

**Monadnock Regional School District
Budget Committee Meeting Minutes
April 27, 2021
Zoom Meeting, Swanzey, NH**

Members Present: Wayne Lechliden, Dan Coffman, Adam Hopkins, Scott Peters, School Board Rep., Wendy Martel, Ed Sheldon and Richard HKS Thackston. **Absent:** Megan Foley, Wayne LaCoste, Doug Bersaw, Phyllis Peterson, Melissa Divens, Unassigned seat for Gilsum and Unassigned seat for Roxbury.

Also Present: L. Witte, Superintendent, J. Morin, Business Administrator and L. Aivaliotis, Recording Secretary.

1. **Public Comments:** There were no public comments.

2. **Approval of Meeting Minutes:**

a. **March 23, 2021 Budget Committee Meeting Minutes: MOTION:** W. Lechliden **MOVED** to approve the March 23, 2021 Budget Committee Meeting Minutes as presented. **SECOND:** R. HKS Thackston. **VOTE:** 6.6789/0/0/4.3343. **Motion passes.**

b. **March 30, 2021 Budget Committee Meeting Minutes: MOTION:** W. Lechliden **MOVED** to approve the March 30, 2021 Budget Committee Meeting Minutes as presented. **SECOND:** W. Martel. **VOTE:** 6.6789/0/0/4.3343. **Motion passes.**

3. **Administration Report:**

a. **MRSD Monthly Expense Report:** J. Morin reported there is 10.43% of the budget remaining. She has been meeting with the principals and the cost centers to see if there is anything they need to get by the end of the year. Cutler and the MRMHS have the most remaining due to positions not being filled. Transportation and the wellness payouts have not been completed. The wellness payouts are for staff not covered under a contract.

b. **NEW Manifest Report:** J. Morin explained the Budget Committee had requested additional information on the district's spending. The Budget Committee received the manifest. There is a lot of information and it is run right before the Board Meeting. W. Lechliden said it is not necessary to receive the manifest. He would like a

line item accounting for each month, what is budgeted and what was spent. The manifest is unnecessary. L. Witte explained any additional information would have to be at the request of the School Board. W. Lechliden said the Budget Committee has the right to ask for the information. L. Witte explained we have provided the information any additional information the School Board would have to okay. W. Lechliden said the RSA does not say that. L. Witte explained it is additional work. A. Hopkins presented the RSA. He feels that the RSA allows the Budget Committee to ask for additional information to be provided by the administration. S.Peters said the Board would be supportive if you need the information but not if an individual member was requesting it. The administration would have to put in a lot of time to tailor to the view of the member. The Budget Committee can make a motion and the School Board will do the request but not customize back and forth each meeting. A. Hopkins commented we do not have to go through the School Board to do this. We do not need their permission. S.Peters agreed with the RSA. W. Lechliden said the School Board and the Budget Committee are separate entities and the School Board does not okay what the Budget Committee does. **MOTION:** W. Lechliden **MOVED** to have the administration provide a monthly report of each line item in the budget. The actual amount budgeted and the actual amount spent. **SECOND:** D. Coffman. **DISCUSSION:** D. Coffman asked if we are trying to work together or draw lines. He said the request is simple and can be distributed by J. Morin easily. S.Peters asked what level they are looking for. A. Hopkins said line item specific. L. Witte said it could be a few 100 pages and budget transfers happen throughout the year. The level being asked for could be very lengthy. W. Lechliden said the budget is about 54 pages. L. Witte said accounting of all expenditures, about 60 pages. W. Lechliden said every line item appropriated and spent. D. Coffman said it is an easy request. Maybe a conversation with J. Morin offline. J. Morin said she completely understands what is being asked for. **VOTE:** 5.5574/0/1.1215/4.3343.

Motion passes.

c. What major transfers occurred since last meeting? J. Morin explained there were three major transfers since the last meeting. A transfer in the amount of \$15,011.00 from the District-Wide Telephone to the District Technology Equipment line to purchase Touch screen TVs/Chromebooks for the new classrooms being constructed at MRMHS. A transfer in the amount of \$44,000.00 from the District-Wide Telephone line and the MRMHS Telephone line to the District Technology Equipment line to purchase an updated security camera system at MRMHS. A transfer in the amount of

\$45,855.00 from the Technical Education budget line, Repair and Maintenance line and the Teacher Substitute line for the purchase of replacement and new Tech Ed. equipment for the Tech/Ed addition project at MRMHS.

d. What major expenses are anticipated for next month? J. Morin explained the District has received the initial drawings for the 4 classrooms. It will be going out to bid.

e. Maximum dollar amount of possible retained funds at the end of this budget year? J. Morin will provide this information at the next meeting.

f. MRSD cost per pupil for the last 5 years vs. State average: The cost per pupil was presented to the committee. There is a 10% difference between the State and Monadnock. W. Lechliden said we need to compare similar sized school districts in the area. A. Hopkins explained the committee asked for the comparison with the State.

g. Costs related to COVID related leave usage (substitute days used, reimbursement eligible from COVID funds, staff attendance 202/2021 vs previous years etc.): L. Witte explained the average daily absences due to the Covid pandemic have increased slightly but without a cost impact. L. Witte presented a document to the committee. She said there are 350 employees and 48 could be covered by multiple things.

h. Update on full in-person school costs (expected increase/decrease spending lines for remainder of school year): L. Witte explained the administration had been discussing staffing needs. We have found ways to make it work but she is not sure we have filled all of the spots. The CARES funding will cover the permanent sub and the additional nurse. We can support remote students without additional staff. We are short staffed but ready by being creative. We will continue the Pre-School student's schedule without an interruption. We are in good shape for May 3, 2021. W. Lechliden asked if we have the Maintenance Trust Fund. J. Morin explained we have a number of Trust Funds which are held by the Trustees of the Trust Fund. W. Lechliden asked if there is one to be used for an emergency. J. Morin will bring the expendable trusts to the next meeting.

4. Items for School Board:

a. MDEA Contract Input: The committee would like to give input to the Negotiation Committee. W. Lechliden said he has not had time to pull up the information we wrote on the white board. D. Coffman said he is not a fan of vacation carryover. He said we need to fund it better. We need to find ways to pay that out and not to carry it to

retirement. E. Sheldon would like to have the Negotiating Committee to structure the contracts not in the same year as the bond. S. Peters explained MESSA will be up in 2023. J. Morin explained MDEA does not have vacation days, they have wellness days. L. Witte said the reason why the MDEA has wellness days is because they do not have short term disability. E. Sheldon does not want to hurt the staff who are sick and need the days. Do not create a serious problem for those that have a serious problem. L. Witte said the amount paid to the NHRS is the same. At retirement it is no burden to the district. D. Coffman would like this issue sent to the MDEA. D. Coffman said an increase to the NHRS has to do with wages to the staff. J. Morin explained the retirement paid out is not at per diem. It is a flat rate not calculated on their salary. S. Peters mentioned the Negotiating Committee set out for an early strategy. The information from this committee upfront is the key to success. D. Coffman would agree. He asked about information in May or June. It was mentioned June is too late. W. Lechlinder asked why doesn't the School Board look for the white board document. S. Peters said the Board may have it. W. Lechlinder would like the MDEA to pay more of their health insurance. He would like accountability, performance based measures, reviews/raises. S. Peters said there have been changes to employee performance. He is not sure about a rate increase with employees that do not teach to the test. W. Lechlinder suggested a stipend as an incentive for good test results. S. Peters said not every grade is tested and not every employee in this bargaining unit is responsible for testing. This does not apply to all. W. Lechlinder said it does not matter, it is a team sport. J. Morin commented the nurses and the guidance are in the MDEA Contract. **Bullets from Budget Committee:** **Wellness leave carry over**-too many days allowed. Pay out more regularly so not to carry days to retirement-mirror non-affiliated staff wellness day payoffs. Year-end payout not end of career payout. **Keep bond year warrant** as clean as possible-structure contracts to go past that year. **Health Insurance**-more to be paid by MDEA members. **Performance based**- reviews/raises-stipends or financial incentives for student's test success. **MOTION:** D. Coffman **MOVED** to carry forward the bullets as written to the School Board and Negotiating Committee. **SECOND:** W. Lechlinder. **VOTE:** 5.5574/1.1215/0/4.3343. **Motion passes.**

b. Inflation Rate for CIP: S. Peters explained the project backlog assumed a 1% increase in inflation. If we do not tackle those items right away. What is a good inflation rate? E. Sheldon said he has seen building materials skyrocket. S. Peters asked what is the right approach. D. Coffman would let the architect and engineer firm give

input. W. Lechlinder said we need to have an accurate number for the projects. He would feel okay not assigning a number. **MOTION:** D. Coffman **MOVED** to yield to the School Board to establish an inflation rate for the CIP. **SECOND:** E. Sheldon. **VOTE:** 6.4578/0/.2031/4.3343. **Motion passes.**

c. **Letter to School Board from Budget Committee:** E. Sheldon explained the intention of the Budget Committee in regards to writing the letter. He would like to hear the decisions about the reduced budget. S.Peters said he would be happy to bring that information to the next meeting. E. Sheldon would like to know the ramifications of the cuts.

5. Budget Committee Roles and Responsibilities:

a. **RSA32:** A. Hopkins explained to the members where this information is online for the members.

b. **NHMA FAQs:** A. Hopkins showed the members where to access this information.

6. Budget Committee Schedule:

a. **Return to in person meetings:**

i. **School Board Plan:** A. Hopkins asked what the School Board was doing regarding in person meetings. L. Witte explained with the emergency order there is more leeway. The State of Emergency is expected to continue through the end of the school year. The NHSBA explained there is the ability to have hybrid meetings even without the State of Emergency. S.Peters explained the committees would like to stay hybrid. To have a full School Board Meeting is a challenge. We do not have the physical space.

ii. **District Use of Facilities:** A. Hopkins asked if the district could accommodate the Budget Committee in a full in person meeting. L. Witte explained social distancing and the ability to access remotely. It could happen. D. Coffman said Zoom is not efficient or effective. W. Lechlinder said people are not engaged as much with the remote. The social-distancing should not be an issue. Have the public participate through Zoom. E. Sheldon said it is fair to have the public join by Zoom. S.Peters said hybrid will require work. L.Witte explained we have to allow the public to participate in person as well. She will get clarification. A. Hopkins said it sounds like the

Budget Committee wants to do this. A. Hopkins asked those who are not commenting about in person meetings to email him after the meeting.

iii. Create Budget Committee Plan:

7. Superintendent's Comments: There are no Superintendent comments.

8. School Board Liaison Comments: S. Peters asked about the members not in attendance A. Hopkins explained if a member misses 4 consecutive meetings in a row they are automatically done.

9. Chairperson Comments: There were no Chair Comments.

10. Setting Next Meeting Agenda:

i. New Report-Budget Tracking

ii. 2.5% dollar amount

iii. Trust Fund Balance

iv. Update on SB meeting the approved budget.

11. Public Comments: D. Coffman commented on the Letter to the State from the Board regarding the full return to school. He said it is not wise to tell the State what you are going to do. The District should have requested a waiver. He is expressing his dissatisfaction. It is unwise when we will be asking for funding. W. Lechliden would echo D. Coffman's comments. He said this is an example of disrespect and he hopes there is no issue with the building aid.

W. Lechliden said to be careful removing someone from the Budget Committee. A. Hopkins explained it is by RSA and is automatic.

12. Motion to adjourn: MOTION: E. Sheldon **MOVED** to adjourn the meeting at 9:22 PM. **SECOND:** R. HKS Thackston. **VOTE:** Unanimous for those present. **Motion passes.**

Respectfully submitted,

Laura L. Aivaliotis

Recording Secretary