

**Minutes**  
**Nottingham Budget Committee Meeting**  
**November 9, 2017**

**Members Present:** Jennifer Biron, Suzanne Edin, Miska Hadik, Erin Maskwa, Les Thompson, Peter White, Anthony Dumas – BOS Rep, Susan Levenson – School Board Rep

**Excused Absences:** Michael Koester, Carrie Lee, Karyl Martin,

**Other in Attendance:** Secretary Dawn Calley-Murdough, Jackie Snow, Marjorie Whitmore, Robert Gadomski, Chris Sousa

Chair Hadik called the meeting to order, introductions were completed, and asked all those present to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

**1<sup>st</sup> Draft 2018/2019 School Budget & Current Financials:** Ms. Snow provided the committee an introductory statement of the School Board budget, the work the board hastaken to start the budget process, and their plans to try and increase school services with the help of the Budget Committee.

Dr. Gadomski reported the default budget would be provided to the committee at the next school budget review meeting, along with the revenues, warrant articles, and staff salary information. Materials being provided included the proposed budget, health and dental insurances information with rates down an approximate 2.4%, special education rates and transportation, current contracts for the teachers and paraprofessionals that are in the second year of their contract period. Student enrollments were also included and will be watched carefully to help establish high school student counts and the budget will be adjusted as needed. The SAU and Preschool budget should be finalized by the end of November. Dr. Gadomski stated the committee is welcome to contact the SAU with any questions.

Ms. Levenson stated the report card provides results of the Smarter Balance testing and identifies the progress made by students.

Dr. Gadomski reviewed the budget page by page, highlighting the differences. The Teacher Salary account includes an additional teacher for a new world language program and a math specialist. There is an increase in the Reg. Ed Paraprofessional Salaries account with the addition of two staff members for the newly introduced full day kindergarten program.

Questions were asked about the two new para-professional positions. Ms. Snow stated the Curriculum Director indicates it is standard practice to include a paraprofessional with the teacher for full day kindergarten. Ms. Levenson reviewed the history in making the decision to add a full day kindergarten program in the existing school space, without adding new structure as previously discussed.

Dr. Gadomski reported the Health insurance accounts in all sections have been adjusted for the 2.4% reduction in premiums, using current enrollment levels and adding any qualifying new staff members. However, the amount does not account for any potential open enrollment changes that could take place. It was answered that teachers do pay a percentage of their health insurance premiums and the information is listed in the provided teacher and para professional contracts.

The Art Supply and Science Supply accounts have increased with the need to replenish materials, especially for kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade, and implementing new science standards.

Mr. Sousa reported on the increase for Classroom Textbooks, which is to increase the number of books for students moving into the school system, as well as the new world language text books in order to start a Spanish class.

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Ms. Whitmore stated she would double check the budget amount for Special Education Teacher Salaries, as the decrease listed seems exceptionally high, but there are staff changes that would reduce the prior year budget amount.

Special Education Preschool is an estimated amount, as the final amount will be approved at the next joint school board meeting, and the amount is shared by all three schools.

Mr. White asked about the increase for Spec. Ed. Tuition Non-public Elem account. It was stated the increase is based on the needs of current special student or new students. However, this amount could change depending on students moving into or out of the school system.

Mr. Thompson asked about the decrease in Special Education Software Elementary account. Dr. Gadomski reported the Special Education Administrator would need to answer that question. Ms. Levenson asked for verification for the amount and notes in the Special Education New Equipment account.

Co-Curricular remains almost level funded with a small decrease. Athletics had a small increase accounting for replacement of uniforms. Mr. Sousa reported the Athletic Salaries amount decreased with the removal of one coach, for cheerleading that hasn't been used in the past couple of years.

Mr. White asked if parents still help with fundraiser to support student athletic programs. It was stated parents do hold fundraisers and the PTA is also very active.

Guidance is two full time staff members and the salary amount reflects the teacher contract, and an additional amount has been included to the Guidance Enrichment account. Mr. Sousa reported on the successful guidance programs such as ropes courses, positive choice/anti-drug programs. The successes can be found in a reduction of bullying reports, and how the students are working with each other in team building and group activities; teachers meet every two weeks to discuss progress. Ms. Snow stated the Guidance Counselors are much more active with the students on a day to day basis.

Mr. White asked if the school has a DARE program at the Nottingham School and at the high schools in an effort to keep kids off drugs; is there a program for parents too. It was stated a new anti-drug class, Law Enforcement Against Drugs (LEAD) is being introduced, in addition to the DARE program by the Nottingham Police Department. Dr. Gadomski stated the high school utilizes with health classes but doesn't know if there is a formal DARE program.

Ms. Levenson stated there isn't a specific DARE class for parents, but the School Board and the other SAU schools have made efforts throughout the year to provide outreach programs for parents on a variety of programs. Mr. Sousa reviewed programs have been made available regarding the opioid crisis, bullying, and other programming.

Dr. Gadomski reported a school nurse retired providing decreases in the overall Health account.

Dr. Gadomski reported Special Contracted Services is adjusted based on current student needs, and the Contracted Service - ESL account has a significant increase.

Ms. Edin asked how the school funds any additionally needed special education services that come up during the school year. Dr. Gadomski reported additional funds would need to be found from the overall budget, and Ms. Snow reported the School Board has a capital reserve fund to help with unplanned special education expenses.

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Dr. Gadomski reported the school has seen positive results with the Improvement of Instruction work between the teachers and Curriculum Director, and teachers are eager to continue their professional development and the budgets have been adjusted to meet actual expenses; this is part of the teacher contract. Mr. Sousa reported the school has seen a positive and significant improvement in teacher participation in summer programs to work on in an effort to improve the school curriculum and gives them an opportunity to learn more about the new and changing curriculum and testing requirements. Teachers are provided a small stipend to participate, but do end up spending much more time than they are compensated for to work on curriculum development.

Dr. Gadomski reported the Curriculum Director is a non-CBA employee and has a salary increase of 3%. All non-contracted employees throughout the budget have the same increase. The actual amount they receive will be determined as performance evaluations are completed.

Mr. Sousa reported the library account includes additional funds for new and upgraded equipment. The library has a new technology technician and this is an attempt to introduce more of a media center and not just a traditional library. Changes will be made to improve collaborative learning opportunities, as well as to provide other technology based education with the purchase of a new Chromebook Cart, 3D printer, and provide space for hands on type of activities. Ms. Snow stated the School Board will receive a presentation about the changes proposed for the library at an upcoming meetings. Discussion took place about library improvements last year that didn't make it into the budget and this budget reflects many of those changes to upgrade the library space, including the new equipment and a new air conditioner.

Mr. White asked if computer gaming is part of student activities and learning techniques and is there an effort to eliminate violent video games. Mr. Sousa reported there are educational computer programs that are used and the school works to provide students with a healthy balance of both regular and technology education.

Computer Assisted Instruction includes an increase in Internet Access for the school with an increased bandwidth, and the \$14,000.00 fee will be a new annual access amount. Mr. Sousa reported the school is moving to the 100Mbps is the final goal with the school transition toward a 1 to 1 equipment transition. The school has also added additional equipment to increase wireless connectivity with more wireless hubs and servers.

Mr. Thompson, Ms. Edin, Chair Hadik, and Mr. Dumas asked about the changes for new internet – who is the provider, will the internet being received be enough and can the equipment handle the new speed, does it make sense to start with the 50Mbps first, and is there financial aid to help pay for the new internet. General discussion took place about introducing the 100Mbps rather than an interim step of 50Mbps; the cost difference between the two wasn't significant, the school will need to be at 100Mbps within the next couple of years, and the school would like to meet other recommended national standards. It was stated the school could receive grants for installation of new wires within the school, but that had previously taken place. Mr. Sousa stated the new equipment will be able to handle the new speeds, older equipment has more of an issue with the installed available RAM but they will be able to handle the needed internet speeds.

Mr. Sousa reviewed the school initiative to a the 1 to 1 equipment use by students and the Technology Plan is being updated as prior steps have been met and implemented.

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The Director of Technology salary is a non-contracted employee and has the general 3% increase. Mr. Kevin Smith is very active and does a great job at the school.

School Board Services remains mostly level, except for legal services that has been adjusted closer to actual expenditures. It also includes an amount for the accounting GASB 45 audit.

The SAU expenses and budget will be approved at the next joint board meeting. Ms. Snow stated Nottingham pays approximately 38% of the SAU budget.

The Principals Office account with 3% salary increase, and changes in the Health Insurance Buy Out plan. Mr. Sousa explained the school needs to purchase a new professional shredder; the shredder is larger to address a higher volume of shredding needed by the school. Discussion took place about using a private company to destroy materials, but the problem is not having secured school storage to keep documents in a locked area until they can be shred.

Dr. Gadomski reported the school has increased health and retirement expenses for Operation of Plant staff and the transition from two part time positions to one full time position. Additional funds are being requested to fertilize and maintain the soccer field, which provides the school with the needed field and playground space.

Mr. White asked if the school uses non-toxic weed killers. Mr. Sousa reported the school uses fertilizers that are similar to what other schools use and has hired a company to complete the work and monitor that what is used is safe.

Mr. Sousa spoke to the increase in the Repairs and Maintenance – Building account, which includes repairs to the HVAC system, upgrades to the school security system, and new carpet for the library.

Dr. Gadomski reported custodial supplies increased to reflect actual expenditures. Propane bids have been received at an increase; the hard part of the bid process is contracting for 18 months in the future.

Mr. White asked about solar being installed at the school. It was reported the school has previously looked into and will continue to consider solar, but the school also went through an energy audit that resulted in upgrading school lighting fixtures for better energy usage; the school should pay off those changes in the next year.

Dr. Gadomski reported the school is looking to purchase two new water bottle filling stations, as well as a small tractor and snow blower attachment under Operation and Maintenance of Plant in New Equipment.

Transportation bids are being sought and the current increase is proposed at 3% for a placeholder. It was stated there is an expectation that some transportation savings will be seen by removing the mid-day kindergarten transportation with the change to a full day program. Transportation for Homeless has been separated from the regular transportation expenses in order to identify those specific costs for students who are deemed homeless.

Mr. Thompson asked about the definition of homeless for students. Dr. Gadomski reported Homeless has multiple definitions, including not having a permanent residence, temporary relocation due to a change in housing, and couch surfing where you stay with a rotating list of people. Nottingham has some obligation to transport students who are enrolled and are temporarily homeless.

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Food Service has seen an increase. Ms. Whitmore reviewed the school districts are subject to an accounting review by the state and changes to the Food Service accounts took place for those budgetary requirements, which include a further break out the food purchase expenses for food items that would not be covered/reimbursed for the free and reduced lunch program.

Dr. Gadomski reported there has been a significant transition in the number of students attending Coe-Brown versus Dover, and homeschooled students are also polled for possible attendance to the regular high schools. Two students are anticipated for the Tuition – Anticipated Move Ins account calculation. Student counts are watched very closely and will be adjusted as needed as the budget moves forward.

Ms. Levenson stated the tuition amounts being used are estimates but the School Board should have the Coe-Brown rate soon, and Nottingham will no longer have a discounted high school tuition rate with the high school contract agreements. Ms. Snow stated the 24% increase in the Tuition – Coe Brown account total is both an increase in the tuition amount, as well as an additional 20 students attending Coe-Brown rather than Dover. It was stated the overall Tuition – Dover & Other Public School account decreased to account for a higher Coe-Brown enrollment.

General discussion took place about the number of students and what schools they are attending, in addition to changes in tuition amounts. Dr. Gadomski reported the town should also expect to see an additional increase in the tuition amounts in the next couple of years, especially with a higher number of high school students with the currently larger 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades student counts; versus the small student counts seen in the present.

Dr. Gadomski reported that overall high school special education budget has been decreased, but can change based on the needs of students.

Mr. Thompson asked about Nottingham building their own high school and has a cost analysis taken place of the town having their own high school versus contracting them to another school. Dr. Gadomski reported a high school could be built, but it would have to wait until the existing high school contracts ended, and then it would require bonding and raising funds to build a new building. A cost analysis hasn't been done, but estimates for construction can be seen with the new Dover High School building at an approximate \$93 million dollars.

Ms. Levenson stated the School Board has discussed the issue of a high school in the past, but the feeling was that the student count threshold should be 500 students in order for students to continue receiving the same level of education as can be provided by contracting with existing high schools. Ms. Snow stated the smaller high schools don't have the ability to offer the same opportunities as the larger schools. It was stated this difficult situation can be seen in the town of Pittsfield that has their own high school and if they can maintain a high school, especially as student counts decrease.

Discussion took place about previous thoughts or combining and/or creating a group middle school with Barrington, but Barrington had an increase in their elementary school student counts that filled that empty space. General discussion took place about the ability for school choice.

Dr. Gadomski reported much of the High School increase is based on an increase in the total number of students, and Coe-Brown is a big draw to many parents.

Chair Hadik asked about the large increase in the High School Speech. Ms. Whitmore stated it is based on student need.

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Dr. Gadomski reported there is a large increase in the overall High School budget, but can be identified in an increase in the number students. The total Nottingham proposed budget for 2018/2019 is currently at 6.24%, an increase of \$751,210.00, but there are still amounts that will be increased and decreased as more information becomes available and as the process moves forward. There is the initial expectation of an approximate 4% increase in the Default Budget, which will be presented at the next budget presentation meeting.

Ms. Whitmore reviewed the Transfer to Capital Reserve accounts, stating the year-end transfers based on approved warrant articles are included as an expense for the prior year, but because they are funded with the year-end surplus there is no amount included for the 2018/2019 budget.

Ms. Biron asked about the difference in presentation of materials, and the placement of the high school amounts, stating it is a nice change in being able to break out the high school versus elementary budgets. Ms. Whitmore explained it made sense to see the accounts broken out in the current format and the change was to help the School Board as they review their financials monthly. The change also helps in reporting year end amounts to the state. The addition of the account for capital reserve accounts is to help track the overall expenditures at the end of the year.

General School Updates: Ms. Levenson reported the board will continue to review the school facility plan in anticipation of repairing aging equipment and preparing the CIP data.

The School Board made the decision to include full day kindergarten in the budget rather than introducing a separate warrant article, and will continue their review of the building analysis report they received in September 2017. After discussion a decision was made to put the document on the school website for public review.

Chair Hadik thanked the SAU and School Board members for attending.

General Town Updates: Mr. Dumas reported the town continues to fall within acceptable expenses at the year end. The town is still without a Road Agent/DPW, and in the transition the town will utilize contracted positions for winter plowing services, in order to focus snow removal related needs. All town departments are fully staffed and running well.

**Approval of Minutes**

**Motion:** by Mr. Dumas, second by Ms. Biron to approve the October 19, 2017 minutes as amended.

**Vote:** 8 in favor.

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

Mr. White asked about how to move up the importance of installation of solar at the school. Mr. Dumas suggested attending a School Board meeting. Ms. Levenson stated it is something the School Board would be willing to consider for the future.

Mr. Dumas reported the town is moving forward with the installation of solar as the contract is signed. It was stated installation will be on the Community Center and the Fire Station. General discussion took place about the terms of the contract providing the town with long term savings.

Ms. Edin stated she attended a couple of Capital Improvement Committee meetings and would provide a report on the CIP process at the next committee meeting.

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Ms. Levenson stated the school has made strong efforts in improvements with curriculum building and improvement of instruction with the teachers. The Curriculum Director works closely with the teachers during the summer on implementing new standards. Chair Hadik reported he understands that Mr. Chauvette also works closely with both high schools to make sure Nottingham students are ready for high school. Ms. Levenson reported he also monitors how the high school students are doing in order to make improvements at the Nottingham school to better prepare students for their high school experience.

**ROUNDTABLE:** Mr. White stated he was impressed with the enthusiasm expressed by the SAU and school staff in the budget presentation.

**ACTION ITEMS:**

**Town:** Answer questions about the Community Center and asbestos.

**School:** Ms. Biron asked for a summary of the technology improvements and a separation of costs associated with new equipment, improvements, on-going repairs and general maintenance to try and better understand the costs for the technology programs and systems. Ms. Levenson reported the School Board could work toward establishing an overview of the total program and equipment being purchased and used. Ms. Levenson stated there is an expectation of the board to introduce technology that is thoughtfully used rather than just buying new and newer equipment because it is new; it should be useful equipment. Other members agreed to the request and even the future expenses as more 1 to 1 equipment is added.

Mr. White asked about the specific number of units being purchased and if the school seeks grants to help fund the new equipment. Mr. Hadik reported the Chromebooks make it an easier less complicated process for equipment, eliminating the need for multiple versions of equipment and software.

Mr. Dumas suggested implementing a Life Cycle Span program in the next Technology report plan to make sure funding levels are planned for.

**ADJOURN:** Having no further business,

**9:15 PM Motion:** by Mr. Dumas, second by Ms. Biron.

**Vote:** 8 – 0 in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dawn Calley-Murdough