

1 **Minutes of the**
2
3 **Special Meeting of the Litchfield Budget Committee**

4
5 **Held on May 27, 2010**
6

7 The Litchfield Budget Committee held a meeting on Thursday, May 27, 2010, at
8 Campbell High School, 1 Highlander Court, Litchfield, NH 03052.

9
10 **PRESENT:** J Harte, B Spencer, R Peeples, M Falzone, P Parker, E Miller, F Byron
11 (Board of Selectmen Representative), J York (School Board Representative)

12
13 **ABSENT:** R Peeples
14

15 Mr. Harte called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.
16

17 **1. Public Input**

18 Mr. J. Guerrette, 11 Perry Court introduced himself and talked about the importance
19 of separating the Operating and Capital budgets and the need for capital expenses to
20 be on the warrant. He asked the Budget Committee to consider this for the future.
21

22 Mr. C. Pascucci, 12 Colonial Drive introduced himself. He talked about funding for
23 the play set at the GMS playground and about the options which are currently being
24 discussed. He thanked everyone for responding to the letter he had sent on this topic
25 to the Budget Committee, School Board and the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Pascucci
26 requested, for the benefit of the viewing public, an explanation as to why the Budget
27 Committee would not have this topic on their agenda for discussion. Mr. Guerrette
28 stated he had received feedback from residents that the Budget Committee should be
29 involved in this decision and that residents wish to hear the Budget Committee's
30 opinion.
31

32 Responding to the input, Mr. Harte explained it is the Budget Committee's response
33 that they are responsible for working with the governing bodies, but they are not
34 responsible for telling them how to use the budget money as it is a bottom line
35 budget. He stressed these matters are outside the Budget Committee's purview, and
36 that the Budget Committee can request information but cannot challenge the
37 governing bodies. He also confirmed he had responded to Mr. Pascucci's letter via
38 e-mail confirming it is not appropriate for the Budget Committee to take a formal
39 position on this.
40

41 **2. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings**

42 Mr. Byron requested a number of amendments to the draft minutes of the Budget
43 Committee's April meeting, which he read.

44 **MOTION:** by Mr. Falzone

45 *Move to approve the minutes of the Litchfield Budget Committee meeting held on*
46 *April 22, 2010 as amended*

1 **SECOND:** Mr. Spencer
2 **VOTE:** 6-0-1(Ms. Miller abstained)
3 **The motion carried.**

4
5 **3. Town Business**

6 Mr. Byron handed out copy of a town report to the Budget Committee, dated May
7 27, 2010 and proceeded to provide clarification and update on a number of points as
8 he went through the report. He also asked members of the Committee to let him
9 know if they are not receiving e-mails via their town e-mail addresses. Responding
10 to a query from Mr. Spencer regarding how a salary adjustment had been handled
11 within the Police Department, Mr. Byron reported it had been a change in position
12 on the salary table. He also clarified that the lease for police cars is a municipal
13 lease. Mr. Spencer queried the amount left in the Social Security and Medicare
14 Taxes line within the Personnel Administration account and Mr. Byron agreed to
15 investigate this.

16 **Action: Mr. Byron**

17
18 Mr. Byron reviewed revenues, reporting the town is ahead of revenue projections.
19 He noted the town had not sent out reminders to residents regarding renewal of their
20 dog licenses and will now have to find money to send registered letters to residents
21 as there were approximately 360 residents who had failed to register their dogs.

22
23 **General Update:**

24 Mr. Harte asked whether anything stood out on initial review of the audit report, and
25 Mr. Byron stated he thought there may be an error relating to the Library. He also
26 stated the auditors will ask the Board to segregate Highway Block Grant money
27 which will have ramifications administratively for the town. He stated there may be
28 an issue over some of the basic financial procedures not yet being in place.

29
30 Responding to a query from Mr. Spencer regarding whether the school playground
31 equipment would be eligible for recreation impact fees, Mr. Byron stated he was
32 unsure about this, but that this would also have to be part of the CIP (Capital
33 Improvement Plan). There followed a brief discussion of CIP issues, and
34 clarification on the use of impact fees.

35
36 **4. School Business**

37 Talking about school lunches, Mr. York reported the District anticipates it will be
38 \$19,000 short at the end of the year. He reported there is a revised pricing proposal
39 which recommended an increase the price of lunch at all three schools, but with no
40 increase recommended for St. Francis which the Board is querying. He stated the
41 third party vendor will make a presentation to take over school lunches but this will
42 not happen in 2010/11. He confirmed the District will get a notice from the state
43 about the deficit. He also pointed out that school lunches in Litchfield are between
44 25 and 50 cents per meal less than surrounding districts. Responding to a query from
45 Mr. Spencer, Mr. York reported a decision has yet to be made regarding where the
46 shortfall would come from. Mr. York confirmed the vendors would begin in 2011/12

1 and Mr. Harte stressed the Budget Committee will need to know what the
2 recommendation is for the upcoming budget season. Mr. York talked about some of
3 the possible implications of having an outside vendor, including use of facilities by
4 residents for functions. Responding to a query from Mr. Harte, Mr. York stated the
5 District will possibly look at sub contracting in other areas. Mr. Byron requested
6 that the Board consider the impact of using an outside vendor who would have
7 control over the cafeteria facilities and the use of those facilities in an emergency
8 when the school is used as a shelter for residents.

9
10 Mr. York obtained confirmation that the Committee had received Mr. Martin's May
11 7th report. He reported the next meeting of the Board will be on June 16th.

12 Responding to a query from Mr. Spencer, Mr. York reported the District is not
13 planning on doing anything at present regarding a network upgrade and the Board
14 has not made any recommendations, but stressed the matter is a concern for them.
15 He pointed out the Board is currently trying to work out how to deal with the
16 shortfall in funding from the state. There followed a discussion about the network
17 audit and the need for expansion. Mr. Spencer suggested advancing items from next
18 year to this year to alleviate the situation.

19
20 Mr. Falzone requested a status report on the GMS playground issue, and Mr. York
21 reported there was a motion made at the last Board meeting to allocate funds to the
22 playground but it had failed for lack of a second. He stated they will discuss the
23 matter again at their June meeting. He also reported the PTO has made a
24 commitment to raise a certain amount of money for the playground.

25 26 **5. 2010 Budget Season Goals Discussion**

27 Mr. Harte opened the meeting up for discussion on what the members felt should be
28 their goals for the upcoming budget season. There was discussion on what the drop
29 in funding from the state would mean for the town as a whole, as well as discussion
30 on the talks which will take place over the next few months to resolve the issue.

31 **a) Target Tax Rate**

32 There was a discussion on whether they could come up with a target tax rate and
33 what things would have a bearing on the discussions, such as teacher ratios. Mr.
34 Spencer suggested a means of achieving a reasonable operating budget increase
35 and Mr. Byron weighed in, suggesting the Committee have the town and school
36 district come forward with ideas before they discuss this any further. It was the
37 consensus of the Budget Committee to table this at present. Mr. Harte stated he
38 would like to give the various boards information on what the Budget
39 Committee's position is.

40 41 **b) Meeting Format**

42 Mr. Harte asked whether the members wished to continue with the way they had
43 handled the meeting format last year, and he provided an overview for new
44 committee members. There was a brief discussion, initiated by Ms. Miller
45 regarding the time allotted to both the town and the school by the Budget

1 Committee, and about which representatives from each area present and answer
2 questions from the Committee.

3
4 **c) Meeting Schedule**

5 Mr. Harte reported that Mr. Byron had taken a first pass at a schedule for the
6 town. Mr. Harte provided Mr. Byron with suggested amendments based upon the
7 Committee's preferences. Mr. Byron agreed to discuss the amended schedule
8 with the Board of Selectmen on June 14th.

9 **Action: Mr. Byron**

10
11 Mr. Harte stated the schedules would be presented to the Budget Committee at
12 their next meeting. Mr. Spencer suggested their meetings should have
13 opportunity for public input at both the beginning and the end of the meetings and
14 Mr. Harte said he had no objection to this.

15
16 **d) Board Interaction**

17 Mr. Harte reported he had spoken with the Chairmen of both the Board of
18 Selectmen and the School Board regarding the possibility of joint sessions with
19 the Budget Committee for the exchange of ideas. He made the following
20 suggestion:

21 June - Board of Selectmen

22 July – School Board

23 August – a joint session with both the School and Board of Selectmen.

24
25 He confirmed the Budget Committee would post the meetings and invite
26 everyone, and that he would Chair the meetings.

27
28 **e) Teacher Ratio Discussion**

29 Mr. Spencer talked about whether the Budget Committee should discuss the type
30 of criteria they will use to make cuts in the budget, and in particular the school
31 budget, in advance. He handed out copies of the existing teacher ratio policy, as
32 well as a chart which can be used to determine teacher head count, and one which
33 included the state standards. He compared these to Litchfield's standards and
34 suggested letting the voters decide whether extra teachers required by the school
35 should be in the budget or not. He also suggested the Committee come to
36 agreement about what they think is acceptable as this would make it easier for the
37 school district at budgeting time. He requested members take a look at the
38 information he had shared and give it consideration. Responding to a query about
39 why the high school was not included in Mr. Spencer's information, he pointed
40 out it is difficult to know how to measure teacher ratio at the high school. Mr.
41 Harte mentioned his concern about certain class dimensions and increasing the
42 number of students in those classes, stating he would want to take another look at
43 first grade through second grade to ascertain whether there are classrooms which
44 can support 25 students by state standards. Mr. Falzone suggested touring the
45 school with the principals. He also stated he has problem with the Budget
46 Committee deciding what that ratio should be. Mr. Spencer pointed out the

1 standards in place were never put to the voters and were arbitrarily decided by the
2 district.

3
4 Ms. Miller clarified what her position is regarding the tax rate.

5
6 **f) *Community Interaction***

7 This was not discussed at this time.

8
9 **g) *Road Maintenance Budgeting***

10 Mr. Spencer suggested any road projects which are not funded by Highway Block
11 Grant money be separate warrant articles, suggesting they reach a proposal at
12 their next meeting regarding the Budget Committee's position. Mr. Harte asked
13 for clarification of 'any road maintenance', and Mr. Spencer suggested the Budget
14 Committee may wish to propose a figure. There followed a discussion in which
15 Mr. Byron provided input about Highway Block Grant money. They went on to
16 discuss the accounting procedures for receipt of this money and what it can be
17 spent on, as well as certain procedures resulting in unnecessary restrictions on
18 when and how to use the money. Mr. Harte provided some clarification during
19 the discussion.

20
21 **h) *Salary Increase Budgeting***

22 Mr. Spencer stated he would propose there should be separate warrant articles for
23 salary increases of non-bargained staff, and he would like to discuss the matter
24 and whether they wish to take a position on freezing non-bargained staff into their
25 step and the position in the step at their next meeting.

26
27 **6. Member Input**

28 The Committee held a brief discussion about the input Mr. Guerrette had provided at
29 the beginning of the meeting.

30
31 **• Upcoming Meetings**

- 32 ○ June 24, 2010

33
34 **ADJOURN**

35 **MOTION:** by Mr. Falzone

36 ***Move to adjourn***

37 **SECOND:** Ms. Miller

38 **VOTE:** 7-0-0

39 **The motion carried unanimously.**

40
41 There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 9:17 p.m.

42
43 **Addendum:** E-mail correspondence from Mr. C. Pascucci.

44
45 **Minutes taken by:** *Sandra Maxwell (Recording Secretary)*

46 **Date approved:** *June 24, 2010*

LETTER via E-MAIL From Chris Pascucci Dated May 26, 2010 at 11:01PM

From: Chris Pascucci <chrispas@comcast.net>
Subject: **from Chris Pascucci**
Date: May 26, 2010 11:01:52 PM EDT
To: Frank Byron <fbyron@litchfield-nh.gov>, Mike Falzone, (at work) <Holkarent@aol.com>, Liz Miller <lizbiz001@comcast.net>, Paul Parker <paul_d_parker@yahoo.com>, Raymond Peeples <RayPeeples@stanleyelevator.com>, Bill Spencer <bspence70@comcast.net>, John York <jyork@litchfieldsd.org>, John Harte <John_Harte@comcast.net>
Cc: Brunelle, John <jbrunelle@litchfield-nh.gov>, Cynthia Couture <ccouture@litchfieldsd.org>, Cutler, Dr Elaine <ecutler@litchfieldsd.org>, Jason Guerrette <jnguerrette@litchfieldsd.org>, Jewett, Pat <pjewett@litchfieldsd.org>, George Lambert <GeorgeLambert@litchfield-nh.gov>, Dennis Miller <dmiller@litchfieldsd.org>, Steve Perry <sperry@litchfield-nh.gov>, Mary Prindle <mprindle@litchfieldsd.org>

<THE FOLLOWING WAS AN ATTACHED MICROSOFT WORD DOCUMENT>

Budget Committee
John Harte, Chairman
5/26/10

First, I want to commend all of you for last months budget committee meeting. You were successful in proving that you do not have to substitute thoroughness and accountability for politeness. In my opinion, you asked the right questions and did so in a very respectful manner. Please keep that up. No citizen in this town, myself included, expects that we all agree on every subject, but as budget committee members, we expect you to be responsible, use common sense, ask the tough questions and the right questions of the right people and to always keep in the forefront of your mind that we are to provide the absolute best services and programs in our town and school while keeping Litchfield an affordable place to live. Also taking into consideration the taxpayers ability to pay for it all.

It's certainly not an easy task, but it sure is an important task. We all understand that there are many groups and individuals that will be asking for more stuff, and asking that the taxpayer pay for it. Please consider all people, voters and taxpayers in your decision making process.

I'm sure by now you have heard about a "hot" issue in town. That is; our school board is considering using end of year funds, to finance a project. That project is the playset at GMS. We have heard estimates that this playset could cost upwards of \$50,000. Just to be clear, everyone that I have spoken with, including myself, believes it is a very important item to have at our school. And we understand that the school board is well within their legal right to fund this playset without first bringing it to the voter for approval. The conversation is about the ethical and moral use of taxpayer funds for this playset, without first asking. The one issue that is becoming so decisive is the way we are thinking about funding it. One group really wants this playset by September and believes that not enough money can be raised by then, so they want to take the money from the end of year funds. The other group, although they believe this is important, thinks it's not as important as {say a boiler} so the money should be appropriated via a warrant, or at least sold and vetted as part of the new budget. However, that would push the construction of this playset forward to March, and that is an unacceptable wait for that group. Another option was to fund a special election using the fundraised money, which would probably make that group happy, since they would not have to wait the six months.

Anyway, this is a red hot issue, and, if handled incorrectly, will unfortunately push another wedge through this town. I think this issue rises to the level of very important, and therefore (I think) deserves to be an agenda item in tomorrow's meeting. I also think this deserves an on record opinion of each and every budget committee member including the opinion of the BOS and SB rep. If you have

the desire to review a sampling of the community sentiments about this subject, please log onto www.litchfieldnhboards.com. You will find an on-going debate on this issue.

Respectfully,
Chris Pascucci

RESPONSE via E-MAIL from Ray Peeples dated May 27, 2010 at 11:21AM

From: Raymond Peeples <RayPeeples@stanleyelevator.com>
Subject: RE: from Chris Pascucci
Date: May 27, 2010 11:15:18 AM EDT
To: Chris Pascucci <chrispas@comcast.net>, Frank Byron <fbyron@litchfield-nh.gov>, Mike Falzone, (at work) <Holkarent@aol.com>, Liz Miller <lizbiz001@comcast.net>, Paul Parker <paul_d_parker@yahoo.com>, Bill Spencer <bspence70@comcast.net>, John York <jyork@litchfieldsd.org>, John Harte <John_Harte@comcast.net>
Cc: Brunelle, John <jbrunelle@litchfield-nh.gov>, Cynthia Couture <ccouture@litchfieldsd.org>, Cutler, Dr Elaine <ecutler@litchfieldsd.org>, Jason Guerrette <jguerrette@litchfieldsd.org>, Jewett, Pat <pjewett@litchfieldsd.org>, George Lambert <GeorgeLambert@litchfield-nh.gov>, Dennis Miller <dmiller@litchfieldsd.org>, Steve Perry <sperry@litchfield-nh.gov>, Mary Prindle <mprindle@litchfieldsd.org>

John,

I will not be at the meeting tonight as I have to go down to the city later today and do not expect to return home till somewhere after 9:30 tonight.

As Chris has asked in the document attached, he would like everyone option, I cannot be there so if you could put this in the record, I would be grateful!

I have a mixed view on this one. As a community the recreation committee installed the equipment at Jeff Lane with the help of volunteers and supervision from the company that made the set. I like that approach as in give a bit of ownership to the community and would help do that again myself.

Funding is the second issue, I feel it would hard for the community to do the fund raiser in time to get that amount of money for a September opening, also this is a very important play area for kids over the summer, so September seems like that would even be to late.

I dislike the "because we have it" "we need to spent it attitude" that seems to prevail and the yearend budget feeding frenzy for pet projects, I am not sure that this falls into that category seeing that it benefits a very large group of children and families, unlike issues such as those related to Football or Track where the benefit is for a very small subset of the whole.

All that being said, I would be inclined to support this purchase, **but only** if it was put out to **public bid** and involved a community installation. I would commit to helping in the installation just as I did at Jeff Lane. I think this one is for the greater good and if the size of the set expanded, impact fees could be used to offset the above and beyond costs. *(yes I am aware of the issues with them, but the idea is still valid)*

In the end if, the leaders approach this as a "Community Project" I would support that. Just because it is at the GMS does not make in only the School Boards problem, the Selectman should also be engaged as this is really a public recreation site used by many.

We elect our leaders to lead, and they **can** and **should** make the hard decisions, but protect the peoples interest in using an open and transparent process.

May not be popular but that's my .o2 on it!

Regards,
Ray Peeples

Knowledge is important, Execution is essential!

RESPONSE via E-MAIL from John Harte

From: Liz Miller <lizbiz001@comcast.net>
Subject: **Re: from Chris Pascucci**
Date: May 27, 2010 3:37:52 PM EDT
To: Chris Pascucci <chrispas@comcast.net>
Cc: John Brunelle <jbrunelle@litchfield-nh.gov>, Cynthia Couture <ccouture@litchfieldsd.org>, Elaine Cutler <ecutler@litchfieldsd.org>, Jason Guerrette <jnguerrette@litchfieldsd.org>, Pat Jewett <pjewett@litchfieldsd.org>, George Lambert <GeorgeLambert@litchfield-nh.gov>, Dennis Miller <dmiller@litchfieldsd.org>, Steve Perry <sperry@litchfield-nh.gov>, Mary Prindle <mprindle@litchfieldsd.org>, Frank Byron <fbyron@litchfield-nh.gov>, Mike Falzone, (at work) <Holkarent@aol.com>, Paul Parker <paul_d_parker@yahoo.com>, Raymond Peeples <RayPeeples@stanleyelevator.com>, Bill Spencer <bspence70@comcast.net>, John York <jyork@litchfieldsd.org>, John Harte <John_Harte@comcast.net>

Chris,

Thank you for your letter to the Budget Committee, and the kind words you have shared about the way the Budget Committee facilitates the meetings of the committee.

Regarding your request to have the issue about the playground added as an agenda item to tonight's meeting, I have given your recommendation a lot of thought and I believe that we would be inappropriate at this time for this to be added as a formal agenda item at this time. Please allow me just a few moments to explain my position, as I recognize that this is an important topic not only for you but for many members of our community.

The role of the budget committee is to review and recommend a budget to be brought forth before the voters through our election process. Once the voters vote on the bottom line budget, it is up to the governing body to manage their expenses to the bottom line of the budget. The role of the budget committee is not to manage or oversee the governing bodies to ensure they are spending their allocated monies according to the line items which were discussed in the previous budgeting process. If we take a formal position as to the opinions of the committee, then we as a committee are in fact making a formal statement of an area which is outside of our realm of responsibilities.

Please understand, it is with the purview of the Budget Committee to ask questions throughout the year of the governing bodies, discussing certain items which have been expended upon so we can understand how that transaction may correlate to the approved budget or to future budgets. Once again, those questions are specific to the budget, and the Budget Committee should not take a position where we are seen micro-managing the governing body as to how the funds are managed. The voters elect the members of both boards to administer the funds appropriated, and it is ultimately those governing body's responsibility to make the hard decisions on the use of these funds not only for the day to day operation of the entity, but also on how they must manage to unexpected events such as the playset at Griffin Memorial School.

Lastly, it is certainly not our role as Budget Committee members to determine if the use of end of year funds, or even expenditures throughout the year, for any purpose is ethical or moral. Once again, I would leave it up to the governing bodies to make that determination, vote accordingly, and

be able to support their decision to the taxpayers as they are ultimately the ones who are held accountable. As I understand it, this issue was already voted upon by the School Board, and a vote was taken, and it was defeated, and that will be the decision in which that board is going to need to defend to the taxpayers.

Although I do not plan on having this as an agenda item for tonight's meeting, and I will not be asking members to express their personal opinions to this subject, I certainly welcome you to use the Public Input section of tonight's meeting to express your thoughts to the Budget Committee.

Once again, I appreciate you taking your time to send to the Budget Committee your e-mail/letter expressing your concerns.

Have a good day.

John

REPLY via E-MAIL from Elizabeth Miller dated May 27. 2010 at 3:37PM

Chris,

I agree with John and his statements about the Budget Committee's role. That being said though, I have no qualms giving you my opinion as a resident and taxpayer.

Like most, I believe a nice playground is an asset to the community -- both of my children have enjoyed playing on it. Your letter is the first I've heard of the playground committee wanting to use donated money to help fund a special election. Did I understand you correctly? As someone who donated, I would feel duped if the money was used in this way. While I don't approve of the SB using end-of-year funds to build a new playground, and since the playground is wanted sooner than later, a warrant article is probably the best route for this item. No, it won't be built by September, but the way I'd like to see it done will take longer than a warrant article would.

Some thoughts... Since the playground is open to all the children in the community, and not just those that attend GMS, would it be more fitting to have the playground issues fall under the jurisdiction of the Rec Committee (even though it's school property)? Can this even be done? Incorporate the playground (or future playgrounds) into a bigger plan, the Master Plan (I believe it's due to be updated within the next few years and would include resident input and discussion). This way there's a clear, documented vision of where we want the town to go in terms of future recreational facilities (and who will be funding them) and we can avoid the current knee-jerk responses to these issues.

Thank you for keeping us all on our toes.

Liz Miller

RESPONSE via E-MAIL from Chris Pascucci on May 27, 2010 at 4:14PM

From: Chris Pascucci <chrispas@comcast.net>
Subject: **Re: from Chris Pascucci**
Date: May 27, 2010 4:14:03 PM EDT
To: John Harte <john_harte@comcast.net>

Cc: Frank Byron <fbyron@litchfield-nh.gov>, Mike Falzone, (at work) <Holkarent@aol.com>, Liz Miller <lizbiz001@comcast.net>, Paul Parker <paul_d_parker@yahoo.com>, Raymond Peeples <RayPeeples@stanleyelevator.com>, Bill Spencer <bspence70@comcast.net>, John York <jyork@litchfieldsd.org>, John Brunelle <jbrunelle@litchfield-nh.gov>, Cynthia Couture <ccouture@litchfieldsd.org>, Elaine Cutler <ecutler@litchfieldsd.org>, Jason Guerrette <jnguerrette@litchfieldsd.org>, Pat Jewett <pjewett@litchfieldsd.org>, George Lambert <GeorgeLambert@litchfield-nh.gov>, Dennis Miller <dmiller@litchfieldsd.org>, Steve Perry <sperry@litchfield-nh.gov>, Mary Prindle <mprindle@litchfieldsd.org>

John,

Thank you for responding, and I can really appreciate your reply. I commend you and the budget committee. You are well aware of your responsibilities as elected representatives and you are also well aware of your limitations and obligations to all in this town. This budget committee adheres to both the legal and ethical letter of your role as elected representatives of this town. Although I think that is a fantastic way to behave, that is why I believe this town gets bogged down in many of these controversies. This school board, in my opinion, will sometimes overextend and use their voting power to justify an end of year expense, when it should be sent back to the voter for approval.

This is not about the playset, we all agree that this playset is a necessary part of that school. This is not about the law, because we all know the school board has every legal right to spend all of the end of year funds if they so desired. This is about the ethics of using end of year funds to purchase this playset,...without first bringing it to the voter. (It's mostly about adhering to the "spirit" of the law).

And I do agree with you, that it is not the budget committees role to decide what is ethical or not ethical. But,.....the budget committee has, many times in the past, expressed opinions on many different expenditures. John York will be making his presentation on school board goings-on. This issue must certainly come up in his presentation. I am curious as to how that subject will be handled. And, although this issue will not be an official agenda item, I know some BC members have expressed opinions on various expenditures many times in the past. But that is your call as Chairman.

Finally, you said it is your job to ask questions about budget expenditures and how that will correlate to future budgets. Please note, and I'm sure you have, that this school system has a very large amount of money left over this year. So, although your point is well taken that once you approve the budget, they can spend it to the bottom line. The only way I can see this type of end of year spending to come to an end, is to really question, scrutinize and ask for justification for every line item during the next budget creation cycle. That is where the real work begins.

Again, thank you, and the entire budget committee for doing what you do.

Chris Pascucci

RESPONSE via E-MAIL from Chris Pascucci on May 27, 2010 at 4:26PM

From: Chris Pascucci <chrispas@comcast.net>
Subject: **Re: from Chris Pascucci**
Date: May 27, 2010 4:26:28 PM EDT
To: Liz Miller <lizbiz001@comcast.net>
Cc: John Brunelle <jbrunelle@litchfield-nh.gov>, Cynthia Couture <ccouture@litchfieldsd.org>, Elaine Cutler <ecutler@litchfieldsd.org>, Jason Guerrette <jnguerrette@litchfieldsd.org>, Pat Jewett <pjewett@litchfieldsd.org>, George Lambert <GeorgeLambert@litchfield-nh.gov>, Dennis Miller <dmiller@litchfieldsd.org>, Steve Perry <sperry@litchfield-nh.gov>, Mary Prindle <mprindle@litchfieldsd.org>, Frank Byron <fbyron@litchfield-nh.gov>, Mike Falzone, (at work) <Holkarent@aol.com>, Paul Parker <paul_d_parker@yahoo.com>, Raymond Peeples <RayPeeples@stanleyelevator.com>, Bill Spencer <bspence70@comcast.net>, John York <jyork@litchfieldsd.org>, John Harte <John_Harte@comcast.net>

Thanks Liz.

As for the funding of a special election. I do not think that was "approved" by this group. That is one of the many ideas that was floated. I think you used the correct phrase when you said "knee jerk". I agree with you. This is a big problem as I see it. Most people realize that when a \$30 - \$50,000 plan to purchase a playset is thrown at you and everyone is in a rush.....well, you make mistakes. And they are usually very costly mistakes. We have a very determined group with this playground committee. They are doing a fantastic job. We all need to (as a community) take a giant step back, take a deep breath, and have discussions on how to best go about this.

The problem as I see it, the school board has a deadline to spend the end of year funds, and this playground group is pushing for those end of year funds. This is a recipe for disaster. And this disaster will most definitely waste at least some of our hard earned tax dollars. Someone, some group needs to take a leadership role with this issue (someone with a level head) and get this playset built, with the best possible materials, in a structurally sound fashion, for the least amount of money (which could happen with some time, determination and patience). Unfortunately, the patience part of this formula apparently is what we are lacking. I really like your idea about the rec commission, master plan etc, however the school board needs to be "on board" with all of this, because the deadline is fast approaching for them to approve the spending of our tax money.

Maybe some of what is currently happening, will make a difference?

Thank you,
Chris