

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

106 Hancock Road
Peterborough, New Hampshire

CONTOOCOOK VALLEY SCHOOL BOARD

Selectmen's Advisory Committee

Thursday, December 12, 2019

7:00 p.m.

SAU #1

Minutes

Present: John Jordan, Karen Hatcher, Henry Kunhardt, John Robertson, Bob Marshall, George Willard, Fred Woodhouse, Janine Lesser, Tim Theberge, Alan Edelkind, Kimberly Saunders

John Jordan called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

1. Accept Minutes of October 24, 2019

Karen Hatcher moved to accept the minutes of October 24, 2019.

Henry Kunhardt clarified that supplemental monies were being released from the State. The monies were going to go in the school district general fund unless there was a special meeting to direct the money otherwise.

John Robertson second with clarifications. Unanimous.

2. ConVal Proposed Budget

Version 4 of the proposed budget has gone up because we have advertised for an Accountant but have not been successful because we have not been offering enough money. The rate was just increased by \$20K to attract a person for this position.

In addition, the proposed budget is up \$100K as a result of the food service deficit.

John Jordan asked what was new in the budget.

Kimberly Saunders said that we are expanding our present slots for preschool to provide a more effective program for four year olds. This is the first step toward offering preschool to all four year olds. It is not mandatory but would be available to all four year olds. The present preschools would remain and it would not expand to all towns. It would expand for the students presently in the program to see how it would be. Students would go from half-day to full-day. The district is looking at a sliding scale fee for "tuition". Currently, preschools exist in Greenfield, Peterborough, and Antrim. They are designed to provide early intervention. There is no plan to put a preschool in every elementary school. The reason that the board is headed in this direction is a result of a significant study by RAND. The study was based on NH's economics and place in the country. The impact that preschool has long-term on students who are 300% above the poverty level (those at free and reduced lunch level) saves money in the long run. They project that it saves \$3 for every \$1 spent. Students who are unlikely to have a quality preschool experience are disadvantaged entering kindergarten as a result. It is not intended that everyone would send their four year old to school. It targets a specific population but would be open to all. The sliding scale development is underway. There has always been a fee.

Janine Lesser said that the RAND study was commissioned by the NH Charitable Foundation. The Federal Reserve conducted a study prior to the RAND Study. Huge gains can be made in children's development during the preschool years.

Kimberly Saunders will send the RAND Study to John Jordan along with the Executive Study.

Kimberly Saunders reviewed version three of the budget and highlighted changes. In terms of salaries, an assistant principal at GBS and PES were added. Administrators get raises based on merit. Health insurance is down. The staff contributions have increased as well. Line 330 reflects an increase in other purchased and

technology services as a result of increases in subscriptions. The Property Service lines are under discussion in terms of budgeting items through a warrant, increase in budget, bond, and trust funds. Bonding helps to keep the taxes stable over a period of time.

Kimberly Saunders further said that the first year of a bond requires payment on interest only. ConVal is not pursuing a bond this year but will next year. There are several warrants for smaller renovations and the use of trust fund money is planned. Negotiations with teachers will begin next year. Floating a bond this year would result in the first year payment coupled with the first year of a teacher's contract. Therefore, waiting one year was in the best interest of the taxpayer.

Transportation is expensive. It costs ConVal about \$950 per student each year for transportation. This is one of the reasons for the lawsuit. This is money spent before the student even gets to the door.

Version 5 reflects an increase in water as a result of a 20% increase in January in one of our towns.

Line 432, Electrical Repairs and Maintenance, reflects an increase of \$100K as a result of repairs and maintenance as well as data privacy law requirements to secure student data.

Discussion took place about supplemental money from the State. It was one time money and cannot be built into a budget.

Karen Hatcher said that she will bring information forward about the lawsuit at the State. A commission is forming. Karen said that all of the bills that were tabled are going away. Nothing new on school funding will be coming forward.

3. Unreserved Fund Balance/Surplus

Kimberly Saunders said that \$1.2M was returned last year. A soft freeze was in place last year on spending. Part of the reason that the return was so high was in part because of that soft freeze.

4. Francestown

John Jordan said that a motion was made and withdrawn to reassign Francestown Elementary (FES) students due to anticipated low enrollment. He further said that discussion about closing a school likely causes a family to reconsider purchasing a home in Francestown.

Kimberly Saunders said that census data was reviewed and as a result, FES would have 38 students K-4 next year. In order to operate a school, it was determined that seven adults are needed. A warrant to reassign students in Francestown until the population increases was proposed by administration. The board tabled the discussion. People became concerned about it and jumped to believe that FES would be closed. On Tuesday, December 17th, an open forum with Francestown community will take place at 6:00 p.m. At 7:00 p.m., the School Board meeting will begin.

Henry Kunhardt said that this information was sent home to FES families but was never sent to the town. He urged the district to consider sharing communications with the town moving forward. He would like to work together.

Kimberly Saunders said that it is her job to work all avenues to help keep the budget down. In addition, it is not just budget, instructional leadership is a main focus.

Kimberly said that a potential contracted communication person is under consideration for matters such as this.

Karen Hatcher said that these meetings are public meetings. If you want to learn what is going on, she encouraged all to attend when they can. Karen shared her experience from attending the November 2nd budget work session and her appreciation for learning more about the merits of this proposal. She said that Ann Forrest did a great job sharing reasons for this recommendation that she would have not otherwise known.

Kevin Pobst said that the merits might be correct but the process has to be right and the communication has to be right for the merits to matter.

Alternatives to strengthen the elementary schools are needed.

Kimberly said that she would like to see this group have a real discussion that would attract new people to move to your towns. What are the towns going to do to increase student population? Soon there will be no ambulance drivers etc. as populations decline. It has more than an impact on just the schools.

Kimberly shared experiences that may soon dissolve for students in terms of program as a result of budget.

Keven Pobst shared active discussion in recent years about ways to reorganize the schools for efficiencies. He shared what it feels like with the discussion about reassigning FES students.

Karen Hatcher shared information about a workshop she attended in Keene about the housing crisis in the State. Families don't have a place to live. People who are working in our towns cannot afford to live in those towns. There are developers who are interested in building homes to meet these needs. Everybody needs to be housed. Minimum wage is still \$7.25 per hour. \$24.00 per hour is what is needed to afford housing. This needs to be tackled in our communities.

Kimberly said that a first year teacher in this district cannot afford to live in this district if they can find housing.

George Willard shared Temple's experience with the recent formation of a committee to look at housing. Most did not favor affordable housing in Temple.

John Jordan shared his experience in the far past with building affordable housing.

Karen Hatcher said that the question is "who do we see ourselves as?" Peterborough grapples with what they value and how they build it into their housing policy. If we are town leaders, we have to incent people to build and take advantage of programs. Favorable conditions are needed.

Keven Pobst said that he did research several years ago; it resulted in small old housing as being most affordable. It is easy to control the first buyer on a build, but not the second when they resell.

5. Pre-K

Discussed under agenda item 2) ConVal Proposed Budget.

6. Bond for Capital Improvements

Discussed under agenda item 2) ConVal Proposed Budget.

7. Other

Henry Kunhardt moved to adjourn at 8:25. Fred Woodhouse second. Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Marschok