

**PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED 2020-2021 DISTRICT BUDGET**  
**Monday, April 27, 2020, at 7:00 p.m.**

**View Only Live Stream Link**

<https://stream.meet.google.com/stream/26ffb233-7000-4c4b-9174-660cc693ddee>

**BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chair Ms. Molly Sexton Read (B), Vice-Chair Mr. Robert Jerram (NH), Secretary/Treasurer Mr. Noel Gauthier (NH), Ms. Mary Duran (B), Ms. Theresa Kenneson (C), Ms. Lisa Fragale (C), Ms. Deborah Bell (N), Mr. Ben Nadeau (N), Superintendent Dr. Judith Palmer, Director of Finance & Operations Mr. James Gaskins

**PUBLIC OFFICIALS PRESENT:** First Selectman Mr. Donald Stein (B), Selectman Mr. Nicholas Lukiwsky (B), Board of Finance Chair Mr. Richard Winn (B), First Selectman Mr. Daniel Jerram (NH), First Selectman Mr. Matthew Riiska (N), Board of Finance Chair Mr. J. Michael Sconyers (N)

**PUBLIC:** Questions and comments from the Public can be sent to: [publicinput@nwr7.org](mailto:publicinput@nwr7.org) and will be read by the Chair and addressed where possible.

**CALL TO ORDER:** Ms. Sexton Read called the **PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED 2020-2021 REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 7 BUDGET** to order at 7:01 p.m.

Ms. Sexton Read welcomed Board members, public officials, and community members to Regional School District No. 7's PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED 2020-2021 DISTRICT BUDGET explaining that the Public Hearing is in place of Proposed Budget Presentations for the towns of Barkhamsted, Colebrook, and New Hartford where, due to current COVID-19 circumstances and legislation, those meetings did not take place. Ms. Sexton Read advised of live stream link for community members, and that she would open the floor for questions and comments from board members and public officials in attendance following each Object Presentation and would respond to emails received from community members at the end of the presentation.

**PUBLIC HEARING ON 2020-2021 BUDGET**

Ms. Sexton Read began the power point presentation highlighting historical expenditure increases, student PSAT results, testing result rankings with the Berkshire League, AP student scores, and CSDE Next Generation Accountability indicators. Budget drivers related to Special Education costs and outplacements account for 1.94 percent of the overall 2.90 percent increase. Efficiency measures, retirements and resignations demonstrate RSD's continued ability of providing a high performing school district, even with the challenges of Distance Learning, that meets the educational, social/emotional, and extracurricular needs of all students at an average cost with a conservative and responsible increase.

**100 Object Salaries:** contractual salary increases, High School Mathematics Interventionist position, staffing level changes to meet 25 credit requirement, and Superintendent salary 2-year presentation were reviewed. Ms. Sexton Read opened the floor for questions/comments which were received from: (1) New Hartford First Selectman Dan Jerram advised of concerns with contractual increases and due to current extreme circumstances requested reconsideration of salary increases, and; (2) Barkhamsted First Selectman Don Stein advised of similar lengthy discussions with Barkhamsted Board of Finance, and it was decided at this time to leave their contractual increases in place.

Ms. Sexton Read thanked both for their input during this very challenging time and provided an assurance that the Board of Education would be open, thoughtful and considerate about this process and their discussion.

Ms. Sexton Read provided an explanation pertaining to Excess Cost used as an offset with the budget. No questions followed.

**200 Benefits:** Health insurance increase of 5.75% and health benefits carrier change for a 4% savings.

Questions/comments: None.

**300 Professional Technical Services:** reviewed by Ms. Sexton Read. Questions/comments: None.

**400 Property Services:** increases and budget mitigation actions reviewed. Questions/comments: None.

**500 Other Purchased Services:** increases related to special education and budget mitigation actions reviewed.

Questions/comments: None.

**600 Supplies; 700 Property; 800 Other Objects; 900 Other Funds:** reviewed followed by no questions/comments.

Ms. Sexton Read provided a review of Revenues, Average Daily Membership by Town, and 7-year averages of assessments, anticipated savings due to COVID-19 and also COVID related expenses, and concluded that even with the challenges of Distance Learning and all that entails, dedicated staff members continue to provide a rigorous and comprehensive education program for student success, and expressed her appreciation for the support of community members on behalf of all students within the District.

#### **PUBLIC OFFICIAL QUESTIONS/COMMENTS**

Norfolk First Selectman, Matthew Riiska: Advised that anything the Board of Education could do to reduce the proposed budget increases would be much appreciated, including reconsideration of contractual increases.

Discussion followed with Board of Education members, Dr. Palmer, and Mr. Gaskins, with the general consensus that although all are aware of the financial pressures on many people, due to the extreme challenges during this unprecedented pandemic on teachers, administration, and staff members, salary increases at this time would remain in the proposed 2020-2021 budget. Ms. Sexton Read and Board of Education members requested that Dr. Palmer and Mr. Gaskins review all other budget items and provide for the next Board meeting a plan for budget reductions/savings in other areas for Board consideration to reduce the impact on member towns.

Ms. Sexton Read advised of comments received via email from community members: Ben Witte, Kerry Guilfoyle, Regina Wexler, and Dan Jerram; she will be making them available and forwarding to all Board of Education members for their review.

Further discussion followed pertaining to: possible savings due to COVID, transportation contracts, budget offset timeline, federal reimbursement availability, maximizing dollars spent to pass along to tax payers, on-going COVID challenges. Ms. Sexton Read thanked everyone for their thoughts, participation, and support.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION** by Mr. Gauthier, seconded by Ms. Duran, to **ADJOURN** at 8:11 p.m. AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Mr. Gauthier, Ms. Duran, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Fragale, Ms. Bell, Mr. Nadeau. NAY: None. ABSTAIN: None. **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa H. D'Aprile  
Board Clerk