or their own children. So we do have to try and balance it out. Mrs. Kolb said she couldn't agree more it's easier when there are small increments but there have been years and years without one. Two years there were no raises and last years were minimal.

She said if you compare the school rate with the rest of the state there are only 22 towns out of 240 that were below us. We all try to keep the tax rate down but if the average rate is \$12.00 and you're at \$6:00, the rest of the state has similar expenses as Wakefield. The raises were tried to be kept to a minimum to keep our workers at industry standard. So to not acknowledge what we're trying to do here, trying to keep the tax rate low while we are severely lower than the rest of the state and she compares it to the rest of the state because they have similar expenses. Mr. O'Connor said in the thirty years he's been here he has never seen anyone that wanted to try and compete to get up to the average of paying property taxes that some people across the state are paying. Mr. Kolb said she wanted to correct that very strongly that she's not trying to compete. She's not advocating for it to go any higher than to keep the school running. Ms. Conner asked Mrs. Kolb if she was comparing to other schools in the area or the whole state. Mrs. Kolb asked if she had looked at the public tax rates for every town. Ms. Conner said she wasn't concerned about what other people are paying because our assessments are different. I want to make sure what we're offering our staff, these people get dental, health, retirement and she understands their wages are lower but as Mr. O'Connor pointed out no one is paying the taxpayers dental, health, retirement and they don't get a 5% increase in their social security. She wants to make sure that is all factored into the offered increase. Mrs. Kolb said it's a balance and they're

advocating for the education of the children of Wakefield. Mr. Miller asked for an explanation of snow removal and care of building lines. Mr. Gregoire said they added two additional snow removal events that they didn't have last year but could potentially have next year. They put shades for windows in the care of buildings line. Mr. Zappala said the trash removal went up quite a bit. Mr. Gregoire said the number was under budgeted last year. Mr. Zappala said the valuation of property does not determine the cost of the service. If we have fifteen kids in school we could collect less money. So how much our property is valued only determines our mil rate. So we're just trying to figure how much it takes to run the school independently of how much the state says our property is worth. He doesn't know why this is used as the justification of increased spending here. There is no relationship between the valuation of our property and the cost of running the school. He was hoping not to have to say that again. The town will plow the parking lot this winter. Mr. O'Connor said, and you're expecting to have to clear the roof off a couple more times to the tune of \$3000 a storm. Mr. Williams explained how the snow is removed from the roof. It's removed when it's 18" deep depending on water content. Mr. Romano asked if the custodians line reflected a raise and step according to a CBA. Mr. Gregoire said that's an adjustment to their salaries to bring them up to industry standard.

**Mr. Zappala made a motion, seconded by Mr. Romano, to move the line at \$584,386 (Vote 7-2)**

Mrs. Colbath asked Mr. Gregoire what he found out about the truant officer. He said we have a new signed MOA with the Police Department for the SRO. Mr. Gregoire said they had a MOA when the SRO first started and they have an addendum to that now. Mr. Miller asked about the high school student count. Mr. Gregoire said last year they lost two. Mr. Miller reminded him that he's asked for the last five years. Mr. Gregoire will have that for the next meeting. **Mr. Miller made a motion, seconded by Mr. Shine, to adjourn (Vote 9-0)**

Respectfully submitted for approval at the next Budget Committee meeting

Priscilla Colbath

Secretary Pro Temp