

**JOINT MEETING
TIMBERLANE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET COMMITTEE
AND
TIMBERLANE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
MEETING MINUTES**

**2018-19 Budget Season
November 30, 2017
7:00 PM**

**SAU #55 Boardroom
30 Greenough Road
Plaistow, NH**

CALL TO ORDER 7:00 PM

Chairman Gerns called this November 30, 2017 joint meeting of the Timberlane Regional School District Budget Committee and School Board to order at 7:00 PM with the roll call.

ROLL CALL

Budget Committee Members Present: Mr. Alan David (arrived 7:01 PM), Mrs. Eileen Dube, Mr. Lee Dube (8:25 PM), Mr. David Gerns, Mr. Daniel Guide (School Board Rep), Mrs. Julie Hammond (8:20 PM), Mr. John Hughes, Mr. Michael Mascola, Mr. Shawn O'Neil, Mr. Jim Paul

Administrators Seated at the Committee Table: Dr. Earl Metzler, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Geoff Dowd, Business Administrator

School Board Members Present: Mr. Peter Bealo, Mr. Brian Boyle, Mrs. Stefanie Dube, Dr. Kim Farah, Mrs. Donna Green, Mrs. Sue Sherman, Mr. Gregory Spero, Mr. Kelly Ward

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE Mr. Hughes led the pledge of allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – November 21, 2017 Meeting

07:01 PM

MOTION: Motion to Move Approval of Minutes to the end of agenda. Made by Mr. O'Neil, seconded by Mrs. Dube. Chairman Gerns moved the vote by general consent.

CORRESPONDENCE

The correspondence folder was distributed.

DELEGATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS

Chairman Gerns opened the Delegations section to an open forum. Ryan Richman, Timberlane Teacher's Association (TTA) president spoke against the cuts provided in the second proposed budget, and urged School Board and Budget Committee members to work together to adopt a sensible budget that puts students first. Laurie Herchenroder, Timberlane Support Staff Union (TSSU) president spoke against the proposed cuts, urging elected officials to understand the impact of their words and the actions.

JOINT DISCUSSION

School Board Chair Brian Boyle began by thanking the Budget Committee for adopting the School Board's budget cut recommendation. He reported that at the preceding School Board meeting, the Board requested a third draft with an additional \$1 million, for a total of \$70.6 million. He explained the School Board has no interest in negatively impacting the students and learning environment in any way. He also shared his perspective on the district budget development process, in regards to his different experience at the town level. Stefanie Dube spoke

for the development of a sensible budget, stating that the current expenditure trajectory is unsustainable for tax payers.

Chairman Gerns explained the district budget development process and working towards a bottom line budget number. The Budget Committee receives proposals and requests from administrations, that are vetted and tested by the Budget Committee. The Committee does this with an understanding of fixed costs as well, and takes recommendations, including the community and School Board's, under advisement.

Dr. Kim Farah outlined concern and support for various projects and their budget lines (field maintenance, snow removal, cleaning, removing and replacing wall of CIP, locker removal, operating building systems). Dan Guide clarified the concern for increased field maintenance cost – by contracting out for the Timberlane campus, more Timberlane staff have been able to work at the satellite schools.

Sue Sherman explained that historically, the joint meeting has been to establish what requests are easily identifiable as a future warrant article. Chairman Gerns detailed the Budget Committee's discussion around CIP request BIT-0001 (fiber connectivity). Currently the Committee was thinking the fiber project could go out to warrant to appear shovel-ready for applying and qualifying for grant reimbursement, however they were unsure of the recommending/ warrant writing process.

Mr. Mascola inquired about the addition of the \$1 million, and for the School Board's development and understanding of impact for the 3% cut. Chairman Boyle explained his thoughts and process in developing the \$69.6 million bottom line – development began with the total expenditures of last year (\$67.2 million), adding increased fixed retirement and health care costs, and offsetting this by decreasing administrative staff, while also understanding staff leave by attrition/retirements. Dr. Metzler explained the development of the first and second draft budget, and that he will strategize with the School Board to create efficiencies and do the most with the budget provided. Mr. David noted the discrepancy between increased staffing and decreasing enrollment.

Mrs. Eileen Dube shared her experience and concern for this year's budget development process, and the negative impact it has had on both the schools and community. Discussion ensued on the history and process of budget development (aggregate department budgets vs beginning with a bottom line, prioritization of needs/goals, the Business Administrator's role, and the relationship between the Board, Budget Committee, and Superintendent).

Discussion ensued on the sound-proofing of the PAC classrooms. Dr. Metzler reported that this is a School Board agenda item on December 7th; the Board will see the study that confirms the music classrooms to not be an entirely safe space, and the related bid for the required structure work needed. Mr. Mascola inquired about the Superintendent's belief in a \$69.6 million budget, and Dr. Metzler reiterated he will continue to strategize with the Board to create efficiencies, and although not an ideal number he would work to structure that number with no academic consequence. He noted that a \$72.8 million (including a \$1.8 million surplus) would be more ideal.

Mr. Dowd reported on the history and expectation for transportation budgeting and contract. In the past, ride-sharing was an option, however in new contract development it is unclear if this will continue. Mr. Dowd reported that current student services and special education expenditures are up against their budgets, and expressed concern for the budgets (both current and proposed) in regards to meeting the legal requirements for out of district placements. Dr. Farah inquired about the posting of monthly expense reports and the transportation efficiency study. Dr. Metzler stated that monthly expense reports will resume being posted. Discussion ensued on the current progress and expected completion of the transportation efficiency study, and how it will affect the budgeting process/ public hearing.

Discussion ensued on the second draft proposed athletic cuts. Dr. Metzler explained the rationale, but noted that Chairman Boyle already directed to add them back in. Mr. Hughes inquired about the possibility of decreasing athletic budgeting as opposed to cutting programming. Dr. Metzler further detailed how him and Mr. Dowd approached the review of athletic budget/total budget, and the difficulties of budgeting in a cooperative district. Mr. Paul expressed appreciation for administrators who proposed cuts to their budgets, and shared personal concern for the tax payers. Mrs. Hammond joined at 8:20 PM.

Dr. Farah inquired about the budgeting for continuing and alternative education, and the cost/revenues associated with operating the PAC. Discussion ensued on the School Board's directives of PAC usage, tradeoffs of scheduling different events, revenue associated with different types of events, and investigating revenue generating tactics and operational efficiencies. Mr. Lee Dube joined at 8:25 PM.

Mrs. Sherman spoke to her experience as the assigned School Board invoice reviewer, as it relates to athletic billing, explaining that ice and pool time are expensive and inflexible. Mr. Hughes spoke to his earlier point regarding decreasing athletic budget lines that are historically underspent. Discussion ensued about the amount and expenditure of surplus funds at the district and town levels.

Mr. Spero spoke to his interest in reviewing and supporting a responsible budget, noting he seconded Mrs. Sherman's motion to review a third draft of \$70.6 million. Mr. Bealo clarified that the passed School Board motion was to be provided with a third draft for review, and that this was not an endorsed bottom line number. Mr. Ward also spoke to his interest in supporting a responsible budget, and explained that historically the joint meetings were to discuss School Board prioritization.

Chairman Gerns called a brief recess at 8:38 PM and resumed the Budget Committee Meeting at 8:50 PM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – November 21, 2017 Meeting

Discussion ensued on a word change between "vote" and "poll," to most accurately reflect the meaning/statement of Chairman Boyle.

8:52 PM

MOTION: Motion to change the word "vote" to "poll" in the November 21, 2017 minutes. Made by Mr. O'Neil, second by Mr. Mascola. Discussion continued, and Mr. O'Neil amended his motion to instead state "vote/poll," seconded by Mr. Mascola. Chairman Gerns called the vote to approve minutes with Mr. O'Neil's amended motion, which passed (9-0-1) with Mr. Dube abstaining.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Budget Draft 2 Discussion

Chairman Gerns began by expressing concern for starting with a low number in budget development, and if \$70.6 million will be sufficient to support the district, noting there are still estimates such as transportation that need refining. Discussion ensued on the Budget Committee's charge to develop a bottom line budget and working with draft two, in regards to the current School Board request for a third draft. Chairman Gerns suggested working with a third draft at \$72.2 million to analyze the differences between draft two and three, and explained his calculation of splitting the difference between high and low proposals. Discussion ensued about this suggestion, community and School Board support for lower proposals, and the difference between adding to or subtracting from a bottom line budget in its' development.

9:07 PM

MOTION: Motion to receive a third working draft budget with a bottom line of \$72,200,000, made by Chairman Gerns, second by Mr. Mascola.

Discussion continued on the budget development process (adding vs subtracting), the historical practice of the Committee, and the community input received. Mr. Guide noted the difficulties of starting with a lower bottom line in regards to personnel costs and needs of the District. Mr. Dube reported that of the 86 Sandown community members who contacted him, 66 are in favor of a budget no higher than the current operation budget. Mrs. Dube stated that working with a higher number will allow for visibility between the two drafts. Mrs. Hammond understood the value in working with a third draft, however questioned the arbitrariness of the \$72.2 million bottom line.

VOTE: Chairman Gerns called the motion which failed (4-6-0) with Chairman Gerns, Mrs. Dube, Mr. Dube, and Mr. Guide in favor.

Discussion continued on working with draft two as a bottom line starting point, and working to potentially increase and add funding back in, based on prioritization from administration. Draft two brought priorities to surface, such as athletic programming. Mr. Dube inquired about how many draft two personnel cuts are filled with current employees, versus vacant requisitions. Mr. Paul noted no communication to the Budget Committee in regards to SharePoint posting of draft two, and discussion ensued on developing a practice.

9:23 PM

MOTION: Motion for Budget Committee members to receive a corresponding email update for all SharePoint uploads, made by Mr. Paul, second by Mr. O'Neil.

Discussion continued on developing the best practice for communication regarding public documents.

VOTE: Chairman Gerns called the vote which passed (9-0-1) with Mr. Dube abstaining.

Discussion resumed on how the Budget Committee will approach work with draft two. Establishing an upper limit was debated against working upwards from a bottom line of \$69.6 million, with an understanding of fixed costs in order to add funds back in based on prioritization. An understanding of prioritization is lacking from the draft two provided, and would allow for the Budget Committee to make informed decisions, as well as open the discussion for the Budget Committee to look into efficiencies within the District.

The Committee began the analysis by looking at the personnel cuts, and Mr. Dube requested a breakdown of how many of these positions are currently unfilled. It was clarified that the proposed personnel cuts (ie: "25 TTA (layoff ~50)" refers to 25 full time equivalents (FTEs), and also the true costs savings will depend on the employees vacated. Mr. Dowd reported that of the 11.5 administrative staffing cuts listed, 3 are currently vacant.

9:38 PM

MOTION: Motion that Budget Committee receives a report detailing complete compensation package costs for the currently filled positions that are proposed to be cut in draft two, made by Mr. Dube.

Discussion ensued on the retirement deadline – there is incentive to submit notice by January 1st, however Mr.

Dowd reported that many staff still submit their retirement notice after this deadline. In terms of realizing these reductions in the budget process, Mr. Dowd noted that it is easier to decrease the budget after the public hearing (as opposed to increase after the public hearing).

9:42 PM

MOTION (con't): Mr. Guide seconded Mr. Dube's motion.

Discussion ensued on the Superintendent's insight behind the personnel cuts listed in draft two, and the Committee's purview of reviewing and cutting positions as opposed to budget/dollar amounts.

VOTE: Chairman Gerns called the vote which passed unanimously (10-0-0).

9:48 PM

MOTION: Motion to move the December 14th meeting to December 12th, 2017, made by Mr. Dube, second by Mr. Guide.

Mr. Dube explained scheduling conflicts and his interest in attending all meetings. Discussion ensued about scheduling availability and bylaw requirements. Mr. Dube withdrew his motion as scheduling availability for all was not known, with the understanding that Mrs. Belcher will take a poll to find a day that works for all.

9:54 PM

MOTION: Motion to waive policy that requires the Budget Committee vote on the next meeting date. Made by Mr. Guide, second by Mr. Dube. Chairman Gerns called the vote which passed unanimously (10-0-0).

Mr. Hughes noted reports were not aligned in regards to CIP items that were previously removed by the Budget Committee. Mr. Dowd explained they were not formally removed from each document, and will make those changes to reflect a common understanding between documents. Mr. Dowd will remove the funding associated, however will keep them listed for the prioritization list he will provide.

Mrs. Hammond inquired about the proposed cuts to private tuition and our legal obligation to educate all students in our district. Discussion ensued on how Mr. Dowd reached this new proposed number through analyzing current and historical expenditures – Mr. Dowd reported that Student Services/Special Education are up against their current expenditures, the District is seeing increased need to place out, but the District always prioritizes educating in district first, and ride-sharing if placed out.

Mr. Dowd will provide a prioritized draft two (barring funding for all previous CIP cuts), a study on the filled vs. vacant positions slated for cut, and copies of the third draft being prepared for the School Board.

10:18 PM

MOTION: Motion to remove athletic programs from the list of proposed cuts in draft two. Made by Mr. Guide, second by Mrs. Dube.

Mr. Dowd clarified that the athletic programs will remain on draft two, however will state that these programs will be funded in draft three.

VOTE: Chairman Gerns called the vote, which passed (10-0-0).

Mr. Dowd reported he will provide an income report at the next meeting.

Budget Committee Member Report

Mrs. Dube reported there was a Strategic Planning forum on November 27th, and Mr. Paul stated that he and Mrs. Dube will prepare a Strategic Planning report for the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

10:21 PM

MOTION: Motion to Adjourn. Made by Chairman Gerns, second by Mr. O’Neil. Chairman Gerns called the vote, which passed (10-0-0).

Respectfully submitted,



Katarina Curtin
Recording Clerk

Approved by the Budget Committee on December 13, 2017.

This meeting may be watched in its entirety by logging on to: <https://vimeo.com/245368886>