REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 7

Colebrook Town Hall
Budget Presentation
March 18, 2025 – 6:00 p.m.
APPROVED 4.8.26

PRESENT: Chair Ms. Molly Sexton Read (B), Vice-Chair Mr. Robert Jerram (NH), Ms. Deborah Bell (N), Ms. Terri Kenneson (C), Ms. Kim Crone (N), Mr. Noel Gauthier (NH), Superintendent Steven K. LePage, Director of Finance & Operations Mr. James Gaskins

CALL TO ORDER: Ms. Sexton Read called the Proposed Budget Meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

BUDGET PRESENTATION

Ms. Sexton Read began the meeting by greeting everyone and thanking them for being present. She then began the presentation by giving a brief introduction of where the budget proposal currently stands.

- **Budget Commitments & Vision:** The proposal is driven by commitments to transparency, conscientious resource management, and the maintenance of high-quality education aligned with the "Vision of a Graduate" attributes.
- **Historical Context:**
  - Proposed Budget Increase: 1.99%.
  - Proposed Assessment Increase: 2.0% (minimized due to revenues and designated assessment offsets).
- **Budget Drivers & Cost Controls:**
  - **Special Education:** Outplacements are lower than in previous years. The district is budgeting conservatively regarding state Excess Cost grant reimbursement, projecting approximately 70% reimbursement.
  - **Benefits:** Anthem's rate increase was at 11.5% before this meeting, but it has since been announced that there will be a decrease. Further reductions have not yet been incorporated into this budget. Discussion on this will take place at the Special Meeting scheduled on Monday, 3/23, in Norfolk, following the budget presentation there.
  - **Salaries:** Contractual settlements remain high statewide, but costs were mitigated via Board-approved retirement incentives.
  - **Efficiency Measures:** The district is transitioning to a full suite of ADP programs for payroll, time/attendance, and insurance. While this implementation has related costs, it will result in immediate efficiencies and ultimately a reduction in staffing needs within the business office.

- **School Highlights & Needs:**

    - **Middle School:** Focus on Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) for behavioral/academic support, mental health resources, and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) utilizing behavioral reinforcement tickets, acknowledging students for doing positive things within the school community.
    - **High School:** Highlighted pictures included the pep band, House of Heroes community project, theater productions, and the upcoming Financial Reality Fair. Highlighted data points included strong AP and dual credit course participation, with high success rates (scores of 3 or higher). SAT scores for the Class of 2026 show significant cohort growth, exceeding state averages.
- **Object Breakdown (Major Changes):**
    - **Salaries:** Net increase of $79,493 (0.60%), despite a 4.4% contractual increase for teachers, due to five retirements and the need to replace only one of those positions. This object category includes an expansion of the Athletic Director position, resulting in a full-time position titled Director of Student Affairs. There is also a placeholder for the salary of after-school-hours security staff.
    - **Benefits:** Total increase of $331,920, representing two-thirds of the overall budget increase.
    - **Professional/Technical Services:** Increased nearly 10%, driven by Shared Services assessment (up 3.445%), ADP software implementation, and instructional technology cost increases.
    - **Property Services:** Increased 2.83%. Noted an increase in snow removal costs (9.28%).
    - **Other Purchased Services:** Declined by $203,334 or 5.79% due to lower special education transportation and tuition costs, combined with $242,000 in Excess Cost Grant offsets.
    - **Supplies:** Increased due to necessary textbook replacements for High School Science and Social Studies, among other supply account needs, due to increased costs of supplies.
    - **Capital Outlay:** Maintaining flat funding at $200,000.

    Town Assessments: Based on shifts in Average Daily Membership (ADM)

- Barkhamsted: 2.50% increase.
- Colebrook: 1.65% decrease.
- New Hartford: 2.15% increase.
- Norfolk: 3.99% increase.

Ms. Sexton Read opened the floor for comments and questions. Board of Finance Chair Tom McKeon expressed his appreciation for the budget. Mr. Brad Bremer, First Selectman, was also appreciative of the effort to bring forward a reasonable budget.

The budget presentation ended at 6:35 p.m.