

**Minutes of the  
Litchfield Budget Committee Meeting**

**Held on December 8, 2009**

The Litchfield Budget Committee held a meeting on Tuesday December 8, 2009, at Campbell High School, 1 Highlander Court, Litchfield, NH 03052.

**PRESENT:** B Lemire (Chairman), J Harte (Vice Chairman), B Spencer, P Parker, G Lambert (Board of Selectmen Representative), R Peeples, J Guerrette (School Board Representative)

Also present: Dr. E. Cutler, Mr. T. Lecklider (Principal, LMS), and S. Martin.

**ABSENT:** M Falzone

Mr. Lemire called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

**1. PUBLIC INPUT**

Mrs. C. Couture provided information on health care costs for the School District, referring to Mr. Spencer's comment from the previous meeting. She recalled the last time they had guaranteed maximums, in 2003/2004, and pointed out there had been a large deficit when the Budget Committee had made cuts in health costs.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**MOTION:** by Mr. Harte

*Move to approve the minutes of the Budget Committee meeting on November 19, 2009*

**SECOND:** Mr. Lambert

**VOTE:** 6-0-0

**The motion carried.**

**3. SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET PRESENTATION - LMS**

Mr. Lemire welcomed Mr. Lecklider, Principal of LMS and other town staff. Mr. Guerrette deferred to Mr. Lecklider to present the budget for his school.

**Page 1**

Mr. Spencer asked the School representatives to speak about teacher ratios. Dr. Cutler handed out some data analysis on grades 5-8 projections. She stated a class size of 25 was Board policy, and went through the figures in her handout indicating current and projected teacher to student ratios. Mr. Spencer looked at grades 6-8, stating they have been running at higher than 25 until this school year and suggested he would cut a single teacher. There followed a discussion between Dr. Cutler and Mr. Guerrette. Mr. Lambert asked how students are allocated to a class.

Mr. Peeples joined the meeting at 7:18 p.m.

There was a discussion between Messrs. Lecklider and Lambert regarding allocation to classes, with Mr. Lecklider talking about NECP needing improvement and trying to keep instruction as individual as possible. There was discussion on variable class sizes when you get to grades where children move around, and Mr. Lecklider made the point that they need to look at the overall picture in addition to class size. Responding to Mr. Lambert, Mr. Lecklider stated one less teacher would be detrimental to the children and will impact student learning. Responding to Mr. Spencer's comment that 6<sup>th</sup> grade has been running at higher numbers, Mr. Lecklider stated the quality of student learning improves when you reduce the student/teacher ratio. Mr. Lemire stressed the Budget Committee needs to focus on money and be careful not to impinge on School Board policy decisions. Dr. Cutler talked about the student 'break' which is the point where it affects student learning. Responding to comments from Mr. Parker, Mr. Lecklider explained how 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade classes operate as teams.

Responding to a query from Mr. Spencer regarding balloon checks, Mr. Martin explained this is a health check which is the difference between the current and new rates and is paid in June. He reported it is an expense in the current fiscal year, but charged to the next year. He also reported it is a contract issue as it is paid in advance to cover the difference between current and new rates and is due to teacher contracts which have to be paid up fully by the end of the school year.

## **Page 2**

*Account 440 (Rental/Lease Instructional Equipment):* Responding to Mr. Lambert's query about the lease for the copier, Mr. Martin explained they are opting not to lease two low volume copiers and will purchase them at the fair market value of these copiers.

*Account 610 (Supplies):* Responding to a query from Mr. Lambert, Mr. Lecklider explained there is one day planner for each student plus some extras.

## **Page 3**

*Account 737 (Furniture Replacement):* Responding to Mr. Spencer's query on replacement of chairs, Mr. Lecklider explained they decided to do without more chairs this year.

## **Page 4**

*Account 640 (Textbook Replacement, English):* Responding to a query on curriculum review and textbook replacement from Mr. Lambert, Mr. Guerrette clarified this is driven by a review cycle of five years. Dr. Cutler pointed out the middle school books are 10 years old and need to be replaced.

**Page 5**

*LMS Physical Education:* Responding to Mr. Spencer's query on how they determine how many physical education teachers are required, it was explained that one is a health teacher and the other is a physical education teacher.

**Page 7**

*Music Education:* Mr. Lecklider explained that determining the number of music teachers is based upon student interest and they try to give two music classes to each student by the time they leave the middle school. Responding to a query from Mr. Lambert, Mr. Lecklider stated sheet music is replaced every year for the band and chorus programs. Responding to Mr. Harte's query as to the reason for the increase in that line for this year, Mr. Lecklider stated that band numbers have increased significantly and he offered to obtain specific information for the Committee.

**Action: Mr. Lecklider**

**Page 9**

*Account 640 (Textbook Replacement):* It was clarified for Mr. Spencer that trade books are reading books.

**Page 13**

*Account 110 (Co-curricular Salaries):* In response to a query from Mr. Spencer, it was explained that the Ski Club children pay for their transportation. Responding to a query from Mr. Lambert about which items were funded and active, Mr. Martin explained this will always be at the District level. Mr. Spencer clarified with Mr. Martin that co-curricular and athletics are contractual items.

**Page 15**

*Account 810 (Dues & Fees):* Responding to Mr. Spencer's query as to why fees and dues go up, it was explained that the league they belong to sets the fees, and Mr. Lecklider explained volleyball is a new fee.

**Page 16**

*Account 330 (Professional Services, Guidance):* Responding to Mr. Harte, Mr. Lecklider explained that the increase of \$1,300 in Professional Services is for hearing impaired students which falls under a 504 Plan and comes under the Guidance program.

**Page 21**

*Account 910 (Dues and fees, School Administration):* Mr. Lecklider explained which memberships are contractual, stating the ASCD provides excellent staff development. Dr. Cutler explained this is for administrators such as principals and vice principals and is critical for staying up-to-date with national trends.

### **Page 23**

*Account 610 (Custodial supplies):* Responding to Mr. Harte, Mr. Martin the increase was predominantly driven by the installation of hand sanitizers. He further explained they would normally place orders in May/June and these were delayed. Responding to Mr. Parker's previous question, he reported they had not specifically increased the budget for the batteries to the hand sanitizers.

*Account 430 (Repairs and Maintenance):* Responding to a query from Mr. Harte, Mr. Martin reported that historically they try to replace the carpets every two years but it is not always in the budget. Mr. Martin explained what they look at before they spend the money, pointing out they usually wait until late in the year before doing so to ensure availability of the money.

### **Page 24**

*Account 622 (Utilities – Electric):* Responding to a query from Mr. Spencer as to why there was a drop in kilowatt usage, Mr. Martin explained they had fixed the pump. He reported they would expect to see a drop at GMS due to replacing lights with the new energy efficient ones.

### **Page 26**

*Emergency Management:* In response to a query from Mr. Lemire, it was explained that emergency management covers supplies and the School District get grants directly from the state.

### **Page 27**

*Account 430 (Repairs & Maintenance, Technology Services):* Mr. Peeples queried support and maintenance of the network infrastructure and Mr. Martin explained this.

Mr. Martin confirmed there were 15 cell phones in the district and outlined who has these.

*Account 532 (Data Communications):* Responding to a query from Mr. Spencer, Mr. Martin stated this charge is for T1 connections and everything which sits on top. He further explained these are dedicated lines between the schools and Mr. Peeples talked about the costs involved with the dedicated lines. Mr. Martin agreed to e-mail a copy of the contract to Mr. Lemire for distribution to the Committee.

***Action: Mr. Martin***

Mr. Lemire thanked Mr. Lecklider for attending and answering the Committee's questions.

Mr. Spencer raised the issue of the CHS track, stating there had been a similar problem at Londonderry where the damage had been due to an underground water problem. He stressed the need to get to the crux of the cause before doing anything to fix the track. Following further discussion about the possible causes, Mr. Spencer

suggested Mr. Martin talk to Mr. Kevin Lynch, stressing he would like to better understand the issue before he would vote to spend money on it.

#### 4. VOTING ON SCHOOL BUDGET

**\*\*\* consent spreadsheet to be attached to the minutes for the record\*\*\***

##### **GMS**

**MOTION:** by Mr. Guerrette

***Move to set a bottom line for the 2011 GMS School Budget of \$4,366,148.93***

**SECOND:** Mr. Harte

Mr. Lemire clarified that the Committee members had decided to vote a consent budget and he proceeded to read out the Committee's proposed amendments for the record (see attached spreadsheet for details). He confirmed a new bottom line of \$4,204,122.74 for the consent budget. He then asked whether anyone would like items removed for further discussion or amendment.

**MOTION:** by Mr. Lambert

***Move to accept the Budget Committee's consent budget for the 2011 GMS School Budget of \$4,204,122.74***

**SECOND:** Mr. Peeples

**MOTION:** by Mr. Guerrette

***Move to remove all items relating to two teachers from the GMS consent budget in the amount of \$123,961***

**SECOND:** Mr. Harte

Mr. Guerrette provided his rationale for making this request. Mr. Harte stated he had talked to Messrs. Lynch and Schlichter and had walked around the school. He quoted improved scores for the students with an improved student/teacher ratio, stating that Litchfield is 16<sup>th</sup> on a list of 162 districts. He talked at length about improvements in student performance due to the lower student/teacher ratio and made comparisons with the Merrimack School District. Mr. Peeples responded, pointing out the need to look out for the voters. He stressed the economy would not improve any time soon and there was a need for balance. There followed further discussion between Messrs. Harte and Peeples, and Mr. Spencer stressed he was not proposing moving to the state standards (cutting 1 teacher in each of first 2 grades only).

Mr. Spencer requested the vote be recorded.

**VOTE:** 4-3-0 (Messrs. Parker, Harte, Lemire and Guerrette voted for the motion, and Messrs. Spencer, Peeples and Lambert voted against the motion)

**The motion carried to remove the items relating to the two teachers from the consent budget for GMS.**

Mr. Martin stated he would like to spend time talking about salaries as a whole. He provided figures on savings from attrition in 2007 and handed out historical

information on total salaries. He made the point that in no year has the District saved 3% from attrition, stating he believed 3% was not the right number to look at and requested that the Committee seriously look at the figure again. Mr. Spencer responded, explaining the proposed cut was only for GMS and not across the board. Mr. Martin explained they do not budget for overspending in substitutes.

**MOTION:** by Mr. Guerrette  
***Move to restore account 110 by \$30,153.66***  
**The motion failed for lack of a second.**

There was discussion and confirmation of the new adjusted consent reduction figure of \$40,315.19.

**MOTION:** by Mr. Guerrette  
***Move to restore \$2,934.68 to account 114, Para/Monitor Salaries***  
**The motion failed for lack of a second.**

**MOTION:** by Mr. Guerrette  
***Move to restore \$771.85 to account 230, Professional Services***  
**The motion failed for lack of a second.**

**MOTION:** by Mr. Guerrette  
***Move to restore account 610, Supplies by \$3,405***  
**The motion failed for lack of a second.**

**MOTION:** by Mr. Guerrette  
***Move to restore account 430, Repairs & Maintenance by \$800***  
**The motion failed for lack of a second.**

**VOTE on reductions in the consent budget of \$40,315.19:** 5-2-0 (Messrs. Guerrette and Spencer opposed the motion)  
**The motion carried.**

Mr. Martin requested a copy of the cuts which had been made by the Committee for the School Board budget.

### ***SAU BUDGET***

**MOTION:** by Mr. Guerrette  
***Move to set a bottom line of \$716,729.55 for the 2011 SAU Budget***  
**SECOND:** Mr. Spencer

Mr. Lemire the read list of consent items for the record (see attached spreadsheet) and confirmed the Budget Committee's bottom line, of \$713,458.55. He then asked whether anyone wished items to be removed.

**MOTION:** by Mr. Guerrette

***Move to request that all of the Budget Committee amendments be removed from the consent budget for the SAU budget***

**SECOND:** Mr. Spencer

***Discussion:***

Dr. Cutler justified the need to attend the national conference for superintendents. There was discussion with Mr. Harte regarding where the School Board cut had been taken from. Mr. Martin explained they had increased supplies because they had spent more for the last two years. He also talked about a goal of using electronic deposits and payments. Mr. Harte confirmed (the Budget Committee) was budgeting at the 2010 rate. Referring to the copier reduction, Mr. Martin pointed out this was a new color copier and they were trying to guess as to color usage. Dr. Cutler explained that account 330, Professional Services on page 6 is used for consulting services.

**VOTE:** 2-5-0 (Messrs. Guerrette and Harte voted for the motion)

**The motion failed.**

It was noted that the Budget Committee reductions remain for voting.

Mr. Lemire asked whether anyone would like to change the consent budget for the SAU.

**MOTION:** by Mr. Harte

***Move to add \$600 back to line 580, Travel***

**SECOND:** Mr. Peeples (for discussion)

It was confirmed for Mr. Peeples who enquired whether this item was critical that this would be a decision for the School Board to make.

**VOTE:** 6-1-0 (Mr. Peeples opposed the motion)

**The motion carried.**

Mr. Lemire confirmed the total amount of the reduction recommended by the Budget Committee amounted to \$2,671 for the SAU, bringing the bottom line to \$714,058.55.

**VOTE on reductions in the consent budget of \$2,671:** 5-2-0 (Messrs. Peeples and Guerrette opposed the motion)

**The motion carried.**

**VOTE on the new bottom line of \$714,058.55:** 6-1-0 (Mr. Guerrette opposed the motion)

**The motion carried.**

Mr. Lambert stated he wished to move an amendment under the GMS budget which had not been submitted under the consent budget.

**MOTION:** by Mr. Lambert

***Move to re-open the GMS 2011 School Budget***

**SECOND:** Mr. Peeples

**VOTE:** 6-1-0 (Mr. Guerrette opposed the motion)

**The motion carried.**

**MOTION:** by Mr. Lambert

*Move to zero line items 531 and 532 in account 2840, Technical with a reduction of \$11,310*

**SECOND:** Mr. Peeples

***Discussion:***

Mr. Lambert pointed out he had requested backup information for the justification of these items but had not received it to date and would therefore like to set them to zero and re-adjust them once it is known what the contracts represent.

**VOTE:** 3-4-0 (Messrs. Lambert, Parker and Peeples voted for the motion)

**The motion was defeated.**

Responding to Mr. Peeples' query as to when the Committee could expect to see electronic versions of the School budget, Mr. Martin responded he was working to complete these and would forward copies when his schedule permitted. There followed a discussion between Messrs. Lambert and Martin regarding when Mr. Lambert could expect to receive answers to his outstanding questions, with Mr. Martin stating he will expedite this issue as soon as possible.

***Action: Mr. Martin***

Mr. Spencer requested a hard copy of the year to date actual figures.

***Action: Mr. Martin***

Mr. Lemire reviewed the items on Thursday's agenda, and there was a discussion on whether to stay with the consent method of voting. Mr. Spencer clarified he would require input from the Committee by Wednesday to enable him to put the spreadsheet together in time for the meeting. Mr. Peeples stated he would not be present at Thursday's meeting.

**5. MEMBER INPUT**

There was a discussion between Messrs. Harte and Lambert regarding removal of the voting poll setup from the Town budget. Mr. Harte pointed out this had also been removed from the School budget, and Mr. Lemire stated they would have to re-open one of the items to put an amount back in for this purpose.

Mr. Harte stated he had e-mail Ms. Langille requesting the Board of Selectmen add the money back for the Library health insurance, but that the motion had not passed. Mr. Lambert stated he would verify whether this had been put back into the budget.

***Action: Mr. Lambert***

**MOTION:** by Mr. Guerrette

***Move to adjourn***

**SECOND:** Mr. Harte

**VOTE:** 7-0-0

**The motion carried unanimously.**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:58 p.m.

**Minutes by:** *Sandra Maxwell, Recording Secretary*

**Date approved:** *January 14, 2010*

School Board Consent Budget

Account	Sub Account	Request	Sub Account	Budget Committee	Difference
2311		43,411.09			
	211 Health		8,066.52	7,824.52	242.00
	220 Soc Sec		1,915.44	1,865.37	50.07
2313		4,494.47			
2314		2,727.90			
	890 Misc		2,200.00	1,600.00	600.00
2317		20,000.00			
2318		30,000.00			
Total		100,633.46			
Budget Committee		99,741.39			

97%  
7.45%  
  
  
History

----- Original Message -----

**From:** [Brent Lemire](#)

**To:** [chrispas@comcast.net](mailto:chrispas@comcast.net)

**Cc:** [Falzone, Mike](#) ; [Guerrette, Jason](#) ; [Harte, John](#) ; [Lambert, George](#) ; [Parker, Paul](#) ; [Peeples, Ray](#) ; [Spencer, Bill](#)

**Sent:** Monday, December 07, 2009 9:26 PM

**Subject:** Re: concern from Litchfield resident

Thank you for your comments. As you well know, many hours of thought and deliberation go into any decision made by our Committee. We don't exist as a committee simply to cut budgets or taxes, but to present to the voters a reasonable representation of what the majority of the members feel is in the best interest of ALL of the residents of the town. This may not always involve reductions, but can in fact reflect additional assets needed in an effort to maintain infrastructure and/or programs which tend to maintain or improve Litchfield's quality of life for its residents and their families.

However we vote, please be sure that many hours of scrutiny have been expended in reaching the decision, and it will be one that represents the best efforts of the committee.

Brent

----- Original Message -----

**From:** [chrispas@comcast.net](mailto:chrispas@comcast.net)

**To:** [Lemire, Brent](#)

**Cc:** [Falzone, Mike](#) ; [Guerrette, Jason](#) ; [Harte, John](#) ; [Lambert, George](#) ; [Parker, Paul](#) ; [Peeples, Ray](#) ; [Spencer, Bill](#)

**Sent:** Monday, December 07, 2009 7:03 PM

**Subject:** concern from Litchfield resident

I am sending this e-mail to the entire budget committee, therefore, I am aware it is to be considered a public document.

Good evening gentlemen,

Thank you for all your time and effort that you are putting into this budget process. It is greatly appreciated. This e-mail is in support of your recent discussion relating to the possibility of reducing the number of teachers, thereby raising the number of students per classroom. On the surface, some may consider that action as an anti-child proposal, but I believe it to be quite the

opposite. Mr Peebles made the very important point, that by saving the taxpayers money is indeed an action that is "for" BOTH the children, their education, AND the taxpayers. It is a win-win situation.

Furthermore, Mr Spencer made the point very clear that even after the class sizes were made a little larger, that Litchfield will still be well below the State maximums, as well as being below Litchfield's own policy regarding maximum class sizes.

At the Dec 1st meeting, an argument was made by the Superintendent that we should not reduce the teacher count this year because "we will have to decimate" our school budget next year if we do not get the necessary State funds. That argument was to NOT make big reductions two years in a row. From my perspective, it would seem that if we lose two million dollars from the State next year, we SHOULD NOT wait until next year to cut two million dollars from the budget,.....especially when we could safely start right now, without negatively impacting the education of our children.

If we save the hard earned taxpayer dollars from being spent in this years budget, it would equate to double the dollars by the next budget cycle, thereby lessening the impact next year. So, given the fact that enrollment is declining, the economy will not be getting better anytime soon, and we are still well below the State AND Litchfield's class size maximum, in my opinion, makes the valid case to increase class sizes as Mr Spencer has outlined.

Thank you,

Chris Pascucci