

**Sanborn Regional School District Budget Committee Meeting
December 5, 2013
Approved Meeting Minutes**

Call to Order: 7:10 PM

Attendance:

Members:	Barry Gluck, Chair	Tom Gasse, Vice Chair
	Beth Ann Scanlon	Paul Brisson
	Roger Clark	Patty Stephan
	Alan Felisberto	Nancy Ross, School Board Rep.

Administration: Brian D. Blake, Superintendent
Carol Coppola, Business Administrator

Public Comment: None.

Committee Comment: None.

Prior Meeting Minutes:

- **Motion:** Accept the minutes from the 11/20/2013 meeting (Mr. Gasse)
 - **Second:** Mr. Brisson
 - **Discussion:** none
 - **Vote:** 8-0 Motion passed

School Board Report (Ms. Ross):

- School board discussed budget and submitted questions.
- Asked Dr. Blake to get prioritization from leadership in needs versus wants.
- *Reminder:* 12/6 is the last day to respond to the district survey

Old Business:

- **Should BudComm Implement a Code of Ethics similar to that of the School Board?**
 - *Ms. Ross:* We are representatives of the District. Certain issues are not appropriate for public discussion. We are perceived to be in a position of knowledge. We must keep this in mind. Stick to the facts. Do not promote gossip.
 - *Mr. Gluck* (after group discussion): Duly noted. We should all act with the following in mind:
 - Once we vote as a committee, we all must respect the committee decision, even if it differs from our personal opinion.
 - Be sensitive to any personnel issues to which we may become privy, which we all understand is highly unlikely.
- **Next Steps: Letter to Encourage Community Involvement**
 - *Mr. Gluck:* Should we tweak and focus on the public hearing because we will have feedback, then discuss and vote again?
 - *Ms. Scanlon:* Felt strongly that hearing the presentation directly from leadership was a powerful opportunity. Having missed that opportunity makes her a bit pessimistic. Can we create an FAQ to share this information on the BudComm page?
 - *Mr. Gluck:* Is there anything sensitive we should not share?
 - *Dr. Blake:* Create topical areas and let the administration decide how it should be presented. Want to answer clearly and with appropriate sensitivity to the issues.

- *Mr. Gluck:* Administration will create and post it then.
- *Mr. Brisson:* Possible to get printouts for folks who are not online as much?
- *Mr. Gluck:* Post administration's slideshow presentation as well, to help community become more acquainted with the issues? FYI, no email messages have been sent to the BudComm mailbox yet.

New Business:

- **Discuss Sanborn Regional School District Budget Presentation**

- *Group Consensus:* We will read questions and answers submitted to the administration by the School Board and the Budget Committee on our own and submit additional questions prior to the next meeting. At this meeting, we will address any additional questions.
- *Mr. Gluck:* Freemont began sending their high school students to Sanborn (and paying our district a tuition) in 2006, when the new high school opened. Are we soliciting any other towns to see if there are other opportunities for similar arrangements?
- *Dr. Blake:* Newmarket would require a very long bus ride. Maybe Hampstead or Danville?
- *Mr. Gluck:* Are Massachusetts towns a possibility or are they too different in their requirements?
- *Dr. Blake:* Not sure. But their funding base is different from ours (not property-tax based). In that vein, Vermont would be more of a possibility.
- *Ms. Ross:* Massachusetts has school choice, which we may someday have. People are moving to our district for the quality of our schools.
- *Mr. Brisson:* But we are seeing declining enrollments. How is that true?
- *Ms. Ross:* The information comes from the administration, which did the research. People choose our district.
- *Mr. Gluck:* One factor that is beyond our district's control is that New Hampshire's population is aging at a statewide level.
- *Dr. Blake:* Also, students graduate, move on, and don't come back.
- *Mr. Gluck:* Perhaps we should consider a more aggressive policy to generate tuition agreements with additional districts. Exeter and Timberlane are already incorporated with other towns. What about East Kingston?
- *Mr. Clark:* What is the capacity of the high school? We are currently at 739.
- *Ms. Coppola:* I estimate 1200, but I will check.
- *Mr. Felisberto:* Do we track how many middle school students move to high schools outside our district? It looks like 8-12, which is way below averages.
- *Dr. Blake:* Enrollments can drop for so many different reasons: social, sports, opportunity (such as Philipps Exeter), family job changes and relocation...
- *Mr. Brisson:* If we see a decrease but no projected uptick, when we look at the budget in aggregate, are the numbers per student justifiable?
- *Dr. Blake:* We would lose 30 students per year, but only a few from each class, which would not create a situation in which we could eliminate a teacher (for an entire grade).
- *Mr. Gluck:* The administration has done a good job of making adjustments as needed and has been diligent in adjusting class size as necessary.
- *Ms. Coppola:* The challenge is when there is a decrease in enrollment for the school year, but more folks move to the district over the summer, we have to scramble to ensure we have sufficient teachers. We cannot predict this.
- *Mr. Brisson:* Revenues and Expenditures chart on page 11 of Budget book: % change column seems based on FY13 Actuals, not Budget. Ms. Coppola will check into this.

- *Mr. Gluck:* The number of Full-Time Equivalent Employees (FTEs) has only increased by 13 (from 304 to 317) over the last seven years. This represents only a 4% increase over 7 years.
- *Ms. Ross:* Paraprofessionals in the budget are requested for preschool for kids in need and funded by elimination of a 5th grade teacher position due to declining enrollments. We are currently paying for private education for three of these students because currently we do not have appropriate accommodations within the district. The kindergarten paraprofessionals are for safety and supervision.
- *Mr. Brisson:* Dr. Blake hinted that a decrease in outside funding will also mean increased property taxes for our towns (an 11% increase for Kingston and a 12% increase for Newton for just the school's part of the tax rate. Appears that schools represent approximately 80% of the tax rate. We must be cognizant of any increase in these rates.
- *Mr. Clark:* Even though the valuation declined in Kingston, the rate per thousand increased. He basically broke even.
- *Ms. Stephan:* Newton's second half bill was higher. People are already upset.
- *Mr. Brisson:* The collective bargaining agreement had a big impact. We must quantify that, as it was already voted on and approved by voters. That part of the increase is not negotiable.
- *Mr. Gluck:* We must also ensure voters understand the state mandates for teacher retirement and benefits and the decreases in grants and funding, over which we have no control.
- *Mr. Clark:* Additional people are being requested for this budget (see page 93). Do those figures include benefits?
- *Ms. Coppola:* Yes, includes all associated benefits in the figures for all new positions. The Bakie paraprofessionals are being added to support existing kindergarten class teachers: two paras for full-day kindergarten, which are more than funded by the elimination of the grade 5 teacher. The actual cost for the new paras will depend on the level of experience of the candidates.
- *Ms. Stephan:* As a general comment, I see nothing that seems frivolous in this budget.
- *Mr. Felisberto:* Are we trying to find grant money for the seminary building after the preservation alliance's naming it one of the "Seven to Save?"
- *Ms. Coppola:* There is some money out there. Proceeding with research.
- *Ms. Scanlon:* Agrees with Ms. Stephan. There is not a lot of fat. We are absorbing more and more fixed costs, which are difficult to "sell" to voters and will generate lots of discussion. Looking forward to seeing prioritized list of Wants and Needs from administration before we get too much further.
- *Mr. Clark:* As a taxpayer, I think the general public and people I speak to were happy with adding \$1M for the two teachers' collective bargaining contracts, but they do not want to pay any more than that.
- *Mr. Felisberto:* Capital improvements represent a big line item in the budget. Hopes we do not chop capital improvements. Energy improvements save money in the long run. \$1.2M/year over five campuses is not a lot to spend when you look at the big picture. Most of the line items are for maintaining to prevent higher repair costs later on. Lots of cost/benefit in this capital expenditure plan.
- *Ms. Coppola:* Regarding lighting, there are plans to upgrade to LED. Already did some packing lots and the Swasey Gym. Did not do Memorial and Bakie, which need upgrades, but not before an overall plan for those buildings is complete. Auto on/off lighting was acquired for high school with money from Unitil. Cost/benefit analysis for elementary schools showed they would not pay themselves off. Always trying to save money on utilities so we can put the savings back into education.
- *Mr. Gluck:* When will prioritized list of needs and wants be ready?

- *Dr. Blake:* Next week.
- *Mr. Brisson:* Final numbers last year resulted in \$571K returned to taxpayers. Would it benefit the district to retain the money?
- *Ms. Coppola:* To handle it any other way requires a warrant article. And it helps smooth out fluctuations in tax rates. There's a formula for how much we can retain. The school board can vote on this. Could vote to create a warrant article regarding unexpended funds to move to Cap Improvement fund for future needs.
- *Mr. Brisson:* For what purpose(s) can we use the balance in the Facility Use fund (\$295,464)
- *Ms. Coppola:* There's not much actually there. The School Board voted to use \$100K to remove a dangerous section of the building. The overall cost is expected to be close to \$200K. The Facility Use Revolving fund has a current balance of \$66,717.
- *Mr. Brisson:* How and when can we spend the Special Education Trust Fund balance:
- *Dr. Blake:* It was established years ago to cover unanticipated special education costs, which had at one point caught the district unprepared. If a student with extensive needs moves into the district after the budget closes, we can use this money with School Board approval. If we do not spend it, it takes a warrant article to get it back to the fund. It is set up to be refunded to taxpayers. To replenish the fund, we would need a warrant article specifically to raise funds to raise money for the expendable trust fund for the purpose of increasing the balance of the Special Education fund. Requires a new warrant article each year to move money from the General fund to any other fund.
- *Ms. Coppola:* The cost of special education outside the district can be between \$40 and well over \$100K for out of state. (Perkins School for the Blind, for example, is \$140K/yr.) We get minimal funding for catastrophic aid and Medicaid.
- *Mr. Gluck:* Please submit any additional questions to the Chair via email, by Sunday evening for the next meeting. Please come to the next meeting with a number in mind, along with justification for it.

Public Comment:

- *Ms. Cheryl Gannon:* Please review the following items:
 - \$25K for permanent video equipment for the School Board room: any estimate of cost comparison to what we are currently doing? Also remember that the equipment is not movable and, thus, could not be used for important public meetings, like the public hearing and deliberative sessions.
 - Facilities Presentation:
 - Would the district consider cancelling the lease agreement with the Charter School on June 30, 2014, which would stop that revenue (as well as the cost to operate it)?
 - What would the cost be if the contract continues until June 30, 2015?
 - Would the district consider selling the property? What would be the budget impact?

Committee Comment:

- *Mr. Gluck:* See *A Christmas Carol* this Friday and Saturday evening at the high school, put on by the Middle School Drama Club.

Schedule of Future Meetings:

- 12/12/13: Budget Committee Meeting (Mr. Clark will be absent)

- 12/19/13: Budget Committee Meeting (Ms. Stephan will be absent and requests that someone take notes in her place)
- 01/02/14: Budget Committee Meeting (vote)
- 01/09/14: Budget Committee Meeting (assemble presentation)

Motion: To Adjourn (Mr. Gasse)

- Second: Ms. Stephan
- Vote: 8-0
- Meeting Adjourned at 9:20 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Patty Stephan, Secretary