

Nottingham Budget Committee Meeting

Date: Thursday, January 3, 2024

Un-Official Minutes

Members Present: Michael Kelly, Chairman; Owen Friend-Gray, Vice Chairman; John Decker, Member; Sandra Jones, Member; Jeffrey Morrison, Member; Brent Tweed, Member; Thomas Butkiewicz, Member; Charlotte Fyfe, Member; Robert Kelly, Member; Sandra Jones, Member; Megan Sebasco, School Board Representative; John Morin, BOS Representative

Members Absent:

Others Present: Bill Roy, School Business Administrator; Ronna HasBrouck, Superintendent; Susan Levenson, School Board Chairperson

Call To Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m.

Approval Of Minutes: 12/21/23 and 12/28/23

Mr. Butkiewicz made the motion to approve the minutes of 12/21/23 as amended. Mr. Morrison seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of 10-0-1.

Mr. Owen Friend-Gray made the motion to approve the minutes of 12/28/23 as amended. Mr. Decker seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of 10-0-1.

School Budget Continued

Ms. Sebasco stated that the School Board had seen some of the new numbers the previous night and as a result, had scheduled a work session for the next Tuesday. She asked if there were any suggestions, they would appreciate hearing them tonight so they could be discussed at the meeting on Tuesday.

Ms. HasBrouck stated that they had found a miscalculation in their previously proposed budget having to do with health insurance.

Ms. HasBrouck stated they had provided the committee with a one page summary of the changes to the budget since the last meeting with the Budget Committee. This summary did not include the warrant article she had suggested the prior night which would create a capital reserve fund for tuition (*for high school students*). The current tuition per student is around \$20,000. If new students move into the town, the town has to pay an additional \$20,000 per student added to the budget. This is a huge amount when dealing with such a tight budget. Enrollment data shows that it is trending up.

Mr. Butkiewicz asked what the current enrollment is. Mr. Friend-Gray stated it is around 515 or 518 students and Ms. HasBrouck agreed. Mr. Butkiewicz asked what it was when the school first opened. Ms. HasBrouck did not know but stated that she would look it up.

Mr. Michael Kelly asked about the back page that was provided. Mr. Roy explained that he provided additional information on salaries including health insurance, buyouts, dental and FICA.

Mr. Robert Kelly asked what the difference was between what was presented before and what the new total is after correcting the miscalculation. Mr. Roy stated that it was about \$211,000 additional since the last time they met with the committee.

Mr. Roy stated that they amended the telephone budget. He said the \$900 was for the copper lines to the elevator and fax machine. The extra \$5,000 was miscellaneous repairs and the previous Superintendent's cell phone bill. They ended up removing all of that since there is a separate line item now for the Superintendent's cell phone.

There was discussion regarding the insurance GMR and how the school has no control over the percentage change each year. It is what the insurance companies tell them. And therefore, they do not include that in the budget to be voted upon.

Mr. Decker stated that he felt that the addition of the Math Interventionist should be brought out of the budget and put on a warrant article.

Ms. Jones clarified that even though the school is working to stick with the 4% cap on the budget increase, they do not legally need to do that since the tax cap is only on the town budget; not on the school budget.

Ms. Jones asked what the Math Interventionist's salary is. Mr. Roy stated it is \$86,684.88 not including benefits. So, it is actually closer to \$90,000. Ms. Jones stated she supports putting that position on a warrant article.

Mr. Tweed asked about how much Ms. HasBrouck was thinking of putting on the warrant article for tuition. Ms. HasBrouck stated that she thought \$40,000 would be a good start. Mr. Tweed clarified how the capital reserve fund works in that the money in those funds can only be used for the specified purpose. The School Board can approve the use of the money.

Mr. Robert Kelly asked if the school had any more warrant articles to add. Ms. HasBrouck stated that other than the traditional ones, they were not prepared to discuss any others at this time.

Mr. Butkiewicz suggested making grade 6 (six) a two-teacher grade instead of a three-teacher grade since there are only 49 kids in that grade. He stated that would eliminate one whole position and leave the classroom sizes at 24 kids per class. Ms. Sebasco explained that at the middle school level, the

79 teachers teach specific courses such as math or science. To remove one would remove that subject
80 from the grade. Mr. Butkiewicz asked why teachers cannot teach more than one subject. Ms.
81 HasBrouck stated that one of the teachers in grade 6 (six) does already teach two subjects.

82
83 *(Ms. Levenson's comments were mostly inaudible due to not speaking into a microphone.)*

84
85 Mr. Butkiewicz stated he felt that the middle school classes were very small from 16-18 students and
86 that some of the teachers were very expensive.

87
88 Ms. Fyfe stated that she did not think that removing the position was good for the students and the
89 board should not be going back and forth discussing it.

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91 Mr. Butkiewicz commented that since there are 5 (five) special education teachers and 22
92 paraprofessionals, why not hire another special education teacher to take some of the students who
93 require paraprofessionals including, what he presumed to be some of the "chair flippers that are causing
94 disruption in the classes", so that some of the paraprofessional positions could be removed.

95
96 Ms. HasBrouck stated that they could look into the IEP's of all the students and see if that was an option
97 in the future. But, right now, it is not an option since the paraprofessionals are IEP driven. She also
98 spoke directly to Mr. Butkiewicz regarding his statement about "chair flippers" and that he should not
99 be speaking about students in that manner. Mr. Michael Kelly requested that the board move on.

100
101 Mr. Tweed stated that he supported Mr. Butkiewicz' questions. He asked for the law or statute
102 regarding the requirement of paraprofessionals in the classroom. Ms. Sebasco stated that it is under the
103 IDEA 94:142 Law, a federal law, which requires that students be educated in the least restricted
104 environment, which means that the students need to be in a classroom with other students of their age.
105 Putting the special education students in one room away from the other kids is against this law. There
106 was further discussion on this topic.

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108 Ms. HasBrouck asked the board to please trust in the school's budget since they are the professionals in
109 their area and know what needs to be in the budget and what does not.

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111 Mr. Friend-Gray asked what the difference of the numbers was from last year to the current proposed
112 budget this year. Mr. Roy stated that last year the budget had a 4.06% increase and the proposed
113 budget increase for this year was 5.33%. Mr. Friend-Gray wanted to know what the difference was after
114 taking out the math interventionist and putting it on a warrant article. Mr. Roy answered that it would
115 be around 4.5-4.75%. Mr. Friend-Gray stated he supported the budget with those figures and felt
116 comfortable leaving it that way.

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118 Mr. Michael Kelly stated his disagreement with how the school is dealing with the disciplinary actions
119 within the school, such as the social emotional learning and having the white space. He also expressed
120 his concern for the library books that are being allowed in the school. He suggested cutting the budget

for the library books by \$3,000. Ms. Jones asked Mr. Michael Kelly to confirm that he was suggesting the library not buy any books. Mr. Michael Kelly confirmed that yes that is what he was suggesting. Mr. Tweed supported Mr. Michael Kelly's comments on the content of the books.

Mr. Robert Kelly suggested combining the grounds maintenance line for the school with that of the town. It was stated that it was a contracted amount at this time.

Mr. Friend-Gray suggested reducing the equipment line.

Mr. Butkiewicz suggested reducing the budget for the Athletic Department. Ms. Sebasco stated that the coaches are part of the collective bargaining agreement.

Mr. Butkiewicz also suggested eliminating the Curriculum Director position.

On Tuesday, January 9th, the school board will be meeting at 5:00 in the school library to discuss the school budget and line items. Then, on Thursday, January 11th, the final school budget will be presented to the Budget Committee. This is the official public hearing.

Ms. Sebasco explained that there was discussion of an additional warrant article for technology. She stated this would be an additional capital reserve fund but they did not have the details on that yet since it was just suggested the night before.

Mr. Butkiewicz stated that according to the document he was looking at, the Curriculum Director was costing \$233,000. It was discussed that this was a mistake. Mr. Butkiewicz asked what the true cost was. There was no answer.

Ms. Jones pointed out that this is a public school and if students need to start paying for things, such as sports, that creates a differentiation and that is not public. Mr. Tweed agreed that was a good point.

Mr. Butkiewicz suggested removing the School Board Moderator stipend from the budget.

Ms. HasBrouck, Ms. Levenson, and Mr. Roy left the table at 9:20 as did Mr. Morin.

Sub-Committee Reports.

Mr. Robert Kelly stated that the CIP Committee will have many upcoming warrant articles. Ms. Sebasco stated that the school will be putting a warrant article in for 2025 for the modular additions at the school.

The BOS will be having a meeting on Monday the 8th to finalize their budget.

162 The next Budget Committee meeting is Tuesday, January 9th, when the BOS will present their budget to
163 the committee. This is an open public town budget hearing where anyone can speak. The Budget
164 Committee can make amendments to that budget that night or Thursday, January 18th. The Budget
165 Committee can only recommend or not recommend the warrant articles from the BOS. The Budget
166 Committee has to the 25th to do this.

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168 Mr. Michael Kelly said he looked into the School Board stipends and Nottingham was the highest among
169 the surrounding towns.

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171 Mr. Michael Kelly confirmed that Saturday, February 3rd is the Town Deliberative and Wednesday,
172 February 7th is the School Deliberative Session.

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174 Mr. Friend-Gray stated that he had summed up some of the budget from the last meeting on a
175 spreadsheet for the other committee members to review and work with.

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177 ***The motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Decker. The motion was seconded by Mr. Robert Kelly. The***
178 ***motion passed by a vote of 10-0-0.***

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180 The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

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182 Transcribed per video.
183 Respectfully Submitted,
184 Alana J. Kenney