

TOWN OF EPSOM  
BUDGET COMMITTEE  
JANUARY 5, 2023

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

**Not in Attendance:**

**Other Attendees:** Patrick Connors; Peter Warburton; Michael Wiggett; Linda Valley; Karen Guercia; Jennifer Smith

Marylou opened the meeting at 7:00 PM.

Marylou noted the information received from the School District in response to the Committee's questions. She noted that some of the questions would have a response from the SAU by Tuesday.

Mr. Connors noted the only difference from last year on the School District Warrant Articles was Article 2 which is the teacher contract. He noted the teacher contract includes a change in health insurance and a 2% wage increase. He gave the Committee members copies of the proposed contract for the teachers.

Mr. Connors noted the stipends for various clubs. He noted that the clubs change year to year due to student interest.

Mary asked the benefit for the insurance revision. Mr. Connors noted the leave revisions and the wage increase. The new insurance plan has higher deductibles and co-pays.

Penny asked if there was a change in the dental plan, Mr. Connors indicated there is no change in the dental plan. Mr. Connors reviewed the dental plan information in the binder on page 74. The dental cost increase was 1.5%. The district pays the full cost for a single person and 65% for other plans.

Gary asked about documented personal or sick time vs. undocumented; Mr. Connors noted there are documents for this purpose.

Gary asked about the personal time. Mr. Connors discussed teachers have 3 personal leave time days. Mr. Connors noted sick time is calculated differently and may be carryover from year to year.

Penny asked about the maximum number of hours that could be carried for sick time; it is 105 hours.

Len asked the amount of money that was returned from the 2021-2022 school year; it was \$332,071.57 (page 37 in the binder).

Article 3 – Authorizes the Board to call for a special meeting. It would allow for a special meeting if Article 2 does not pass. Floyd explained that a full town vote would have to occur on a renegotiated contract.

Article 4 – This article is to add funds for a special education child that is not included in the budget. Floyd asked about the amount that could be in the fund. Mr. Connors noted that he would like between \$305,000 to \$500,000. Floyd asked if there is an average cost for a special education child. Ms. Guercia noted they have the information, but she did not have it with her.

Meadow asked as there were funds remaining at the end of the year were there less children or if children might not require special services that were previous determined.

Len noted that there is no way anyone could determine the special education costs for a child. He noted that children with different needs require different services. Mike noted that the Board has discussed this as to how much they should have in the special education trust fund.

Mike asked if there are more children with special needs in Epsom. Ms. Guercia noted that there are not. She noted that she has spoken with Mr. Connors and Ms. Preve and there currently are no issues currently.

Gary noted that Articles 3 and 4 are misleading as the money was raised by taxes and it states NO AMOUNT TO BE RAISED FROM TAXATION. He thought this was misleading as the money is raised by taxes. It was discussed that different wording could be used.

Joni asked if there were any thoughts of adding more money into the funds (i.e. \$60,000.00). There was a discussion on the amount to be added to the funds. Mr. Wiggett noted that the School Board considers what voters might approve.

Marylou indicated there should be discussions between the School Board and the Selectmen as to the amount of funds to be added to the Undesignated Funds.

Meadow asked if the funds remaining at the end of the year is not \$80,000.00 how would the School Board divided the funds. Mike indicated he thought they would look at the needs of each fund.

Mr. Wiggett noted that the SAU Executive Board is meeting next Wednesday and if people have questions to e-mail them to him. The meeting is at 5:30 PM at the

Chichester School. Residents may attend the meetings.

Mr. Warburton noted they could bring forth the concerns they have been discussing at the Budget Committee meetings.

Joni asked Mr. Wiggett could forward the agenda to Marylou so she could send it to the Committee members.

Marylou asked if anyone had further questions for the school. No one had questions.

Marylou confirmed the Public Hearings would be held on January 12, with the School District hearing to be first.

Mike noted that with the new relationship between the SAU and Committee members things should go smoother next year.

Len asked if there was a way to obtain the end of the year information sooner and if the Committee could get something in September.

Meadow asked if with Mr. Warburton's retirement in June has it been discussed going to only one superintendent rather than having two. Mike noted he would be bringing this up at the SAU School Board meeting.

Marylou noted they could bring the MS form for signature on Thursday.

Linda discussed she did not have all the information to determine if she was accepting of the School Budget as we lack a year-to-date report for 2022-2023. Linda noted that the special education costs are the biggest items that are not spent

Len discussed costs for special needs including transportation item for a child that was not planned for in another town. Linda noted she was trying to determine if the lines could be reduced. Meadow noted that they hear the same thing every year but the budget is never completely spent. Linda noted that she needs the information to make an informed determination on the budget. Linda discussed the spreadsheet she put together for the Special Placements for the last two years and the funds not spent.

Len discussed that Mr. Connors is looking at the budget from June on and the Committee is looking at it from November on. Floyd discussed the budget could be reduced by approximately \$100,000 rather than a larger reduction.

Mike will obtain the year-to-date amount spent on the Special Education Costs. Linda indicated she could not make a decision until she had all the facts. Further discussion occurred on obtaining the year-to-date expenses.

## **WATER DISTRICT**

Gary reviewed the 2022 budget and proposed 2023 budget for the Water District. Penny asked about the professional fees line. Gary noted the money spent was for an audit. The remaining funds are for professional services if required.

Gary noted that they have changed operators which is saving costs. They do have to pay if they call the company for assistance. The Commissioners complete a great deal of the work to conserve funds.

Gary noted the two Warrant Articles to be recommended/not recommended by the Committee.

## **Minutes**

The minutes of January 3, 2023 were reviewed and amended.

**Meadow motioned to approve the minutes of January 3, 2023, as amended; Linda seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

Marylou discussed items to be reviewed at the next meeting.

Linda discussed the potential new positions in the Police and Fire Departments on top of the increases for their salaries. She noted a concern with the additional \$2.00/hour salary increase that will be from taxes in 2024 where it is from ARPA fund in 2022 and 2023. The issues were discussed. It was clarified the Police Department has two vacancies currently. The Fire Department is requesting an additional one position. The Fire Chief has requested a \$500.00 salary increase. The issues were discussed.

Len asked how long the ambulance has been out of service, Meadow noted since August. Len asked why the Selectmen did not go to Ford Motor Company to get a new motor. Len noted that the Selectmen, rather than the Fire Chief, should be working on the issues with the ambulance. Floyd discussed perhaps there should be a class action suit. The Town only had the use of the ambulance for two months. The Selectmen should request the money returned and turn in the ambulance. Meadow noted they are discussing contacting Town Counsel.

**Linda motioned to adjourn; Meadow seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

Marylou adjourned the meeting at 9:50 P.M.

Respectfully,

Betsy Bosiak  
Recording Secretary