

At the May 16, 2024 Budget Forum the following questions were raised by the public.

1. Is it a coincidence that the budget has increased while the population has decreased?

The answer that was given was that the budget is not directly dependent on the population.

I would like to elaborate a bit further.

First, any population decrease, or increase, is presumably spread across all 4 towns and all 13 grades. If we have a 2% population drop from one year to the next and, hypothetically, they were all in second grade in Bowdoinham it may translate to a reduction in the number of teachers needed. However, if it is a drop spread across ages and towns, it probably will be one or two students per grade per school. Unless the classroom was already on the cusp of our class size minimums it won't impact the number of teachers we have. We don't employ fractions of teachers. If a classroom goes from 20 students to 19, we don't reduce our staff by 1/20th of a position. We also will have the same number of buildings to maintain, buses to run, utilities for purchase, etc. There are a few items that will decrease on a per student basis (for example lunch food) and our changing population is taken into account in those areas.

Second, we did take declining population into account in this year's budget at the high school level. The population has been slowly declining over the last 10 years. The accumulation of the drop in numbers led us to a reduction in staff of 4 teacher positions at MTA this year.

Third, unfortunately, the Maine state funding DOES work on a per student basis. So when our population goes down the state funding goes down by a directly proportional amount, which means we have the same expenses with lower state funding requiring additional local funding to be raised.

2 - Article 5 is "To see if the District will authorize the Board of Directors to expend \$933,900 for other instruction for the 2024-2025 fiscal year." Why is the wording so vague?

The answer that was given was that the paragraph under the Article language gives more detail about what is included in this Article. What I also should have explained is that the language of this article, and all of the articles, is determined by

state statute and is the same format that is followed by all School Administrative Districts in Maine. The state has a very specific formula, also, for which items/costs are included in each warrant. It is the same every year and the same district to district. We are not trying to obfuscate what the items in the budget are. The budget line items are available on the web page if anyone is interested in more detail for any article.

3- There was a motion to reduce the appropriation of \$38,216,904.89 in Article 13. Because the motion was withdrawn this is moot, but it seems worth elaborating.

As it was explained at the meeting, this article describes the state's calculation of the cost of the "Essential Programs and Services" that MSAD #75 is required to provide to its students and calculates the state and local portions. By law the state must contribute 55% of that cost.

State determined total cost = \$38,216,904.80 (100%)

State determined state share = \$20,845,741 (55%)

State determined local share = \$17,371,163.06 (45%)

The passage of this article means that the District will accept the \$20,845,741 from the state and agrees to fund the remaining \$17,371,163.06.

The state determines the operating allocation for each district pursuant to MRSA Title 20-A, Section 15683. The basic calculation is the number of students multiplied by a state determined "per-pupil rate." It is then adjusted based on the number of economically disadvantaged students, the number of English learners, and a few other incentives for various state targets.

It is not based on anything specific to our schools (e.g., the number and age of our buildings, the number and distances buses travel, special education costs that required by federal law, our determination to offer AP courses or technology courses, extracurricular activities, etc).

The only districts where this could possibly be close to their actual budget would be a 1-building school district with no extra-curricular activities, special education students, or elective classes.

The question was also asked, "what would happen if the town did not approve this article?" That is not directly addressed by the statute, and it would require the

District to obtain legal advice. We are not aware of any examples of this happening in the state of Maine.