

HANOVER FINANCE COMMITTEE

Statement on the Proposed Hanover School District Budget for FY 2024-25

The Hanover Finance Committee (HFC) is an appointed Town Committee composed of Hanover residents¹. HFC is charged with reviewing the Town's financial matters and providing guidance to Town officials, the Hanover School Board (HSB) and Town residents.

During public meetings on January 4 and 11, 2024 HFC voted unanimously to support the proposed FY25 Hanover School Budget of \$15,147,065. (Article 5), and new salaries for district officials (Article 3). HFC also voted unanimously to support a new collective bargaining agreement with teachers and other certified staff (Article 4 at an additional cost of \$408,763) which, together with all other expenditures, represents an increase in appropriations of \$373,051 or 2% over FY24. After factoring in revenues, which are \$602,747 or 17% less than FY24 due primarily to decreases in state sources and the elimination of the 6th Grade Tuition Reserve Fund, the Hanover District assessment is expected to increase \$1,010,798 (8.5%). When combined with the minimal increase in the Dresden assessment and if all the warrant articles in Hanover and Dresden were to pass, and if all of the assumptions of valuation and state tax calculations hold true, then the total school tax rate would increase by \$.30 to \$11.57 per \$1,000 of property value or by 2.6%.

HFC supports the implementation of Zero Based Budgeting (ZBB) this year in the annual budgeting process. HFC applauds the effort and recognizes the benefit to the Hanover School District by aligning their budget to their mission, vision and strategic plan through the use of ZBB.

Along with an anticipated 9% increase in health insurance, costs associated with the proposed teacher contract contribute most significantly to the proposed budget. HFC recognizes the importance of hiring and retaining quality staff. This means keeping salaries competitive with other top schools in New Hampshire and Vermont while ensuring that compensation is commensurate with pre-inflation levels for the majority of staff who have only been eligible for 2% base increases in recent years.

Other cost drivers include \$129,500 for site and building improvements and \$60,000 for student transportation. Funding is also in the budget to hire a full-time Instructional Coach, a new position to the Ray School. Cost reductions in this year's budget included \$158,000 in the area of Regular Education Ed Assistants and \$210,000 in the area of Special Education.

Looking forward, HFC continues to advocate for evaluation of staffing levels and new initiatives and for the sharing of this information along with Educational Quality Indicators for the Ray School in a readily available location, ideally online. Further, HFC recognizes the challenges faced by SAU staff these past several years and looks forward to the resumption of a timely distribution of budget

¹ Members are Kari Asmus, John Dolan, Rich Greger, Herschel Nachlis, Greg Snyder, Antonia Barry (Hanover School Board) and Carey Callaghan (Hanover Selectboard).

material. We also remain willing to share thoughts on what information is useful from a public perspective in terms of understanding the budget, such as the layout of the budget and a breakdown of staffing positions.

In closing, HFC again commends the efforts of administrators, faculty and staff in our district's pursuit of educational excellence. This year, however, we would like to especially thank the seven individuals who comprise the Hanover School Board for their untold hours of service and note our support for the overdue increase in stipends included in Article 3 – the first such increase in over a decade.