

**HOLLIS BROOKLINE COOPERATIVE SCHOOL DISTRICT
PUBLIC HEARING
FEBRUARY 2, 2023
MEETING MINUTES**

A Public Hearing was conducted by the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School District (COOP) Budget Committee on Thursday, February 2, 2023 at 6:47 p.m. at the Hollis Brookline Middle School.

Darlene Mann, Chairman, presided:

Members of the Budget Cmte. Present: Raul Blanche, Vice Chairman
David Blinn
Matthew Maguire
Brian Rater
Anthony Stanizzi
Cindy VanCoughnett, School Bd. Rep.
Tom Whalen

Members of the Budget Cmte. Absent:

Members of the School Board Present: Holly Deurloo Babcock, Chairman
Tom Solon, Vice Chairman
Kate Stoll, Secretary
Beth Janine Williams
Cindy VanCoughnett
Krista Whalen

Members of the School Board Absent: Tom Enright

Also in Attendance: Andrew Corey, Superintendent
Gina Bergskaug, Asst. Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction
Kelly Seeley, Business Administrator
Lauren DiGennaro, Director of Student Services
Linda Sherwood, Assistant Business Administrator
Tim Girzone, Principal, Hollis Brookline High School

**HOLLIS BROOKLINE COOPERATIVE SCHOOL DISTRICT
PUBLIC HEARING
FY24 BUDGET**

Chairman Mann explained the purpose of the Public Hearing was to introduce the articles to be voted on at the District Annual Meeting and gather public input.

The Budget Committee can amend the operating budget article. There is a 10% maximum allowable appropriation limit on the amount that can be recommended up at the district meeting.

Although the agenda for this evening's meeting included a public hearing regarding Article 1, that hearing will be conducted on Monday, February 20, 2023 at the Hollis Brookline Middle School (HBMS) Library. It is anticipated the language of the article will change to reflect bond language.

A brief synopsis of the Warrant Articles was provided.

Article 2

To see if the school district will vote to approve the cost items for the third year of a four-year collective bargaining agreement reached between the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School Board and the Hollis Education Support Staff Association for the 2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years, which calls for the following increases in support staff salaries and benefits at the current staffing levels:

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Estimated Increase</u>
2023-24	\$162,006

and further to raise and appropriate a sum of **\$162,006** for the third fiscal year (2023-24 school year), such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in support staff salaries and benefits required by the new agreement over those that would be paid at current staffing levels.

Estimated tax impact is \$0.05/\$1,000 in Hollis and \$0.08/\$1,000 in Brookline.

This was intended to be the 3rd year of a three-year contract with the Hollis Education Support Staff Association (HESSA). The Board was made aware of difficulties experienced in hiring of essential staff such as food service workers, custodians, and paraprofessionals based on step levels that were in place. Per contract language, Administrators are permitted to hire above the step level. In an effort to hire, individuals were brought on above current step levels. The result was new employees coming in and being compensated at a higher rate than existing/more experienced staff.

The contract was opened to review the salaries and table. The district was not competing against local districts alone, but also against retail stores paying a higher pay rate. In an effort to retain current staff and have the ability to hire, the wage structure was reexamined. The salary tables were cleaned up so that they are more even between steps. The base step was eliminated, and a step 9 added. The anticipated insurance caps for the 3rd year of the contract were maintained. The starting salary was increased from \$12.39 to \$15/hourly rate.

For 2023-2024 there will be an increase of 8-9% depending on where the individuals fall on the step table. Because of that, those off step were provided an 8% increase. Proposed is the 3rd year of what is now considered a four-year contract as an additional year was added to avoid negotiating again next year.

Due to the changes, the total increase for FY24 is \$162,006 versus the previously anticipated \$82,000. For those staff members who fell into the category of new hires, for the same positions being hired at a larger hourly rate, the district was able to utilize Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER), set to expire in May, to provide bonuses. That was done in 3 segments, if employed by February of 2022. They were able to ensure individuals were placed on the correct step.

Chairman Mann opened the floor for public comment at 6:55 p.m.

Drew Mason, Moderator, 61 Baxter Road, Hollis

Spoke of his approval of the proposed change. If looking at the private sector, if in fact inflation comes down a lot, the whole wage structure in private industry may change, e.g., wages may come down. He questioned if the Board has any thoughts in terms of year 5.

School Board Member Whalen noted a new contract would be negotiated in year 5. However, at this point, there are no thoughts.

The public comment period was closed at 6:56 p.m.

Article 3

To see if the school district will vote to raise and appropriate a sum of **\$26,499,039** for the support of schools, for the payment of salaries for the school district officials and agents and for the payment of statutory obligations of the district. This appropriation does not include appropriations voted in other warrant articles.

Estimated tax impact is \$7.63/\$1,000 in Hollis and \$12.83/\$1,000 in Brookline.

Chairman Mann commended the Administration for coming in below the Budget Committee's guidance numbers. The proposed budget represents a 3.5% increase over the FY23 operating budget.

Changes include increases in the number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) positions (paraprofessional and half of an I.T. person), maintenance and safety items (rigging system at the Hollis Brookline High School (HBHS) and water tank installation, technology, continued laptop replacement for staff and students, installation of interactive flat panels, audio upgrades, and Chromebook replacement cycle at the middle school), academics (new textbook purchase across various subjects, program materials and equipment, updates to literacy program, and updates to middle school computer program and curriculum), and athletics (implementation of a fee structure for our coaching staff that addresses longevity).

Major increases in the budget include a \$159,210 or 1.8% increase in salaries, programming changes for Student Services of \$275,346 or 5.3%, the revised stipend structure for athletics at \$32,129 or 5.0%, replacement computers (staff and student laptops, interactive flat panels, etc.) \$112,770 or 150.5%, and total new items of \$494,321 (rigging system, etc.).

Major decreases include fewer teacher retirements for a decrease of \$102,791 or 66.5%, biannual rate change for the New Hampshire Retirement System (professional staff) \$67,726 or 3.3%, professional development (based on actuals) \$16,700 or 11.1%, and textbooks \$27,477 or 54.3%.

Chairman Mann opened the floor for public comment at 7:01 p.m.

Drew Mason, 61 Baxter Road, Hollis

Asked if the Board and Committee would be discussing Article 11 and questioned the proper way to structure that at the Annual Meeting. Chairman Mann responded it was not her intent to address it. Mr. Mason commented he is facing somewhat of a procedural issue and would be seeking legal advice on there being an article that is the budget and another that is looking to zero a line item in the budget.

The public comment period was closed at 7:02 p.m.

Article 4

Shall the District vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$1,140,822** as the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School District's portion of the SAU budget of **\$2,264,374** for the forthcoming fiscal year? This year's adjusted budget of **\$2,247,208** with **\$1,132,174** 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.

Estimated tax impact is \$0.33/\$1,000 in Hollis and \$0.55/\$1,000 in Brookline.

Chairman Mann noted the SAU budget is shared among the 3 districts. The Legislative body (voters) will have the opportunity to vote in each of the districts on the portion of the budget which gets allocated to that district.

School Board Chair Deurloo Babcock stated the increase over FY23 is \$161,198 or 7.6%. Budget drivers include the Board approved support staff salary adjustments and associated benefits for an increase of \$74,139 and a 3.5% annual increase for budgeted salaries and associated benefits at a cost of \$82,254.

These increases were determined by the SAU 41 Governing Board as a means of retaining our quality staff. As is the case across school districts, the SAU struggles to maintain and retain employees.

No new positions have been proposed. The SAU Budget is primarily driven by salary.

Chairman Mann opened the floor for public comment at 7:05 p.m.

No public input was offered.

The public comment period was closed at 7:05 p.m.

Article 5

To see if the school district will vote to raise and appropriate up to the sum of **\$300,000** to be added to the previously established School Building and Facilities Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund. The sum to come from the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School District's June 30, 2023 unassigned fund balance, available on July 1, 2023.

Estimated foregone tax impact is \$0.11/\$1,000 in Hollis and \$0.19/\$1,000 in Brookline.

The beginning balance of the Expendable Trust Fund is \$123,066. FY24 proposed funding is \$300,000. Planned expenditures; HBMS flooring \$21,200, HVAC \$10,000, Elevator \$25,000 and HBHS roof (Phase 8) \$110,000 and road paving (Phase 2) \$120,000 total \$286,200 resulting in an FY24 ending balance of \$136,866.

Noted was an additional \$266,375 in facilities maintenance items included in the operating budget.

Chairman Mann opened the floor for public comment at 7:06 p.m.

No public input was offered.

The public comment period was closed at 7:06 p.m.

Article 6

To see if the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School District will vote to raise and appropriate up to the sum of **\$25,000** to come from the June 30, 2023 unassigned fund balance available for transfer on July 1, 2023 to be added to the previously established Special Education Expendable Trust Fund. No amount to be raised from taxation.

Estimated foregone tax impact is \$0.01/\$1,000 in Hollis and \$0.02/\$1,000 in Brookline.

Chairman Mann opened the floor for public comment at 7:07 p.m.

No public input was offered.

The public comment period was closed at 7:07 p.m.

Article 7

Shall the school district vote to authorize the School Board to continue to retain year-end unassigned general funds in an amount, in any fiscal year, not to exceed **2.5 percent** of the current fiscal year's net assessment in accordance with RSA 198:4-b a, II as amended in 2020, which requires the School Board to hold one public hearing before expending this retained fund balance, and requires the School Board to provide an accounting of the activities of this retained fund balance to the District in its annual report? (Majority vote required).

(Please note: The School Board is currently authorized to retain up to 1% of the District's net assessment in year-end unassigned general funds as an ongoing contingency fund. However, RSA 198:4-b was amended in 2020; thus, failure to pass Article 7 will cast doubt on the School Board's continued authorization to retain up to 1% under the new version of the law).

Chairman Mann opened the floor for public comment at 7:08 p.m.

Drew Mason, 61 Baxter Road, Hollis

There are two articles that basically address the same point. This experience is a first for him. What he has heard from other moderators is they basically bring up the discussion on both at the same time, but voting has to be separate. He has no idea what occurs should both articles pass.

The public comment period was closed at 7:09 p.m.

Article 8

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 up to **\$125,000** to go into the fund. This sum to come from the unassigned fund balance available on July 1, 2023, and no amount to be raised from taxation. Any appropriation left at the end of the year will lapse to the general fund.

Estimated foregone tax impact is \$0.05/\$1,000 in Hollis and \$0.08/\$1,000 in Brookline.

Chairman Mann opened the floor for public comment at 7:10 p.m.

No public input was offered.

The public comment period was closed at 7:10 p.m.

That concludes the School Board and Budget Committee articles for the warrant. The remaining five articles listed are petition warrant articles.

Article 9 - Petition Warrant Article

To see if the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School District will vote to amend the Articles of Agreement of the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School District by adding the following new Article 12:

Article 12: The approval of a proposed amendment to these Articles of Agreement shall require a two-thirds (2/3) supermajority approval by ballot. The polls shall remain open, and ballots shall be accepted by the moderator for a period of not less than one hour following the completion of discussion on the question. If a two-thirds (2/3) supermajority of those voting on the question vote “yes”, then the amendment is approved.

Public Hearing will be conducted on Thursday, February 16, 2023 at the Captain Samuel Douglass Academy Cafeteria in Brookline and Monday, February 20, 2023 at the Hollis Brookline Middle School Library, Hollis.

Article 10 - Petition Warrant Article

Shall we adopt the provisions of RSA 32:5-b, and implement a tax cap whereby the governing body (or budget committee) shall not submit a recommended budget that increases the amount to be raised by local taxes, based on the prior fiscal year’s actual amount of local taxes raised, by more than 5%?

Public Hearing will be conducted on Thursday, February 16, 2023 at the Captain Samuel Douglass Academy Cafeteria in Brookline and Monday, February 20, 2023 at the Hollis Brookline Middle School Library, Hollis.

Article 11 - Petition Warrant Article

To prevent taxpayer dollars from funding lobbying against the interests of parents and citizens, shall the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School District zero out budget line item “Fees, School Board” 10.2310.810.00.0?

Article 12 - Petition Warrant Article

To reduce the Hollis and Brookline property tax burdens, shall the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School District rescind authorization under RSA 198:4-b II so that the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School District no longer retains any unassigned general funds under RSA 198:4-b II?

Article 13 - Petition Warrant Article

Shall we adopt the provisions of RSA 32:5 V-b, requiring that the annual budget and all special warrant articles having a tax impact, as determined by the school board, shall contain a notation stating the estimated tax impact of the article? The determination of the estimated tax impact shall be subject to approval by the governing body.

Article 14

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

Chairman Mann once again opened the floor for any public input at 7:15 p.m.

No additional public input was provided.

The Public Hearing was declared closed at 7:15 p.m.

Date _____

Signed _____