

Monadnock Regional School District (MRSD)

Budget Committee Meeting Minutes

April 28, 2020

Zoom Virtual Meeting, Swanzey, NH

Members Present: Edward Sheldon, Wayne Lechluder, Dan Coffman, Jillian Exel, Meghan Foley, Wayne LaCoste, Phyllis Peterson, Adam Hopkins, Brian Bohannon- School Board Rep **Absent:** Douglas Bersaw, Richard HKS Thackston, JoAnn Daris

Administration Present: N/A at School Board Facilities & Finance Meeting tonight

Also Present: Brian Bohannon and Lisa Steadman from School Board

Call to Order: A. Hopkins Vice-Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and introduced all board members present. Richard HKS Thackston attempted to login multiple times but was unable to join the meeting. Lisa and Brian from the School Board to confirm with their board who is the representative to the Budget Committee.

1. Elect Chair and Vice-Chair:

MOTION: D. Coffman nominates Adam Hopkins to be Budget Committee Chair **SECOND:** W. Lechluder. No further nominations. **VOTE:** D. Coffman- yes, W. Lechluder- yes, W. LaCoste- yes, M. Foley- yes, J. Exel- yes, P. Petterson- yes, E. Sheldon- yes, L. Steadman (SB Rep)- yes, A. Hopkins- abstain. **MOTION PASSES.**

MOTION: W. Lechluder nominates D. Coffman to be Budget Committee Vice Chair, D. Coffman declines. **MOTION:** D. Coffman nominates Jillian Exel to be Budget Committee Vice Chair. **SECOND:** W. Lechluder. No further nominations. **VOTE:** D. Coffman- yes, W. Lechluder- yes, W. LaCoste- yes, M. Foley-yes, P. Peterson- yes, E. Sheldon- yes, L. Steadman- yes, J. Exel- yes, A. Hopkins- yes. **MOTION PASSES.**

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes

MOTION: W. Lechluder motion to approve 1/16/2020 BC Public Hearing Minutes. **SECOND:** D. Coffman. No discussion. **VOTE:** W. Lechluder- yes, D. Coffman- yes, W. LaCoste- abstain, M. Foley- yes, J. Exel- yes, P. Peterson- abstain, E. Sheldon- abstain, L. Steadman- abstain, A. Hopkins- yes. **MOTION PASSES.**

MOTION: W. Lechluder motion to approve 1/16/2020 BC Meeting Minutes. **SECOND:** J. Exel. No discussion. **VOTE:** W. Lechluder- yes, D. Coffman- yes, W. LaCoste- abstain, M. Foley- yes, J. Exel- yes, P. Peterson- abstain, E. Sheldon- abstain, L. Steadman- abstain, A. Hopkins- yes. **MOTION PASSES.**

MOTION: W. Lechluder motion to approve 2/1/2020 Pre and Post Deliberative Session Minutes. **SECOND:** D. Coffman. **DISCUSSION:** D. Coffman would have liked to have seen notes on the dialogue that occurred in our Post Deliberative Session reflected in the minutes. L. Steadman pointed out that Laura the Recording Secretary was not present during this part of the meeting so she was given the voting information to include in the minutes. **VOTE:** W. Lechluder- yes, D. Coffman- yes, W. LaCoste- abstain, M. Foley- yes, J. Exel- yes, P. Peterson- abstain, E. Sheldon- abstain, L. Steadman- yes, A. Hopkins- yes. **MOTION PASSES.**

3. Overview of Budget Process

- a. **Set Operating Budget and Default Budget:** Committee uses information provided from the Administration to make a recommendation to the voters at Deliberative Session in terms of spending. That recommendation can be adjusted at Deliberative Session by voters by up to 10%. Once it is set at Deliberative Session it goes to the ballot. M. Foley asked if we will stay with the entire Budget Committee forming the Default Budget as we did last year or will we do a sub-committee? W. Lechluder liked the process we used last year working the Default as a whole committee, W. LaCoste and M. Foley agreed with that.
- b. **Budget Oversight:** Committee is provided with monthly reports by J. Morin the Business Administrator and information provided by Superintendent L. Witte that shows where the district is in terms of budget position and spending in each of the buildings.
- c. **Warrant Article Support/Not Support:** Committee votes whether to support or not support on any Warrant Article that has a financial impact. A. Hopkins echoed a point of W. LaCoste's earlier that it tracks that if the Budget Committee does not support a Warrant Article generally the voters will follow that recommendation. The public trusts us and we need to take that responsibility seriously.

4. Administration Report

COVID-19 Fiscal Impact

J. Morin e-mail response to agenda items: In regards to the COVID-19 Fiscal Impact, we do not believe that we will be incurring any costs beyond what we had already anticipated with our budget. We are very fortunate as a district that we had already implemented 1 to 1 devices for grades 6-12, which is where I think a lot of other districts are seeing the huge impact. Our biggest potential impact will be with the nutrition program as I indicated below, but we are watching that closely. Regardless, it will not have a large impact on our overall budget.

- a. Staffing - Budgeted for. No impact.
- b. Lunches - We have been consistently serving between 550 -600 breakfasts/lunches since we opened up the extra locations. The federal reimbursement is covering a majority of those expenses. There is a concern that there may still be a shortfall in that fund, which the General Fund would have to cover, but Tom Walsh and I are closely monitoring that.
- c. Facilities - We are using our facilities equipment budget to purchase a Clorox 360 machine, which is great at disinfecting and we are excited about.
- d. Transportation - Budgeted for. No impact.

A. Hopkins asked if transportation costs should be lower now with busses not running, D. Coffman and P. Peterson would also like to see more detailed information on this item. L. Steadman responded that we have a bus contract and it is still being paid per contract. D. Coffman asked if we pay for busses on snow days and other no school days, L. Steadman said yes that is the contract. W. Lechlinder asked outside the bus contract about the district vans and their drivers. L. Steadman replied there are savings there with the busses not going out in terms of fuel savings and hours reduced for the PT staff but reminded the committee that we are seeing increased special education costs having to do with delivering the educational services at this time.

J. Morin's further email response:

- a. MRSD Monthly Expense Report Attached!
- b. What major transfers occurred since the last meeting? None
- c. What major expenses are anticipated for next month? We are working on the purchase of the 2nd District van that was budgeted for this fiscal year.

Superintendent L. Witte email response to End of Year information: At the last Board meeting, the following actions were taken regarding the end of the year.

- The last day of school for students is May 29th.
- The last day for school-year employees in MDEA, Specialists, and MESSA will be June 9th. The difference between contracted days and days worked will be paid.
- For year-round employees, there will be a shut-down of the District the week of June 15th - June 19th. Employees in this category will be paid for the shutdown period without using accrued leave time.

At this point in time, we are still working on what our usual year-end milestone celebrations will look like and/or when they will happen. Summer programs, we are hoping to have but there is a strong possibility they will be remote in nature. Still awaiting more guidance from the state on that. For the fall, I'm an optimist - hoping to start school, in school, as scheduled.

D. Coffman asked L. Steadman and B. Bohannon to bring back to the School Board that with Zoom School Board meetings there needs to be a longer period for Public Comment as he was trying to be recognized at the last School Board meeting to speak to the End of Year agenda item but due to technical issues wasn't able to get his hand raised in time. L. Steadman will commit to being a second set of eyes for the School Board Chair on Zoom meetings to see members of the public wishing to be heard.

Monthly Expense Report

E. Sheldon asked where we should be for each of the cost centers at this point in the year percentage wise. Is there a way to add a note or column that shows what percent should be left at a certain point of the year? A. Hopkins replied that a lot of it has to do with when items are encumbered during the year, if the salaries are encumbered in October vs another month it will skew what percent remaining we would have left at any point in time. W. Lechliden responded that usually the Administration is at our meetings and we can ask them for that context and they can pull out encumbrances and provide the data. M. Foley would like to have follow up on Cutler and Emerson spending, will they be overspent for the year?

5. Review Previous Budget Cycle

A Hopkins pointed out that when the Budget Committee and School Board disagree the voters follow the recommendation of the Budget Committee, hopefully the School Board and Administration recognize this when they are making their budget and warrant article plans. L. Steadman reminds the committee that there are three contracts this year and that she knows they need to get the contracts to the budget committee early and keep us engaged in the process. W. Lechliden- we supported the various warrant articles when the operating budget was at our proposed amount but had to adjust our support based on the deliberative session increasing the operating budget, we view the entire warrant when making our recommendations. W. LaCoste would like to see longer terms in the contract with staff, are 4 or 5 year contracts an option. D. Coffman appreciates what he heard from the School Board at the last meeting when they were talking about getting the contracts to the Budget Committee sooner to review. Will the elementary school engineering study be back on the warrant this year? L. Steadman said it may but we have missed the state budgeting biennium for funding.

6. Budget Committee Schedule

S. Peters and A. Hopkins had a discussion about meeting nights for the Budget Committee and any School Board sub-committees and trying to avoid double booking the Administration on the same night. W. Lechliden said the 4th Tuesday is historically Budget Committee night and that it is rare that there was a conflict. L. Steadman said the School Board is aware and that this was an anomaly that Finance & Facilities was scheduled tonight. D. Coffman would like to stay on the 4th Tuesday and suggested that the Administration team send 1 member to each meeting on the nights there is a conflict, he appreciated that effort from them last year.

7. Chair Comments/Other

J. Morin emailed that the Health Insurance GMR came in at 2.7% versus the budgeted 4.4% budgeted but that there would be significant increases in the transportation contract that will eat up the GMR savings. D. Coffman would like to see a dollarized accounting of savings for the GMR vs the increase in the transportation contract.

B. Bohannon asked for the opinions of the Budget Committee in regards to the engineering study and what could be done differently to gain the support of the committee. W. Lechliden believes it was because of the change in the Operating Budget that cost the support of the Budget Committee for the engineering study spending. W. Lechliden believes the GMR savings item should be this fiscal year

but the transportation contract increase should be for next fiscal year. L. Steadman will check on it but believes GMR is an annual contract not fiscal. M. Szymcik adds that GMR is for next year.

J. Exel commented on engineering study, she found it perplexing that we paid an expert for advice on what route to take but then went in another direction, she understands the school board then opened up the options to allow for the architect supported option. She is unsure of the neutral site discussion for the southern school and how it will go forward, will half of the building be in Troy and the other half be in Fitzwilliam? She hopes for more work to be done and the town select boards to be brought in on the process. D. Coffman wants to push hard on the engineering and school building plans next year and suggests the school board members prioritize what is most important, don't get locked in on the operating budget and lose sight of how changing it at deliberative session will impact other warrant articles. B. Bohannon wants to focus on the long term 10, 15 year planning for the district which this \$250,000 was for and is disappointed we got bogged down on an argument about a 1 time, less than 1% spending item which would have moved the district's long term plan forward. E. Sheldon believes we need better communication between the school board and budget committee. A. Hopkins shared NH Employment Security data about COVID related unemployment for our district town. It is information we should be aware of when making our decisions. We were all around 3% before COVID but now all are near or above 10%.

MOTION: D. Coffman moved to adjourn. **SECOND:** W. LaCoste. **VOTE:** Unanimous for those present.

Next meeting will be Tuesday May 26th 7pm on Zoom unless otherwise allowed.

Action Items:

- New Transportation contract info- what does "significant increases" look like?
- Add a "Where we should be" metric for Monthly Expense Report.
- Cutler and Emerson are close to budget will they go over?
- Dollar figures GMR savings and Transportation Increases- which budget year does each fall into?