LYME-OLD LYME SCHOOLS

Regional School District #18

A Private School Experience *in a Public School Setting*

Special Board of Education Meeting
February 5, 2025

Board Present: Jason Kemp, Chair; Anna James, Vice Chair; Christopher Staab, Treasurer; Martha Shoemaker, Secretary; Scott Brown; Laura Dean-Frazier; Susan Fogliano; Gavin Lodge; Alexander Lowry

Administration Present: Ian Neviaser, Superintendent of Schools; Mark Ambruso, Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme Middle School; Michelle Dean, Director of Curriculum; Melissa Dougherty, Director of Special Services; Kelly Enoch, Principal of Mile Creek School; Allison Hine, Principal of Lyme Consolidated School; Sean Kennedy, Assistant Principal of Mile Creek School; Holly McCalla, Business Manager; Jeanne Manfredi, Assistant Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme High School; Ron Turner, Director of Facilities & Technology; Noah Ventola, Assistant Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme Middle School; James Wygonik, Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme High School

Others Present: 20 community members from Lyme-Old Lyme

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jason Kemp at 6:30 p.m. The purpose of the meeting was to hold a public forum on the proposed 2025-2026 budget. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Mr. Neviaser gave a PowerPoint presentation on the 2025-2026 budget, which reflected a proposed budget figure of $39,650,803 a 7.39% increase from the current year's budget.

Reporting highlights included: goals to be served by the budget; overall budget summary breakdown; budget drivers (increases/decreases); historical perspective of budget increases/decreases; budget increases of local school districts; historical impact of school renovations (increased debt service); a reflection of the key areas of the budget; and proposed facilities projects.

Mr. Neviaser spoke to the proposed decrease in music staffing. The current middle school teacher will move to Mile Creek School, and the current high school teacher will split her time between the middle

and high school. Mr. Neviaser explained that this was due to a decrease in enrollment at the high school, and staffing is based on student enrollment and interest. He stressed that there was no loss of programming due to these changes.

Mr. Neviaser explained how they further reduced the budget increase proposed last week of 7.49% to 7.39%. This was due to the upcoming retirement of the high school assistant principal, and the administration reducing this position next year from 1.0 FTE to .8 FTE (again, because of reduction in student enrollment at the high school level).

The meeting was opened up for questions and comments from the Board of Ed and the public.

Michael Hansen, a resident of Old Lyme, spoke to federal funding and an executive order titled *Ending Radical Indoctrination in K Through 12 Schooling*, which was signed by the president on January 29. Mr. Hansen stated that this order aims to tie federal funding for schools to removal of certain topics from curriculum and mandates the teaching of "patriotism" and, in essence, American mythology over history. Mr. Hansen questioned whether the Board of Ed was willing to, and in the financial position to, stand against this plan and continue to provide a well-rounded curriculum that allows for critical thinking and individualism.

Erin Wyman, a resident of Old Lyme, voiced opposition to the reduction in music instruction because of the impact to students. She cited various reasons including increased course load for the high school/middle school teacher; vocal teacher teaching instrumental music at the elementary level; and increased workload for coordinating festivals and state competitions.

Cyril Gregoire, a resident of Old Lyme, echoed Mrs. Wyman's statement citing the importance of instrumental music instruction beginning at the elementary level. He recommended that the money saved from the reduction in the assistant principal's position be relocated back to the music program. Mr. Gregoire also spoke to the top performers outpacing the other students at an unsustainable rate, and he stressed the importance of educating all the children, not just the top performers.

Mary Powell St. Louis, a Lyme resident, spoke to the many benefits of music instruction, i.e., regulating motions, improving critical thinking, increasing neural connections within the brain, etc.). She voiced concern and staffing statistics in support of not reducing the staff in the music department. She suggested that the Board defer some of the facilities projects ($150,000 high school auditorium sound system or $150,000 middle school auditorium lighting) and keep the music program intact as it was her belief that staff are more important than facilities upgrades.

Carmen Oulahan, an Old Lyme resident and President of the Friends of Music, echoed the previous statements on the support of the music program and avoidance of reductions in staffing. She spoke to her own experience as a teacher in another district who worked in two buildings and the detrimental effect it has on the teacher and students.

Maria Belval, a resident of Old Lyme, read a letter on behalf of her daughter Lauren expressing her support for the music program at the high school and keeping the status quo of the teacher remaining there as a full-time teacher rather than splitting her time at both the high and middle school.

Sheryl Shyloski, a resident of Old Lyme, applauded the efforts of the Board on the development of the 2025-2026 budget. She voiced hope that the community supported the budget so that additional cuts wouldn't have to be made. She also encouraged the Board to work more on transportation issues (shorter bus rides for the students) and keeping class sizes low.

There being no further comments or questions, the special meeting adjourned at 6:59 p.m. upon motion by Mrs. Shoemaker and a second by Mr. Lodge.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Shoemaker, Secretary

2025-2026 Budget Proposal

Goals to be Served by the Budget

To support the objectives outlined in the Strategic Plan by:

- Preserving and building upon the high standards of education in LOL while remaining fiscally responsible to our communities.
- Supporting the ongoing renewal of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and staff development activities in response to the expectations of state and national standards.
- Continuing to plan and provide technology infrastructure and applications that are consistent with highly effective and efficient programming and operational standards.
- Maintaining high facility standards for all district buildings and grounds.
- Maintaining a dynamic and responsive approach to programming needs and mandates in special education.
- Maintaining both compliance and reasonability in response to state and federal mandates.

What is a budget?

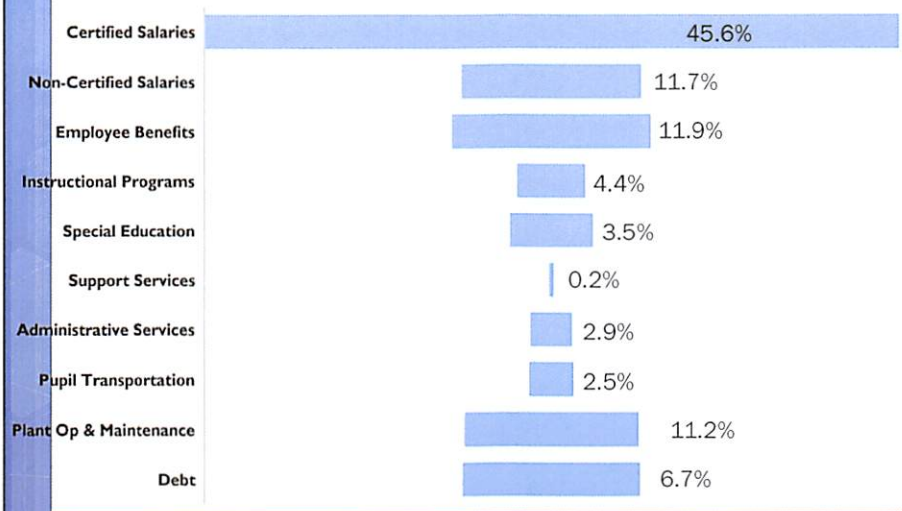
- **Sec. 10-222. Appropriations and budget.** Each local board of education shall prepare an itemized estimate of the cost of maintenance of public schools for the ensuing year and shall submit such estimate to the board of finance in each town or city having a board of finance, to the board of selectmen in each town having no board of finance or otherwise to the authority making appropriations for the school district, not later than two months preceding the annual meeting at which appropriations are to be made.
- **A BUDGET IS NOT ONLY A PLAN, IT IS A STATEMENT OF VALUES AND PRIORITIES**

Overall Budget Summary

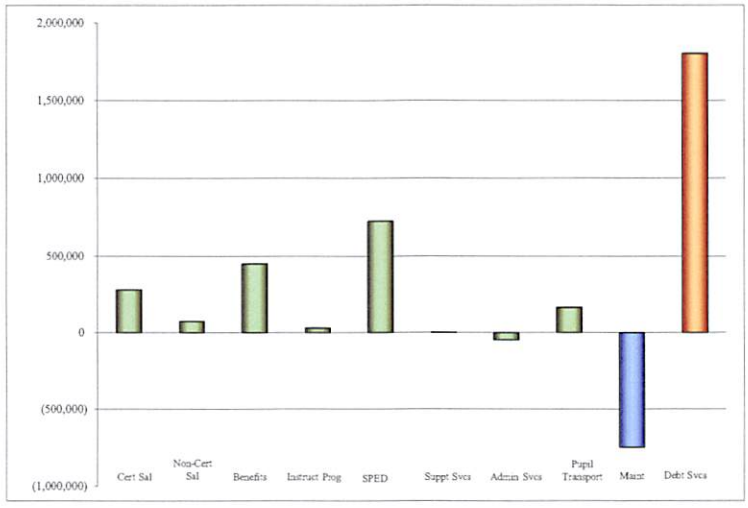
	23-24 Actuals	24-25 Budget	25-26 Budget	$ Increase or (Decrease)	% Inc or (Dec) by Line Item
Certified Salaries	16,227,328	16,349,160	16,627,814	278,654	1.70%
Non-certified Salaries	3,869,083	4,188,967	4,263,615	74,648	1.78%
Employee Benefits	3,972,368	4,274,244	4,722,729	448,485	10.49%
Instructional Programs	1,507,946	1,586,694	1,616,322	29,628	1.87%
Special Education	806,398	1,238,752	1,965,473	726,721	58.67%
Support Services	66,929	78,298	78,360	62	0.08%
Administrative Services	1,018,558	1,026,921	979,148	(47,773)	(4.65)%
Pupil Transportation	661,768	883,269	1,047,503	164,234	18.59%
Plant Op & Maintenance	4,110,690	4,883,574	4,136,551	(747,023)	(15.30)%
OPERATING BUDGET	32,241,068	34,509,879	35,437,515	927,636	2.69%
Debt Service	3,229,313	2,411,002	4,213,288	1,802,286	74.75%
TOTAL BUDGET	$35,470,381	$36,920,881	$39,650,803	$2,729,922	7.39%

2025-2026 Proposed Budget

$39,650,803 7.39% increase



2025-2026 Budget Drivers (Increase/Decrease)



Historical Perspective

2020-2021	$34,711,631	
2021-2022	$34,874,548	+0.47
2022-2023	$34,830,464	-0.13
2023-2024	$35,844,345	2.91
2024-2025	$36,920,881	3.00
2025-2026	$39,650,803	7.39

2020-2021	$34,711,631
2025-2026	$39,650,803
	+$4,939,172

- That is an average annual increase over five years of $987,834 or **2.73%** per year.
- During that same time period the average annual operating budget increase has only been **1.84%** per year.

Comparisons

- Clinton 6.85%
- Old Saybrook 3.78%
- Guilford 6.53%
- Madison 2.47%
- Waterford 6.25%
- Westbrook 4.61%
- East Lyme 6.99%

Historical Impact of School Renovations (increased debt service)

Year	Total Budget Increase
2000-2001	10.91%
2002-2003	9.49%
2003-2004	8.20%
2011-2012	4.92%
2025-2026	10.53% (predicted)

The operations/program budget reflects:

- Continued adherence to class size guidelines
- Addition/ reduction of staff to account for enrollment shifts
- Continuance of existing academic and extracurricular activities
- Adjustments for anticipated changes in the special education population
- Adequate funding for maintenance and repair of buildings and grounds
- Scheduled replacement of technology and equipment
- Program improvements that are consistent with high academic and operational standards

Facilities Proposed Projects

Capital Projects	2025 – 2026
High School Auditorium Sound System	$150,000
Middle School Auditorium Lighting	$150,000
Replace Pre-K Playground Piece	$46,000
Pave Middle School Front Sidewalk	$13,200
Project Totals	$359,200



What's next?

- Opportunity for public comment
- Board discussion and action on the proposed budget