

BROOKLINE SCHOOL DISTRICT
ANNUAL MEETING
FIRST SESSION (DELIBERATIVE)
FEBRUARY 3, 2020
MEETING MINUTES

The First Session (Deliberative) of the Annual Meeting of the Brookline School District was conducted on Monday, February 3, 2020 at 6:30 p.m. at the Captain Samuel Douglass Academy.

Moderator Peter Webb presided.

Members of the School Board Present: Matthew Maguire, Chairman
Rebecca Howie, Secretary
Alison Marsano
Erin Sarris

Members of the School Board Absent: Kenneth Haag, Vice Chairman

Also in Attendance: Thomas Humphreys, Clerk
Andrew Corey, Superintendent
Gina Bergskaug, Assistant Superintendent
Bob Thompson, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services
Kelly Seeley, Business Administrator
Kristen Maher, Assistant Business Administrator
Dennis Dobe, Principal, Captain Samuel Douglass Academy
Brian Rater, Chairman, Brookline Finance Committee
Graham Loff, Secretary, Brookline Finance Committee
Dana Ketchen, Brookline Finance Committee
James O'Shaughnessy, Esq., School District Attorney

Moderator Webb led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Members of the School Board and Administration were introduced. Members of the Administration are not members of the Town, and, therefore, technically not permitted to participate. However, given what they could add to the discussion, the Moderator requested anyone objecting to allowing them to speak make that objection known. No objections were stated.

Moderator Webb noted this to be an SB2 meeting under RSA 40:13 also known as the Official Ballot Referendum System. The School Board has created a Warrant having 10 Articles. Under SB2, the Warrant is effectively the Ballot. Before the voters was the opportunity to discuss each of the Warrant Articles and to consider any amendments. Although the Ballot could be changed, it could not be approved until before the voters on Tuesday, March 10, 2020.

Article 1

Election of Officers. *To elect all necessary School District officers for the ensuing terms by official ballot vote on March 10, 2020, Captain Samuel Douglass Academy, 7:00 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.:*

- *To choose a Moderator for the ensuing year.*
- *To choose a Clerk for the ensuing year.*
- *To choose a Treasurer for the ensuing year.*
- *To choose two (2) members of the School Board for the ensuing three (3) years.*

Article will be placed on the official ballot as written.

A chart was provided depicting historical and forecasted enrollment numbers. The District currently has 578 students and is projecting 611. Projections are provided by the New England School Development Council (NESDEC). The historic high was in 2010/2011 (659). Projections see the District heading towards that figure again in FY23. That uptick is also being seen in the other two districts.

The State's average cost per pupil is currently \$16,520. Brookline's is \$15,430.

Superintendent Corey provided a description of the articles put forth.

Noted was that the teachers' contract and the SAU budget are not amendable in this session. The teachers' contract goes to the ballot in the form negotiated by the Teachers' Union and the School Board. At the polls, voters have two options with regard to the SAU budget; proposed or adjusted.

Superintendent Corey spoke of the State Adequacy Aid. In FY20, the District received \$1,908,595 and in FY21 the figure is \$1,993,905, which represents an increase of \$85,310 or 5%. The retained tax, which is basically the State tax (stays in Brookline), will be increased by \$15,765 or 3%.

Superintendent Corey spoke of a grant received in FY20 that will again be received in FY21 (\$591,264). That revenue will be utilized to offset the tax rate.

A reduction in local revenues (\$264,093 or 30%) is seen. The brunt of that reduction is kindergarten tuition. If full-day kindergarten is supported, \$217,500 in parent paid revenues will stop and the cost will shift to taxpayers.

The total proposed appropriation for FY21 is \$3,795,230, which represents an increase of \$428,246 or 13%.

With regard to the tax rate, the proposed operating budget identifies a 2.2% reduction from FY20, an increase of 31.1% associated with the Warrant Articles (teachers' contract and full-day kindergarten are the major increases), a reduction in local revenue (29.5%) and an increase in State aid (4.5%). The retained State tax is a 2.9% increase, and the one-time grant a 100% increase for a reduction in the total tax effort of 6.8%. That is the result of the School Board making the conscience decision not to spend that one time revenue of \$591,264.

The Brookline School District tax rate would go from \$10.42 to \$9.60 (reduction of 7.9%). The State tax rate increases from \$0.86 to \$0.88 or 2.3%. If all estimates come in, the tax rate for the School District would go from \$11.28 (FY20) to \$10.48 (FY21), which represents a reduction of 7.1%.

Moderator Webb introduced members of the Finance Committee; Brian Rater, Chairman, Graham Loff, Secretary, and Dana Ketchen.

Mr. Rater provided a chart depicting the breakdown of property tax. Last year approx. 37% went to the COOP School District, 33% to the Brookline School District, 4% to the County, 20% to the Town, and 7% was education dollars (also to schools).

A graph chart was shown identifying the trajectory of the operating budget over the past 7 years. The level of increase has been relatively flat.

Major budget impacts include the maturing of the bond for CSDA (\$437,274 reduction), the proposal for full-day kindergarten (increase of \$143,163), teachers' contract (\$146,163 increase in FY21 and \$480,677 over the three-year life of the contract), and increase in State aid of \$676,574.

Mr. Rater remarked over recent years the State has been reducing the amount of State aid. It has been put into law that it goes down by a certain percentage every year. This year there was a dramatic change and the Legislature increased the amount of State aid that goes to property poor towns, which is what Brookline is considered to be. That amount of increased State aid is just for the Brookline School District. We are also getting a similar amount for the COOP School District. The bulk of that aid is a one-time commitment.

A slide was shown that identified the amount of last year's operating budget less the bond that was paid off (to provide an apples-to-apples comparison of the current and proposed budgets). Effectively, there is a 2.38% increase in overall spending. However, it does not take into account the one-time State and other revenue changes. About 2/3 of the 2.38% is the money for the teachers' contract that the voters approved last year. Once it is approved it goes into the operating budget. The numbers the School Board will display don't include that. Their focus is on the amount of the budget there is control over.

Mr. Rater addressed the recommendations of the Finance Committee on each of the articles. For the teachers' contract the Finance Committee did not recommend by a vote of 1-2-0. The primary concern was with sanbornization. With sanbornization, you approve a contract for several years, which means it does not go back before the voters in each of those years. There were concerns expressed with future year increases associated with sanbornized contracts.

The Finance Committee did not recommend the proposal for full-day kindergarten on a vote of 1-2-0. The feeling of the majority of the committee is that the current system is working well. It provides a revenue stream and options for families.

The Committee unanimously supported the operating budget, the maintenance trust and special education trust. The contingency article and SAU budget were recommended by votes of 2-1-0. Concerns expressed were with the overall spending levels of the School District and Town. Access to special education funds is something approved every year.

Article 2

To see if the Brookline School District will vote to approve the cost of items included in the three-year collective bargaining agreement reached between the Brookline School Board and the Brookline Teachers Association for the 2020-2021, 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years, which calls for the following increase in professional

staff salaries and benefits at the current staffing levels:

| <u>Fiscal Year</u> | <u>Est. Increase</u> |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 2020-2021 | \$146,163 |
| 2021-2022 | 170,569 |
| 2022-2023 | <u>163,945</u> |
| Total | \$480,677 |

*and further to raise and appropriate a sum of **\$146,163** for the first fiscal year (2020-21 school year), such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in professional staff salaries and benefits required by the new agreement over those that would be paid at current staffing levels. **The School Board recommends this article 4-1-0. The Finance Committee does not recommend this article 1-2-0.***

Mr. Maguire read into the record a statement from the School Board Vice Chairman, Ken Haag:

“Thank you for attending today’s Deliberative Session. I am sorry to be unavailable for this year’s meeting. This is a position I take very seriously, and regret missing the meeting.

Although I have been engaged throughout the budgeting cycle and teachers’ negotiations, I have provided my position for each article in this document, similar to as I have with justifications.

I support the warrant articles as proposed. I believe they balance delivering a strong public school education why trying to balance the fiscal burden, thus ultimately delivering value to our community. As Andy will show, we are still at a lower cost per pupil than the State average. That value starts with our community through the process all the way through the execution by our teachers and administration, not to mention the hard work of our students and their parents throughout their curriculum.

In sum, I believe we delivered a fair teacher contract that puts us in a good position for long-term around healthcare. I support the full-day kindergarten initiative both philosophically and financially without regulations being rolled out around the busing. Paying off the CSDA bond certainly helped our bottom line budget, but New Hampshire Retirement and special education continue to be a major driver to our local budget. I would advocate for more State and Federal aid in these areas that burden small towns like ours. The trust funds are positioned well for the future unanticipated needs or capital improvements, so I support the values proposed.

Again, thank you for your support of this process and our school system year after year.

Ken Haag, Vice Chairman, Brookline School Board.”

Mr. Maguire stated the negotiated contract to be for a term of three-years. It is a sanbornized contract. When before the voters, approval will be sought for all three years of the contract.

The District is currently in the 2nd year of a two-year contract. Negotiations began in June with a negotiation team made up of teachers, the NEA representative, 2 School Board members, and 3 administrators. The committee met numerous times leading up to the December meeting after which the negotiations turned to mediation (December). Through mediation, an agreement was reached.

The salary table includes steps and lanes. Steps relate to years of service (only goes to a certain point) and lanes to level of education. There are 33 staff members who fall on the salary table. The current salary schedule identifies wage increases for employees on-step as 0.75% + step (3%) (FY21 and FY22) and 1.3% + step (FY23).

There are 23 staff members who have been with the District for a number of years and no longer fall on the salary table. For those off-step, the contract calls for a 2.25% increase in (FY21), 2.55% (FY22), and 2.75% (FY23).

The cap on the District's portion of the cost of health insurance will not change for the single and two-person plans throughout the contract (\$869 single/\$1,570 two-person). The cap on the District's portion of the cost of a family plan will increase from \$1,953/month to \$2,003/month (FY22) and \$2,053/month (FY23).

The District has a driver plan (ABSOS). There are 4 teachers on the single-person plan, 9 on the two-person, and 16 on the family plan. In previous negotiation cycles efforts were made to move teachers to this plan as it is much more cost effective. It allowed the District, at that time, to offer the benefit of significant coverage to get them to move to this plan. In FY21, the District's contribution to the family plan is 96%. In FY22 the District's contribution will be 92.8% and in FY23 89.8%.

The insurance rate increase for year 1 is known to be 4.1%. For budgeting purposes, a 6% average was used for estimating cost increases for FY22 and 23.

The District still offers other plans for which employee contributions are significant, e.g., for the AB10 plan, the employee contributions for the family plan are, 22.3% (FY20), 25.4% (FY21), 27.8% (FY22), and 30.2% (FY23). On the AB10/BC3T10 plans, there are 2 single, 4 two-person, and 6 family.

Cost increases break down as follows:

| | <u>Year 1</u> | <u>Year 2</u> | <u>Year 3</u> | <u>Totals</u> |
|---------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Salary | \$138,125 | \$147,772 | \$148,267 | \$434,164 |
| Health | 8,038 | 22,797 | 15,678 | 46,513 |
| Totals | \$146,163 | \$170,569 | \$163,945 | \$480,677 |

Craig Plummer, 52 Taylor Drive

Read the following statement into the record:

“Teach, change lives, and repeat. The teachers work hard every day to change children’s lives and unlock each child’s potential. This doesn’t happen without high-quality teachers who work tirelessly to instruct and support our children. The Brookline School District ranks in the top 10 school districts in the State. Teachers in Brookline provide the foundational skills for success as they continue on into the middle and high school; one of the top schools in the State.

In order to keep and attract high-quality teachers, we need to provide the schools and educators the support they need. In this current 2019-2020 school year, Brookline ranks 66th in the State for minimum starting teacher’s salary behind our neighboring towns of Amherst at 53rd, Milford at 30th, Nashua at 50th, Hollis at 24th, Mason at 23rd, and even in the COOP at 28th just to name a few.

A Brookline teacher's starting salary is over \$4,000 less than Hollis or Mason. The modest salary increase negotiated in the Collective Bargaining Agreement is a small step toward achieving an even playing field for our incredible teachers in this town. The majority of the teachers, several years ago, switched to a high deductible health plan that saved the District money. In order to keep attracting and maintaining the highly qualified educational professionals, we need to offer them salaries commensurate with those high-level skills. If we don't strive to attract and keep highly qualified teachers to maintain our strong schools, property values will fall as these teachers begin to leave the District for higher paying salaries at other places.

The schools are the backbone of this Town. They are the heart of our community's identity. People move here for these schools, and they support them. Property values are very closely associated and connected to the quality of the schools. If we don't continue to support the schools, we will see this community crumble. Investing in teachers and schools is an investment in the wellbeing of this amazing community. Our educators teach, they change lives, they inspire, and they do it all over again every single day."

Ann Somers, 11 Potanipo Hill Road

Questioned, and was told the presentation is available [online](#). She questioned the fluctuations in the costs from one year to the next. Superintendent Corey commented on teachers that will be moving off the salary scale.

Ms. Somers suggested, in the future, consideration be given to two-year contracts as she believes that would keep the increases in line with the economy.

Jim Rezzarday, 35 Captain Seaver Road

Questioned the healthcare deductibles. The response provided was that the deductibles for the driver plan (ABSOS) are \$3,000 single person plan and \$5,000 family-plan.

Roger Ogden, 13 Potanipo Hill Road

Asked for clarification, had the contract not been sanbornized, warrant articles would have been put before the voters in each of the subsequent years, and was told that would have been the case. He noted the total cost of the three-year contract to be in the area of \$943,000. The chart provided only identified the increases from year to year. This year, with a single vote, taxpayers will approve approx. \$943,000 to be paid over the course of the next 3 years.

Ms. Sarris stated the District would be paying teachers each year. What is being voted on is the current contract and associated increases. Were the contract not to pass, teachers would be paid at the rate in the previous contract.

He questioned the reasoning for the single opposing vote on the School Board. Ms. Marsano stated were she given the opportunity she would change her position to an abstention. At the time, she did not feel she had sufficient information to take a position, and her personal life had not afforded her the necessary time to conduct the research needed. She stated her support for a teachers' contract. Her concern was with taking the vote away from future voters and with the third year. She is concerned with what the District can handle and where the economy will be at that point in time.

If she had to choose between a sanbornized contract and not having a contract, there is no doubt she would want the sanbornized contract. She commented when teachers have to work without a contract, they do not get the

step(s) back, e.g., if they started at step 3 and worked for 3 years without a contract, they stay at step 3. She believes that to be unfair.

Asked about the opposing votes by members of the Finance Committee, Ms. Ketchen stated her concern is with taking away the rights of future voters. She commented on the information provided relative to the proposed increases from year to year. In year 1, it is \$146,163, but in year 2 it is \$146,163 plus \$170,569, etc.

She spoke of taxpayers historically being pretty generous to the teachers. She does not believe there have been times when teachers were without a contract. Asked to provide any clarification, Chairman Maguire spoke of the teachers being without a contract three years prior (1 year absent a contract), and a few years prior to that for 1 or 2 years.

Ms. Ketchen stated her opinion the cost of the sanbornized contract is too much. The percentages are deceitful, and the cost increases aren't accurate as depicted.

Mr. Rater stated his concern was purely with the sanbornization; asking voters in one year to take away power from voters in future years. Aside from the sanbornization, he believes it to be a very good contract.

Tom Solon, 2 Shady Rock Road

Stated his understanding if a non sanbornized three-year contract is approved the first year and in a subsequent year the warrant article is not approved, the people who are on-step continue to move on-step, but those who are off-step would not get the off-step raises. Superintendent Corey responded that used to be the case; contracts had an evergreen clause whereby in the absence of an agreement a teacher on-step would move up.

Peter Walker, 57 Pepperell Road

Remarked year in/year out we see an 8-10% increase in the total tax burden. He spoke of comments made regarding property values, and questioned if there is a scenario where we reach a place of diminishing returns where each added dollar of tax burden no longer yields equal or greater value or benefit to the Town.

Mr. Rater stated his belief property taxes have not gone up quite that high year after year. There are occasional years when tax rates do go up very high. For most years it is in the 3-4% range. If you look at the expenses (as a whole), minus revenues that come in from other sources, e.g., motor vehicle registration, whatever remains has to be raised through taxation. The effect of property assessments for the Town is a mechanism to decide what percentage of the overall taxes each individual taxpayer pays. If you took everybody's property tax assessment and raised it all by \$100,000, it really wouldn't affect anybody's taxes because the percentages would still come out the same. It is really dependent on how much needs to be raised through taxation and what percentage of the overall property value of the Town an individual owns.

Mr. Walker stated there to be a point at which the consumer says I'm only going to pay so much for X number of square feet of home and property, or I start looking elsewhere for less expensive alternatives with still a good educational system.

Joseph Hartman, 51 Mountain Road

Spoke of having researched property taxes on Avitar last year and having found on most it was around 2.5-3.5% of an increase on an overall annual basis. In some years there were spikes and some actually decreased.

Looking at the tax rates of comparable homes in neighboring towns, he found you would have to go very far out to get something less expensive. Market forces are at work. He questioned the discrepancy in teacher salaries with the other communities mentioned by a previous speaker. Chairman Maguire stated his belief when comparing salaries to districts of similar size in the State, the District falls in the mid-range. He noted the importance of factoring in healthcare benefits.

Peter D'Agostino, 9 Louis Drive

Commented he does not believe there to be any requests that could be made for the schools that the voters would not approve. His ask would be that it be done transparently. He spoke of his reliance on the documentation provided. He learned two things that he found significant; on the salary grid there is an asterisk where the additional 3% is identified. He would like that 3% to be highlighted more. With regard to the point made by the previous speaker relative to the overall increase of the contract, he requested clarification in FY21 the increase is \$146,163 and FY22 it is an increase of the \$146,163 plus an additional \$170,569. Chairman Maguire stated that to be correct. By year 2 the \$146,163 is part of the operating budget and the \$170,569 is an increase to that operating budget. He requested the presentation be updated to make it clearer to the voters.

Jen Morrissey, 25 Laurel Crest Drive

Questioned if the assumption used for the calculations is that the number of teachers will not change over the life of the contract. Superintendent Corey explained that is the assumption made in the calculations, and although there could arise the need for additional teacher(s), there could also be retirements and other scenarios that come about over that period, e.g., a retiring teacher earning a salary of \$70,000 having 20+ years in the District may be replaced by a teacher new to the profession making \$40,000.

James O'Shaughnessy, Esq., School District Attorney, stated the Department of Revenue Administration (DRA) requires that the District disclose the numbers in a specific way. The Warrant Article states "To see if the Brookline School District will vote to approve the cost of items included in the three-year collective bargaining agreement..... which calls for the following increase in professional staff salaries and benefits at the current staffing levels". It could say more, and certainly you could go on and try to explain it, but "at current staffing levels" has a very specific meaning for the DRA. The estimates are all based on a snapshot in time, and the increase for each year is just an increase at current staffing levels for each year of the contract. It is not the best way, but that is how the DRA tells the District to word this Warrant Article.

Linda Saari, 7 Meetinghouse Hill Road

Asked if the contract has to be sanbornized; if it is how it was agreed to with the teachers. Chairman Maguire responded "yes".

Moderator Webb noted that cannot be amended.

Dana Ketchen, 59 Russell Hill Road

Questioned if there has ever been an open teacher position in the District for which there were no applicants. Superintendent Corey responded yes. The District typically receives a better pool than other districts, but in certain specific areas it is very difficult right now to find teachers. He provided the example of special education noting the critical shortage across the State. Asked if there are currently any open positions, he indicated there are not. However, the District is struggling to replace maternity and illness leaves. Asked, he noted, if a long-term illness, there is only a period of 20 days before there has to be a certified teacher in the classroom.

Gordon Matthews, 11 Westview Road

Questioned how the District compares to others in terms of salary and benefit packages, and if that information is provided somewhere. Superintendent Corey responded the Department of Education will rank teacher salaries. They don't necessarily rank compensation packages. That is where you see a wide discrepancy, e.g., retirement compensation, healthcare, professional development. There are now districts who, as a means of attracting teachers, are offering to pay off a portion of their student loans. You cannot get a true comparison. As a negotiating team they reach out to other districts, and do their best to put everyone at rank order for the 8-10 towns used for comparison.

Asked if the District is competitive in terms of the benefit package, Superintendent Corey stated it is. Asked for a range, he used the local comparison of Hollis noting Hollis makes more in salary, Brookline has better health benefits; in terms of compensation packages, they are almost neutral.

Mr. Matthews questioned attrition rates. Superintendent Corey stated the District is losing teachers primarily to retirement; 2 this year, and with a wave that all came in together, it is believed in the next 5-10 years the District will see a number of people move on to the next phase of their careers.

Mr. Matthews stated he moved to Town for the school, and commented "I don't care what the taxes are, let's do it."

No further discussion was offered on Article 2.

Article will be placed on the official ballot as written.

Article 3

*To see if the Brookline School District will vote to implement a Full-Day Kindergarten Program at Richard Maghakian Memorial School starting with the 2020-2021 school year, and to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$143,065** (Gross Budget) for the purpose of funding the additional operating costs of the program. It is anticipated that 65 students will be enrolled for total additional State revenues of \$120,535. Defeat of this article will have no impact on continuing the Kindergarten program currently in place.*

If this article passes, the General Fund Operating Budget will decrease by \$96,965 and the General Fund Revenues will also decrease by \$96,965, which represents the revenue sources related to the Kindergarten program currently in place that will not be available if Full-Day Kindergarten passes; the cost of operating Full-Day Kindergarten will be included in the operating budget in future years.

Additional cost of new full-day program: \$46,100

Expected State funding: \$120,535

Current parent-paid revenue that will be lost: \$217,500

Revenue difference: \$96,965

Net effect to the taxpayer: \$143,065

The School Board recommends this article 5-0-0. The Finance Committee does not recommend this article 1-2-0.

Ms. Sarris explained the article is something the Board has considered for the past few years. A great deal of research and polling of the community has been done over that time. She spoke of the data around the impact early childhood intervention has on student needs, which also results in a long-term cost benefit; the need for intervention in the elementary school years drops from 33% to 9%.

It would allow the District to deliver a balanced curriculum at a developmentally appropriate pace for all students, will meet the State mandated play-based expectation, provide for a common experience with the Hollis School District, and will align with the New Hampshire Early Learning Task Force goal of increasing full-day kindergarten in New Hampshire.

Ms. Sarris commented currently parents have a choice between half-day and full-day, and remarked she would argue personally the only people that have a choice are the people that are able to pay tuition. All day kindergarten would provide equity to all of our students.

Melissa McGoldrick, 17 Wildwood Drive

Questioned if, with the passage of the article, all students would be in school for the full day or if there would remain an option for half day, and was informed all students would be attending for the full day.

She questioned if the \$40,000 allocation identified in Article 7 would not be required as there would be no reason for mid-day bus runs.

Ms. Sarris stated that to be the case. The \$40,000 allocation is requested to be placed in contingency to address the need should this article not pass. Because of a change in the law governing transportation, the District will be required to fund the cost of mid-day transportation (\$40,000).

Asked if there is a way of including that information in this article so that the voters clearly understand that should this article not pass there is a \$40,000 obligation that would remain, Superintendent Corey noted when providing a cost to the voters, the District has to provide the cost should kindergarten pass. The \$40,000 obligation is one the District may or may not have. As a result it would be almost disingenuous to put it in the kindergarten article because it would be \$40,000 that would not be needed if the article is approved.

Were the voters to approve this article and the Contingency Fund article, monies allocated to the Contingency Fund could not be expended without the approval of the School Board.

Ms. McGoldrick questioned if Hollis has realized any savings in special services since starting full-day kindergarten. Superintendent Corey responded that can be looked at from the point of view of the programs the District has for 3 and 4 year old students, which are mandated by the Federal Government, and have resulted in significant progress getting interventions for students at that age; primarily with speech and language

difficulties. They are able to overcome them. The services you would have paid as a taxpayer have been relieved in some instances. He does believe, in the long-term, it is a benefit, but it is very hard to quantify.

Gordon Matthews, 11 Westview Road

Commented this is one of those requirements related to how we live our lives now. He paid for his son last year and will happily do so again for his daughter in two years. This equates to \$0.14/\$1,000 or on a home assessed at \$300,000, \$50/year.

Peter D'Agostino, 9 Louis Drive

Questioned if the \$143,065 is year over year or if the increase would be greater in subsequent years. Superintendent Corey explained it would increase were enrollment to increase. If student enrollment increased so would the adequacy aid.

Mallory Rislér, 14 Hobart Hill Road

Has a 3-year-old and a 5-year-old child. She pays for her son to attend school this year. Her family made a choice to be able to afford it. Unfortunately, she cannot get her daughter into the public preschool program because she is waitlisted. She has to take her to another program. She would happily enroll her son in a half-day program, but cannot get back to the school in time because the school days ends at 11:00 a.m. She would have to disagree that it is working right now. It is not working for parents who are home with their children and are making other sacrifices, and it is not working for the working families who are making sacrifices in other areas. She is pleased to see the Warrant Article come forward. She spoke of the benefit of early intervention provided with kindergarten.

Edward Arnold, 10 Milford Street

Believes there to be a good many newer families coming to Town with younger children that would benefit from this. However, there are also a lot of old families in Town; people that have sent their children through the school system just fine. His father grew up in Brookline, his family still lives in the same house, and are struggling to pay the taxes. It may only be \$50/year, but the last article was only \$50/year, all the other articles are only \$50/year, and we still have a COOP and Town meeting to make it through.

His family owns two businesses in Town, and they are struggling. He asked people to consider the blue collar families that have been here for generations, and are just trying to make it.

Webb Scales, 49 Dupaw Gould Road

Questioned if the passage of this article would provide additional savings, understanding there would be no need for the mid-day transportation cost. Superintendent Corey stated the cost of mid-day transportation was not included in this article as it would have provided a false sense of the cost. The total cost of the article is \$143,065. Because of the change in law requiring the District to provide the mid-day transportation, were the article to fail, there would be an additional cost of \$40,000. That \$40,000 was intentionally not reduced from the \$143,065 because they are two separate and unique things.

Dana Ketchen, 59 Russell Hill Road

Questioned if there is currently a mechanism to fund full-day kindergarten for families who show financial hardship. Superintendent Corey stated the District looks at every situation on a case-by-case basis. It is not the intent of the District to turn a family away. Should a family member lose a job, undergo a severe illness, etc. they would not want that to impact a student. When that does happen, he takes it to the Board, and they look to see if there is a means to assist through other lines in the budget.

Ms. Ketchen remarked there is the ability for families who wish to send their children to full-day kindergarten to apply under a financial hardship. That would allow families who can afford to do so to generate revenue to cover the cost of the program. She stated concerns with people moving to Town just for the education. Having resided in Town for 37 years she paid for her children to go to nursery school and kindergarten. The costs to live here as an elderly person are getting extreme.

She is a supporter of the schools, but believes in a balanced community instead of a transitional one where people come in, send their kids to school, and then move on to avoid the high taxes.

Tad Putney, 8 Milford Street

Requested reassurance that over the next 1-5 years, if full-day kindergarten comes into place, that there would be no needed expansion of the Richard Maghakian Memorial School (RMMS). Superintendent Corey responded presently the lower level floors of RMMS are not utilized for any special classrooms. They also have rooms for music, art, and two other specials. He believes there to be space to accommodate growth.

Jill Aitken, 14 Potanipo Hill Road

Stated her support of the article commenting on the points discussed that bring a great deal of value to the District/Town for a relatively low cost. She stated her belief what has been learned is that if children are in a full-day kindergarten they are a lot less likely to need additional supports down the road. Those additional supports are at a cost to the taxpayers.

Full-day kindergarten is becoming the standard of our times. Throughout the State there is only 8.9% or 16 districts/towns that do not have taxpayer funded full-day kindergarten. It has proven to be better for the children to have the longer day. She had been concerned her child might not be able to handle a full day, but instead of packing in all of the State required education elements in a half-day period, the full-day program provides the additional time to work on and practice them through play in a structured environment with their peers.

Edward Arnold, 10 Milford Street

Questioned what class sizes would be if the article were to pass and what time would be allotted for recess. Superintendent Corey stated the approx. class size to be 19-21. There would be a mandatory recess of approx. ½ hour. However, the whole kindergarten program would be play based; children would be up and moving. He spoke of the existing program and the stationed base system where students are going from one place to the other. There is a classroom teacher, and in many cases, a paraprofessional assisting.

Dennis Comeau, 76 Russell Hill Road

Spoke of his son having participated in full-day kindergarten last year. He commented on the activity level of his child joking he doesn't have any still photos of him. His experience was positive. The District adapts the program to be developmentally appropriate for students at that age.

He spoke of being uncomfortable, philosophically, with the idea that children of families that may not be able to cover the cost are not getting the leg up. To the point made earlier, he believes full-day kindergarten is being recognized as the new standard as a matter of educational pedagogy of being what is developmentally best for kids. New Hampshire being one of the leading states in the country in education, he would like to see us leading the way.

Jessica Hartman, 51 Mountain Road

Questioned if the expected State funding is a one-time or continual revenue source. Superintendent Corey stated it becomes part of Adequacy Aid. There is an assigned dollar amount for every student as of October 1st each year. That aid comes in as a revenue source to offset the amount that has to be raised through taxes.

Gordon Matthews, 11 Westview Road

Asked if the amount of Adequacy Aid per student is understood, Superintendent Corey stated kindergarten is presently funded through Keno revenue. That just went away. That revenue source provided \$1,100 per student enrolled in the full-day program over the amount provided for the half-day program (\$1,800). The Adequacy aid will be approx. \$3,700/student. Asked how that would impact the cost of the program, Superintendent Corey noted the funding is not distributed until the year after the students are out of kindergarten.

Asked what the expected cost of the full-day program would be following receipt of the anticipated aid, Superintendent Corey stated it would basically be neutral.

Dana Ketchen, 59 Russell Hill Road

Spoke of having attended the School Board meeting where the Board and Finance Committee took formal positions on the articles. She is supportive of kindergarten and noted the availability of space in the facility and the issue of the mandated transportation cost. The rationale for her vote in opposition to the article is that the teacher salaries would be part of the sanbornized contract. She is opposed to the sanbornized contract. She stated her concern for long-time residents who struggle to keep up with rising taxes.

Superintendent Corey clarified the salaries of 3½ of the 4 teachers that would be needed for the full-day program are already in the operating budget. The slide shown on this article included "additional cost" of \$46,100, which represents the other half salary of the 4th teacher.

Mallory Rislér, 14 Hobart Hill Road

Commented her son's teacher calls her at least once a week; when he has a good day and when he has a bad day. She believes that teacher deserves what we can give her. He doesn't need special accommodations now, but the teacher knows him as a student, and she believes that speaks to who she is as a teacher. The teacher has

been in the District for 20⁺ years. She wished to express how much she appreciates the teachers and the positive remarks concerning the kindergarten program.

No further discussion was offered on Article 3.

Article will be placed on the official ballot as written.

Article 4

*To see if the Brookline School District will vote to raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling **\$9,459,497**. Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$9,379,264, which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the school district or by law or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only. Majority vote required to pass. **The School Board recommends this article 5-0-0. The Finance Committee recommends this article 3-0-0.***

Peter D'Agostino, 9 Louis Drive

The article states the tax impact to be \$9.02/\$1,000; however, the slide depicting information on the tax rate states the tax impact to be \$9.60. It also includes a footnote stating "Assumes 1.1567% increase in Brookline tax base". He noted that assumption was not made for tax year FY20. It arbitrarily shows a reduced tax impact. When not assuming the increased tax base, the actual tax impact is \$9.71. He spoke of how heavily the taxpayers rely on the information provided, and the need for clarity.

Superintendent Corey stated the \$9.60 is inclusive of all articles, not just the operating budget. The operating budget is the \$9.02.

Mr. Ogden questioned the reasoning for the assumption, and was told the District reaches out to the Town for guidance on what is expected in any particular year.

Moderator Webb recognized Superintendent Corey to present the Article.

The proposed FY21 budget (\$9,459,497; does not include year 1 of the proposed contract as that has to be voted on separately before it can be included within the operating budget, per DRA) represents a decrease from the FY20 budget (\$9,820,054; includes FY20 teacher contract costs) of \$360,557 or 3.7%. An apples-to-apples comparison of the operating budget of FY20 and the proposed FY21 represents a decrease of 2.2%.

New item requests for FY21 represent an increase in the allocation to academic programs (\$21,150), decrease in personnel (\$59,580; was related to a self-contained program that was anticipated and did not come to fruition), and increases in computer equipment/services (\$22,010) and facilities/safety (\$70,900). The total is an increase of \$54,480.

A large piece of the operating budget is the retiring of a bond (\$437,275 or 4.5% reduction), reduction in program needs for special education (out of district)(\$63,298 or 0.6%) a reduction in the retirement benefit (less retirements) (\$45,081 or 0.5%), increases in wages (BESSA/Non-BTA) / New Hampshire Retirement System/FICA (\$75,913 or 0.8%), health/dental insurance (\$40,216 or 0.4%), special education contracted

services/transportation based on program needs (\$100,313 or 1.0%), new items (\$54,480 or 0.6%), and a decrease in discretionary items (\$85,825 or 0.9%). Net change to the budget is a decrease of \$360,557 or 3.7%.

Should the voters not approve the budget, the default budget would come into play. The default budget is the FY20 adopted budget (\$9,820,054) reduced or increased, as the case may be, by required by law or contacted increases/reductions (overall reduction of \$328,051) and reduced by one-time FY20 expenses (\$112,739) for a total default budget of \$9,379,264. The difference between the default budget and the proposed budget is \$80,233.

By way of providing additional detail, he noted wages/benefits were reduced (\$30,585), special education services (required by law) were increased by \$24,353, health/dental/FICA/NHRS increased by \$54,245, retirement benefits (CBA) increased (\$39,177), the reduction of the bond payment (\$437,275), transfers are up (\$20,000), and various other small amounts show a total increase of \$2,034.

Moderator Webb explained the default budget is a creature of SB2. As it is theoretically possible the Townspeople could deny the proposed budget leaving no funding in place, under SB2, since there is one shot at voting, it is required there be a default budget calculated as they dictate.

Roger Ogden, 13 Potanipo Hill Road

Commented on having printed the information provided on the four rounds of budget discussion. Superintendent Corey explained the budget process begins in July and goes through a series of rounds during which there is discussion of new item requests (only). New item requests making it through to round 4 are then pulled over into teacher salaries, health, and all of those pieces.

Mr. Ogden questioned if the contingency in the warrant is actually in the budget. Superintendent Corey stated the contingency is a line item in the operating budget. It has to be approved as a separate warrant article. It is not included as part of the budget warrant article.

Mr. Ogden commented on the \$437,275 in bond payments being removed from the budget and \$600,000 more coming from the State. He would expect to see a budget that is decreased by \$1 million. Superintendent Corey stated the \$600,000 that is coming in is on the revenue side. The operating budget is the expense side. The anticipated reduction in the tax rate is due to the calculation resulting from the balance that remains after reducing expenses by revenue.

Dana Ketchen, 59 Russell Hill Road

Spoke of the uncertainty the \$600,000 revenue from the State will be recurring. The swing in the percentage of the budget will increase next year and in future years in the absence of that revenue.

Jessica Webster, 10 Laurel Crest Drive

Asked about the mention of other reductions seen in special education, contractual retirement benefits, and discretionary items; if that is the data that is being discussed in the description on the slides concerning the operating budget and budget detail. Superintendent Corey stated the slide on the operating budget identifies a decrease in special education out of district tuition of \$63,298, which is based on need and the retirement benefit reduction is a result of fewer retirements. Asked if the reduction in special education costs of \$63,298 is all associated with out-of-district tuition, he indicated it is.

John Liska, 197 Route 13

Stated special education is supposed to be funded somewhat by the Federal Government. He questioned where that amount is. Superintendent Corey stated what comes to the State is 63% of special education costs. Students who are on an Individual Education Plan (IEP) have required services. If the District is unable to provide those services, it is required to place the student in a district that can. That cost can range from \$70,000 - \$100,000 and a transportation cost of \$60,000 - \$90,000. He spoke of the difficulty in budgeting for services that are required, but cannot be anticipated, e.g., if a student moves into the District after the budget is approved, the cost of special education services must be found from somewhere else within the budget.

The IDEA Grant is shown on the revenue side of the ledger. It is approx. \$100,000 in the Brookline School District.

Mr. Liska commented on the increase that would result were the \$600,000 in State revenue to stop. Superintendent Corey noted the \$600,000 was not utilized to cover the cost of anything that would be ongoing, e.g., hiring of teachers. It is proposed to be utilized solely to offset the amount that has to be raised through taxes.

Mr. Liska spoke of the constant increase in taxes. It is becoming out of control. Superintendent Corey stated the proposed budget represents a decrease. If the \$600,000 was not used to offset the tax rate that would not be the case, and there would be the potential increase in the following year.

He spoke of the need for Concord to stop looking to the communities to share the burden. We participate in the State retirement program in which the State contributes \$0. Prior to 2013, it was a 75/25 split. There is a new cost passed down to the districts this year; have to test every sink for lead. Although he fully supports that effort, it is an unfunded mandate. Another new unfunded mandate this year is on day tanks.

Superintendent Corey stated part of the responsibility is in reaching out to the Legislature. There is a rainy day fund at the State level, and there should be some discussion of at what point that comes back to the communities to offset the ever increasing costs and reduce the burden on taxpayers.

Brian Rater, 31 Mason Road

Suggested individuals keep in mind, particularly when discussing tax impacts, the figures provided are estimates. Also noted was that the schools utilize a fiscal year (July 1 to June 30) where the Town utilizes a calendar year. When we make changes on the school side, half of the changes impacts one year's tax rate and the other another. That makes it a bit more difficult to determine exact numbers regarding what the tax rate will be.

No further discussion was offered on Article 4.

Article will be placed on the official ballot as written.

Article 5

*To see if the school district will vote to raise and appropriate a sum of up to **\$75,000** to be added to the previously established SCHOOL FACILITIES MAINTENANCE EXPENDABLE TRUST FUND, this sum to come from the June 30 unassigned fund balance (surplus) available for transfer on July 1, 2020. No amount to be raised from taxation. **The School Board recommends this article 5-0-0. The Finance Committee recommends this article 3-0-0.***

Ms. Sarris explained the proposal to be an allocation of \$75,000 to the Maintenance Expendable Trust. The amount would be funded through unassigned fund balance; monies that would otherwise be returned to the tax base.

The proposed use includes the CSDA playground surface renovation, which is the result of an insurance company audit, and is something that will have to be addressed at some point. This is believed to be the most responsible way to manage important and necessary maintenance.

Webb Scales, 49 Dupaw Gould Road

Questioned what is anticipated to be remaining at year end. Superintendent Corey responded, based on what has been encumbered and the available projections, it is believed the balance would be sufficient to fund the warrant articles proposed. It is money that would not go back to the taxpayers to offset the tax rate so there is an associated cost.

Roger Ogden, 13 Potanipo Hill Road

Questioned if the warrants approved last year were all able to be funded, and what the total amount for the contingency fund was. Superintendent Corey stated they were able to be funded. The contingency last year was at \$25,000. Asked about the number of articles funded and the total amount, he stated the articles to have been the Maintenance Trust Fund (\$50,000), Contingency (\$25,000), and the Special Education Trust (\$25,000). The expectation for this year is that all articles would be able to be funded and an approx. \$30,000 returned to the tax base. Approximately \$70,000 was returned to the tax base last year.

Dana Ketchen, 59 Russell Hill Road

She came into the process late as an appointed member of the Finance Committee. She thanked members of the School Board commenting it has been a pleasure to work with them. She remarked she is the first person in line wanting to return funds to the tax base. She voted for this as she was convinced it is the right thing to do. These cost items will have to be funded one way or another.

Thomas Humphreys, 4 Mead Drive

Noted the language in Article 5 refers to unassigned fund balance, unreserved fund balance, and surplus, and questioned if they share the same meaning. The response was yes.

He questioned the current balance. Superintendent Corey reiterated, based on the most recent revenue and expense report, the projection is approximately \$120,000 - \$130,000. That will fluctuate depending on expenses that come up between now and the end of the school year.

Mr. Humphreys questioned how the fund is replenished. Superintendent Corey stated it is part of the operating budget. Approval of the warrant articles provides the authority to transfer monies unexpended from the operating budget, at the end of the fiscal year, into the various funds. If transfer of those funds into the warrant articles was not approved, the unexpended dollars from the operating budget would be returned to the tax base at the end of the fiscal year and would be used to offset the future tax increase.

Webb Scales, 49 Dupaw Gould Road

Stated his belief the Warrant Articles total \$140,000. Superintendent Corey stated that to be correct commenting on the very cautious approach that is taken in the revenue and expense reports. Based on historical information from the past 5-6 years, the District has been able to fund all warrant articles, which he believes will be the case again. The District utilizes an encumbrance approach meaning the Business Office ensures all anticipated expenditures are encumbered. Some of those purchases may not need to happen.

Mr. Scales asked for clarification of whether there is the ability, at this meeting, to renumber any of the articles. Moderator Webb stated he has reviewed the Statutes and is convinced that the right to reorder does exist.

Mr. Scales remarked the subtlety is that should the unassigned fund balance be exhausted before all of the articles are funded they will be funded in the order they appear on the ballot. What the School Board has done is prioritize them by placing them in the order they appear. The Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund being seen as the biggest priority, would be funded first, the special education trust second, and the contingency article following that.

No further discussion was offered on Article 5.

Article will be placed on the official ballot as written.

Article 6

*To see if the school district will vote to raise and appropriate a sum of up to **\$25,000** to be added to the previously established SPECIAL EDUCATION EXPENDABLE TRUST FUND, this sum to come from the June 30 unassigned fund balance (surplus) available for transfer on July 1, 2020. No amount to be raised from taxation. **The School Board recommends this article 5-0-0. The Finance Committee recommends this article 2-1-0.***

Ms. Howie stated the current, and anticipated FY20 ending balance, is \$175,000. With the allocation of \$25,000, the anticipated FY21 ending balance is \$200,000. The goal of the fund is to maintain a balance of approx. \$225,000.

No further discussion was offered on Article 6.

Article will be placed on the official ballot as written.

Article 7

*To see if the school district will vote to establish a contingency fund for the current year for unanticipated expenses that may arise and further to raise and appropriate a sum of up to **\$40,000** to go into said fund. This sum to come from the unassigned fund balance (surplus) available for transfer on July 1, 2020. **The School Board recommends this article 5-0-0. The Finance Committee recommends this article 2-1-0.***

The District is moving towards full-day kindergarten. If that is not approved by the voters, a change in the law that mandates the District bus kindergarten students to and from school would result in an additional cost. The mid-day parent pick-up would now be mandated transportation. The \$40,000 contingency is intended to address that additional cost should the voters not approve full-day kindergarten.

Ms. Sarris remarked the notable thing about this fund is the requirement for a Public Hearing and Board approval to access the funds.

Joseph Hartman, 51 Mountain Road

Questioned the rationale of the Finance Committee member who voted in opposition to the article.

Dana Ketchen, 59 Russell Hill Road

Stated her reasoning to be her anticipation the warrant article for kindergarten will pass and the voters would have voted to allocate \$40,000 to be put into a contingency fund that would require a public hearing to be accessed.

Webb Scales, 49 Dupaw Gould Road

Noted the language begins “To vote to establish”, and questioned if the fund is new. Ms. Sarris responded that is the nature of contingency funds; if the funds are not utilized they automatically lapse to the general fund (are returned). Contingency funds have to be reestablished every year.

Mr. Scales noted the article does not state any of the terms, e.g., when it lapses, how expenditures are made, who the custodian of the fund is, etc.

Superintendent Corey stated the Contingency Fund is governed by the School Board. A public hearing is conducted prior to a vote of the Board for any expenditure from it. If unspent, it lapses every year, and becomes part of the balance. The taxpayers would have to approve establishment of a new contingency fund. Last year it was set at \$25,000, and was not expended. It is sitting in the budget, and there is no intent to spend it.

Dana Ketchen, 59 Russell Hill Road

Voted in opposition to this article because with \$122,000 surplus in this year’s budget, if kindergarten did not pass, she is confident they would be able to find the money to pay for it.

Roger Ogden, 13 Potanipo Hill Road

Commented this seems a little overboard. A lot of taxpayer money has been put into these funds. The unassigned fund balance has been over \$100,000 every year.

**MOTION MADE BY ROGER OGDEN TO AMEND THE ARTICLE BY CHANGING THE ALLOCATION FROM FORTY THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$40,000) TO ONE DOLLAR (\$1)
MOTION SECONDED BY DANA KETCHEN**

ON THE QUESTION

Webb Scales, 49 Dupaw Gould Road

Questioned the percent the \$120,000 is of last year's total budget, and was told \$100,000 would represent 1%. Mr. Scales remarked the Board got last year's budget 99% correct, and aired on the side where we don't have to scrape together and collect pennies to cover the expenses. Superintendent Corey stated that to be correct.

The request is for a small cushion to ensure we don't have to get it exact this year. He stated his opposition to the motion.

Brian Rater, 31 Mason Road

Commented on the need to keep in mind another cost that is highly flexible from one year to the next is that of special education. When there are unexpected costs the monies have to be identified from within the operating budget. Some years they are really scraping by to be able to find that. That is one of the reasons for the contingency and other funds. There does need to be some flexibility within the budget to be able to handle unexpected expenses.

MOTION FAILED

No further discussion was offered on Article 7.

Article will be placed on the official ballot as written.

Article 8

*Shall the voters of the Brookline School District adopt a school administrative unit budget of \$1,807,100 for the forthcoming fiscal year in which **\$319,460** is assigned to the school budget of this school district? This year's adjusted budget of \$1,718,104 with \$307,815 assigned to the school budget of this school district will be adopted if the article does not receive a majority vote of all the school district voters voting in this school administrative unit. **The School Board recommends this article 5-0-0. The Finance Committee recommends this article 2-1-0.***

The FY20 budget was \$1,731,611 and the proposed FY21 budget \$1,807,100, which represents an increase of \$75,489 or 4.4%. The adjusted budget, should the proposed budget not pass, is \$1,718,104. The adjusted budget is similar to, but not legally a default budget.

Changes in salaries for salaried employees result in an increase of \$22,333. Attributed to the H.R. Coordinator moving to an Administrator position is \$5,000 (additional education). Benefit increases total \$24,914.

The proposed new position of Facilities Director would represent an increase of \$66,500. Ms. Marsano spoke of the need for the position. The individual would be responsible for supervision of all custodial/maintenance staff, conducting the facility physical audit, budgeting, managing capital improvements, managing contractors, responding to emergencies, building inspections, consolidating purchasing, and scheduling services. Benefits of the position include a shift in workload from the current Administration and increased quality, accuracy, expertise, efficiencies, cost savings, and pro-activity. A hiring contingency (\$10,000) is proposed.

Also included is a reduction in the position of Student Services Transition Coordinator (\$54,202). The intent was always for that to be a one-year position.

Roger Ogden, 13 Potanipo Hill Road

Questioned if the cost to the District is \$66,500. Ms. Marsano stated the anticipated salary for the position, as a whole, to be \$66,500. Asked how that cost is shared amongst the districts, Ms. Marsano indicated it would be apportioned as is the rest of the budget.

Jen Morrissey, 25 Laurel Crest Drive

Questioned if it is one facilities manager for the entire SAU or for the two schools in Brookline, and was told it would be one manager for the entire SAU; 8 buildings, over 400 acres, etc.

A motion was made and seconded to end discussion.

Discussion was closed.

Article will be placed on the official ballot as written.

Article 9

*To see if the school district voters will authorize the Brookline School District to access future year state and federal special education aid funds in the event that special education costs exceed budget limitations. **The School Board recommends this article 5-0-0. The Finance Committee recommends this article 3-0-0.***

No discussion was offered on Article 9.

Article will be placed on the official ballot as written.

Article 11

To transact any other business which may legally come before said meeting?

MOTION BY PETER D’AGOSTINO TO AMEND ARTICLE 10 TO BE IDENTIFIED AS ARTICLE 10

MOTION SECONDED BY BRENDAN DENNEHY

MOTION CARRIED

Article will be placed on the official ballot as amended.

Ms. Sarris expressed the Board’s gratitude and best wishes to Mr. Dobe noting his retirement from the District at the end of the school year.

The February 3, 2020 first session (Deliberative) of the Annual Meeting of the Brookline School District was adjourned at 9:12 p.m.

_____ Date: _____
Matthew Maguire, Chairman, Brookline School Board

_____ Date: _____
Kenneth Haag, Vice Chairman, Brookline School Board

_____ Date: _____
Rebecca Howie, Secretary, Brookline School Board

_____ Date: _____
Alison Marsano, Brookline School Board

_____ Date: _____
Erin Sarris, Brookline School Board

_____ Date: _____
Thomas Humphreys, Clerk