LINCOLN-WOODSTOCK COOPERATIVE SCHOOL BOARD
SAU #68
DATE: February 11, 2026
ANNUAL SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET HEARING MINUTES

SCHOOL BOARD PRESENT:
Jasmine Weeden, Secretary
Mandi Avery
Kevin Bell
Casey Caulder
Joe Bossie

ADMINISTRATION/STAFF/STUDENT PRESENT:
Dr. Mary Steady, Superintendent of Schools
Peter Stivali, Principal
Debbie O'Connor, Financial Manager
Sharon Holt, SAU#68 Administrative Assistant

SCHOOL BOARD ABSENT:
Jay Duguay
Tamra Ham

PUBLIC PRESENT:

Sally Nicoll	Kristyn Fadden	Rebecca Manning
Scott Clark	Darlena Clark	Marcella Shamberger

The Budget Hearing was held in the Elementary School Multipurpose Room.

School Board Secretary, Jamine Weeden called the Budget Hearing to order at 6:30 PM.

Jasmine Weeden noted the 2026 Annual School District Budget Hearing is being held to provide an overview of and receive public comment regarding the 2026-2027 budget and Warrant Articles which will be brought forward for vote at the March 17, 2026 School District Annual Meeting.

Jasmine Weeden expressed her appreciation to Debbie O'Connor, Administration, and the School Board members. Board work sessions regarding the budget began in early December with the Board going over the budget line by line to see where cost savings could be made and/or alternate funding such as Trust Funds could be utilized.

Jasmine Weeden mentioned the budget is designed to provide an educational experience for approximately 220 students K-12 while navigating challenges such as shifting enrollments. The budget Warrant Article is Article 5 and notes a budget figure of $10,346,163. This constitutes a 5.4% increase ($500,143) over last year's budget. The tax impact for Lincoln will be $0.237/$1,000 of property valuation and $0.30/$1,000 of property valuation for Woodstock. Personnel costs including salaries and benefits remains the primary cost driver and a large factor in the budget increase. Personnel health insurance premium rates increased by 25%. The budget also includes the second year of the two-year Collective Bargaining Agreement with the teachers association and a 3% increase for administrative salaries. Other factors effecting the budget include increased costs for special education services, curriculum consultant services, and athletic supplies, transportation, and referee services.

Jasmine Weeden noted the District is working on ways to mitigate rising costs such as staffing efficiencies which included reducing the total amount of teachers by three positions over the past three years. Other cost saving initiatives include moving the SAU office back to the school building saving on the extra rental and utilities costs; utilization of grant monies; and moving one-time technology and equipment purchase requests from the general budget in favor of utilizing the Trust Funds for these requests.

Jasmine Weeden mentioned over the past few years, additional facilities specific Articles have been placed on the Warrant for larger long-term projects such as flooring, roofing, and HVAC system upgrades. Due to the larger than normal increase in the general fund budget, there will be no separate facilities specific Warrant Articles. Instead, the plan is to utilize either Trust Fund monies or retained funds to continue planned facilities projects for this year with no added tax impact.

Jasmine Weeden opened the budget hearing to public comment and hearing no comment on the budget Article continued to review the draft Warrant.

Jasmine Weeden noted draft Warrant Article 6 relates to the new two-year Collective Bargaining Agreement with the support staff. The first year impact is $74,867 which includes an hourly wage increase, unused sick leave pay-out language, additional professional development days, and an additional tier to the retirement stipend. The tax impact for Lincoln will be $0.035/$1,000 of property valuation and $0.045/$1,000 of property valuation for Woodstock.

There was no public comment on draft Article 6.

Jasmine Weeden explained draft Warrant Articles 8-11 deal with deposits to the District's Trust and Capital Reserve Funds. These deposits are made with funds already raised but not spent during the current budget year and therefore have no new tax impact. The Trust and Capital Reserve Funds act as savings accounts for District emergency repairs and/or other extraordinary expenses.

There was no public comment on draft Articles 8-11.

Jasmine Weeden asked Dr. Steady to speak to draft Article 12. Dr. Steady noted draft Article 12 relates to open enrollment. The legislature passed a law that allows any public school student to attend any other public school anywhere in the State. Based on a NH Supreme Court ruling, the sending District would then need to pay the receiving District 80% of the sending District's cost per pupil to educate that pupil even if the receiving District's cost per pupil is less. The way the current legislation is written, the District can place a Warrant Article or have Board policy regarding how the District is handling open enrollment which would mitigate the 80% per pupil cost. Lin-Wood's draft Warrant Article states the District will allow one non-District student per school level, elementary, middle, and high school to attend Lin-Wood while allowing 0% of students to leave. The Warrant Article is not being placed based on a choice belief, believe families should have a choice on where their child attends school, the Article is being placed in response to the process and the ability for the local communities to develop, retain control, and contain School District budgets. The Article was drafted by an attorney.

- Jasmine Weeden expressed appreciation to Dr. Steady for her work with the North Country superintendents on figuring out a way to approach the open enrollment issue and for keeping the Board informed and up to date.

Public comment:
Marcella Shamberger of Woodstock noted the District cost per pupil is approximately $37,000 and asked why the District would restrict the number of incoming students to the District? Wouldn't the inclusion of more students lower the District's cost per pupil?

- Dr. Steady noted if we allow other students to attend Lin-Wood from outside of the District, this will impact the other District's budget. The North Country School Districts worked together to limit this number on each Warrant in order for each District to keep local control of their budget. Additionally it will allow Lin-Wood some time to really understand and get a handle on the changes around curriculum happening in the schools and what it would actually cost to educate a student from outside the District. The Warrant Article is a stop-gap to keep control of the budget. This may not be a permanent solution because the legislation may change and Districts may no longer have a choice.
- Debbie O'Connor mentioned District's sending students to Lin-Wood would only need to pay 80% of their cost per pupil which may be less than Lin-Wood's.
- Jasmine Weeden noted limiting the number of students entering and exiting the District is the only place the local Districts has any say with this law which has significant impacts on public education.

Marcella Shamberger expressed concerns about declining enrollments and not having enough students to field girls' sports teams?

- Kevin Bell noted the Warrant Article would limit the number of students able to enter the school via open enrollment but the Board can still entertain and act on enrollment requests through Board policy. The Warrant Article would prohibit the Lin-Wood District from having to pay 80% of our cost per pupil to another District.

Marcella Shamberger inquired as to the Lin-Wood District's cost per pupil versus other area Districts such as Thornton, Campton, Plymouth and how paying the 80% would affect the budget, could Lin-Wood be getting a deal?

- Debbie O'Connor mentioned the Lin-Wood District's cost per pupil is approximately $37,000. Some Districts' cost per pupil are higher and some are lower but Districts that are of similar size are about the same as Lin-Wood's. The biggest driver is the number of enrolled students.
- Dr. Steady noted if one student leaves Lin-Wood and we have to pay the other District 80% of that student's cost, Lin-Wood's budget would increase. It is not a one for one as Lin-Wood would most likely not be reducing staff

levels or the size of the buildings, those costs such as utilities, personnel, etc. would remain the same and the 80% fee to the other District would be additional.

Marcella Shamberger asked if the legislation changed, would this Warrant Article/vote be null and void?

- Dr. Steady answered, yes. Additionally, the Board will be working on policies to address open enrollment as well.

Kristyn Fadden of North Woodstock asked if Lin-Wood would be required to pay for transportation for students choosing to enroll in other Districts?

- Dr. Steady answered, no. Lin-Wood would not be responsible for transportation.

Jasmine Weeden noted declining enrollments are not unique to Lin-Wood. This is an issue throughout the State. Draft Warrant Article 12 is in effort to work in collaboration with other schools/Districts to deal with open enrollment.

Jasmine Weeden mentioned draft Article 13 came about based on the School Board's concern with enrollments declining and costs increasing. The Board is aware it needs to be mindful and efficient with budgeting to keep costs down. The Board tries to be as creative as possible such as decreasing positions through attrition, teacher dual-certifications, and working with the current staff to keep costs down. Draft article 13 states: To see if the Lincoln-Woodstock Cooperative School District will vote to request the School Board to establish an Advisory Committee for the purpose of exploring ideas to address declining student enrollment and increasing operational cost within the District, and to ensure alignment with the Lincoln-Woodstock Cooperative School District Strategic Plan. The committee shall review and evaluate various educational and organizational configurations at the elementary level. This review shall include, but is not limited to multi-age and multi-grade classroom models, optimal teacher -to-student ratios per grade level. The committee shall report its findings and non-binding recommendations to the School Board and the community no later than January 1, 2027. The School Board shall determine the composition of the committee, which may include administrators, teachers, School Board members, parents and community members from both Lincoln and Woodstock. The School Board recommends this article again as a way to move in a progressive way into the future of public education. Information regarding multi-grade/multi-age classrooms was provided to Budget Hearing attendees.

Kristyn Fadden asked based on declining enrollments, etc. if the Board will continue to replace staff members that retire or leave the District?

- Jasmine Weeden mentioned she believes the Board would look at open positions to see if they need to be filled or not and stay flexible.
- Dr. Steady noted relating to a position this year a process was used to consider whether the position would be filled or not. The Administration met with grades K-2, 3-5 and the middle school team to discuss ideas and gather opinions. At the end it was determined to not fill the position and that the middle school would change to have one less teacher on their team. Reducing staff at the elementary level did not make sense at this point to ensure that the younger students are reading, writing and doing math at a proficient level and to continue gaining traction on curriculum and programs that have begun at the elementary level. The Board and Administration will continue a process such as this to look at each position as it comes up.

Sally Nicoll of Woodstock expressed concerns about what would happen if Warrant Article 13 did not pass as it make sense to look at some of the items addressed in the Article relating to declining enrollments, etc.

- Kevin Bell noted Article 13 is designed to make sure the community is involved in the process and to take the pulse of the community and determine if they want to give input and present findings to the Board.
- Jasmine Weeden noted if Article 13 is defeated, the Board would do it anyway but wants the community involvement. Lin-Wood has had great success with many of the community forums held in the last 2-3 years.

Scott Clark or Woodstock asked about enrollment projections?

- Dr. Steady noted enrollment has stabilized over the last 2-3 years, the kindergarten classes have been approximately 10-14 students.
- Debbie O'Connor noted enrollments are trending downward last year there were approximate 240 students and this year 220.
- Dr. Steady mentioned these trends are shown when a larger class graduates and a smaller class size comes into kindergarten.
- Jasmine Weeden noted enrollments are definitely down but they are down everywhere. Lin-Wood has unique challenges bigger schools may not have such as the cost of housing limiting people's ability to live in the area and send their children to Lin-Wood.

Jasmine Weeden expressed appreciation for the Board's work on the budget and the time involved.

There was no further public comment.

Joe Bossie made a motion to close the public comment period of the Budget Hearing. Casey Caulder seconded the motion. Discussion: None. **Jasmine Weeden called a vote to approve the motion. All Board members present were in favor and the Budget hearing closed at 7:08 PM.**

Jasmine Weeden asked if there was any further Board discussion on the budget or draft Warrant and hearing none, asked for a motion to close the Budget Hearing.

Joe Bossie made a motion to close the Budget Hearing. Casey Caulder seconded the motion. Discussion: None. **Jasmine Weeden called a vote to approve the motion. All Board members present were in favor and the Budget Hearing closed at 7:08 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,
Sharon Holt, SAU #68 Administrative Assistant