

Monadnock Regional School District (MRSD)
Budget Committee Meeting Minutes
Public Hearing
January 12, 2017
Monadnock Regional MS/HS, Swanzey, NH

Members Present: Wayne Lechliden, Cheryl McDaniel-Thomas, School Board Representative, Dan Coffman, Wendy Martel, Neil Moriarty, Adam Hopkins, Tom Parker, Wayne LaCoste, Brian Bohannon, Tom Matson and Kristen Goodenough.

Absent: Bonnie Black, Unassigned rep. from Gilsum and Roxbury.

Administration Present: L. Witte, Superintendent and J. Fortson, Business Administrator.

W. Lechliden called the Public Hearing to order at 7:00 PM. W. Lechliden explained he will read each article and allow the public to comment and ask questions. The public must state their name and the town they are from.

W. Lechliden read Article One, the Operating Budget.

D. LaPointe of Troy asked why are we not making the cuts to the budget and why not consolidate. Who says it will ruin the education of the students. He said the student to teacher ratio is at 11 students to 1 teacher, could we live with 13 students per teacher and save 1.6 million dollars in the budget. We could save 2.3 million dollars if it was 14 students per teacher. If we pass the proposed budget we will never have another major renovation. It is a political move to pass the contract. Soon we will not be able to afford public education. *W. Martel arrives.*

A. Bailey of Troy said he has no doubt everything in the budget and the articles are necessary but we cannot afford it. His taxes are up \$1000.00 and it could be an increase of \$2000.00 next year. He can afford it but is concerned about the people who cannot afford it. The Board and the Budget Committee discussed free breakfast for all the students. You knew the kids are hungry how do you think the people will be able to pay their taxes when they may not be able to feed their children. He said the budget needs to be slashed.

P. Bauries of Swanzey. The School Board directed the administration to bring a number of scenarios for ways of reducing the proposed budget. The Finance Committee had spent numerous hours on the proposed budget. She said if this budget is approved she will have a 14% increase in her taxes. There is a lot in the proposed budget that should not be there. The Finance Committee proposed a budget cut of 1.5 million. The proposal did not close a school. We need to manage the budget. If a town pulls out of the District due to the budget you will see the District crash. The taxpayers cannot afford the budget.

E. Breen of Troy commented on the increase in her taxes. She explained what she pays for Medicare and what she receives in Social Security. The amount of money received and paid out are a wash. She wants

to know what is going to happen to people that cannot afford their taxes. What can be done to lower the budget?

B. Skully asked an explanation of the budget number. W. Lechluder explained the number is the School Board's number. The Budget committee's job is to change if we so desire. She asked what is in the budget. W. Lechluder explained the budget was discussed over many meetings. The Budget Committee will set the bottom line.

J. Carnie of Richmond said as the Finance Committee Chair he has spent a tremendous amount of hours on the proposed budget. The committee had 8-9 scenarios and at the end we felt very strongly that the number being presented by the Board is irresponsible. The budget recommended by the Finance Committee was a 1.5 million dollar reduction in the proposed by the administration. Enrollment is down. He would hope this committee will do what the Board did not. We have a recommendation from the Finance Committee and we have an obligation to the taxpayers.

W. Lechluder read Article Two, \$1,400,000.00 for renovations to Mt. Caesar.

J. Fortson of Swanzy commented we have spent 6 years doing work at the MSHS which took us off probation. We have done the general contract work ourselves. MTC is well overdue. MTC was mentioned in the CIP from 2001-2011 and again in 2005-2010. MTC needs the work to be done. She mentioned the saving in electricity and fuel at the MSHS after the renovations were done. We went after every grant we could. We saved \$146,000.00 in the Facilities Budget. If you cut the building program you will have to spend more next year. She would expect the representative she voted for to represent her at the Board Meeting. She would encourage someone to reconsider the MTC renovations.

W. Lechluder read Article Three, \$193,000.00 for asbestos abatement at MSHS and MTC and to replace the boiler for Emerson

J. Fortson, the Business Administrator for the District explained there is only a 6 week window of time to complete the work over the summer. This is to continue the asbestos removal. We have covered the asbestos years ago and now it is time to remove it. A large portion of the article is for a replacement boiler at Emerson. The District has been doing patch work on the boiler at Emerson since 2008. Many of the schools are burning propane now.

W. Lechluder read Article Four, \$75,000 for the Before and After School Program. There were no questions or comments.

W. Lechluder read Article Five, \$50,000.00 to be placed in the Special Education Expendable Trust Fund from surplus.

J. Fortson explained the funds will be placed in this account only if there is a surplus. The balance in the Special Education Expendable Trust is about \$350,000.00. She said that is less than two out of district placements.

W. Lechluder read Article Six, the Bargaining Agreement between the District and the MDEA.

P. Bauries of Swanzey reviewed the salary in the contract for the three years of the contract. She then reviewed the increases in the contract. In the first year there is a \$420,462.00 increase and in the second year of the contract there is additional new money plus the \$420,462.00. If this contract is approved the total over the 3 years will be \$2,152,809.00. She cannot say she will vote for this contract. This contract and the MDEA leadership are holding the District hostage for \$394,000.00. There was a hearing and the arbitrator will not give a decision until after the vote. She cannot support this contract.

David Smith said the District needs to make the District attractive. We do not want any of the teachers to leave.

J. Carnie of Richmond and a School Board Members said this contract is worse than last year's contract. It is a double dip. This is twice as bad as last year. The \$394,000.00 is in arbitration. If the District was to lose the teachers would receive the funds. They assume the funds belong to the teachers. It was not carried forward in a non-lapsing fund. The MDEA put it before the PELRB and it was not done in a timely fashion. The \$394,000.00 is a sizable amount of money. There is not a lot of opposition from the School Board due to the Negotiating Team or conflict. The contract better not go through the long term implications are huge. The Budget Committee needs to say we do not need this.

W. Lechliden read Article Seven, Shall the Monadnock Regional School District receive and approve the reports of the agents, auditors, committees and officers chosen as printed and distributed in the Annual Report?

There were no questions or comments on Article Seven.

W. Lechliden read Article Eight, To listen to opinions of a purely advisory nature with regards to the conduct of school affairs for the ensuing year.

There were no questions or comments on Article Eight.

W. Lechliden read Article Nine (inserted by petition), to delete School Board Policy BCA item #10.

There were no questions or comments on Article Nine.

MOTION: N. Moriarty **MOVED** to close the Public Hearing at 7:56 PM. **SECOND:** T. Parker.

VOTE: 11.779/0/0/2.221. **Motion passes.**

Respectfully submitted,

Laura L. Aivaliotis
MRSD Recording Secretary