

LAMOILLE NORTH MODIFIED UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES
GMTCC COMMUNITY EDUCATION CENTER
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2025

Present: Mark Nielsen, Bart Bezio, Sue Hamlyn-Prescott, Stephanie Sweet (remote), Jan Sander (remote), Catherine Gallagher, Deb Clark, Michele Aumand, Jennifer Hulse, Cole Hayes, Blake Nemeth, Rene Thibault, Dylan Laflam, David Manning, Dan Noyes, Rich Westman, Thad Tallman, Rob Rodriguez, Sue Lovering, Lois Frey, Kim Moulton, Susan Tinker, Linda Davis and other community members, board members and town clerks.

Mark Nielsen called the meeting to order at 7:00.

Article I:

To determine whether Roberts Rules (Revised) or other rules of order shall govern the parliamentary procedures of the meeting

Mark Nielsen asked for unanimous consent to use Roberts Rules (Revised). There were no objections.

Article II:

To review and approve the minutes of the February 19, 2024 Annual Meeting

It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes of the February 19, 2024 Annual Meeting and the motion was passed by a voice vote.

Article III:

To elect by ballot the following officers: a) Moderator; b) Clerk; c) Treasurer

Rene Thibault nominated Mark Nielsen for Moderator. **Mark Nielsen was elected Moderator by a voice vote.**

Kim Moulton nominated Donna Griffiths for Clerk. **Donna Griffiths was elected Clerk by a voice vote.**

Donna Griffiths nominated Kim Moulton for Treasurer. **Kim Moulton was elected Treasurer by a voice vote.**

Article IV:

To establish compensation for the duly constituted officers and the Board of Directors of said Modified Unified Union School District

A slide with current and proposed compensation was shown. It was proposed to continue with the current compensation: \$600/year plus mileage for the clerk, \$8000/year for the treasurer, \$1900/year for the board chair and \$1600/year for other board members.

Rene Thibault moved to establish compensation for officers and the Board of Directors as recommended and the motion was seconded.

Donna Griffiths said in past years compensation for the clerk has included an additional \$150 for each additional vote that takes place after town meeting day. She asked that that be added to the clerk compensation for FY26.

R. Thibault and the seconder agreed to amend the motion to include \$150 for each additional vote that takes place after town meeting day as part of clerk compensation. The motion was passed by a voice vote.

Article V:

To hear and act upon the reports of the Modified Unified Union School District

M. Nielsen asked if there were any objections to allowing Deb Clark and Catherine Gallagher (who are not residents of the district) to speak. There were none.

Catherine Gallagher provided a snapshot of the district, including the number of students who are economically disadvantaged, homeless, on IEPs, or multi-language learners. She described recent exceptional achievements of some students, teachers and staff. She said the proposed budgets are very conservative. Per pupil spending is nearly flat. A drop in property tax is anticipated across the district. Unlike last year, the governor has signaled support for passing budgets and has promised to buy down property taxes further. Community input from the well-attended community forum several months ago and from a survey in fall shows that academic rigor, mental health supports and student engagement are important to the community. That is what this budget reflects. We have more AP courses than any other high school in the region, and that is not because we have more students. We have universal meals for our students. The budget is nearly flat but still maintains the resources we need for our children.

Deb Clark reviewed the Treasurer's report for FY24. Total cash balance was down \$56,773 for the year, due primarily to closing the Hyde Park bond investment account.

D. Clark showed some budget information. More than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the funding is dedicated to instruction and student services. The elementary school and tech center budgets use some of the FY25 surplus to contribute to reserves and support reductions in taxes. Budgets were developed based on schools' needs and new class size requirements. Draft budgets were reviewed by the board finance committee throughout the development process. The committee met with stakeholders. The budgets absorb economic pressures and support a move to more competitive wages. D. Clark reviewed factors important in building the FY26 budget

Article VI:

To receive from the Board of School Directors of said District its estimate of expenses of the Lamoille North Modified Unified Union Grade Schools for the ensuing year. This is a public information hearing regarding the budget. (See Article XIV.)

D. Clark reviewed the FY26 elementary budget. The budget is increasing 3.4% to \$17,307,730. There is an increase in general fund expenses, a slight decrease in grant funded expenses and a decrease in special education expenses. Prior year surplus is being used to help achieve a 21% increase in revenues. Over 75% of the budget is going directly to student needs.

Article VII:

To receive from the Board of School Directors of said District its estimate of expenses of the Lamaille North Modified Unified Union Middle & High Schools for the ensuing year. This is a public information hearing regarding the budget. (See Article XV.)

D. Clark reviewed the FY26 middle school and high school budget. It is increasing by 1.54% to \$20,186,786. Revenue is up by about 21%. The amount of prior year surplus used was a little more than the amount used in FY25. Over 80% of the budget is going to student needs, including tuition and school nutrition.

The estimated decrease in the pre-CLA tax rate for FY26 is 19.54 cents (\$195.35 per \$100,000 of property value or \$293.03 for a \$150,000 home.) If statewide budgets come in with lower spending than anticipated the yield could be adjusted upward, further decreasing tax rates. LNMUUSD gained 29.46 LT ADM over fall 2023 (up 1.1%.) The statewide adjustment is a new element added to the education tax rate calculation. It has no effect on final tax rates but shifts the focus of increases or decreases in the tax rates away from the currently volatile and shifting property values.

D. Clark showed how tax rate calculations for FY26 compare to FY25. Student numbers and spending per student are similar but there has been an increase to the yield. She showed estimated FY26 tax rates for the different towns in LNMUUSD compared to current year rates. There are estimated decreases in tax per \$100,000 of property ranging from \$55 to \$172 after CLA is applied.

Rob Rodriguez asked if D. Clark is saying his taxes will go down. D. Clark said that is correct. And the governor has said that if increases are held to 5.9% or less statewide he will buy taxes down even further.

D. Clark explained how the statewide adjustment affects the common level of appraisal.

Mark Nielsen said there are 17 private schools that get our tax money. There are schools in New Hampshire that get our tax money. The elementary budget went up a small amount. The school board asked administrators to come back with what level funding would look like and it wasn't pretty. Voters can vote the budget down but that just means their money will go somewhere else first and our schools will get less. Administrators and the superintendent did an amazing job putting these budgets together. There was no dissension among school board members. If voters vote the school budget down locally their money goes to places where school budgets passed and we penalize ourselves by having to cut. The only places to cut are after school and summer programs, nutrition and busing. He encourages budgets being approved.

D. Clark said she is happy to sit with anyone at any time and go through the budget calculations.

Article VIII:

To receive from the Board of School Directors of said District its estimate of expenses of the Green Mountain Technology & Career Center for the ensuing year. This is a public information hearing regarding the budget. (See Article XVI.)

D. Clark said the primary drivers behind the 5.5% GMTCC budget increase are personnel costs, with double digit increases to health benefits.

Lynn Sibley said she would find it helpful if a more detailed breakdown of expenditures could be shown. D. Clark said she can send her more detail. People have indicated that they like the less detailed pie charts and find the detail cumbersome.

L. Sibley said to many people “instruction and student supports” may mean only teachers and instructional assistants. Would principal salaries be included as part of instruction and student supports? D. Clark said yes. L. Sibley said she assumes a lot of other individuals would also be included.

D. Clark said GMTCC expenses reflect current inflation rates and supply costs for the new engineering program that began in 2024. Instructor salary and benefits for the engineering program were grant funded last year and will be grant funded in FY26. That expense will appear in the general funds budget for FY27. The budget includes prior year surplus used for tuition reduction. FY26 budgeted expenses total about \$4.2 million. Expected revenues total about \$2.4 million. That includes state aid. The amount of tuition to be raised is about \$1.8 million. That amount is divided by the 6 semester average FTE to come up with the per pupil sending tuition, which is \$13,914 for FY26. There was an increase in students this year. The engineering program has attracted new students. But we won’t really see the benefit of that for a couple of years because of the 6 semester average. The 6 semester average is starting to increase after a drop.

The state has reindexed their aid to tech centers, dropping the amount of aid per student.

C. Gallagher asked D. Clark to talk about the effect of this budget on the tax rate. D. Clark said tech centers don’t have a direct impact on the tax rate. They are self-funded through tuition from sending schools. Tech center tuition is built into the high school budget. Tech centers are also funded from state funds and grant funds. She showed a 12 year history of per pupil assessment figures.

A meeting participant asked what the growth in tech center enrollment can be attributed to. C. Gallagher said the engineering program has been widely well-received. Will Jaspersohn asked what kind of engineering is being taught. R. Thibault said it is a pretty high level introduction to a handful of different avenues such as product development, manufacturing processes and CAD programs. The tech center website has a page on the engineering program with more detail.

Article IX:

Shall the voters of Lamoille North Modified Unified Union School District #058A (Prek-6th grade) hold an amount of the unassigned audited fund balance in the amount of \$253,981

as of June 30, 2024, in the established Reserve Fund for the purpose of meeting special and unanticipated capital needs of the Lamoille North Modified Unified Union School District #058A?

Bart Bezio moved the article as presented and it was seconded and passed by a voice vote.

Article X:

Shall the voters of Lamoille North Modified Unified Union School District #058B, Green Mountain Technology & Career Center, establish a Special Reserve Fund for future unanticipated costs associated with emerging programming needs?

Bart Bezio moved the article as presented and it was seconded and passed by a voice vote.

Article XI:

Shall the voters of Lamoille North Modified Unified Union School District #058B, Green Mountain Technology & Career Center, hold an amount of the unassigned audited fund balance in the amount of \$44,564 as of June 30, 2024, in the established Reserve Fund for the purpose of meeting future unanticipated costs associated with emerging programming needs?

The article was moved and seconded as presented and passed by a voice vote.

Article XII:

Shall the voters of Lamoille North Modified Unified Union School District #058B, Green Mountain Technology & Career Center, hold an amount of the unassigned audited fund balance in the amount of \$44,563 as of June 30, 2024, in the established Reserve Fund for future tuition reduction needs?

Bart Bezio moved the article as presented and it was seconded and passed by a voice vote.

Article XIII:

To transact any other business to properly come before the meeting.

Stephanie Sweet thanked the Finance and Capital Committee and administrators for doing an amazing job keeping budgets as neutral as possible and being financially responsible. Another attendee agreed and said we need to let everyone know that good things are happening in this district. D. Clark talked about some ways the district will get information out to the public.

At 7:51, Mark Nielsen recessed the meeting to March 4, 2025 (Town Meeting Day) for the purpose of voting by Australian ballot at the usual polling places in the member districts.

Articles XIV, XV and XVI:

On March 4, 2025, ballots were brought to the LUHS library, where they were commingled and counted under the supervision of the LNMUUSD clerk. The number of ballots cast for Article

XIV was 821. Results of the vote for Article XIV (the PreK-6th grade budget) were 547 in favor, 268 opposed, 4 blank and 2 spoiled. **Article XIV was passed.**

The number of ballots cast for Articles XV and XVI was 1182. Results of the vote for Article XV (the middle school/high school budget) were 811 in favor, 358 opposed, 9 blank and 4 spoiled. **Article XV was passed.** Results of the vote for Article XVI (the GMTCC budget) were 934 in favor, 232 opposed, 11 blank and 5 spoiled. **Article XVI was passed.**

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths