

**Monadnock Regional School District
Budget Committee Meeting Minutes
January 14, 2021
Zoom Virtual Meeting, Swanzey, NH**

Members Present: Wayne Lechliden, Jillian Exel, Dan Coffman, Adam Hopkins, Wayne LaCoste, Ed Sheldon, Meghan Foley and Phyllis Peterson. **Absent:** Joanne Daris, Douglas Bersaw, Richard HKS Thackston, Brian Bohannon, School Board Rep., Open Seat for Roxbury and Open Seat for Gilsum

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

1. Approval of the December 16, 2020 Budget Committee Meeting Minutes: MOTION: D. Coffman **MOVED** to approve the December 16, 2020 Meeting Minutes as presented. **SECOND:** W. Lechliden. **VOTE:** Unanimous for those present. **Motion passes.**

2. Approve/Adjust MRSD Default Budget:

a. Administration provided Default Budget: \$33,564,758.00: MOTION: W. Lechliden **MOVED** to approve the 2021-2022 proposed default budget as presented by the administration in the amount of \$33,564,758.00. **SECOND:** E. Sheldon. **DISCUSSION:** D. Coffman commented the Default Committee did not spend a lot of time on this number. We are taking what the administration delivered. He asked if there was anything not carried over. L. Witte and J. Morin directed the committee to column G on the screen. The textbook line is taken out. J. Morin explained in a default there are no one time expenditures. The CARES Act funds were additional resources which we did not have and are not in the budget. **VOTE:** Unanimous for those present. **Motion passes.**

3. Set MRSD Operating Budget:

a. 2021-22 School Board Proposal (approved 1/15/21): \$33,307,289.00: MOTION: E. Sheldon **MOVED** to accept the 2021-22 proposed budget in the amount of \$33,307,289.00 as presented by the School Board. **SECOND: Motion fails for lack of a second.**

MOTION: D. Coffman **MOVED** to amend the 2021-22 proposed budget in the amount of \$32,452,289.00 (which includes the \$970,000.00 for Food

and Nutrition Grants). **SECOND:** W. Lechliden. **DISCUSSION:** D. Coffman explained that he reduced the School Board's proposed budget by \$855,000.00. He took the average surplus for the past 4 years and cut it in half and that is how he came up with the \$855,000.00 reduction. L. Witte explained the proposed budget is .17% higher than the previous year's budget. She said there were uncontrollable increases in health insurance, GMR, NHRS, lane changes and transportation. The \$658,488.00 is absorbed in the budget that increase to the proposed is only .17%. E. Sheldon asked what effect would this proposed reduction have on the operations of the district. L. Witte commented we have gone beyond reducing supplies. We would have to reduce staff. It would possibly be 10-11 certified staff. People and programs will need to be reduced. M. Foley feels it is not unreasonable there is still a buffer. L. Witte said we saw significant savings due to COVID. W. LaCoste said we have had over a million-dollar surplus for years. E. Sheldon said we need to budget for the worst case scenario in some areas. L. Witte said we will see a smaller fund balance due to the new Business Manager and change in the software. We anticipate less of a surplus. One third of the surplus was due the fact we did not spend some of the funds due to COVID. The total warrant is 1/2 % less than last year. The warrant includes 3 contracts. She is proud the School Board is able to put his budget forward. D. Coffman would agree with L. Witte. It is a nice recovery and the proposal is responsible. There is no law to say we need to budget for the worst case scenario. It is reasonable to cut the surplus. He does not believe you will cut the teachers. W. Lechliden asked about the Special Education Expendable Trust which has a balance of \$333,922.00 and the Emergency Fuel Fund which has a balance of \$57,938.00. W. LaCoste complimented the team in regards to the new software. We have had a million-dollar surplus. To say you will reduce staff is misleading. E. Sheldon said he does not have a reason not to believe that the staff will be cut with this vote. He will vote against the motion. J. Morin explained if we have a deficit a special meeting will be called to appropriate funds to cover the deficit. W. Lechliden asked if we can transfer funds. J. Morin explained we can use the emergency funds but only if Special Ed. and fuel exceeds their balances. They are allowed to be used for a specific purpose. **VOTE:** 5.810/3.558/0/4.632. **Motion passes.**

MOTION: W. Lechliden **MOVED** to support Article One as presented by the Budget Committee. **SECOND:** D. Coffman. **VOTE:** 8.180/1.188/0/4.632. **Motion passes.**

4. Warrant Article Recommendations:

a. Discuss all fiscal year 2021-22 Warrant Articles with a monetary value, and make a BudHe would get Committee recommendation on said Warrant Articles: MOTION: W. Lechlinder **MOVED** to support Article Two \$840,000.00 in renovations to the Gilsum STEAM Academy and the MRMHS. **SECOND:** P. Peterson. **DISCUSSION:** W. Lechlinder said he is moving this motion in the positive but will not support this article or any other article except for Article Six. D. Coffman asked about the previous articles that have passed but the district has not broken ground. The portables and the industrial arts expansion. L. Witte said the projects are multiyear. We need blueprints and engineering designs. They will happen. J. Morin said this article is for the air handling units and ventilators. We have done some of that work at Gilsum. We are doing due diligence by tackling the projects for air quality. L. Witte said there is no COVID funding for this. They are not COVID related issues. W. LaCoste said there are inconsistencies based on emotions. D. Coffman asked when the projects will begin. It was explained the projects went out to bid and we received only one bid because the companies are so busy. The bid was too high. We have put the projects as a whole out to bid. We have not received anything yet. D. Coffman is concerned the Board is asking for funds and not getting the projects done. In the previous years it went well with the million dollar projects each year. J. Morin said they are outstanding funds with a sunset date. L. Witte said we can get the information being asked for. The administration had asked for questions prior to the meeting in order to be prepared. **VOTE:** 2.376/6.992/0/4.632. **Motion fails.**

MOTION: W. Lechlinder **MOVED** to support Article Two \$300,000.00 for engineering and fees. **SECOND:** E. Stanley. **DISCUSSION:** W. Lechlinder will not support this article. He believes we need to clean up our passed warrant articles. He would suggest the School Board push this out to another time. It was asked if last year there were three bids for the engineering and design. L. Witte said no because it was an estimate from the consultant. The consultant did go out to bid. It was commented that a bond is tough to get the voters to pass. It was commented this is sloppiness to get this passed without any brick and mortar. E. Sheldon said doing these renovations will save money over time. The projects need to be done and will cost us more in the long run. M. Foley said we need to deal with the now. We need to deal with the future projects. We need to get our

ducks in a row and tackle the proposals after. D. Coffman asked if the Budget Committee supported this at the Public Hearing last year. L. Witte said yes. We want to get in line to receive the funds from the State. Feels like we have time regarding getting the funds from the State. W. Lechliden said \$300,000.00 does not mean we are building buildings. There is a lot of work to get the people to vote on the bond. We have major expenditures in the Town of Swanzey. **VOTE:** 1.188/8.818/0/4.632. **Motion fails.**

MOTION: W. Lechliden **MOVED** to support Article Four the first year of a 3-year contract for the Specialists in the amount of \$33,269.00. **SECOND:** W. LaCoste **DISCUSSION:** W. Lechliden said from this point he will be voting no on the remaining articles but if things change at the Deliberative he may change. **VOTE:** 4.746/4.622/0/4.632. **Motion passes.**

MOTION: W. Lechliden **MOVED** to support Article Five the MDEA 1 Year Contract in the amount of \$315,447.00. **SECOND:** M. Foley. **DISCUSSION:** It was commented that it is all about the money. It was also commented that the teachers are appreciated. E. Sheldon asked what if the contract fails. L. Witte explained. The increases are not uniform across the board because there are teachers on different steps due to years of experience. W. LaCoste would ask for the Board to strive for a performance factor and to have the contracts longer term. P. Peterson asked the percentage of increase across the board. L. Witte explained it is 2.3% and we have staggering agreements so we do not have to negotiate 3 contracts in one year. E. Sheldon said \$270,677.00 looks big but 2.3% is an expectation in most companies. W. Lechliden said 2.3% is okay with high performers. He does not see that with our test scores. E. Sheldon said to compare this job in the private sector. The teachers are going through a lot this year. He said 2.3% is average, 4% is excellent. **VOTE:** 3.558/5.810/0/4.632. **Motion fails.**

MOTION: W. Lechliden **MOVED** to support Article Six, the first year of the 2 year MESSA Contract in the amount of \$91,431.00. **SECOND:** W. LaCoste **DISCUSSION:** W. Lechliden will not support this article based on Article 4. He is watching the dollars. E. Sheldon agrees with dollars but we need to think of the value. We focus too much on the dollar amount and not thinking of what they purchase. P. Peterson asked the percentage of increase in the contract. L. Witte explained it is 2.59% in the first year and 2.56% in the second year. **VOTE:** 3.454/5.934/0/4.632. **Motion fails.**

MOTION: W. Lechluder **MOVED** to support Article Seven, the Special Education Expendable Trust Fund in the amount of \$1.00. **SECOND:** M. Foley. **DISCUSSION:** L. Witte explained this is a placeholder. This amount can be adjusted at the Deliberative Session if there is an unforeseen placement which can cost \$250,000.00-\$350,000.00. **VOTE:** Unanimous for those present. **Motion passes.**

5. Budget Committee Schedule:

a. Deliberative Session Saturday, January 30, 2021 at 10:00 am (MRMHS, Emerson School, Gilsum STEAM Academy, Troy School, ZOOM): The Budget Committee Pre-Deliberative Session will be on January 28, 2021. L. Witte explained voters need to be physically present at the Deliberative Session in order to vote. The Budget committee will have their post-Deliberative Session 20 minutes after the Deliberative Session closes.

b. Budget Committee Meeting Monday 2/1/2021 at 7:00 PM to act on any changes from the Deliberative Session (if necessary):

6. Superintendent's Comments: L. Witte had no further comments.

7. Chairperson Comments: A. Hopkins had no further comments.

8. Public Comments: K. Noonan is very disappointed in the votes tonight. She said the operating budget was well done. What does the Budget Committee feel should be cut? Not to support the staff and to see how essential they have been through this is awful. Reconsider the budget and contracts.

E. Sheldon would agree with K. Noonan. These votes are not in support of the kids and the school but their wallets. He is very disappointed in the outcome tonight.

B. Tatro is disappointed regarding the budget. She was on the Negotiation Committee and we did not give much. She is very disappointed.

D. Coffman commented if anyone wants his personal opinion to call him. He does not make decisions on his wallet. He is not ashamed, there is opportunity for improvement. We had discussed the contract issues and they were blown in the wind.

W. LaCoste said he approved the cut to the budget because it is a cut to the surplus. He said the committee discussed performance in the contracts. He has 2 children in the district and they will not have school work until Tuesday. This is a very bad learning year.

S. Peters commented the members of the Board made a point to attend your meetings to share details. You thanked us and supported us but not tonight. He is not sure why. We gave you a very clear road map of the renovations. If this plan is not good enough what is it, you need to see to support the article and the contracts? We asked the Budget Committee for questions regarding the contracts and we received nothing. We had made every effort to respond to the Budget Committee.

9. Motion to adjourn: MOTION: W. Lechliden **MOVED** to adjourn the meeting at 9:39 PM. **SECOND:** P. Peterson. **VOTE:** Unanimous for those present. **Motion passes.**

Respectfully submitted,

Laura L. Aivaliotis
Recording Secretary