

**Minutes of the
Litchfield Budget Committee Meeting
Held on November 14, 2019**

The Litchfield Budget Committee held a meeting on Thursday, November 14, 2019 at Litchfield Town Hall, 2 Liberty Way, Litchfield, NH 03052.

PRESENT: K Douglas (Chair), A Cutter (Vice Chair), J Martin, N Fordey, B Hodgkins, W Hayes, R Leary (Selectmen's Representative), R Meyers (School Board Representative)

Absent: J Bourque

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mrs. Douglas called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

● **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

2. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

3. REVIEW / ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

● **October 24, 2019**

MOTION: by Mr. Cutter

Move to approve the minutes of October 24, 2019 as amended

SECOND: by Mrs. Martin

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion carried.

● **October 30, 2019**

MOTION: by Mr. Cutter

Move to approve the minutes of October 30, 2019

SECOND: by Mrs. Martin

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion carried.

● **November 7, 2019**

The minutes of November 7, 2019 were tabled until the next meeting.

4. CORRESPONDENCE

Mrs. Douglas announced that she received questions from Budget Committee members regarding the School District budget that she passed on to the district for responses; calendar for the annual meeting from the NHMA.

5. OLD BUSINESS

● **School Tours**

School tours for members that were unavailable during the daytime tours were rescheduled for December 3, 2019 at 6pm.

- **Follow up of questions from November 7 Budget Presentation**

Dr. Jette indicated that Committee members' questions were received from the Budget Committee Chair and responses have been provided.

Technology

Jason Pelletier, Director of IT, reviewed the questions that were asked and provided responses to the Committee.

Questions:

Which services for maintenance are contracted and which are not?

What are the school's practices/policies in seeking different bid or price comparisons for services?

In reference to Account 430 under DW Technology Services, there is \$12,500 budgeted for Firewall, web filter, routing and threat management. What services are we using and are we in a contract?

Are switches on a replacement plan? (\$8,000 budgeted per school for replacement switches)

Responses:

Maintenance Agreements, Account 1000284000-430

These are the costs for our annual subscription and advance replacement agreements. Mostly everything is done in-house and we limit the use of outside contractors as much as possible.

With regard to the specific line for which \$12,500 is budgeted, that accounts for four annual subscriptions (webfiltering, threat management, technical support and advanced replacement for hardware failures) for which these services protect our \$22M in assets. In order for the district to receive federal funds, we must have URL filtering for our students as well.

In reference to the services we use, confidentiality requirements prohibit us from divulging the system we use so we are not targeted by bad actors who can use that information; however, we spend a lot of time reaching out each year making sure we can leverage the best pricing for this and all products. We are getting a much better rate than businesses and were able to get rates beyond regular education discounts by bypassing vendors and working directly with the firewall manufacturer to secure the best pricing possible.

Replacement Switches

With all of the added technology throughout the past four years we have outgrown the entry-level switches we previously used. The increase is due to the added cost of the upgrade in switch type. Some of our big and much more expensive modular network switches are part of our five year plan, but in our smaller network closets we place them in the equipment replacement lines in the budget.

We also encumbered funds to help fund building security projects that arose from the Department of Homeland Security. As best practices, we reach out to the major vendors that can leverage the best pricing for us and get multiple quotes no matter the size or value of the equipment. We are always in the evaluation mindset to see what is available that is less costly and the best value for the district. Our top priority is always what is best for the students, parents and the community.

Mr. Cutter asked about what has been budgeted for Chromebooks at CHS.

Mr. Pelletier indicated that last year students in Grade 8 were outfitted with Chromebooks before the total 1:1 rollout and those students brought those devices up to the high school, so we did not have to budget for CHS. He noted that we budgeted for Chromebooks for Grade 5, which starts the cycle this year.

Mr. Cutter asked about the cost of each Chromebook (\$250) and if that is a contracted price.

Mr. Pelletier indicated that is the average cost. He explained the cost goes up and down as we have purchased some in the past for as low as \$187 and as high as \$280, with the license for each ranging from \$23 to \$28. He noted that since they are purchasing less and less Chromebooks with the roll out of the 1:1 program, the less we buy the higher the price of each device.

Mr. Cutter asked if the Chromebooks are compatible with the computer carts funded in the past.

Mr. Pelletier indicated that usb charging is starting to be standardized and until this year devices have had different chargers. He noted we recycle those down to the elementary school and recable the carts with the proper chargers.

Mr. Cutter asked about HB 1612 and if the software lease is a new item.

Mr. Pelletier explained HB 1612 is a bill that created an amendment in one of the laws that requires us to audit, monitor and log activity that occurs in the district. He indicated in order to do that we need powerful software, which is very expensive. He added that the IT Department reached out to several vendors and what is budgeted is the least expensive software.

Curriculum

There were no questions with regard to the Curriculum Development budget.

Special Services

Devin Bandurski, Director of Special Services, reviewed the questions that were asked and provided responses to the Committee.

Questions:

What do the abbreviations after items mean (i.e. P, DD, S3)?

Why does the Special Services need a new conference table replacement and chairs at CHS?

Under DW Speech Services Travel line there is an increase of \$200 for a new item, "Community Outings for Speech Students". Is this a new initiative for speech students?

There is less money requested for items like workbooks for speech students. Are there less students?

In DW Special Services Administration, why is what is budgeted never all spent?

Is it contractual that the Director attend four conferences per year with hotel, airline and meals paid?

Responses:

Abbreviations: P is for PreSchool; DD is for Developmental Delay; S3 is for the Student Support program.

New Conference Table and Chairs: the conference room at CHS is used for all special education meetings throughout the year. Anytime another department gets new furniture it seems we get the “hand me downs”. The table and chairs are really old and rickety.

Community Outings for Speech Students

This is for older students at the high school that do community projects.

Less Materials Requested: There are more web-based materials used.

Postage: Our office mails a lot of things. It is unknown why the postage use is not applied there.

Director Conferences

Contractually the Director has professional development. There is only one annual national conference attended and that is what the airfare is for. The others are local conferences.

Mrs. Fordey commented she tried to compare all the lines in the notes to the previous year for supplies. She indicated she is trying to understand the increases.

Mrs. Bandurski commented it all depends on if there are any supplies left over from the previous year as they do a lot of work as part of the curriculum.

Dr. Jette commented this budget is one that makes us more nervous than others because it is required and federally mandated that we have to meet those special needs. He indicated that the district has had some additional families arrive this year and the special education budget is in deficit. He noted we will be withdrawing funds from the Special Education Capital Reserve Fund once we have determined the exact amount that is needed. Dr. Jette commented that it is concerning to withdraw reserve funds this early in the year. He indicated it is very difficult to project where the needs are since it is unknown if a family or families with student(s) on an IEP will move into the town.

Mr. Cutter commented transportation is a point of discussion every year. He asked if an identified student requires his/her own transportation when attending the same facility as another identified student.

Mrs. Bandurski indicated that the transportation would be shared if there is an opportunity to do so. She cautioned it depends on the cost of the provider and whether we can cost share with another district.

Mr. Hodgkins asked if the district ever refuses students with special needs who come into the town/district.

Dr. Jette commented that it is the law and the reality. He noted these are people that become your neighbors.

Mr. Hodgkins asked what happens if we cannot afford everything this person needs.

Dr. Jette indicated it is a district's obligation to provide what they need, as long as what we have meets the child's needs. He noted our programmatic offerings are more limited than a larger district.

Mr. Hodgkins commented they chose to move here knowing we have a smaller budget and chose to put the tax burden on this town.

Mr. Cutter commented he does not believe it is in their control.

Mrs. Douglas suggested it would be appropriate to approach the State Legislators regarding those concerns.

Mr. Cutter commented the concern is valid as some students' needs can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars; however, it is the obligation of the school district.

Dr. Jette commented it is the nature of school funding in NH. He indicated there is Catastrophic Aid that can help to recover the costs, but that is paid in the following year. He noted when you compare Litchfield to other small towns in NH we are large in comparison. He indicated the burden for special education is on the taxpayers in any district / town.

Mrs. Fordey thanked Mrs. Bandurski for providing a breakdown of the handicap tuition line. She noted one of the lines mentions charter school services. She asked what is included in that line.

Mrs. Bandurski indicated under NH law if a parent chooses to place their child in a charter school and the child has a special need, the district they reside in has to pay the tuition.

Dr. Jette commented in NH parents can choose for their child(ren) to attend a charter school; however, all special needs rely on the district in which the child lives.

6. SCHOOL BUDGET PRESENTATIONS

● Campbell High School

Mr. Lonergan presented the FY21 CHS Recommended budget with a bottom line total of \$643,405, which is a \$16,679 increase over FY20. He indicated that there is a significant increase in athletic transportation, supplies for the science department and old furniture replacement at CHS.

Mr. Lonergan highlighted increases and decreases in the budget:

- Athletic Transportation is expected to increase \$19,341 due to contract increases not reflected in the FY20 budget
- Technical Education Equipment Replacement increase of \$3,437 due to a need for a safe mitre/chop saw and functional new shaper
- Library Services increased \$4,800 due to replacing outdated furniture
- Music Equipment-Additional increased \$2,990 for new electronic keyboards, stands and texts for a new course, Intro to Piano

- Science Furniture-Replacement increased \$5,279 to replace one classroom's stools that are at the end of their useful life (start of a five year replacement program)
- CHS Vocational Education increased \$4,111 due to increasing enrollment
- Physical Education and Athletics increased due to requests for:
 - Software \$1,300
 - Banner Replacement \$2,900
 - Additional Kettlebells \$3,000
- Computer Education Supplies and Equipment increase of \$2,100
- Other Support Services increase of \$2,200 due to additional supplies for graduation (chair rentals, programs, gowns for new faculty)
- Co-Curricular Supplies increase of \$1,780 for supplies for new programs and the purchase of a portable sound system for large group presentations and school events;

- Decrease of \$3,300 in Regular Education due to updated lease on school copier machine and flatlining supplies
- Decrease of \$1,758 in FACS Equipment Replacement - no Reality Babies requests
- Decrease of \$12,500 in Guidance Services due to tuition decrease for a resident that was attending Pinkerton
- Decrease of \$7,974 in Music Budget
- Decrease of \$3,546 in Science Budget.

Mrs. Fordey asked if the same supplies for students are purchased each year in Art Education. Mr. Lonergan indicated that CHS goes through a lot of consumables and supplies for digital cameras.

With reference to Dues and Fees, Mrs. Fordey asked about the process for adding a new membership fee, such as is budgeted in the Foreign Language department. Mr. Lonergan indicated that a new teacher joined CHS this year and requested a membership for NH Association of World Language Teachers.

Mrs. Douglas asked about the new portable keyboards budgeted. Mr. Lonergan indicated that the Dance class was eliminated and Intro to Piano was added and will be a long term course.

Mrs. Fordey asked about piano tuning and how many pianos are tuned. Mr. Lonergan indicated there are three pianos at CHS and two tunings for each are budgeted.

Mrs. Douglas asked about the replacement lab stools and if that will become an annual expense. Mr. Lonergan indicated stools will be replaced over the next five years in each science class.

Mrs. Douglas asked about the additional 3D printer that is budgeted. She noted that there is already a 3D printer at CHS. Mr. Lonergan indicated that printer is in the Library Media Center. He noted this printer is for ICT Pathways courses.

Mrs. Douglas asked why vocational education increased. Mr. Lonergan indicated there are more students interested in vocational education.

Mrs. Fordey asked about the WATS Club under co-curricular supplies. Mr. Lonergan indicated that is a new club called We're All The Same and provides opportunities to students as a welcoming for those with differences.

Mr. Hodgkins asked about the FBLA Conference for students and if the hotel costs are included. Mr. Lonergan indicated that is just the cost for the conference registrations and students pay for their own hotel.

Mr. Cutter commented there is not a big change in this budget, but all these budgets are up. He asked when looking at Dues and Fees, why it is up \$5,000 over the last few periods. Mr. Meyers commented it has been his experience that registration fees have increased significantly over the years.

Mrs. Fordey asked about the \$1,000 increase in Athletics Conferences/Workshops. Mr. Lonergan indicated the new Athletic Director requested to attend the national conference.

Mr. Hodgkins asked if student athletes raise funds for sports. Mr. Lonergan indicated there are no participation fees. He noted that we advocate that the students do better academically when involved in extra-curricular activities.

Mr. Hodgkins asked why their parents are not paying for this. Dr. Jette commented American models are school based and it is the nature of how schools operate in NH. He indicated there is high participation in athletics and students do a lot of fundraising. He noted that along with offering these activities we have to provide transportation for the events.

Mr. Lonergan commented that he supports student growth and if we do not support co-curricular activities for students then the town becomes a somewhat unattractive place to live. He indicated that these programs are important for child development. Mr. Meyers indicated these activities are part of the whole student.

Dr. Jette indicated all student athletes are required by NHIAA to keep their grades up. Mrs. Fordey asked about the additional equipment for the weight room. Mr. Lonergan indicated that we do not have a rack for our current set of kettlebells and it is needed for safety. He noted that additional kettlebells are needed to accommodate more students.

Mrs. Fordey asked about the mobile trauma unit budgeted under Nurse Services. Mr. Lonergan indicated that is to address trauma until emergency services arrives.

Mrs. Fordey asked about the mobile shelving for the Library. Mr. Lonergan commented one of the things that is happening is libraries are changing to learning commons. He indicated mobile shelves allow us to utilize more space in the Learning Commons. He noted that Ms. Green has been creating more space in the Learning Commons by culling out things that are not used.

Mr. Leary asked about the 30 desks and chairs budgeted for the media center. Mr. Lonergan indicated the desks are 20 years old and are breaking and the chairs are broken and not working.

Mr. Lonergan indicated that Athletic Transportation has increased \$20,000 despite the School Board reduction of \$20,000. He commented the new Athletic Director budgeted heavily for this. He noted we will not the increase in this year's budget, but we have to be attentive to next year's increase.

Mr. Izbicki commented that the rate from last year to this year is approximately a 21% increase. He explained that the initial contract was for a rate that included the mileage plus wait time combined. He noted once we found that was costing the district much more we renegotiated the rate and agreed on a less costly calculation. Mr. Izbicki mentioned that with multiple sports you have to budget for a lot of playoffs.

Mr. Cutter commented budgets have increased overall significantly from year to year. He was concerned that the bus contract has increased that much.

Mr. Izbicki indicated the district went out to bid, but unfortunately there are only two vendors in the state and First Student had the lower bid. He acknowledged that budget has increased, but believes it has not been under spent.

- **Litchfield Middle School**

Mr. Lecklider presented the FY21 LMS Recommended budget with a bottom line total of \$148,758, which is a decrease of \$140 from FY20. He noted that the overall focus is on STEAM, which has taken on a lot of life. He indicated that the robotics program has grown. He highlighted increases and decreases in the budget:

- Increase of \$1,500 in Science supplies for Project Lead the Way refill kits
- Increase of \$793 in Co-curricular supplies for Lego Robotics (\$543) and Green Raiders Recycling Conference (\$250)
- Increase of \$2,500 for tutoring needs for 504 students
- Decrease of \$900 for the phasing out of paper student agendas for grades 7 and 8
- Decrease of \$2,693 in Library Services as a result of furniture that was purchased last year.

Mrs. Douglas asked about Xello software budgeted in FACS. Mr. Lecklider indicated that was moved from another part of the budget to FACS because it is specific to FACS.

Mrs. Douglas asked if the piano accompaniment budgeted in Music Education is new. Mr. Lecklider indicated the growth in the choral program has resulted in a need for an accompanist for concerts.

Mrs. Douglas asked why the School Board added \$957 to the transportation budget. Mr. Izbicki indicated it was added after the rate increase was recalculated.

- **Griffin Memorial School**

Dr. Jette mentioned that the district is monitoring the enrollment number in Kindergarten and there is a possibility to add a fifth kindergarten teacher and an additional paraprofessional. He explained that is already budgeted in the FY20 budget and based on class sizes if we had hit 76 students in the summer we would have added the positions, but we did not spend it.

He indicated enrollment is projected to 81 students next year and the School Board was trying to decide the best way to proceed. Dr. Jette commented one thought was this may be a continual problem that is budgeted year after year with the possibility of not using it. The other thought was to create a Kindergarten Expendable Trust Fund and park the money in that fund to be used when it is needed. The other possibility it to return the funds to the taxpayers and raise it again.

Mrs. Douglas believes a trust fund is a good idea.

Dr. Jette commented that there is a possibility if we structure the warrant article with Budget Committee support and eliminate the funds from the budget and the article does not get approved, we will not have that money in the budget.

Mrs. Douglas asked if there is room for a fifth kindergarten class at GMS.

Dr. Jette indicated there will be a space need, but we have had many students in the building in the past. He noted there will be an additional grade 3 teacher next year as well.

Mr. Thompson indicated that if we needed a fifth kindergarten class, we would move one of the PK classes in the portable back into the building and find room for the professionals in that space (ESOL, 2 Title I tutors, Math tutor, Enrichment program). He commented we may have to give up the music room and put music on a cart. Another possibility would be that technology is portable and can be delivered in classrooms; however, the more sophisticated our specialist programs become, the more difficult it is to move our programs around.

Mr. Meyers commented this is a School Board issue and the Budget Committee should concentrate on the budget.

There was some brief debate between the Chair and the School Board representative. Mr. Cutter called the question about the teacher.

Dr. Jette commented we can take what is in the budget for Kindergarten and deposit it into a trust fund if it is approved. He indicated an additional grade 3 teacher is needed due to the current grade 2 numbers.

Mr. Thompson mentioned that enrollment in grade 2 is at 100 students and we project over the next three years we will gain 43 students at the elementary level. He indicated space continues to be a concern.

Mr. Thompson presented the FY21 GMS Recommended budget with a bottom line total of \$172,160, which is a decrease of \$530 from FY20. He highlighted increases and decreases to the budget:

- Increase of \$1,278 in Regular Education Furniture-Additional for 2 standing desks for students in a room with little storage
- Increase of \$1,716 in Services for the Teacher of the Deaf and tutoring services, which is student specific

- Increase of \$2,310 in Co-Curricular Activities Dues and Fees, which includes registration fees for students for Lego Robotics teams and registration fees for students for the Great East Festival (School Board voted to pay for the festival fee for each student, but not for the Canobie Lake portion)
- Decrease of \$1,583 in Regular Education Furniture-Replacement because we will focus on desks next year instead of chairs
- Decrease of \$2,876 in Art Education Furniture-Replacement as the furniture was replaced last year
- Decrease of \$1,524 in Reading Supplies
- Decrease of \$1,084 in Co-Curricular Supplies as the lunch wagons were budgeted last year and not needed in this budget.

Mrs. Douglas asked about the potential repair for audiometers budgeted in Nurse Services Repairs/Maintenance. Mr. Thompson indicated that is the actual cost from this year.

Mrs. Douglas cautioned against budgeting potential expenses and raising taxes on things that may not be needed. Mr. Izbicki indicated that we do not know from year to year.

Mr. Cutter commented when touring the school one of the things mentioned was a temporary wall. He indicated he did not see it in the GMS budget. Mr. Thompson indicated that is budgeted in Buildings and Grounds.

- **New and Expanded Positions**

Dr. Jette presented requests for new and expanded positions. All requests include salaries and benefits costs. He noted that the School Board took action on these requests at their last meeting.

- Grade 5 Teacher - LMS \$88,234.49 (enrollment numbers)
 - School Board voted not to support the request
- Additional Hours for Administrative Assistants - GMS \$14,466.64 (afternoon coverage to ensure there is an adult in the building if a student is brought back by a bus)
 - School Board voted not to support the request
 - School Board feels that hours of existing employees can be staggered
- Library Monitor - GMS \$14,078.15
 - School Board voted not to support the request
 - Covered by parent volunteers
- Grade 3 Teacher - GMS \$88,207.69
 - School Board voted to approve the request
- Computer Teacher, Part Time to Full Time - GMS \$58,434.86
 - School Board voted not to support the request
 - School Board feels more important to determine how to integrate technology in the classroom vs a stand alone program
- Gounds 75% - District Wide \$23,249.18 (reduce need for summer help)
 - School Board voted not to support the request
- Custodian - CHS \$53,051.57
 - School Board voted to approve the request
- Special Education Facilitator \$48,563.95
 - School Board voted not to support the request.

- **Food Service**

Dr. Jette indicated that Lauren Crowley, Director of Food Services, has brought new life into the department and numbers for lunch sales have increased significantly.

Mr. Izbicki presented the FY21 Food Service budget and explained that it is a self-sustaining program that received money from federal and state sources and does not impact the tax rate. He reported this year we replaced some equipment that was aging and unsafe and improved staffing. He indicated the department actively participates in the State Buying Group, which has resulted in lower supply costs. Mr. Izbicki pointed out the department no longer has a bookkeeper position. He reported there are not large equipment purchases included in the budget. He noted that the only new purchase is the Meals Plus (point of sale) software.

Mr. Izbicki reported the Department of Revenue Administration received the District's revenues today and we should be seeing the tax rate soon.

7. REPORTS

- **Town Business**
 - **General Update**

Mr. Leary indicated that the Select Board meets next Monday and there will be a public hearing for the acceptance of unanticipated revenue.

8. MEMBER INPUT/ NEW BUSINESS

- **Nomination & Voting of BC Representative to the Town Capital Improvement Plan Committee**

Mrs. Douglas indicated that the Committee discussed and voted to allow a non-voting member to serve on the Town Capital Improvement Plan Committee.

MOTION: by Mrs. Douglas

Move to nominate Andrew Cutter to serve as an ex-officio member of the Town Capital Improvement Plan Committee

SECOND: by Mr. Hayes

VOTE: 7-0-1, with Mr. Cutter abstaining

The motion carried.

- **Reconsideration of BC Representation on the District Capital Plan Committee**

Mrs. Douglas indicated there is a current request for a member of the Budget Committee to serve as a fully participating member of the District Capital Plan Committee. She does not believe that member should be a voting member.

MOTION: by Mr. Cutter

Move to nominate Nicole Fordey to serve as an ex-officio member of the District Capital Plan Committee

SECOND: by Mr. Leary

VOTE: 7-0-1, with Mrs. Fordey abstaining

The motion carried.

Mr. Cutter commented that he received the Excel formatted FY21 School Board Recommended budget and performed an analysis. He indicated that in the budget has increased \$3.5M since what was actually spent in 2017. He expressed interest in the District Wide accounts and GMS accounts, as well as Salaries/Benefits and Conferences/Travel accounts. Mr. Cutter noted in the past this is where this Committee has reduced the budget. Miscellaneous accounts have increased nearly \$30,000 in a short period of time; Salaries/Benefits at GMS has increased almost \$1M; Travel and Conferences has doubled over the last 3 years; there are large increases where we are hearing there are none.

Mr. Cutter encouraged every Committee member to look at the information in total and have a discussion about it. He commented the budget is increased \$1M between the current year and next year and believes that growth is unsustainable.

9. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

- **Budget Schedule**

Mrs. Douglas indicated the Budget Committee will not meet on December 3 and 10, but will schedule an additional meeting for Thursday, December 12. She reported the Budget Hearing will be on January 16, 2020, which provides more time for a thorough review.

10. ADJOURN

MOTION: by Mr. Cutter

Move to adjourn the meeting.

SECOND: by Mr. Hayes

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion carried.

Next meeting: November 21, 2019

The meeting was adjourned at 9:49 p.m.

Recorded by: Michele E. Flynn, Recording Secretary

Approved: