

**Minutes of the
Litchfield Budget Committee Meeting**

Held on December 10, 2009

The Litchfield Budget Committee held a meeting on Thursday December 10, 2009, at Campbell High School, 1 Highlander Court, Litchfield, NH 03052.

PRESENT: J Harte (Vice Chairman), B Spencer, P Parker, M Falzone, G Lambert (Board of Selectmen Representative), Mr. Guerrette (School Representative)

Also present: Dr. E. Cutler, S Martin, R Gregg (Special Education Director)

ABSENT: B Lemire (Chairman), R Peebles

Mr. Harte called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

1. PUBLIC INPUT

Ms. C. Couture stated she wanted to make the Committee aware that this year is the first time that the 6th grade class size has been so large. She talked about it being a transition year of importance and a good student/teacher ratio is required.

Responding to a query from Mr. Lambert, Ms. Couture confirmed that the addition of four students would put them over the current ratio.

Mr. Guerrette, 11 Perry Court spoke as a member of the public, voicing his concern that the Budget Committee not taking into consideration the entire town and has not considered those citizens who are unable to pay by continually raising the tax rate when they do not have to. He also commented that he felt Mr. Lemire had made a decision in isolation of the committee on how to proceed with voting.

Mr. Parker arrived at 7:15 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

There were no minutes for approval.

3. SCHOOL BUDGET PRESENTATION

a) Special Education within the District Wide Budget (1200 series)

Ms. R. Gregg, Special Education Director introduced herself, explaining the budget for Special Education fluctuates and pointed out this is particularly true when the economy is bad.

Account 114 (Para/Monitor salaries): Mr. Spencer pointed out they have never spent money in this account and Ms. Gregg stated that a student is back within District who has an interpreter.

Account 330 (Professional Services): Mr. Spencer pointed out this account is regularly under run, and Ms. Gregg explained they employ certain outside agencies for vision services and mobility when required and contract for a set number of hours. She explained these are based on IEP's and fluctuate according to the progress made by students. Mr. Martin stressed that this money is returned to the voters if it is not spent.

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Mr. Spencer had the same question about under running for Account 332, Tutor Services, and was again told this is variable. Ms. Gregg explained the District needs to pay for services for juveniles and 17 year olds if they are incarcerated.

Mr. Spencer queried out of district placements (account 569, Handicapped Tuition), and Ms. Gregg explained they are seeing an increase in areas such as emotionally handicapped. She talked about a therapeutic program at Germaine Lawrence which runs through the summer for which they have planned 19 – 20 months for one student, with the average being 14 months.

Ms. Gregg confirmed for Mr. Harte that Saint Ann's and Longview are facilities used for out of district placements which are new to the District, and there was a discussion about the effects upon the District financially and of parent challenges to decisions. Mr. Spencer also pointed out that COOL (Center for Optimum Learning) is also new for the District.

Mr. Spencer requested information on state funding and Ms. Gregg explained how the process works. Ms. Gregg and Mr. Martin talked about the reduction in expected state aid to between 70 and 75%. They explained usually 80% of anything over \$30,000 is reimbursed but not until the following year, and reimbursement is based on the student therefore both transportation and tuition is included.

Account 580 (Travel): Responding to Mr. Spencer's query, Ms. Gregg explained this is for the coordinator and specialists who belong to the District who travel on behalf of the student. There followed a discussion regarding the District having to pay for support services provided to the students on field trips. It was clarified for Mr. Harte that the School Board cut this account for historical reasons.

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Responding to Mr. Spencer's query as to how the salary cut for SPED teachers came about, Ms. Gregg stated 1.5 positions were cut District wide, and she explained how they decide on the number of teachers they require. She also explained about early intervention programs, and that they can access Medicaid for assistance with students who have health or behavioral problems. There was a discussion on how effective IEP's are, and Ms. Gregg stated that 20% of the student population are on either an IEP or 504 Plan. There was also a discussion

about staff in the District working with autistic children, the population of which has increased.

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Ms. Gregg explained for Mr. Spencer that the number of paraprofessionals is based on the number of students and there is one per grade. She also explained how they operate.

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Responding to Mr. Spencer Ms. Gregg explained the pay scales for paraprofessionals. Mr. Spencer stated CHS historically spends less than budgeted and Ms. Gregg explained why the budget for this fluctuates.

Page 11 (2000 series)

Responding to Mr. Falzone, Ms. Gregg explained how psychiatrist services fit in with whole system.

Responding to Mr. Harte, Ms. Gregg explained testing protocols may vary according to what a student needs are, stating they try to anticipate which tests will be revised as they have to purchase the new ones.

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Account 2150 (Speech services): Ms. Gregg explained there is a vacant position, as they could not find a speech pathologist. She stated they are therefore exhausting professional services as they have to hire someone from outside. She explained there was an expectation that funding a new staff member will enable a reduction of some other services.

b) SPED Transportation

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Account 519 (Transportation): Mr. Martin explained this is a new contract which has no rate increase in the first year. Following a query from Mr. Spencer regarding the amount budgeted for First Student transportation, and a query about the cost effectiveness of the transportation, Ms. Gregg explained the companies piggy back with surrounding districts to save the district money and she explained some of the challenges they come across. An example was given of a student who is currently transported to Alvirne which they hope to move to Litchfield using the regular bus service which would save the District \$12,000.

Responding to a query regarding off-site work settings from Mr. Spencer, Ms. Gregg explained there are a number of students in the 18 to 21 age group which go to a variety of work locations. Mr. Spencer asked for year-to-date spending in this account and Ms. Gregg agreed to obtain this.

Action: Ms. Gregg

Mr. Martin handed out information on class student ratios. He also handed out the revenue figures, stating he does not want to compare the budget to actual figures, but instead look at page 2. He stated there is a large increase in grant funds, and explained what affects the property tax rate. There followed discussion on the figures.

Mr. Spencer asked about the default budget figure, and Mr. Guerrette responded that it had failed at the School Board level. Mr. Martin explained some items which he had not included this year in the default budget. He explained he will be advising the Board what they need to do.

Mr. Guerrette handed out year-to-date actual figures and the monthly financial report.

c) District Wide Budget

Page 1

Account 110 (Salaries): Mr. Harte stated he expected the 6th period cuts to be mostly at CHS. At the request of Mr. Spencer, Mr. Martin explained what the 6th period is and how they made the decision to cut this.

Mr. Harte queried the balloon check benefit rate, and Mr. Martin explained the software cannot deal with the rate increase for the last three months health insurance, therefore this is manually added to the budget. Mr. Spencer stated he estimated the balloon payment will be in the order of \$46,000 across the board.

Responding to Mr. Lambert, Mr. Martin explained a long term substitute is someone who covers for a teacher who is out for longer than a few days for things like medical leave, and there was a discussion on substitutes.

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Mr. Spencer provided historical information on co-curricular and athletics for the three schools, stating they under spent salaries by approximately \$10,000. He stated he did not think the Board had cut these sufficiently.

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Responding to a query from Mr. Spencer, Mr. Guerrette explained Dr. Cutler had made a decision to cut the Curriculum Director position to part time which had been very difficult as it may impact grant writing.

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Account 271 (Course/Reimbursement/Union): Mr. Spencer queried the figure for course reimbursement and Mr. Martin explained how this operates. He explained that as it is contractual they are required to fully fund this. Mr. Spencer talked about historical under spending in this account.

Account 110 (Salaries): Responding to Mr. Harte, Mr. Martin explained the salary account figures and how these are calculated; clarifying it covers adjustments for non LEA staff where new hires are placed at a higher salary.

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Custodial Services: it was explained the District budgets a lump sum and splits it between schools.

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Mr. Martin explained for the benefit of Mr. Spencer what School Dude is. Mr. Guerrette spoke about the need to have someone who is familiar with the software and who can maintain it.

There was a discussion on insurance property and liability.

Page 21

Account 610 (Supplies): Mr. Harte queried this account asking what the increase was for, and was informed it was for irrigation systems and the grounds in general at GMS and LMS.

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Account 626 (Fuel): Mr. Spencer asked about the fuel adjustment and Mr. Martin stated he would provide the Committee with a copy of the new contract. He explained why they did not go out to bid.

Action: Mr. Martin

There was a discussion on charging students at high school for bus transportation.

Page 24

Technology Services: Responding to a query from Mr. Harte, Mr. Martin stated there were 11 servers with nine having expiring warranties this coming year. There followed a discussion on servers with Mr. Lambert.

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Mr. Martin explained what LANdesk is and what it is used for.

Benefits & Fixed Charges: Mr. Martin informed the Committee that the union and District are at an impasse and they do not foresee any improvement in the projected increase in health and dental insurance costs which they have estimated. There was a discussion on the meaning of 'same level of service' for the health insurance, as well as a discussion regarding the next step in negotiations (mediation) and what it means for the District.

Mr. Harte clarified with Mr. Martin why there were differences between the health insurance at GMS and LMS. He explained the areas where they were seeing changes, such as the new law to offer family coverage for up to age 25 and moves from single to family coverage or spousal changes requiring staff to take up health insurance through the District, and there followed a discussion on these.

4. **VOTING ON LMS**

MOTION: by Mr. Guerrette

Move a bottom line for the 2011 LMS Budget of \$4,280,951.72

SECOND: Mr. Falzone

Discussion:

Mr. Spencer stated he no longer had a problem with the 6th grade teacher numbers and explained he previously had an incorrect count of the teachers.

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Mr. Harte queried Utilities and the increase from PSNH, and was told that the Board had chosen to make some cuts as they had looked at the forward market for the electricity supply in general and Mr. Martin had based his figure on what they are paying through their current vendor which is cheaper than PSNH and there was a 70/30 split.

Page 2

Account 440 (Rental/Lease Instructional Equipment): Responding to a query from Mr. Lambert, Mr. Martin pointed out some of these are multi year contracts therefore they are budgetary numbers.

VOTE: 6-0-0

The motion carried unanimously.

5. **MEMBER INPUT**

Mr. Lambert stated the Board of Selectmen is making progress on the warrant articles for the Town.

Mr. Falzone stated he wanted the record to show he was in agreement with the consent vote to reduce the staff positions as he had not been at Tuesday's meeting.

- **NEXT MEETING:**
December 15, 2009

MOTION: Mr. Falzone

Move to adjourn

SECOND: Mr. Spencer

VOTE: 6-0-0

The motion carried unanimously.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 10:15 p.m.

Minutes taken by:

Sandra Maxwell (Recording Secretary)

Date approved:

January 14, 2010