GOVERNOR WENTWORTH REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
DELIBERATIVE SESSION

Minutes

February 3, 2024

Meeting was called to order at 10:00am by Moderator Kaitlin Purdy Murphy

The Moderator welcomes those in attendance and asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Moderator introduced the School Board and SAU Officials. Assistant Superintendent Heather Cummings, Board Members Dana Streeter, Thomas Bickford, Brodie Deshaies, Charlene Seibel, Stefanie King, Mary Schillereff, Dr. James Manning, James Pittman, Vice Chair, John Widmer, Chair, Superintendent Dr. Caroline Arakelian, District Attorney Barbara Loughman, Business Administrator Kathy O'Blenes, Katharine Lagace and School District Clerk Michelle Capone.

The Moderator reminds those in attendance of legalities regarding non-residents voting on district affairs and reminds voters that they will vote on Article I at the polls on March 12, 2024. The Moderator asks for a show of hands of those in attendance who are not registered voters of the district and if anyone knows of anyone in attendance that did not raise their hands.

The Moderator reviews procedural rules of the meeting, amendments to and voting on amendments, articles on the Warrant and identifies that Articles II-VII are submitted by the School Board. No amendments to amendments permitted on the floor at the same time. Meeting operates under the Rules of SB2. An article cannot be killed by tabling it or passing over it. Default Budget amount in Article II is not amendable as it is fixed by law. Wording of Warrant Articles that are prescribed by law and cannot be changed.

The Moderator will ask if anyone wishes to speak to an article and to come to the microphone and state their name and town they are from.

Moderator will read each article then recognize a Board Member to move article then the Moderator will ask for second. Once an article is seconded it will be addressed.

If article not amended it will appear on ballot to be voted on in March.

Motion to restrict reconsideration may be called at anytime, if approved, restricting reconsideration of articles already read. Only issues to be discussed are those in proposed articles.

The Moderator reads the School Board seats being voted on and those declared candidates, At-Large and Tuftonboro seats being contested this year. Voting locations and times can be found in the Annual Report.

Moderator introduces Chair Jack Widmer to give State of the Schools Address. Chairman Widmer extends welcome to those in attendance and extends deep gratitude on behalf of the Board to faculty, staff and administration for their compassion, dedication and tireless efforts on behalf of our school district community and the district families for their continued support. Chairman Widmer reviews some of the highlights from each school's students and staff, praising them all for their achievements. Chairman Widmer explains the rationale for each article on warrant and how the proposed 2025 budget being proposed was developed.

Meeting is turned back over to Moderator Murphy.

Moderator Murphy reads Article I:

To choose the following School District Officers:

School Board Member from New Durham 3-year term

School Board Member from Tuftonboro 3-year term

School Board Member-At-Large 3-year term

School Board Moderator 1-year term

Running for election in New Durham for 3 year term, Elizabeth Sheckler; Running for re-election as Member-at-Large for 3 year term Mary Schillereff and for election is Wesley Smallidge. Running for re-election in Tuftonboro, John "Jack" Widmer and for election Guy Pike and running again for Moderator, Kaitlyn Purdy Murphy.

Moderator Murphy reads Article II:

ARTICLE II: Shall the Governor Wentworth Regional School District 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 $62,838,424? Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be $61,578,639 with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Governor Wentworth Regional 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. *NOTE: This Warrant Article (operating budget) does not include appropriations requested in ANY of the other warrant articles. **The School Board recommends this appropriation. 4-3-0 (Majority vote required)**

Moderator Murphy recognizes Chairman Jack Widmer who moves the article, seconded by Dr. James Manning.

Chairman Widmer speaks to the article and gives an overview of the phases of the ESSER Funds I, II & III, what they are and their purposes and guidelines. ESSER III funds are the remaining phase funds. Mr. Widmer gives explanation on this phase's limits of use, flexibility and that unexpended funds not used by the end of 2024 must be returned. The budgeting process is explained, what dates hearings were held allowing for public input and the final bond hearing on January 8, 2024. General Fund-Employees, Enrollment, General Fund, Debt Service and Revenue are reviewed and what things impact each area. The projected state and local tax impact on each town is explained. Chairman Widmer reviews the Default Budget and how it is governed by state law and is presented so voters will have understanding of what budget would look like if proposed budget is defeated.

Chairman Widmer turns meeting back to Moderator Murphy.

Moderator Murphy asks if there are any questions on Article II.

Moderator recognizes David Bickford of New Durham. Mr. Bickford asks when bond expires. Chairman Widmer defers to Kathy O'Blenes, Business Administrator. Ms. O'Blenes responds 2032.

Mr. Bickford requests explanation on board's diversity/dissention on vote. Chairman Widmer explains some members felt funds could be better spent in other areas.

Chair recognizes Board Member Charlene Seibel who addresses 4-3 vote. This was the vote on the article after board voted to remove a position.

Mr. Bickford asks what position was eliminated and Chairman Widmer states Curriculum Coordinator, its original approval and why the District wanted the position to be funded for this year.

Mr. Bickford asked why there is separate article regarding the 2nd SRO position.

Chairman Widmer explained SRO position hadn't been in school long enough to gather full year of data. Separate article allows the District to gather more information on the SROs effect on schools to justify placing position in main budget.

Chair recognizes Board Member Brodie Deshaies who explains his opposition and reasoning behind voting against Curriculum Project Manager position.

Moderator recognizes Ken Perry of Wolfeboro. Mr. Perry asks for explanation regarding town proposed increase in taxes, while viewing slide again.

Chairman Widmer explains changes in individual towns has to do with funding formula, 75% based on average daily attendance and 25% equalized property valuation. As school population goes up cost per pupil cost goes up. Chairman Widmer reviews town costs and how funding formula tries to round out cost. All students receive same education but wealthy towns pay more, towns with less property value pay less.

Mr. Perry thanks the Chair and asks for clarification that the enrollment numbers are based on pupil numbers from last year.

Chairman Widmer and Business Administrator O'Blenes each state yes.

Moderator recognizes Beth Sheckler of New Durham. Ms. Sheckler asks Chairman Widmer about 20% ESSER III funds and the plan on how they will be allocated

Chair Widmer defers to Superintendent Arakelian.

Superintendent Arakelian states the 20% of ESSER III or 1.2 million dollars will be for programming for students, (summer), and materials for all students across the District, Professional Development under focus areas included in new Strategic Plan to be reviewed at Monday's board meeting.

Ms. Sheckler refers to previous discussion on Curriculum Project Manager. What is expectation regarding competency based education at schools, how many schools have adopted this system plan, how many have not. What is plan going forward if Curriculum Project Manager not included in budget?

Superintendent Arakelian states currently competency based education and reporting goes up to grade 8. The position is based at High School; high school is the final frontier in collecting data. Moving forward, if position funded for next year, would continue to work with teachers and staff and set up reporting systems to have ability to reflect on what district wants to accomplish at high school level. Looking at on-line access, student results and reporting. It is important to have a leader in that position.

Moderator recognizes Bobbi Boudman of Wolfeboro. Ms. Boudman shares concern regarding new charter school and expenses associated with services that the District would be responsible for providing which could result in additional costs to the District and not budgeted. Ms. Boudman sites private school students one mile down that road that could switch to charter school impacting the District's budget. Suggests there should be a line item for these costs. Will cost of services for the charter school students take away from areas of budget for existing District schools? Has there been any discussion with Administration of new charter school.

Superintendent states certain costs for charter schools are mandated by law. For students from our District, Special Education Services and transportation are required. These would be provided to any student no matter what school they attend and given already established transportation routes these should not create additional costs. Services can be provided at charter school or at one of the schools in the District.

Superintendent Arakelian states there have been no discussions with charter school's administrators. The District has received no information from parents regarding students moving to charter school and there are no student numbers at this time that could be used to estimate any costs to the District.

Ms. Boudman states transportation would be an expense to District.

Superintendent states there is no separate line for transportation and the current transportation routes would allow for adequate transportation coverage.

Chairman Widmer asks of 75 potential students that could switch to the charter school how many are already receiving services. This could be used to draw data but District does not have this information.

Ms. Boudman still questions where would money come from, believes should be discussed before budget brought before tax payers to be voted on.

Attorney Loughman speaks to the law requirements as they apply to any student attending a charter school, services required and District's cost and determination on how to deliver services. Regarding transportation-current law states transportation of students that reside in the District attending a charter or private school can ride District buses.

Chairman Widmer recognizes Board Member Stefanie King. Ms. King informs voters that cushions are built into the Special Education line item as the District cannot know ahead of time what services and costs may be incurred each year as needs can vary.

Chairman Widmer reminds voters that this cushion has been built into the budget for years due to the uncertainty of need each year.

Chair Widmer recognizes Board Member Brodie Deshaies.

Mr. Deshaies mentions there is an established Capital Reserve Trust for unexpected Special Education needs, currently at $180,000. Chairman Widmer concurs these funds could cover any budget overages should they arise.

Moderator asks if there is any further discussion on Article II. Seeing none, Article II will appear on ballot as read.

Moderator reads Article III:

ARTICLE III: To see if the Governor Wentworth Regional School District will vote to raise and appropriate up to the sum of one hundred fifty-thousand dollars ($150,000) to be added to the Maintenance Capital Reserve Fund previously established to maintain and repair schools and furthermore to name the school board as agents to expend. This sum to come from the June 30, 2024 fund balance available for transfer on July 1, 2024. No amount to be raised from taxation. **The School Board recommends this appropriation. 7-0-0 (Majority vote required)**

Moderator recognizes Board Member Stefanie King to move Article III, seconded by James Pittman.

Ms. King gives overview on history of the Maintenance Capital Reserve Fund and current balance of $183,111. The fund is used for unexpected maintenance and repairs not budget for. The funds come from fund balance and have no affect on budget.

Moderator recognizes Becca Brownell-Smith of Wolfeboro.

Ms. Brownell-Smith asks how this is article is different from Article V. Ms. King states this comes from any funds left at end of fiscal year whereas Article V is raised from taxation.

Moderator recognizes David Bickford of New Durham.

Mr. Bickford states this is about the same raised every year. What is the expenditure each year?

Chairman Widmer explains this article is a capital reserve and is used in case of catastrophic need or an expense not planned for. There is no intent to use these funds now; it's to put aside and a non lapsing capital reserve fund. Article V covers annual maintenance the District plans for.

Ms. King states this also helps the District not to have to go into a bonding issue should a major repair arise.

Moderator asks if there are further comments or discussion on Article III. Seeing none, Article III will appear on ballot as read.

Moderator reads Article IV:

ARTICLE IV: To see if the Governor Wentworth Regional School District will vote to raise and appropriate up to the sum of sixty thousand dollars ($60,000) to be added to the Turf Field Capital Reserve Fund previously establish and furthermore to name the school board as agents to expend. This sum to come from the June 30, 2024 fund balance available for transfer on July 1, 2024. No amount to be raised from taxation. **The School Board recommends this appropriation. 6-1-0 (Majority vote required)**

Moderator recognizes Board Member Brodie Deshaies to move Article IV, seconded by James Pittman.

Mr. Deshaies reviews history of article being presented, life of field and current funds in the Turf Field Capital Reserve Fund of approximately $736,000. Original life expectancy of field was 12 years but has exceeded expectancy reaching 15 years due to meticulous care. The goal of the District is to have full replacement cost in 2025.

Moderator recognizes Bobbi Boudman of Wolfeboro.

Ms. Boudman applauds one dissenter. Voters need to know that the District is replacing turf field with turf field, lists sports teams, cities, etc. removing this type of field. Ms. Boudman states these types of fields are toxic to our children with PAHs and PFAS and should be torn out. They cause cancer in our children. She urges the voters to say no to this article and rip out the turf field.

Ms. King addresses research done and that the research is not conclusive. Due to this and cost to replace with sod, four to five times more expensive, the Board made decision to replace with turf. It was thought through thoroughly.

Mr. Deshaies reminds the voters $736,000 is specifically to replace field. In order for our athletes to have field and have practices and games it is important to replace. Many reports were reviewed and much time spent on the issue.

Ms. Seibel speaks as lone no vote and her reasons to vote against article and in good conscience support article. Ms. Seibel asked for third party testing of crumbles, for parents whose student's participate in sports on this field to sign a waiver to protect district from liability down the road, cancers don't appear overnight. Asks that parents of student athletes to sign waiver understanding issues and risk. She cannot, in good faith, support the article because science is inconclusive. There are studies showing issues.

Moderator recognizes Jim Pittman.

Mr. Pittman, leader of Building and Maintenance Committee stated lots of time and effort was spent researching on this serious concern, cost and discussions on differences between experts. Replacing the turf with sod has half life expectancy, makes price gap even bigger. It is difficult when committee gets differing responses from lots of experts in the field. He wants voters to know the issue is not being glossed over or swept under the rug.

Moderator recognizes Becca Brownell-Smith of Wolfeboro

Ms. Brownell-Smith asks if sod alternative has been priced out.

Mr. Pittman states it has not been done in the past.

Moderator asks if there are any further questions or discussion on Article IV. Seeing none, Article IV will appear on ballot as read.

Moderator reads Article V:

ARTICLE V: Shall the Governor Wentworth Regional School District raise and appropriate the sum of one hundred fifty-thousand dollars ($150,000) for repairs and improvements of buildings/grounds at the Kingswood Regional High School, Kingswood Regional Middle School, Lakes Region Technology Center, Kingswood Arts Center, Carpenter School, Crescent Lake School, Effingham Elementary School, New Durham School, Ossipee Central School, Tuftonboro Central School and the SAU 49/Transportation Facility? **The School Board recommends this appropriation. 7-0-0 (Majority vote required)**

Moderator recognizes Board Member James Pittman to address and move the article, seconded by Dr. James Manning.

Mr. Pittman gives an overview of the capital improvements fund and what this article will cover and reviewed projects accomplished last year with the funds voters had approved. Priorities for this year include New Durham window replacement, playground fence replacement at Ossipee School, sidewalk repair at Tuftonboro Central School and Effingham School as well as final roof replacement over kitchen and room 141 at Tuftonboro Central School.

Moderator recognizes David Bickford of New Durham.

Mr. Bickford asks if there is a formula used in considering how much money to put away i.e., square footage basis.

Chairman Widmer states district does not use a formula, District lays out all repairs and projects that need to be done and identify those that are critical. Some repairs get put off till a following year.

Mr. Bickford approves of current way repairs are approached and possibly formula approach might assist Board.

Mr. Pittman explains predictable and non predictable maintenance expenses, how the District addresses them when creating budget and feels staff has done well at predicting what is needed.

Mr. Deshaies feels Business Administrator O'Blenes would be better to address how staff approaches this area in budget process.

Ms. O'Blenes states the District and staff look at state and federal requirements, required reporting and addressing any issues immediately as they arise.

Moderator asks if there is any further question or discussion on Article V, seeing none states Article V will appear on ballot as read.

Moderator reads Article VI:

ARTICLE VI: To see if the Governor Wentworth Regional School District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of fifty-five-thousand eighty dollars ($55,080) for a second School Resource Police Officer (SRO) for Kingswood Complex for the 2024-2025 school year. **The School Board recommends this appropriation. 7-0-0 (Majority vote required)**

Moderator recognizes Board Member Tom Bickford to address and move article, seconded by Brodie Deshaies.

Mr. Bickford reminds voters of history of how this position proposed in 2023. He reviews what this position does to aid the District, its needs and purpose. This fulltime position is a cost sharing position agreement (50/50) with the Town of Wolfeboro.

Moderator recognizes Board Chair Jack Widmer. Mr. Widmer lets voters know that the School Board asks the Police Department for monthly reports on the activities of the SRO. The board has only had short time, since September, to gather data. This has not given Board enough time for review. By putting this as separate article the Board will be able to have a full year of report data for review to justify putting this into the budget as fulltime position in 2025.

Moderator recognizes Brodie Deshaies who informs voters that the Town of Wolfeboro has placed this cost in their main budget.

Moderator recognizes Bobbi Boudman of Wolfeboro. Ms. Boudman asks the Board if the voters can hear from the leadership of the Kingswood Complex on how this SRO has worked out in the last five months to determine if position is still a needed posilton.

Moderator recognizes Superintendent Arakelian who states they did hear from the Middle School leadership during finance committee meeting. The Middle School response was very positive response. The amount of work for the original SRO has exceeded the time allotted. Now with second SRO there is more of a presence at Middle School, more protection from the outside, more assistance with students and connections for more. Students ask questions; feel comfortable and work together to solve problems. Feedback on SRO has been highly received and positive.

Moderator recognizes Board Member Stefanie King. SRO is meant to be preventative to any instances to school safety. Exclusionary discipline is part of the SRO position and hopes Board looks at rates of exclusionary discipline as one of metrics to evaluate effectiveness of this position.

Moderator recognizes Beth Sheckler of New Durham. Ms. Sheckler asks Ms. King to elaborate on exclusionary discipline and which direction SRO typically influences those rates in schools.

Ms. King explains research is mixed. If SRO utilized as intended, to strengthen prevention systems, and strengthen relationships. Discipline should be reduced, students feel safer, have a sense of belonging and less likely to perform acts requiring exclusionary discipline. When SRO utilized as intended, rates go down but if SRO used as responsive to assist administration, rates would remain high.

Moderator recognizes Ken Perry of Wolfeboro. Mr. Perry asks for definition of exclusionary.

Ms. Kings explains exclusionary discipline is when a student is removed from their learning environment, i.e., in and out of school suspension.

Moderator recognizes Board member Mary Schillereff. Ms. Schillereff speaks of her reaction when SRO was initially proposed and her continued support of the second SRO. Adding the second SRO allows for more contact with parents, community, and social workers.

Moderator asks if there are any questions or further discussion on Article VI. Seeing none states that Article VI will be on ballot as read.

Article VII: To transact any other business that may legally come before said meeting.

Moderator states there is one more piece of business.

Moderator recognizes Chairman Jack Widmer.

Mr. Widmer thanks Board Member Stefanie King for her years of service to board and community. Her strong voice of advocacy will be missed.

Mr. Widmer encourages everyone to vote on March 12th.

Ms. King thanks everyone, it has been a pleasure and privilege to serve, and she moves on to finish her Ph.D. Ms. King recognizes Beth Sheckler, who is running unopposed for the New Durham School Board seat, she will be a wonderful addition to the board.

Chairman Jack Widmer reminds everyone that School Board meeting is still in session and Board will be taking final vote on articles after Deliberative Session ends and this vote will appear on ballot.

Moderator asks if there are any more questions or further discussion.

Seeing none, Moderator asks for motion to adjourn.

Motion to adjourn made by Board Member Brodie Deshaies and seconded by Bobbie Boudman.

Moderator adjourns meeting at 11:39am.

Respectfully Submitted by,

Michelle J. Capone
School District Clerk