

**Monadnock Regional School District
School Board/Budget Committee Joint Meeting
November 18, 2023
MRMHS Library Swanzey NH**

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

Budget Committee Members: Wayne Lechlides, Robert Audette, Ed Sheldon, Robert Young, Adam Hopkins, Anne Marie Osheyack and Nancy Carney. **Absent:** Doug Bersaw, Dan Coffman, Richard HKS Thackston, Jon Hoden and Unassigned seats from Roxbury and Gilsum.

Administration Present: L. Witte, Superintendent, J. Rathbun, Assistant Superintendent and J. Morin, Business Administrator

1. **CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER: 9:00 AM**
 - a. **Budget Committee Roll Call:** 6.78/0/0/5.22. **Due to the fact the Budget Committee has a quorum A. Hopkins will run the meeting.**
 - b. **School Board Roll Call:** 6.482/0/0/6.518. **No quorum for the SB.**

2. **PUBLIC COMMENTS:** There were no public comments.
3. **MATTERS FOR JOINT MEETING INFORMATION & DISCUSSION:**
 - a. **Superintendent Search Committee:** C.McDaniel-Thomas updated the Board and the Budget Committee on the Superintendent Search. She explained the committee had already conducted 3 short interviews and will be doing one more on Sunday. The committee will meet Monday night to make a decision to see who will move ahead to the long interview process. The committee is on track to making an offer after the holidays. Forums with the finalists will be held in January. There was a total of 6 candidates and 4 made it to the short interviews.
 - b. **Specialists Contract Status Update:** L. Steadman, Chair of the Negotiation Committee explained that there is nothing that can be shared. They still have several weeks to go. L. Steadman asked the Budget Committee the drop-dead date for the contract to be available for review. It was commented that the target date should be December 20, 2023.
 - c. **Renovations Project Update:** J. Rathbun explained the process is going well. K. Barker and Hutter Construction are deep into the drawings. The site work will begin June 12, 2024 after school lets out. The administration had advertised for an Owner's Project Manager, which is required by the State but did not get as many

responses as they wanted. They will be extending the posting until Dec. 12, 2023. They are moving along, feel confident and good to go in June. R. Audette commented on the number of new units being built in the District. He is concerned that the renovations will not be able to absorb the number of students. J. Rathbun explained that the administration has been speaking to the Town of Swanzey. K. Barker explained that MTC will be able to house 650 students. At this time, we have 515 students. We are going to watch this closely. The projected tax impact with the renovations has not been done yet.

d. Capital Improvement & Warrant Ideas for 2024/25: S. Peters explained with the elementary school renovations being done, the CIP is focusing on the MRMHS and the SAU for the next several years. The Finance/Facilities has projected the FRED at 10%. There are no warrant articles being proposed by the Board at this time. He asked the opinion of the Budget Committee regarding the Expendable Trusts and if they would like any funds to be added this year. W. Lechliden said possibly at a minimum. He also commented that the new tax bills have just gone out. S. Peters explained that the Board will be discussing warrant articles at their meeting on Tuesday.

e. Staffing Update: The administration presented the committees with the most updated information on the vacancies. They are working very hard to fill the positions. L. Walker explained the para vacancies are mostly at the Middle/High School. The district is looking to contract a nurse but there are no contracted nurses. There is an interview on Monday.

f. 2024/25 Budget Driver Review: The administration identified the budget drivers. There were **4 FTE positions** that were covered by the CARES/ESSER Funds and it had been decided if the positions were benefiting the students they would like to permanently keep those positions. **The MDEA Contract increase** and the **MESSA Contract Increase**. In the past a building project or repair would have been a separate warrant article but the principle and the interest for the bond are now part of the budget. The amount being shown is the increase. **The bond and principal payment** is 1.6 million which is lower due to the lower interest rate on the bond. **Transportation** is a driver and this is the last year of the contract with an option to extend for 2 more years. **Related services and OOD Tuition** are drivers as well. J. Rathbun explained that there are students with social and emotional needs. The 4 FTE positions will take over the curriculum at the elementary schools and the district will add a School Coordinator at full time to provide the social/emotional curriculum. The At-Risk Counselors are at the Middle School and the High School. They help to reduce the number of suspensions. We are seeing kids acting up. We have people to look at the situation. If a student is not feeling safe, does not have basic needs or is not mentally available they are not interested in school. We need to make them feel comfortable, focus on education and increase scores. Kids that have their basic needs met increase in education. He does believe that we are making a difference. Across the nation they are focusing on the

social/emotional needs of students. All indicators show that there is a need throughout the country. **The Health Trust GMR** came in at 19.5% which comes to an increase of \$939,000.00 and is significantly more than last year. It was explained the increase of the GMR was not on the diagram but it will not change the dollar amount of the whole increase to the proposed budget. L. Walker will send out the corrected pie chart to the members. C. Woods explained that there are 29 out of district students. She explained since the pandemic students are different and demonstrating unsafe behavior. It is huge across the State. This amount is not any higher than we have seen before. The number is much too high and hopefully the At-Risk Counselors and the social workers will help. Some of the students are sent to Massachusetts, Vermont and stay in NH. We try to keep them close to their homes. There are not a lot of facilities available. L. Walker explained that there is a new formula for the Adequacy Aid. J. Morin explained that she has shared the positions that have been filled and also filled by contracted services. This information is shared with the Finance/Facilities Committee and we are trending to have a lot lower fund balance.

4. **PUBLIC COMMENTS:** There were no public comments.
5. **ADJOURNMENT:** A. Hopkins closed the meeting at 9:43 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura L. Aivaliotis
MRSD Recording Secretary