

**Draft Minutes of the
Litchfield Budget Committee Meeting
Held on November 19, 2020**

The Litchfield Budget Committee held a meeting on Thursday, November 19, 2020, at Litchfield Town Hall, Two Liberty Way, Litchfield, NH 03052 and remote locations.

In response to COVID- 19 and the resulting need to practice social distancing, the meeting will be held remotely via Webex and be broadcast live via LCTV

PRESENT: A Cutter (Chair), N Fordey (Vice Chair), K Douglas, B Hodgkins, W Hayes, J Son, S Taylor, B Bourque (School Board Representative), R Leary (Selectmen Representative)

Absent:

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Cutter called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

● **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

2. PUBLIC INPUT

Residents were encouraged to submit comments via email to Andrew Cutter, Budget Committee Chair, acutter@litchfieldnh.gov. Messages must include commenter's first and last name & address.

There was no public input.

3. REVIEW / REVISION OF AGENDA

Members in person at Town Hall: Andrew Cutter, Jon David Son, Nicole Fordey, Robert Leary, Brion Hodgkins, Keri Douglas, Scott Taylor, Brian Bourque. Members remote: William Hayes

Mr. Cutter announced the addition of a conversation regarding conflicts of interest, opening remarks from the Budget Committee, Superintendent and School Board Chair.

4. CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. Cutter shared correspondence that included school budget analysis, weekly town report, agendas for the School Board budget reviews, draft minutes, detailed agendas, notification from the Fire Department regarding the passing of Peter Dionne, district budget report, a request for an electronic copy of the FY22 Budget, notification of cancellation of the November 12 Budget Committee meeting, Business Administrator's correspondence regarding the final budget, review of the 2003 warrant article, questions from Mr. Son regarding the Professional Development costs in the FY22 District budget and response from Ms. Widman, FY22 District Budget in Excel format, confirmation of Deliberative Session dates, questions from Mr. Taylor regarding the FY22 District Budget and responses from the District, budget updates, letter of resignation as

School Board Budget Committee representative from Mrs. Harrison, conflict of interest agenda item request.

5. REVIEW / ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

- **October 15, 2020**
- **October 22, 2020**

MOTION: by Mrs. Fordey

Move to approve the amended minutes from October 15 and October 22, 2020

SECOND: by Mr. Leary

VOTE carried by roll call vote:

Mrs. Fordey, yes; Mr. Hodgkins, yes; Mr. Bourque, abstain; Mr. Leary, yes; Mr. Taylor, yes; Mr. Son, yes; Mr. Hayes, yes; Mr. Cutter, yes.

- **Conflict of Interest**

Dr. Jette commented that there are questions regarding conflicts of interest of some Budget Committee members relative to the district budget. He requested to have a discussion about what those conflicts are and how the Budget Committee will proceed.

Mr. Son indicated that he sent a message to Mr. Cutter to inform him he will abstain in votes pertaining to district software as the company he works for is a vendor from which the district purchases software.

Mr. Bourque clarified there are two Budget Committee members with spouses that work for the district.

Dr. Jette acknowledged that this type of discussion has taken place in the past and asked if it could be repeated for new members and members of the public. He asked about the expectations of committee members voting on the district budgets with spouses who work for the district.

Mr. Leary indicated he abstained from voting on the LSSA contract. He commented he feels comfortable that he can sit in on budget discussions.

Mr. Bourque mentioned that the issue is benefitting from financial gain due to a relationship with someone who works for the district.

Mr. Taylor asked Mr. Bourque if he would abstain from votes regarding athletics salaries because his wife is a coach for the athletics program.

Mr. Bourque indicated he has abstained in the past and would do so going forward.

Mrs. Douglas commented that she trusts the people here will do what they feel is right and best for the community. She indicated she is hearing there is no faith in the collective board.

Dr. Jette explained it is about transparency and was just a question about the procedure. He indicated no offense was intended.

Mr. Cutter commented the Committee will go through the detail of the budget and the bylaws addresses conflicts of interest. He indicated the Committee is not voting tonight and when the voting begins he will ask members who may have conflicts to abstain, but they will still be able to vote on the bottom line.

Mrs. Fordey commented that she trusts each member would abstain from voting if there is a conflict of interest.

Mr. Taylor commented he would abstain from voting with respect to the CHS Administrative Office, but feels that not having a voice in the overall Salaries/Benefits budget is out of line.

Mr. Hodgkins commented everyone agrees you have your own opinion.

Mr. Leary agreed with Mr. Taylor.

6. REPORTS

• Opening Remarks BC

Mr. Cutter thanked Dr. Jette, Mr. Izbicki and the School Board for the invitation to the School Board budget review meetings. He commented that it did not have the effect that it was meant to have since there was no participation in the process for the Budget Committee, no budget in front of the Committee members and no transparency from the school district. He indicated the Town budget process was completely different.

Mr. Hodgkins agreed that there was no involvement from the Budget Committee.

Mr. Son commented that he found the opportunity to listen to the presentations was beneficial and the budget was posted on the website. He noted if we had the document that was presented we would be in a better place and would see those changes being made. He indicated having department heads answering questions was helpful, but would prefer to have the information in front of the Committee.

Mr. Fordey commented that she can see the intent of the process for not having the department heads present twice. She agreed with Mr. Son that having the budget in front of the Committee members would have made it easier to follow. She believes that the one day budget review session the School Board has held in the past was more in depth. She indicated some areas of the budget that were not thoroughly discussed was due to being level funded or decreased. She felt that going forward the review process can be improved.

Mr. Hayes agreed with Mrs. Fordey. He commented in the first review session he could follow along even though he had no information in front of him. He suggested fine tuning the process going forward.

- **School Budget Review**

Dr. Jette commented that budget documents were available to the public to be accessed; however, he will ensure they are provided going forward. He indicated the process has been streamlined at this point and we are ready to dig deep in the budget and what is presented by the departments. With regard to the one day, Saturday budget review sessions, he noted no public was in attendance and it was believed that presenting the budget over the two evenings was beneficial to having the Budget Committee members there. He noted that the intent was for Committee members to ask questions and make comments. He added that the School Board can look at this process in the Spring and fine tune it.

Dr. Jette reviewed the FY22 Budget process. He and Mr. Izbicki met with all department heads and made reductions to their budgets. The budget was brought forward to the School Board. The School Board made reductions at the budget review sessions and at the School Board meeting last night. The FY22 Recommended Budget is \$90,000 over the Default budget, which is set by the School Board. Year 3 of the LEA CBA salary increases and Year 2 of the LSSA CBA salary increases, which were approved by the voters, are included in the budget. The big driver is the significant increases in NH Retirement that have been passed down to the local district and municipality. The district has been incredibly responsible with the COVID shutdown in March and took steps, consolidated services and recovered as much cost savings as possible. Voters were very supportive of the budget in March. When the pandemic occurred savings were realized and the district returned a large portion to the taxpayers to stabilize the tax rate and help those taxpayers who may have lost their jobs, had decreased wages and were struggling. Dr. Jette mentioned that the budget methodology of using three year averages will not work with this budget due to the COVID year.

Budget Committee members began their review of the FY22 Recommended Budget.

Mr. Hodgkins commented at one point it was mentioned that the total remaining at the end of the year was \$1.3M. He asked how much was left at the end of FY20 and what was done with it.

Mr. Izbicki indicated that the district returned approximately \$700,000 to the taxpayers and retained approximately \$400,000 to use for projects budgeted during the year and the LMS security project. He noted at one point there was \$1.3M remaining in FY20, but the end of year payroll had an impact.

- **CHS**

The FY22 CHS Recommended Budget was presented to the Budget Committee, with a total of \$595,279, which is a decrease of \$22,200 from FY21.

Mr. Taylor indicated he submitted 15 questions for CHS:

Business Education: Why is the workbooks line item showing a \$600 increase year over year? Are larger monitors needed? He commented he would be comfortable to reduce that line.

Physical Education: Repairs/Maintenance on the Ropes Course. Why has insurance increased? Increase for Strength Training. Response was \$1,300 is for the tracking service for strength training; free service used but there were equity and privacy concerns.

Freshman Seminar: Response was that it is used for team building.

Regular Education FACS: Why an increase of \$4,000? Response was the increase is due to the transition from fee based labs to materials paid for by the district and is based on equity with other course labs.

Mrs. Douglas commented that would have affected last year's budget and should not affect his year's budget. She wanted to know why the increase was so high if we are not spending as much.

Mr. Izbicki indicated that the FACS teacher cannot run labs this year.

Mrs. Douglas asked why we cannot encumber this year's funds for next year. Mr. Izbicki indicated that we are not able to encumber the funds for fees.

Mrs. Douglas asked if the savings this year will be retained for the taxpayers. Mr. Izbicki indicated it will go back into the general fund.

Mrs. Douglas asked for a commitment for that money to get returned and not used. Mr. Izbicki indicated that is not the Budget Committee's purview.

Mr. Taylor continued sharing the questions he asked and responses he received.

Music Education: Why is PPE budgeted and not rolled in with the general PPE? The response is that PPE for musical instruments is specialized.

Regular Education Textbooks: Why is \$1,500 budgeted for AP text replacements and \$1,600 budget for new textbooks? The response is that it is a new course and a double booking.

Mr. Taylor asked how many students are requesting AP Physics.

Principal Lonergan indicated that the enrollment for the AP courses are starting to stretch thin and he questions the ability to have the staffing to handle those classes.

Mr. Bourque commented that is not the purview of the Budget Committee. He encouraged Committee members to attend School Board meetings to learn more about the details of district and school operations.

Mr. Taylor commented when additional cost goes into the budget it is the purview of the Budget Committee.

Mrs. Douglas commented she appreciates seeing more AP courses offered.

Computer Education Textbooks: Why has this increased? The response is that textbooks also refers to online resources.

Vocational Education Tuition: What is the student enrollment for both schools? Can we consolidate to one school? The response was that the schools offer different courses and have varying enrollment. This is driven by student interests.

Mr. Taylor commented the cost of tuition and transportation raises questions. He asked if there are enough students to add these classes to the high school offerings?

Mr. Son commented that he sees much value in those programs. He asked if the Committee members could have a copy of those programs and the enrollment in the programs.

Dr. Jette commented the district will provide a better analysis for the Committee. He explained there is a federal investment in the CTE centers and is supported 50% by federal funds. He indicated that you may see an increase in the expense, but that is small compared to what it would cost to offer those classes at CHS. He added the district has a legal obligation to offer those programs to students due to federal funding and the law.

Guidance Services: Question on an increase in professional services relative to SATs. The response was the increase is based on 504 students' needs and tutoring. PSATs and SATs are included in that line.

Guidance Tuition: Question on if the Londonderry night program is necessary and if there is a better method for those students. The response was there are no resources to provide an adult learner program at CHS.

School Administration: Question regarding printing and binding for the Program of Studies. The response was the Program of Studies is printed for incoming high school students.

School Administration: Question on new textbooks and reducing the number of yearbooks to one. The response was that several copies are used by different departments and a single copy can get lost or significantly damaged.

Mr. Son asked if the information in the yearbook is in the student information system. Dr. Jette indicated if a student has left, the information is not in the student information system. He noted that yearbooks are helpful for historical information.

Athletic Transportation: Question on the necessity to travel to Varsity games. The response was there are 38 athletes and their equipment, which requires two buses to transport.

Regular Education: Question about textbooks and consumables still used for K-4 if they are using 1:1 computing.

Mr. Izbicki indicated textbooks are purchased on a rotating cycle and not all in the same year. He noted students are not using 1:1 computing and not everyone has a chromebook. He added consumables are still used.

Mrs. Douglas asked about the increase of \$2,400 in Music repairs.

Mr. Izbicki indicated that the instruments require specialized cleaning due to COVID and that line will level out when we are normalized.

Mrs. Douglas asked for a breakdown of that information so it does not get lost. She asked if the calculation for Software (Line 650) is correct and what the \$1,000 represents.

Dr. Jette indicated they will get that information for the Committee.

Mrs. Douglas commented science supplies was level funded last year and asked if there is a plan for spending this budget this year.

Mr. Izbicki commented it is early in the year and much of the supplies have not yet been purchased.

Mr. Taylor indicated that we may not see as much spending with the 4 x 4 schedule.

Mrs. Douglas asked if Theater Arts is moving forward this year.

Mr. Izbicki indicated that a production is expected this year. Dr. Jette pointed out this budget also supports the in school class and the production.

o LMS

The FY22 LMS Recommended Budget was presented to the Budget Committee, with a total of \$137,321, which is a decrease of \$5,351 from FY21.

Mrs. Douglas commented that Regular Education supplies reflects they are budgeted for 372 students and enrollment projections show 352 students.

Dr. Jette indicated that the number of students is a typographical error and supplies has been budgeted for 352 students.

Mrs. Douglas indicated she would like to see PPE supplies broken out from regular supplies in the budget.

Mrs. Douglas asked about the Music Software increase and commented that is a common theme across the schools in the budget. She asked about the supplies for Project Safeguard.

Mr. Cutter suggested if Mrs. Douglas has a list of questions that she share them with him and he will forward them to the SAU office for responses.

Mr. Lecklider reminded the Committee that Project Safeguard is budgeted for May 2022 and is planned to run.

Mr. Son asked if the new FM system that is budgeted can be purchased with this year's funds.

Mr. Izbicki indicated he is hesitant to move items out of the budget that are legally required.

o GMS

The FY22 GMS Recommended Budget was presented to the Budget Committee, with a total of \$142,873, which is an increase of \$672 over FY21.

Mrs. Douglas asked if the Library Book Replacement is annual or is planned to be replaced.

Mr. Mitchell indicated the annual book replacement is due to wear. He noted that a service called Sora has been started and there is a cost associated with ebooks, which is in that line.

Mr. Leary asked about the increase in Regular Education supplies.

Mr. Mitchell indicated that is based on an increase in enrollment projections.

o Curriculum

The FY22 Curriculum Development Recommended Budget was presented to the Budget Committee, with a total of \$167,343, which is an increase of \$257 over FY21.

Mr. Taylor asked about the increase in the Textbook line and asked if there is any insight as to where that is expected to fall or if there is a cycle that is being followed.

Mr. Izbicki indicated he would defer to Ms. Widman.

Dr. Jette commented it is very unusual that the district adopts multiple curriculum in one year. He indicated we try to adopt a cycle and we are trying to smooth out the past process.

Mr. Taylor asked about the point in which this will level out where you have that cycle you are looking for.

Dr. Jette offered to get that information. He indicated book costs vary by programmatic needs and course.

Mrs. Douglas asked about vertical alignment and why it has increased by 30% this year.

Mr. Leary asked about Improvement of Instruction is increased \$3,191 and, Line 641 has doubled from \$10,000 to \$24,000 from 2020.

Mrs. Fordey pointed out that the increase of \$3,191 is the total increase in that budget.

o Technology

The FY22 Technology Recommended Budget was presented to the Budget Committee, with a total of \$386,363, which is a decrease of \$45,145 from FY21.

Mr. Taylor submitted a question regarding the cost for a touchscreen chromebook vs a non-touch screen chromebook. He noted the response is that the touchscreen chromebook is \$250.

Mr. Izbicki indicated that will be removed to be purchased with end of year funds and we will analyze the most effective grade level for those chromebooks.

Mr. Son commented he would advocate that they be provided for the K-2 level and Special Education students.

Mr. Taylor clarified the reason for the questions was around the incoming fifth grade.

Mr. Cutter asked about the cost of damage to the touchscreens.

Mr. Izbicki indicated they are self-insured. He noted the IT Department will make the first repair and any damage after that repair will be the family's responsibility.

Mr. Son commented that there is an opportunity for cost savings for replacements, for example, at the high school level by having them bring their own devices. He suggested exploring a way for the students to bring devices in safely and securely, which would result in savings to the district in the future for replacement chromebooks.

Mr. Izbicki indicated that the IT Department feels that, from a security standpoint, the consistency of the program and software [in chromebooks] is the driver. He noted over time there will be cost savings. He indicated bringing their own devices would increase costs to support the type of program loaded into the device.

Dr. Jette commented he has been in schools, during NEASC visits, that have a bring your own device policy. He indicated when NEASC visits a school like that the teachers have to explain how to operate with different devices.

Mrs. Douglas asked about the increase for Go Guardian.

Mr. Izbicki indicated he will follow up with Mr. Pelletier. He noted as we expand 1:1 throughout the district the costs will increase.

Mrs. Douglas commented that there was \$50,000 budgeted for a wireless replacement last year and another budgeted this year. She asked if that is the annual cost.

Mr. Izbicki indicated it is an annual cost on the 5 Year Replacement Plan.

Mr. Son asked why there are 28 desktops budgeted and if they are for specialized use in labs.

Mr. Izbicki commented this line was reduced from two labs to one lab because one of the labs no longer needs desktops.

Dr. Jette commented the desktops are needed to run Robotics and Project Lead the Way.

Mrs. Douglas asked why the nursing software has doubled at all schools.

Mr. Izbicki indicated the hosting fee increased and offered to follow up with Mr. Pelletier.

Mrs. Fordey asked for an explanation of removing the cost of the chromebooks for year end funding.

Mr. Izbicki explained at School Board discretion, we provide a list of items for encumbrances to purchase items for the next year with some remaining year end funds.

o Special Services

The FY22 Special Services Recommended Budget was presented to the Budget Committee, with a total of \$1,278,255, which is a decrease of \$78,444 from FY21.

Mr. Taylor asked about the \$89,000 decrease in Handicapped Tuition.

Mr. Izbicki indicated that what is budgeted is based on current students and the information we have now.

Dr. Jette asked the Committee to keep in mind this is one of those budgets for which we are legally obligated to provide services. He commented it is a pleasant surprise to see a reduction in the Special Education budget, but it is also based on a projection 20 months ahead and a student can come into the district at any time, for which we have to provide services by law. He noted that there is a reserve fund we will use if needed.

Mr. Izbicki pointed out that Catastrophic Aid has been greatly reduced based on the number of students.

Mrs. Douglas commented it would be interesting to see those revenue numbers with declining enrollment.

Mr. Izbicki indicated the Legislature is actively working on education funding.

Mrs. Douglas asked about the increase in legal fees and noted the historical spending is less than what is funded.

Mr. Izbicki noted that many areas of this year's budget were impacted by the pandemic and how services are provided.

Mrs. Douglas believes the numbers do not support the increase and feels this is just an estimate or that the director thinks she may need it.

Dr. Jette commented that in the fall a substantial review was done regarding specialized services due to COVID and legal services were needed. He indicated that the expense may not have been reflected in the district's expenditures yet.

Mr. Cutter commented that Special Education funds not spent will be returned to the taxpayers.

Mr. Taylor submitted a question regarding the cost budgeted for district wide Psychology Professional Services. He indicated the response was that the district was not able to find a qualified psychologist and had to outsource.

Mrs. Douglas asked about a 10% increase in transportation.

Mr. Izbicki indicated that multiple providers are used for Special Education transportation as First Student cannot always provide those runs.

Mrs. Douglas commented the notes reflect First Student plus 10% and asked if that means we are not using First Student.

Mr. Izbicki indicated that is taking into account the rate and right of first refusal for First Student to provide that run, for which we have to compensate for the other vendor. He offered to check with the Director of Special Education for that information.

Mr. Son commented that we know regular education has seen a decline in students in transportation. He asked if that is the case with special education.

Mr. Izbicki indicated there is no way to predict how many runs will be needed for special education.

Dr. Jette clarified that ridership may be reduced, but that is by design due to COVID and physical distancing on the buses. He indicated the district still pays the same amount regardless. He noted there are very limited vendors that provide transportation services.

Mr. Taylor commented knowing how many special education students are remote will help us understand that may be the reason there are less students transported when we look at the actual expenditures.

Dr. Jette clarified that there could be savings in transportation, but there are other services that may be provided in the home.

Mr. Izbicki explained when the schools were closed in the Spring, the district benefitted from a clause contained in the transportation contract for a reduced rate adjustment due to the pandemic.

He indicated that he anticipates when the contract is re-negotiated the vendor will ask to remove that clause.

o Food Service

The FY22 Food Services Recommended Budget was presented to the Budget Committee, with a total of \$286,556, which is a decrease of \$15,918 from FY21.

Mr. Taylor asked about the increase in the software lease and if there will be another program.

Mr. Izbicki indicated that Food Services has transitioned from NutriKids to Meals Plus and there is an annual maintenance fee associated with it.

o Facilities

The FY22 Facilities Recommended Budget was presented to the Budget Committee, with a total of \$1,078,503, which is a decrease of \$252,244 from FY21.

Mr. Taylor commented there is a \$200,000 decrease in the Facilities budget and asked if this is a one time decrease.

Mr. Izbicki indicated we are focusing on maintaining what is being done in FY22. He noted we have a reserve fund and monies from the state, as well as the year end fund balance that we can use for larger projects.

Dr. Jette commented the priority this year has been ventilation and the systems are in various stages of conditions. He indicated the \$252,000 the district received is being used to get our ventilation repaired and running properly. He noted at the high school it was discovered the system was never balanced, which was what was causing some areas to be colder or hotter than others at various times of the year. He indicated that the repairs and adjustments that are taking place will impact the energy costs and increase efficiency.

Mr. Cutter commented that his issue with the work that is being performed is what will happen the following year. He asked if there will be a \$280,000 increase to restore \$1M funding on an annual basis.

Mr. Izbicki commented that he would anticipate there will not be a one time spike if we are doing this responsibly, as we have been doing. He indicated once the repairs are completed, maintenance costs should be lower going forward and contract cost for repairs will decrease.

Mr. Cutter commented he would like to avoid an uptick in the budget the following year.

Dr. Jette indicated we are trying to get after projects that have been delayed for 20 years. He explained we negotiated very hard with our energy suppliers. He commented that when looking at GMS there are projects that will not get done as the intent is to bring a new school forward, and if a new school is not approved \$1M will not be enough to address the problems.

Mrs. Fordey referred to Line 633, Electric, in the CHS budget, and asked if we are counting on a decrease in need based on these upgrades.

Mr. Izbicki indicated it is too soon to tell. He noted we took a reduction because of the final payment for the Smart Start program that has ended. He commented consultants are working with us on energy efficiency as well.

o Business

The FY22 Business Office Recommended Budget was presented to the Budget Committee, with a total of \$48,071, which is a decrease of \$186 from FY21.

There were no questions.

o Transportation

The FY22 Transportation Recommended Budget was presented to the Budget Committee, with a total of \$591,546, which is an increase of \$17,236 over FY21.

There were no questions.

o SAU

The FY22 SAU Recommended Budget was presented to the Budget Committee, with a total of \$27,515, which is an increase of \$2,518 over FY21.

There were no questions.

o School Board

The FY22 School Board Recommended Budget was presented to the Budget Committee, with a total of \$83,340, which is an increase of \$200 over FY21.

There were no questions.

o Human Resources

The FY22 Human Resources Recommended Budget was presented to the Budget Committee, with a total of \$9,001, which is an increase of \$525 over FY21.

There were no questions.

o Personnel

The FY22 Food Services Salaries & Benefits Recommended Budget was presented to the Budget Committee, with a total of \$327,854, which is an increase of \$14,238 over FY21.

The FY22 Salaries & Benefits Recommended Budget was presented to the Budget Committee, with a total of \$18,580,814, which is an increase of \$1,056,504 over FY21.

Mrs. Fordey commented at the beginning of the School Board meeting in the non-public summary, it was mentioned there was a new high school special education teacher hired, with a salary of \$42,291, but in the FY22 budget, the salary for that position is budgeted at \$58,000.

Dr. Jette indicated that the new hire salary has been prorated for this year due to a late start.

Mrs. Douglas commented on staffing levels at GMS. She indicated there is an additional teacher budgeted for grade 3, tech integrators, and according to enrollment projections there should be 4 grade 2 teachers and not 5, as is budgeted.

Dr. Jette indicated there is a reduction in grade 2 teachers and an addition of a teacher in grade 1.

Mr. Cutter commented that Mr. Meyers made a motion at the School Board meeting to remove all three tech integrators, which failed. He noted there was another motion to reduce 1 tech integrator. He wanted to know the difference in cost for the reduction.

Dr. Jette indicated each tech integrator was budgeted at \$86,182, which would be the difference.

Mr. Leary commented salaries at the SAU in administration have increased with raises up to 5.7%. He indicated that the Town has limited their increases to 3% and all administrators are at 2% increases. He noted that the salary for the Director of Human Resources has gone from \$67,000 in 2018 to \$79,000 in 2022.

Mr. Izbicki clarified that what is budgeted is this year's salary. He indicated there is no actual increase from FY21 to FY22.

Mr. Taylor asked if the SAU staff are part of a contract.

Mr. Izbicki indicated the SAU staff are not part of a union.

Dr. Jette explained that SAU salaries were linked to teacher raises, which was an increase in steps and cost of living adjustment, which became part of the salary pool. He indicated the pool is not allocated equally to employees. He commented that the district looks to be competitive and retain our administrative staff. He noted, for example, there is one person in the SAU pool who received a higher increase because of earning a Masters degree. He indicated we compare our SAU employees to other district cohorts and allocate increases appropriately.

Mrs. Douglas asked if non-union employees received raises in years when teachers did not have a contract.

Dr. Jette indicated he cannot answer that as that was prior to his hiring.

Mr. Cutter commented that salaries and benefits is a "sore thumb" budget. He indicated that the budget presentations were "smoke and mirrors" this year because the district decreased buildings and grounds and increased salaries and benefits. He believes that the real issue with the increase

of salaries in a large percentage is out of touch. He stated it is insensitive to those who are not getting raises in the public.

Dr. Jette commented that the salaries are not out of touch with the public school sector.

Mr. Cutter strongly suggested Dr. Jette go on camera, look at the taxpayers and tell them you approved raises of 5%, and say that to the person who cannot afford a Thanksgiving meal.

Dr. Jette commented he does not need to be lectured on what people can or cannot afford and that the district provides meals for families who are less fortunate.

Mr. Bourque indicated the public voted for the LEA and LSSA contracts, which are drivers of the increase in the salaries budget.

Mr. Cutter stated the district has artificially decreased buildings and grounds to inflate salaries and benefits.

Dr. Jette denied the allegations, as did Mr. Bourque.

Mrs. Douglas commented the tech integrators just happened to appear in the budget.

Dr. Jette explained that 2.5 positions were reduced from the budget because they were no longer needed so that these positions could be paid for.

Mr. Son commented that at the School Board budget review session he heard salary increases of 5.6% across the board for those positions, but then heard Dr. Jette say the increases were 2.5% to 3%.

Dr. Jette commented that a 3% increase was budgeted to mirror teachers raises then applied to the salary pool for non-union employees, which are not distributed equally. He explained coming into this year we looked at what teachers had and mirrored what they have. He encouraged Committee members to let him know if that is too much. He indicated we have already had the conversation with the School Board.

Mr. Son commented that the 5.6% increase will be divided up among the Administrative Team, which will be determined by the Superintendent.

Dr. Jette indicated that is correct. He commented that a member of the SAU staff has already been approved by another district with an offer of an increase in salary. He noted we have to be cautious that we do not lose good people.

Mr. Taylor commented that he understands competitive balance, but there is also a point where taxpayers cannot fund it. He indicated that if there is no control over the retirement system contributions that has to be factored into the negotiation of salary. He believes that is a changeable benefit.

Mr. Izbicki indicated that the district cannot control that because it is governed by law.

Mr. Taylor commented that looking at the last 10 years a growth cycle can be determined when entering into negotiations.

Mr. Bourque indicated retirement is state driven and mandatory. He commented we cannot negotiate a contract with no increase.

Mr. Taylor indicated the taxpayers cannot sustain the increases.

Dr. Jette commented it is important to point out that the only way it can be changed is through the Legislature. He encouraged Committee members to call their legislator. He reminded the Committee that the state used to contribute to the retirement system and passed in on to local districts and towns. He noted it does not result in someone getting more in retirement; it is an amount of money to match an actuarial obligation.

Mr. Izbicki commented that the state retirement system is underfunded and if everyone in the district retired today, taxpayers would have to pay the state \$21M. He indicated we have to carry this on our financial statements.

Mrs. Douglas commented we can complain all we want, but that money comes from local business owners. She indicated when negotiating contracts you need to look at the total cost.

Mr. Leary believes the upper administration raises are too high.

Mr. Hayes referred to the comment about finding and retaining qualified people and commented at some point we cannot compete with larger towns and districts. He indicated the benefits here are better than others and if someone wants to leave it is their choice.

Mr. Son commented this is a good conversation to have. He indicated we have people and we have “stuff” and 75% to 80% of the budget is people, which forces us to look at the remaining 20% to save costs. He noted we have to be strategic with that 20% to sustain the 80%.

Dr. Jette indicated that the district presented a strategic budget that resulted in cost savings to that 20% and we are being accused of “smoke and mirrors”.

Mr. Hodgkins commented you keep saying it cannot be done, but it can be done. He indicated people will not like it, but it can be done.

7. MEMBER INPUT / NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Cutter commented that he distributed the FY22 School District budget Excel file, but there are no recommendations included at this time. He indicated there is a three year comparison and includes the original budget with and without details, function account analysis, object account analysis and location account analysis.

Mr. Cutter indicated he broke out the following sections: Salaries/Benefits, Repairs/Maintenance, Travel/Conferences, Supplies, and Miscellaneous.

Mr. Taylor suggested to break out how much travel is required to maintain certifications.

Mr. Cutter indicated the Committee will begin voting on the district budget on December 3.

Mr. Son commented there are many questions and follow up items. He asked if it is reasonable to have responses going into December 3.

Mr. Izbicki indicated if the questions are compiled, listed and shared with him, he will share it with directors for their responses.

8. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

9. ADJOURN

MOTION: by Mrs. Douglas

Move to adjourn the meeting.

SECOND: by Mr. Hayes

VOTE to adjourn the meeting was taken by roll call:

Mr. Hayes, yes; Mr. Hodgkins, yes; Mrs. Fordey, yes; Mrs. Douglas, yes; Mr. Son, yes; Mr. Taylor, yes; Mr. Bourque, yes; Mr. Leary, yes; Mr. Cutter, yes.

The motion carried.

Next meeting: December 3, 2020

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Recorded by: Michele E. Flynn, Recording Secretary

Approved: