

**Finance Committee Meeting Notes
Crescent Lake School
November 20, 2025 6:00pm**

PRESENT

GWRSB Finance Committee: Dr. James Manning – Team Leader, Kirsten Burke, Brodie Deshaies, Kayla Hewitt

Administration: Superintendent Caroline Arakelian, Business Administrator Kathy O’Blenes, Paul Michalski, Dr. Kaitlyn Hills, Dr. Kelly Mask, Kathy O’Blenes

Other: Mary Schillereff, Donna Lehmann

SUBJECT MATTER

Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2027 – General Fund

BUDGET OVERVIEW / DISCUSSION

- Director of Technology, Paul Michalski, described the evolution of technology in the District over a period of years from having no network or Wi-Fi to the current redundant dark and lit fiber network with a main distribution frame on the Kingswood campus and the failover located in Ossipee. The District’s Wi-Fi service is moving to a more secure certificate-based service over the coming summer. The technology team of eight is made up of 3 Technicians, 1 Equipment Manager, 1 Systems Administrator, 1 Network Administrator, 1 Assistant IT Director, and the IT Director. Mr. Michalski described the software needs, security monitoring, system analysis, and system protection requests to provide increased security measures for the District. He described the different software, licensing, training, and monitoring items that are part of the current budget. Mr. Michalski explained how he seeks ERATE reimbursement for as much work as possible. Mr. Michalski answered questions from the committee.

- Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Kaitlyn Hills, presented the proposed budget for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment with an overall budget increase of 11% to include 3 proposals. She requested \$8,400 to purchase a new K-6 science resource as the current Mystery Science program license expires this year. She also requested \$18,000 to implement part one (of two) of a K-6 writing program. The remaining balance of this purchase will be requested for the following budget year. Finally, she requested \$16,000 to outsource all printing of decodable materials. These requests are offset by decreases in spending on other instructional materials or reducing licenses, resulting in a net budget increase of \$18,660.40.

Dr. Hills also reported on the increasing number of homeless students in the District and described the role and responsibilities of the District’s legally required homeless liaison as currently supported by the McKinney Vento grant. She supports moving this essential position into the operating budget to ensure stability, compliance, and continuity of support in the face of annual cuts to the grant funds. Dr. Hills answered questions from the committee.

- Director of Special Education & Counseling Services, Dr. Kelly Mask, presented the proposed budget for Special Education with an increase of 16.16% due largely to professional or contracted services, tuition expenditures, and transportation costs. Dr. Mask reported that the District services 347 eligible school-aged students, approximately 16% of the GWRSD student enrollment, in addition to 60 preschool-aged students who receive special education services due to a disability. Dr. Mask explained that unpredictable needs can arise at any time, making the Special Education Trust Fund an essential tool to maintain fiscal stability in the face of unbudgeted expenses related to Special Education. She outlined the budget drivers and requested a 100% full-time DPT for the preschool program, to increase the DPT shared between EES and TCS to 100%, and to increase the Special Education Administrative Assistant at KRMS by 3.5 hours per week plus an additional ten days of work. Dr. Mask expressed support for the Lakeside Academy restructuring proposition. Dr. Mask answered questions from the committee.
- Business Administrator, Kathy O’Blenes, presented the proposed budgets for the School Board and SAU/Business Office. The SAU/Business Office budget drivers are snow removal, internet, and software. Ms. O’Blenes described the new absence management software system that is planned for rollout. Ms. O’Blenes answered questions from the committee.
- The committee reviewed the proposed general fund budget and discussed recommended edits.

Motion: To increase the School Board’s legal services line from \$20,000 to \$40,000.

Moved: Mr. Deshaies – **Second:** Dr. Manning

Vote: All in favor

Motion: To have the McKinney Vento liaison continue to be grant-funded.

Moved: Mr. Deshaies – **Second:** Ms. Hewitt

Vote: All in favor

Motion: To reduce 3 vacant paraprofessional positions at OCS.

Moved: Mr. Deshaies – **Second:** Ms. Burke

Vote: All in favor

Motion: To approve new staff requests as edited.

Moved: Mr. Deshaies – **Second:** Ms. Hewitt

Vote: All in favor

Motion: To recommend the proposed FY2027 budget, as edited, to the full Board.

Moved: Mr. Deshaies – **Second:** Ms. Burke

Vote: All in favor

Motion: To present a Warrant Article to place \$250,000 into the Special Education Trust Fund from the unreserved fund balance.

Moved: Mr. Deshaies – **Second:** Ms. Hewitt

Vote: All in favor

Motion: To establish a Health Insurance Trust, with the School Board as agents to expend, using \$50,000 of unassigned funds.

Moved: Mr. Deshaies – **Second:** Ms. Hewitt

Vote: All in favor

Motion: To present a Warrant Article to use \$250,000 for free meals.

Moved: Mr. Deshaies – **Second:** Ms. Burke

Vote: All in favor

Motion: To present a Warrant Article to fund a Student Wellness Coordinator position for \$135,300.

Moved: Mr. Deshaies – **Second:** Ms. Hewitt

Vote: All in favor

Motion: To present the unassigned fund Warrant Articles in the following order: (1) Special Education, (2) Buildings & Maintenance, (3) Health Insurance.

Moved: Mr. Deshaies – **Second:** Ms. Burke

Vote: All in favor

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:55pm.

Recorded by,



Kathy Lagace
School Board Secretary

Approved by School Board: **12/8/2025**