

Wakefield Budget Committee Meeting

November 25, 2019

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

School Board present: Bob Ouellette, Jennifer McCawley

School Administration present: Jerry Gregoire, Marie D'Agostino, Brennan Peaslee and Joe Williams.

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

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

2721 Regular Education Transportation: Increase of \$54,496 – 12.71%

Mr. Kasprzyk asked if the buses had a transponder so they have a discount at the toll booths. Mrs. Peaslee said we don't have to pay the tolls. Mr. Miller said we use to use a leasing company that we hired to transport children and then we took it in-house and leased the buses. The prior BA told us it was much cheaper to buy the buses. We were never given an analysis. He would like someone in the SAU to figure out the most advantageous way to acquire the buses. Mr. O'Connor asked if we added personnel or were they moved from another line? The dispatcher was moved to this line along with a new bus driver and route. Ms. Conner asked why they were adding a new route. Mr. Gregoire said if every student that was eligible to ride the bus did so they would be over capacity. Mrs. Peaslee said more children are taking the bus now rather than parent drop off. We have an average of 70 children per bus. The Rec Center before and after care puts a lot of children on one bus. If every child took that bus that was registered for it we'd be over capacity. We wouldn't be able to handle the children if parents decided their children would ride the bus rather than driving them. They will be using one of their spare buses for the new driver.

Mr. Miller wanted to know how many buses and the number of children we are transporting out of town and what towns are they being transported to. Mrs. Peaslee said there are two going to Somersworth on one bus and a student going to Acton on a separate bus. They use the van for the Somersworth route and the car or mini bus whatever is available for the Acton route. Mr. O'Connor asked about the 7.5% increase for the manager. Mr. Gregoire said last year Mrs. Peaslee's contract was not for the full year so last year we had to find money to pay her for the rest of the year. We prorated that out and it came to about \$8,000 to go the full year. We didn't have that kind of money last year to bring her up to so she ended up getting a \$3,000 stipend or adjustment to bring her up to where she should be but we didn't have the complete \$8,000 so this reflects that full prorated amount. Mrs. Colbath asked why the dispatcher was in Co-Curricula in the first place. Mr. Gregoire said it always has been for after school tutoring and after school program. Mr. Romano asked if the buses had video recording and the answer was yes. Mr. O'Connor asked about the travel line increase of \$1,082, a 496% increase. Mrs. Peaslee said she

goes to the NHSTA meetings in Concord and back and forth to the bus yard, a bus stop or an accident. She keeps track of the miles when she uses her own vehicle. She gets 58 cents a mile. He said that equates to about 2300 miles a year is that accurate? She tends to go to Concord once a month and back and forth to the bus yard two or three times a day. She only did mileage reimbursement last year when she went to Concord. She feels that this is a good estimate. Mr. Kasprzyk asked why the retirement increased so much. Mrs. D'Agostino said raises equal increases plus they added a driver. Driver positions are hard to fill. It's a regional issue. Drivers are working 7-8 hours a day and coming in even when they're sick. The Transportation Manager is even having to drive a bus. Most drivers work 6.5 hours but when they go over that they get retirement. Mr. Kasprzyk said Mrs. Peaslee did a good job with the budget but the increases all seem to be in salaries. Mr. O'Connor said it seems to be a trend this year.

Mr. Mankus made a motion, seconded by Mr. Miller, to move the \$483,424. (Vote 7-2)

2722 Special Education Transportation: Increase of \$67,147 – 59.86%

Mr. Gregoire said the increase is for one anticipated student. They have a good idea where they would be transporting that student. Mrs. Peaslee said we had five students last year being transported out of district. Mr. Kasprzyk wondered why we had five last year (three Somersworth, one Acton and one Rochester) and three in this budget and we were paying a lot less money last year. Those were out of the transportation line not contracted services. Mr. Miller asked if the \$71,000 increase is for one child. Mrs. Peaslee said one is and the other goes through Mrs. Kebler. She said its \$325 a day to transport the student. Mr. O'Connor asked where this student would be going at a rate of \$325 a day which is a base rate. Mr. Gregoire said we can't discuss that in public. He can only say it would be in Maine. Mr. O'Connor wondered why the name of the town would violate anyone's privacy. Mrs. Colbath said you just named the other towns. He said it's a specific program that is a ways away, probably the same distance as Somersworth. Student transportation is mandated by the state. Mr. Romano asked if we received any reimbursement. Mr. Gregoire said we can apply IDEA to where we need to. We get a flat rate based on our student population. Mr. Miller asked if this individual would qualify for catastrophic aid and whether we get a reimbursement. Mr. Gregoire said he'd have to defer to Mrs. Kebler. Mr. Gregoire said he would have that information for the next meeting.

Mr. Miller said the one thing he continues to talk about every year is the size of the Special Ed budget and we start asking questions and we get, "that's confidential". Is it your opinion or is there a law to back that it's confidential? A \$50,000 increase and we hear that's confidential. He is not satisfied with that response. Mr. Romano asked if a child is being covered under Medicaid and there are requirements for their education does the district receive reimbursement. Mr. Gregoire said the parent has to agree to it. We can apply but we never know for which child we receive money for. Mrs. Colbath asked how much money they were reimbursed last year for Medicaid. Mr. Kebler answered \$97,435 for Medicaid reimbursement. Ms. Conner asked if a certain type of company is required and is that why it's so expensive. Can we not hire someone locally? Mr. Gregoire said we are cautious who we put our children in a vehicle with. All our drivers go through an FBI background check. Some districts use a taxi service but it isn't something he's ok with. We are required to have a driver that's been background checked. Mr.

Kasprzyk asked how you can get a competitive rate when no one is allowed to ask anything. A message has to be sent to the federal government that we will pay our 60% and you can pay the rest. Mr. Gregoire said and when they don't pay we'll be sued. It's not a risk he's going to take. **Mr. Mankus made a motion, seconded by Mr. Miller, to move the \$179,325. (Vote 6-4)**

2723 Athletic Student Transportation: Increase of \$0 – 0%

Mr. Miller made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Colbath, to move the \$3,229. (Vote 10-0)

2725 Field Trip/CoCurr Student Transportation: Increase of \$0 – 0%

Mr. Miller made a motion, seconded by Mr. Kasprzyk, to move the \$3,229. (Vote 10-0)

2820 Technology: Increase of \$45,055 – 50.89%

Mr. Colbath asked what the first line, Data Security Services means. Mr. Gregoire said HB1612 mandates that we protect student, school and employee data and this is the cost \$16,320, to hire a company. Mrs. Colbath asked why the sixty new computers aren't in the trust fund as they were last year. There is \$41,000 in the Technology Trust Fund right now. Mr. Miller asked, are you going to be spending the \$41,000 plus the \$16,000 plus the \$9,000? Mr. Gregoire said they are looking at purchasing Chromebooks so we will be spending that money and phasing out the MacBooks when they are no longer useable. Mr. Miller repeated his question, how much are you going to spend from the \$66,000. Mr. Gregoire responded that he did not have an exact figure. He will get that figure for Mr. Miller. He said he will probably spend the entire \$40,000 from the trust fund this year and the rest next year. Mr. Gregoire wanted this in the budget because it's a yearly purchase. Mrs. Colbath said we put cruisers in the trust fund and that's a yearly purchase. **Mr. Miller made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Colbath, to reduce the new computer and teacher computer lines by \$25,000 to zero and have the school put that money in the Technology Trust Fund. (Vote 9-1)** Mr. Miller explained if this money is in the trust fund it can only be spent on computers, the taxpayers have more control and if not spent it will still be there the next year. Plus we already have an existing Technology Trust Fund.

Mr. Miller made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Colbath, to move the \$108,595. (Vote 9-1)

2900 Other Benefits: Increase of \$-271 – (0.53) %

Mrs. Colbath asked who got life and disability. Mrs. D'Agostino said teachers and administrators get disability and only the SAU staff gets life.

Mrs. Colbath made a motion, seconded by Mr. Shine to move the line.

Mr. Miller asked if life was restricted to just the SAU why isn't it in the SAU budget? Mrs. D'Agostino said all the ancillary benefits are included in these lines. Mr. Miller said this isn't ancillary it's just for the SAU. She said they could move the \$1,370 to the SAU. Mr. Miller said there have been a number of things that have been moved out of the SAU and it's getting harder

to compare apples to apples. This belongs in the SAU if it's an SAU benefit. She said the board will vote on this at the next meeting.

Mr. Kasprzyk asked what percentage of the life insurance does the school pays. Mrs. D'Agostino said the school pays 100%. Mr. Kasprzyk said he believes that the people getting this benefit should pay a portion like any other business. The Committee will wait until the School Board votes to move the SAU life insurance.

Mrs. Colbath withdrew her motion and Mr. Shine removed his second.

Function 2900 will be voted on in December.

5221 Food Service: Increase of \$ 10,000 – 0.00%

Mrs. Colbath made a motion, seconded by Mr. Miller, to move the \$10,000. (Vote 10-0)

Questions from 11-18-19

1. Mr. Gregoire, in answer to Mr. Kasprzyk's question, the ratio of students to teachers is 19 to 1. Mr. Kasprzyk said the question he asked was the ratio of students to all adults in the room. Mr. Gregoire said with all the professionals in the building including administrators that's about 10-1. He assured him it was not a 3 to 1 ratio.

2. Mr. Miller asked how many students we lose on average at the high school level. He said over the last five years it appears to be about a 5.5. We have not had more students at the end of the year. Mr. Miller said in the past, at the Deliberative Session, we have looked at the current number and have taken it up or down depending on the final number at that meeting and have been successful at reducing the budget at between three and five students. Mr. Miller said we could reduce that number now or at Deliberative Session. Mrs. Colbath said she'd rather wait to see what the number is and do it once. Mr. Miller said his recommendation right now is to reduce that line by at least three. Mr. Zappala asked if we see saw some resolutions on the behavioral issues from last year when eight or nine people were brought in to get a handle on this and do we see a savings if that has been resolved? Is there somewhere we can look in the budget to see some reduction in costs? Mr. Gregoire said we had some professional development come in but he doesn't see any financial gain yet. Mr. Zappala said so we have retained all those professionals? Mr. Gregoire does not recall adding any new staff. Mr. Zappala asked if there is a reduction in the budget this year by removing some of the costs for those services. Mr. Gregoire said not as of yet. Mrs. Kolb said we have to follow 189:1 to provide the number of high school students in October and present it to you along with the cost for tuition which is \$14,522 per student. Mr. Gregoire said the LNA was taken completely out of the nurse's line last year and put in the paraprofessional line. Mrs. Colbath said that according to the minutes of a school board meeting the LNA, even though in the Special Ed budget was to help the nurse when time was available. Mr. Gregoire said she is now but it wasn't budgeted for the nurse's office. Mrs. Colbath said it was agreed that she'd work in the nurses' office. The LNA is presently working with a student and in the Nurses office at times.

3. Mr. Miller asked if they could budget the average cost for insurance in the line for the new position rather than the estimate of \$16,600. Mrs. D'Agostino said the average is the two person

plan. Mr. Miller asked for the average of the teachers. Mr. Miller said if you have 80 employees and we're paying \$300,000 for insurance and you divide by 80 you're going to get an average. She said that would be a discussion for the board to have if they want to go forward with that. It has not been past practice. We're picking the cost of a two person plan. Mr. Miller said you don't know if it's going to be a two person plan. She said the school board will decide. A family plan runs about \$30,000, two person plan \$16,000 and single plan \$10,000. If the board wants to change that we will do so.

4. Mrs. Colbath's question was, how many new positions are you budgeting for including Contracted Services? Mr. Gregoire said they have no new positions for next year. Mrs. D'Agostino said they will be reallocating \$25,000 to contracted services and adding another \$25,000. It's not a personnel addition.

Mr. Mankus made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Kolb, to move the 1100 line Regular Education at \$5,405,104. (Vote 5-5)

Mrs. Colbath made a motion, seconded by Mr. Zappala, to move the 2110 line Truant Officer at \$0. (Vote 10-0)

Mrs. Colbath made a motion, seconded by Mr. Miller, to move the 2130 line Nurse at \$85.275 (Vote 10-0)

Mr. Miller made a motion, seconded by Mr. Kasprzyk, to add \$1 to the 2150 line Speech (Vote 10-0)

Ms. Conner asked if we will be charged if the individual that will be costing us \$325 a day for transportation doesn't go to school will we be charged for that day? Mrs. Peaslee said yes, the contract is for 180 days but the amount in the budget will not cover a full year. Ms. Conner asked if this is a given and was told it was not but if they didn't plan on it and it happened it could be a significant hit. Mr. O'Connor said you could also use money from the expendable trust. He assumes they will put money in there this year. Mrs. Colbath asked how many Math Interventionist you have. The answer was one. Mrs. Colbath asked if they were using the money they saved from the yellow insurance plan to give unaffiliated staff raises? Mr. Gregoire said no. that money has not been designated for that purpose. Mrs. Colbath said that's what it looks like. She asked what the difference in cost of the two person yellow plan and a two person for the plan we have now. Mrs. Colbath said she didn't understand the handout so she was asking a simple question, the difference in cost between the two plans. Mrs. D'Agostino said approximately a 12.5% decrease. Mrs. Colbath asked for a figure. She said it looked to her like they were giving raises to the affiliated from the insurance savings. Mrs. D'Agostino said that was not the intent. Mrs. Kolb said the unaffiliated were going to get raises no matter what happened with the insurance. Mrs. D'Agostino said she had handed out the new rates at the last meeting and it shows the difference in the rates and you can see the cost. Mrs. Colbath said could you just tell me what it is. She had to calculate the percentage that the district is paying. The school board has a budget workshop next week and will be doing the warrant articles.

The next meeting will be Wednesday December 18th at 6:30.

Mr. O'Connor said the school and town Public Hearings will be separate this year.

Deliberative Session is February 1st and town Public Hearings will be separate this

Mr. Kasprzyk thanked everyone for their hard work and wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving

Mrs. Colbath made a motion, seconded by Mr. Miller, to approve the minutes of December 12th.

Deliberative Session is February 1st.

Mr. O'Connor said to Mrs. D'Agostino all we will need is a clean copy of the operating budget.

**Mr. Kasprzyk made a motion, seconded by Mr. Zappala, to adjourn the meeting at 8:10.
(Vote 9-0-1)**

Respectfully submitted for approval at the next Budget Committee meeting

Priscilla Colbath

Secretary pro temp