

TOWN OF EPSOM
BUDGET COMMITTEE
DECEMBER 21, 2021

Attendees: Marylou Keane, Chairman; Joni Kitson, Vice Chairman; Gary Kitson, Water District Representative; Virginia Drew, Selectmen's Representative; Meadow Wysocki; Joy Sheehan; Mary Frambach; Joyce Heck; Len Gilman; Linda Hodgdon; Penny Graham; Michael Muise, School Board Representative

Not in Attendance: Amber Wheeler

Other Attendees: Patrick Connors; Peter Warburton; Michael Wiggett

Joni opened the meeting at 7:00 PM.

SCHOOL BUDGET – MR. CONNORS

Mr. Connors noted everyone should have a binder and the additional memo book from Ms. Wheeler.

Mr. Connors noted the teachers' salaries are contractual. Many of the aides have been reclassified as a Special Education Aides due to the student needs.

Line 14 (001.1100.112.103.00) Substitute Salaries - Mr. Connors noted that the substitute rate increased over multiple years from \$80.00 to \$100.00 a day. Gary noted the sign at the school indicated substitutes are needed asking how many they currently have. There are three, but they do not all work every day. They would like to hire 3 more people.

Line 32 (001.1100.561.103.000) Tuition to Other Districts – Mr. Connors noted that this is for students sent to other districts.

Supplies are for the number of books, etc. required to teach the students.

Meadow noted that in 20/21 the supply line was overspent. Mr. Connors noted the school purchased the supplies that students usually bring to help families during COVID. The school purchased the supplies again this year.

Line 67 (001.1100.641.103.00) Books – Social Studies - Mr. Connors noted the 6th grade Social Studies books were so old they are not using them anymore (18 years old).

The school is purchasing online access for students for advanced math with Mr. Connors noting the number of students in the program.

Gary asked about the Chrome Book computers that are planned to be replaced. Mr. Connors noted that they only replace some each year.

The 1200 Lines are for Special Education Students that involve all students in the program from ages 3 to 21.

Gary asked about the aides for Special Education. Mr. Connors discussed the figures on pages 30 and 32. Mr. Connors noted the “Case Managers” are Special Education personnel. Gary asked if they were all certified. Mr. Connors noted not all aides were certified although they have the ability to become certified.

Line 134 & following (1410) – Co-Curricular Programs – The salaries are based on the master agreement.

Line 144 & following (2120) Guidance - The Guidance Salaries are based on the Master Agreement.

Mr. Connors noted the Para Agreement is in negotiations with a plan to have a Warrant Article for it in March.

Gary asked what services are received from the NH School Board Association dues. Mr. Warburton noted the items that they receive for the dues. Virginia asked since they withdrew from the National Association would the dues be reduced. Mr. Warburton discussed the assistance received from the organization.

Joy asked how many School Board members attend the AREA meetings. Mr. Wiggett indicated 3 members. Meadow asked about members attending the SAU Board meetings. Mr. Wiggett indicated 3 School Board members attend those meetings.

Gary noted the amount of the Towns’ share of the SAU expenses. Gary asked if we would have to belong to the SAU. Mr. Connors noted the services would have to be replicated, by an SAU. Gary asked how the costs are calculated. It is based on the number of children. Gary noted that at one time the SAU had one Superintendent. He noted they keep hiring more people. Gary noted there are problems when the teachers have to be taught how to teach subjects. Gary noted that the SAU has Curriculum Coordinators, and the school has Curriculum Coordinators. He noted that Epsom students were not always taught the same information as the other districts.

Gary noted that what he was discussing were things the students were not taught. Mr. Connors noted that students are taught the how, why, etc.

Meadow discussed that the Curriculum Coordinator at the SAU level should be sure the same curriculum is taught at each elementary school so the students will be ready for Pembroke Academy.

Marylou asked if the other towns are teaching the same curriculum as Epsom. It was discussed that the Curriculum Coordinator should be sure the same items are taught at each school so the students will be ready when they attend Pembroke Academy.

Joni asked what we were paying the SAU Curriculum Coordinator if the person was not being sure each district taught the same things.

Joy asked if anyone follows up with the students to see what they felt they needed in high school that they were not taught at the elementary school level. Joy asked where the gaps were.

Mr. Connors noted he has asked how Epsom students do in Math at Pembroke Academy and was told they are doing fine.

Gary asked what would happen if the school returned to teaching Math the old way. He noted that the students need to have analytical reading skills so they can do their Math.

Page 16 – Virginia noted there are approved SAU salaries and discussed the salary for the Curriculum Coordinator and Assistant Superintendent had a voted budgeted amount and the positions were paid a higher amount. She discussed other positions that had different payments than from what was voted. She asked where the money for the increases came from.

Mr. Warburton noted that the SAU is an interesting mechanism. He noted that there is a lot of work people do not understand. There are about 17 people in the office. The Business Administrator oversees all the financial items. He discussed the various positions and their duties.

Mr. Warburton noted that there are 72 students that are incarcerated that they have to educate.

Mr. Warburton noted that there are different ways to do things. He also noted that different Boards have different people on them. He invited members to visit the SAU office to see what they do. He noted that if there are concerns with what they do, to let them know. He noted there are 23 Board members from the various towns.

Virginia noted when she goes to the bottom line the actual is more than what was voted. Meadow asked where the funds that were not voted on coming from.

Marylou noted they were using the Undesignated Fund Balance Funds. Joni asked if they have to go to DRA if they overspend the budget. Mr. Warburton noted he would ask Ms. Wheeler to explain the differences. Marylou noted she would call Ms. Wheeler.

Virginia stated she was trying to understand how the SAU budget works.

Linda asked if it was normal to have two Superintendents and one Assistant in the SAU. Mr. Warburton noted that larger SAU's may have more than one Assistant. Linda noted that typically you have one boss and there are two of them in SAU 53. Mr. Warburton noted the SAU is split with Ms. Sherman overseeing Deerfield, Allenstown and Pembroke and he oversees Epsom and Chichester.

Meadow noted the SAU has a reserve fund that is funding the additional increases. She asked how the funds get into the reserve and if money is put in the fund each year, Mr. Warburton did not know.

Joni asked if the SAU ever turns the unspent funds back to the Towns. Mr. Warburton noted that it all goes into the reserve. Meadow asked the amount in the reserve. Mr. Warburton did not know.

Gary noted they had the right to take funds out of the reserve. Mr. Warburton noted the SAU Board determines the removal of funds from the reserve.

Gary asked who Epsom's representative was to the SAU Board, it is Mr. Wiggett. Mr. Wiggett noted the Executive Board decides and then it goes to the AREA Board for its confirmation.

Meadow asked who determined the increases and how much is in the reserve fund. Mr. Warburton noted that the Executive Board determines the expenditures, and it then goes to the AREA Board and School Boards.

The Budget Committee was uncomfortable with the SAU changing salary lines within the budget after the school budget is voted on.

Meadow noted the previous year only \$3,000.00 was withdrawn from the reserve fund, but this year it was \$69,000.00.

Joy noted that the Budget Committee has discussed the budget and getting a budget passed. She asked if the Epsom School Board had discussed these issues.

Meadow noted there is only \$100,000.00 difference between the budget and the default budget.

The additional funds the Executive Board voted to spend, and the AREA Board voted to approve them. Gary asked if they could get a list of where the funds were spent.

Joni noted when people learn that the budget is overspent, they do not like it.

Line 51 (001.2345.111.053,00) Federal Funds Bookkeeper (Page 160) – Virginia discussed the position's salary was increased by \$25,000.00.

Marylou noted that the Committee needs to know the amount in the reserve. Meadow asked how much has been voted on from the reserve for the 21/22 budget.

It was discussed the next meeting would be January 4. Marylou noted that if Ms. Wheeler cannot attend she will not schedule a meeting. She will speak with Ms. Wheeler and wants her at the meeting.

Virginia asked what the Federal Funds Position was. Mr. Muise noted that there were positions that were two part time positions that were merged into one full time position at the SAU.

Len asked the number of students from Epsom that go to Pembroke Academy. Mr. Connors noted the Freshman Year goes from 60 to 40 students. Len asked if there was a way to find out how many Epsom students graduate from Pembroke Academy and go on to a career school.

Joy discussed unfunded mandates asking if there have been any additional letters sent to Concord to address the unfunded mandates. It was noted that the SAU was not big enough to get a response. Joy asked if smaller SAU's could get together to be a bigger voice.

Mr. Connors noted the school cuts anything they can. There are additional supplies purchased due to COVID. They are looking at possibly installing additional HVAC for the older section of the building.

The equipment replacement is the tractor that is about 25 years old. The tractor is used for the field clearing and also the snow. Meadow asked if that would be a new purchase and if there would be a maintenance contract also. Mr. Connors noted this plan would be to purchase. Virginia noted the Town has found leasing is more viable for larger equipment.

Marylou asked if they considered a Warrant Article for the tractor purchase. Mr. Connors noted that funds could become available based on different factors. Joni verified they would purchase at the end of the year rather than at the beginning. Mr. Wiggett discussed if a Warrant Article failed they could not purchase a tractor.

Mr. Connors discussed the bus contract and the need for 7 buses for Epsom. The five districts are doing individual contracts rather than one contract for all the Towns. Mr. Wiggett noted that they hope by doing separate contracts they receive more bids than just the one they have been receiving. Issues with doing individual contracts was discussed.

Meadow asked if the Special Education Transportation line would be closer to what is budgeted. Mr. Connors noted that they did as many facilities were closed last year due to COVID not allowing students to be placed out of district.

Gary asked about the health insurance contract. Joy noted that the school contract paid more than the Town contract did for teachers. Virginia noted it is negotiated as part of the teacher contract for the school. The Selectmen sets the rate for the Town Employees. Gary noted that the percentage the School pays could be adjusted.

Page 10 – Dental Insurance – The rate has decreased by 1.3% but there are more participants.

Penny asked why the Regular Field Trips cost increased from \$10,000.00 to \$26,000.00. It was noted that much of the cost increase was due to busing students for Environmental camp each day rather than having them stay overnight. Also, they did not have students do individual fundraising.

Transfer to Food Service – Mr. Connors noted that line covers the offset for the cost of food and employees that students do not pay. It was discussed that students are not paying for breakfast and lunches this school year.

Mr. Connors noted the breakdown on page 15. Mr. Muise noted notes from Ms. Wheeler regarding the increase. Joni noted that meals are now given to students in disposal boxes rather than reusable trays.

Page 12 - Meadow noted there is another food service costs line of \$219,109. Mr. Connors noted there is an anticipated shortfall not charging students this year.

Meadow asked about the Grant. Mr. Connors noted that it is anticipated revenue, but they have to show the funds in the budget.

Meadow asked about the extracurricular activities. Mr. Connors noted they are trying to bring back as many of the regular activities as possible.

Meadow confirmed that no additional students were budgeted for in the Pembroke Academy tuition.

Marylou asked when the Committee would receive the Warrant Articles for the School. They are included in the binder except for the Para Contract.

Meadow discussed funds in the Special Education and Maintenance Warrant Articles that say no additional funds are budgeted as the money comes from the surplus budget money not spent. The funds are only allocated if available.

Virginia noted that the Selectmen are trying to educate the voters on how the money is spent.

Linda asked when they would feel they have enough money in the Special Education Trust Fund. Mr. Connors noted that \$200,000 to \$300,000 could be used for one student in one year. Mr. Connors thought \$300,000.00. Len noted that it is not just students in the

building but includes transportation also. The issues were discussed as to if one or more students could require the funds.

Minutes

The minutes of December 16, 2021 were reviewed and amended.

Meadow motioned to approve the minutes of December 16, 2021 as amended; Joyce seconded the motion. The motion passed with Joy abstaining.

Marylou noted the items that were given to the members tonight. The next meeting is scheduled for January 4th.

The amount of property owned by the Conservation Commission and the amount having Conservation Easements on it was discussed. Joy will attempt to have the responses for this for a future meeting,

Marylou will have a Town Budget updated for December 30th.

Linda motioned to adjourn the meeting; Mary seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Marylou adjourned the meeting at 9:48 P.M.

Respectfully,

Betsy Bosiak
Recording Secretary

Conservation Committee The Town Forest is 657 ACRES owned by the Town. And an Abutting 11 acre lot on Griffin Road. There are a couple of very small parcels listed in the Town Report that I do not know the Total but should be in the Town report. We do not actively monitor them. As far as land in Conservation I would need to research. We can try to take an inventory of those parcels 2 Hickey, 3 Harkness, Bronstein, and more. We have 2 easement acquisitions in process Bloomfield and Harkness. We are hoping to complete Harkness this year. We know this is not complete but we can work on taking inventory of all Conservation land and acreag