

Monadnock Regional School District (MRSD)
School Board Meeting Minutes
December 27, 2023
Wilcox Building, Swanzey, NH

Members Present: Kristen Noonan, Scott Peters, Edmond LaPlante, Lisa Steadman, Stephanie Lawlor, Eric Stanley, Betty Tatro, Dan LeClair, Brian Bohannon and Jeff Cesaitis. **Absent:** Gina Carraro, Jennifer Strimbeck and Cheryl McDaniel-Thomas.

Administration Present: J. Rathbun, Assistant Superintendent via Zoon and J. Morin, Business Administrator.

1. **CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER at 6:00 PM.** S. Peters called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.
2. **PUBLIC COMMENTS:** There were no public comments.
3. **MATTERS FOR SCHOOL BOARD INFORMATION & DISCUSSION:** S. Peters explained that at the last meeting the Board did not have a quorum and there was business that had to get done. This is the reason for this meeting.
4. **MATTERS THAT REQUIRE BOARD ACTION:**
 - a. **Specialist Contract:** L. Steadman explained that the Negotiating Committee made their last and final offer to the Specialist Group and they came back with another proposal. The School Board said no to their proposal and they finally took the last and final offer. J. Morin passed out the red lined contract to the Board for review. L. Steadman highlighted a number of the changes. The Sign Language Interpreter is now in the Unit. It is a 3-year contract. For the new hires they will have a mentor and the mentors will be paid the same as in the MDEA contract which is \$400.00 a year. They cleaned up the maternity language which is closer to the MDEA contract language. There is a \$1000.00 step increase per year for those on step and those off step will receive 5% increase the first year, 4% increase the second year and 3% increase the third year. J. Rathbun mentioned that this Unit is not year-round and does not receive vacation days. J. Morin mentioned that the total increase for the first year is \$36,080.81. There are 2 people in the Specialist Unit who are funded by a grant. The Board would like to show on the warrant that 2 of the positions are paid for by the grant in order to be transparent to the voters. This was not done in previous years. J. Rathbun would not want the warrant to dictate the grant. He would like to contact J. O'Shaughnessy. **MOTION:** B. Bohannon **MOVED** to ratify and authorize L. Steadman to execute the Global Tentative Agreement

with the Specialist Bargaining Unit. **SECOND:** B. Tatro. **VOTE:** 10.961/0/0/2.039.

Motion passes.

b. Proposed Budget: J. Morin explained that she had brought the proposed Default Budget to the Budget Committee on December 20, 2023. The default is 1 million dollars under the proposed budget. She sharpened her pencil and was able to make additional adjustments in staffing and other areas. She was able to cut about \$100,000.00 out of the proposed budget. Last week C. Woods was also able to make a change in out of district expenses and reduced the proposed by another \$150,000.00. The new proposed budget number is \$38,288,066.00. Both the Proposed Default Budget and the Proposed Budget include the \$970,000.00 in their totals. S. Peters explained that the Board can take the administration's recommendation of the Proposed budget or make changes but in a short amount of time. J. Morin went around the pie chart which was provided by L. Walker. J. Morin explained which drivers are in the Default Budget and which are not. All of the drivers are in the Default Budget except the Out of District placements and related services. S. Peters asked what is the will of the Board? Would the group like to adjust the number? B. Bohannon would like to see the number under \$38,000,000.00. J. Morin explained that she is not looking at any fund balance at the end of the year. The Proposed Budget Number is \$38,288,000.00 after the 2 newest adjustments. S. Peters asked where \$290,000.00 will come from. J. Morin is not sure. She explained that she meets with the principals and they have reduced their supplies. It was mentioned to reduce the counselors which would bring the proposed budget below \$38,000,000.00. J. Rathbun commented that the administration feels that the 4 FTE from CARES/ESSER have made a huge impact in the schools. It might be time to look at class size and elementary enrollment. J. Rathbun explained that he had provided at-risk student numbers at the last full Board Meeting. There is a story to tell. There is data. K. Noonan does not want to reduce teachers or classroom size. She said that there are a lot of behavioral issues. J. Rathbun is not saying reduce but look at the class size. At MTC and Cutler you are not able to have multi-aged classes but Gilsum is small. It is a lot but it is not impossible. We need direction. S. Peters asked what options would be possible in a week. D. LeClair suggested cutting the Security Guard. He said it is not a huge impact on education. **MOTION:** K. Noonan **MOVED** to request the administration to present options to change the proposed budget to something less than 38 million. **SECOND:** B. Bohannon. **VOTE:** 10.961/0/0/2.031. **Motion passes.** L. Steadman suggested pulling out the 4FTE counselors and placing them on a separate warrant article. J. Rathbun commented that athletics, supplies and sports were not mentioned. Are they off the table? J. Morin explained that kids can sign up for the travel teams. It was mentioned that in the school everyone can play. Pay to play kids are left out. They cannot afford it. **MOTION:** S. Peters **MOVED** to ask the administration to consider the following scenarios, the At-Risk Counselors and the Counseling Director previously funded by CARES/ESSER,

unfilled positions that are not required by law but to avoid further cuts to the Foreign Language Program and reduction in staff (existing headcount). **SECOND:** L. Steadman. **DISCUSSION:** J. Rathbun and the administration are not comfortable with reducing the 3 positions. He will find the funds without doing this. J. Morin commented there are ideas on the table but give us time to get to that number. S. Lawlor asked about doing out of district programs in house. J. Rathbun explained that it is a much bigger conversation than in a week. The biggest problem is space. J. Rathbun said the administration will find the funds to reduce the proposed budget. **VOTE:** 10.961/0/0/2.031.

c. Proposed Warrant Articles: J. Morin gave the balances in the current Expendable Trust Funds. She explained at the last Budget Committee Meeting the Budget Committee suggested \$25,000.00 to go into the Special Education Expendable Trust and not to fund the others. **MOTION:** L. Steadman **MOVED** to approve Draft Warrant Article Three, Special Education Expendable Trust and Draft Warrant Article Four, to accept the reports of the auditors. **SECOND:** S. Lawlor. **DISCUSSION:** J. Morin mentioned in the budget reports it is a much tighter budget. J. Rathbun mentioned that there are CARES Funds left and the administration is purchasing literacy materials for grades K-6. That will leave a balance of about \$300,000.00 to be used for Special Ed. expenses. This is allowed for the students who were affected by the pandemic. This can never be done again. J. Rathbun and J. Morin agreed the current budget is very tight. **VOTE:** 10.961/0/0/2.031. **Motion passes.**

5. SETTING NEXT MEETING'S AGENDA

- a. Presentation by the Administration**
- b. Contract numbers**
- c. Motion for Warrant Article One and Two**

6. Public Comments: K. Noonan said that she appreciates all of the work the administration has done on the proposed budget. She thanked them for looking at more possible cuts.

S. Lawlor commented on the fact that the Board Meetings are not making quorum. Please let S.Peters know if you are not able to attend the Board Meetings.

7. ADJOURNMENT: MOTION: K. Noonan **MOVED** to adjourn the meeting at 7:35 PM. **SECOND:** S. Lawlor **VOTE: Motion passes.**

Respectfully submitted,

Laura L. Aivaliotis
Recording Secretary

VOTING KEY: Yes/No/Abstain/Absent