

Timberlane Regional School District Budget Committee
Atkinson, Danville, Plaistow, and Sandown

Regular Meeting
November 10, 2010
7:00 p.m.

SAU, 30 Greenough Road
Plaistow, New Hampshire
03865

Mrs. O'Neil called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Present: Ms. Rochford, Ms. Maffeo, Mr. Mullen, Mrs. O'Neil, Ms. Conte, Mr. Bouchard, Mrs. Chaput, Mrs. Lisi and Mr. Collins.

Absent: Mr. Balanoff.

Timberlane Administration Present:

Mr. LaSalle, Superintendent,

Mr. Stokinger, Business Administrator,

Mrs. Smith, Assistant Business Administrator,

Mrs. Edwina Lovett, Director of Pupil Personnel Services,

Mrs. Elizabeth Rincon, Assistant Director of Pupil Personnel Services,

The pledge of allegiance was recited.

Mrs. Chaput made a motion and was seconded by Mrs. Lisi to accept the minutes of November 3, 2010. Vote: Unanimous.

An email correspondence was received and discussed. Mrs. O'Neil read the questions which were about the Food Service Program. Mrs. O'Neil stated the questions would be more appropriately answered by the School Board and referred the email to them.

Mr. Collins gave the School Board Report which happened to be a review of the Budget Committee's previous meeting where the "salary schedule" for support staff was discussed. Mr. Collins reported there was some clarification made in regards to what this actually is and how it is used. It is in fact, a function of the software program that each employee be attached to a spot on a pay scale. For ease in changing people's rates they are moved down in steps to achieve the 1.8% increase in pay. Mr. Collins also reported one School Board Member reported the Town of Sandown is giving a 2% increase to their employees in 2012.

Mrs. O'Neil thanked Mrs. Rincon and Mrs. Lovett for attending the meeting. Mr. Stokinger distributed the financial reports so the Budget Committee members could see the new details added per their request. Mrs. O'Neil asked Mrs. Lovett to discuss the "Out of District Tuition" in more detail. Mrs. Lovett stated there are currently 24 students in "Out of District" placements. Of these students, two students are in 24 hour residential facilities. These 24 hours residential facilities will charge the school district for room and board at these facilities, in addition to the tuition and other related services. An example of this type of placement is Crotched Mountain Hospital, which would cost the district about \$300,000 for the year. Occasionally a child will be court ordered for a particular placement, which may be extremely expensive but it happens very

infrequently. Mrs. Lovett reviewed the Cat Aid state reimbursement procedure with the Budget Committee; however she did say that the amount they are entitled to receive, has been reduced to 62% in the current year. There was a brief discussion about special education transportation in regards to ways to increase efficiency and reduce expenses. Other committee members were asking about the level of nonteaching staff needed such as nurses and psychologists. Mrs. Lovett stated the staff levels are at appropriate levels in her areas of responsibility. Studies have been done in regards to the number of visits to the school nurse, for example and it averages one new visit by a student or staff member to the nurse's office every four minutes. If students are not placed due to court orders, Mr. Mullen asked, then how are the student placement decisions made. Mrs. Lovett explained in detail the IEP team and process. Of the 24 "Out of District" placements the students are in 16 different facilities or programs, which this district is unable to provide the services required by the IEP. Mrs. Lovett continued, reminding everyone not all students with IEP's always continue to need an IEP. Many times after a certain amount of intervention and attention is given to a student's "disability", the IEP team will decide the student no longer needs the IEP. The number of students with IEP's has been declining over the last few years. There are currently 779 special education students in the Timberlane School District. Mrs. Lovett and Mrs. Rincon finished their discussion with the Budget Committee around 7:30 pm and exited the meeting room.

Mr. Stokinger discussed the revised budget total, which had changed from the previous meeting due to adjustments he made to the facilities projects. The budget was reduced by \$64,900 from the last meeting. The various financial reports provided by Mr. Stokinger were reviewed and discussed.

Mrs. O'Neil brought up for discussion salary increases and if it is appropriate in this economy, to give raises to the non unionized employees. Mr. LaSalle stated that the employees we are talking about are in fact, the families who are struggling in these tough economic times. These people make on average \$15,000 per year and raises for these people will have a very minimal impact in a \$62 million dollar budget. It is his opinion that investing a little money into these employees will save us a lot in the long run. He meets with the Timberlane Support Staff Association regularly and they expect to be treated equitably and fairly regardless of them not being an official "union". As far as Administrators in Timberlane, many of them make less per hour than the staff they are supervising. As a matter of fact, last year the administrators did receive a 2% raise, however at the same time they started contributing 5% towards their insurance, so in effect they received no increase at all. The total amount needed to give the raises as proposed is \$151,000. Mrs. O'Neil stated she is still extremely concerned regarding the loss of 1.1 million dollars that Danville is facing with the new school funding formula. This will dramatically drive up the tax rate in Danville. She doesn't feel she has any control over what the state is doing, but the Budget Committee can control a few things and non affiliated staff raises is one of them. Mr. LaSalle stated that it is not wise to react to politics when budgeting; we are reacting to a tough economy as best we can, as can be seen by a proposed level budget, but it would take a reduction of 8 million dollars in the school budget, to offset what the state may or may not do with the funding formula and its effect on Danville. Fairness to the staff is Mr. LaSalle's priority in this tough budgeting session. Mr. LaSalle stated that he doesn't know exactly what the staffing needs will be for 2012, however, he will be taking a very close look at the enrollment numbers for next year. He is anticipating reducing staff by one administrator, and a few teachers

based on his initial look at enrollment. He is asking the Budget Committee Members to not cut the support staff increases as of yet, until he has a chance to review his staff needs and make staff reduction recommendations at the next meeting. Other questions came up such as the details in the current contract for teachers. It was explained those teachers who are not at the max step will be receiving two steps next year, to make up for the loss of a step increase last year. In this year's budget, the teachers at max are getting a one-time bonus of 2.5%. This approved teacher contract has an overall cost of about \$600,000, while in previous years, teacher contracts have been known to cost as much as 1 million per year for the life of the contract. The two step increase for some teachers will equate to a 6% to 7% increase. Mr. LaSalle stated school salaries in general do not equate with the private sector.

There are only 37 school districts in New Hampshire that spend less per child than we do, but there are 125 school districts in NH that spend more per child than we do. That isn't to say there isn't room to improve efficiencies because there is, however we do have some efficiencies in place that save the district a lot of money. One example would be the new MS Autism room built a few years ago. We now keep in house many autistic students who might not have been able to stay in district previously.

Mrs. O'Neil asked the committee members what their direction for Mr. LaSalle is at this point in the Budget process. Many committee members felt extremely uncomfortable discussing the budget without knowing what the State is going to do about adequacy funding. Mr. LaSalle agreed that is very difficult, however we should focus on what is good for the students and citizens of the school district and not the politics going on in Concord. He stated on November 15th the state is supposed to release the "official funding levels" however they are subject to change in January. Maybe he will have news to share with them after that date.

Mr. Collins stated he would like to hear from other members of the Budget Committee. Many of the same people have re-iterated their thoughts while others have remained silent. Mr. Bouchard stated that he is not willing to lessen the quality of education in order to cut the budget, but he is also very concerned about what the State will do. Mr. Collins stated our goal cannot be to cut taxes but rather to keep the school district moving in a forward motion in the most economical way possible. Mr. Mullen agreed the goal should not be to cut taxes; however we need to keep in mind what our community is willing to pay for and at what cost. Mr. LaSalle agreed the focus should be on spending required to run the school district, not what the tax impact will be of the spending. Mrs. Lisi agreed with Mr. Collins and she does not want the focus of the Budget Committee to be the tax rates, but rather how to continue to fund the successful programs such as sports, arts and music that has had a long history in this district.

Mrs. O'Neil stated the proposed budget looks very lean to her and she is hopeful the enrollment numbers will allow for some staffing reductions as Mr. LaSalle suggested. The committee members were in agreement to wait to see what Mr. LaSalle will propose for staff reductions before making any cuts in the proposed budget.

Mr. Stokinger reviewed the email from Mr. Hughes outlining the reasons for replacing the boiler at Danville. He also stated he believes the School Board will be placing a warrant article on the

ballot, for \$250,000 of the \$303,000 in the Capital Reserve account, to renovate the Pollard Elementary kitchen.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday before Thanksgiving. A few committee members knew they would not be available to attend, however it appears that a quorum will still be available.

Ms. Maffeo asked about the class size policy and stated her daughter's class has three new students since the beginning of the year. Mrs. O'Neil stated Mr. LaSalle does analyze enrollment figures carefully to make sure we have enough student spaces and still remain within the school board policy for class size. His estimates are conservative and allow for some increases/decreases during the school year.

The next three scheduled meetings are:

Tuesday November 23, 2010

Thursday December 9, 2010

Wednesday December 22, 2010.

Ms. Rochford made a motion and was seconded by Mr. Bouchard to adjourn at 8:50 pm.

Vote: Unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathy Smith

Recording Secretary

Approved 11/23/2010