

**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS
106 Hancock Road
Peterborough, New Hampshire**

CONTOOCOOK VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT

PUBLIC HEARING

Tuesday, January 12, 2021

6:30 PM

(Snow Date - January 13, 2021 @ 6:30 p.m. @ SAU)

**Physical Location:
SAU #1 Office
106 Hancock Rd.
Peterborough, NH 03458**

Virtual Location:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88332360539?pwd=ZWJpMk1GMkVXd2hNZ25EN2pTa1lVUT09>

Meeting ID: 883 3236 0539

Passcode: Mpc7mn

Telephone: 1 646 558 8656

Passcode: 762551

Proposed 2021-2022 Budget

Per RSA: 40:13, II-a (c), a public hearing on the proposed budget is required.

Minutes

Rich Cahoon called the Public Hearing to order at 6:31 p.m.

Rich Cahoon read the "*Right to Know for Public Meeting Emergency Declaration*".

Rich Cahoon said that there is a school board meeting immediately following this public hearing. Accessing the board meeting requires a different Zoom Link to access than this meeting. This meeting is restricted to discussion about the proposed budget.

A roll call attendance was taken.

Jim Fredrickson introduced himself as the Budget & Property Chairperson and School Board Representative from the Town of Sharon.

Jim Fredrickson spoke about the initial budget guidance as the starting point leading to the development of a final proposed budget.

Jim Fredrickson said that the budget for the current year, 2020/2021, was approved only days prior to COVID hitting. Balancing education, safety, mental health, costs, and flexibility are always a part of the budget equation. Remote learning will be a new norm moving forward.

Jim said that the NH Emergency Order was issued and we went into remote learning. Our students already had Chromebooks for the most part, which put ConVal ahead in planning. People expected a savings once we went to remote learning; but there were none because of the unanticipated expenses.

The reopening plan was initiated. This year, unanticipated costs total \$3.15 Million in staffing, technology, PPE, cleaning, HVAC, and outdoor classrooms. Federal & State Programs and encumbrances cover all but \$1.2M. ConVal is addressing the \$1.2M through budget transfers, deferrals and cancellations.

The guidance given for budget development included the intent to go back to normal in FY'22, recover lost learning and capital improvements, plan for potential student population reductions, and include "hybrid learning models" for remote and in-person learning.

The guidance was revised to include a flexible learning model for FY'22 and beyond, minimal transmission and minimal mitigation FY'22, and covering program additions with offsets in the budget or the use of trust fund money.

Kimberly Saunders spoke about Reopening, Recovery, and Resiliency. The first piece is the need to reopen in a productive way that includes steady and in person learning. Recovery focuses on helping students move toward making up lost learning and recover strategic steps toward the ConVal vision. Resiliency involves the changing of practices, structures, and strategies that will result in a stronger organization. It should be viewed as a set of steps. Kimberly spoke about each of the steps.

The Operating Budget was reviewed. The proposed budget is up 4.04% or \$1,954,609. The Gross Budget is up 2.63% or \$1,348,074. District Assessment reflects a 6.8% increase.

The Default budget was reviewed. The default budget is a calculation, and not a budget, that is arrived at by taking last year's budget and considering contractual obligations that have been assigned minus one time obligations. For example, we are legally required to transport students to school. A contractual obligation would be a Collective Bargaining Agreement or other contracts signed.

Revenues are down locally. They include trust funds and revenue from State sources. We are fortunate that the decrease in adequacy was not greater; we did not see the decreases that other surrounding districts saw in enrollment numbers. State sources are down just over 5%. All in, we have a decrease in revenues of 6.6%.

Rich Cahoon asked the board if they would like to speak about the budget. None.

Rich asked the public if they would like to ask a question or make a comment related to the budget.

Bob Edwards, Antrim, asked what the percentage of families that may prefer remote learning to in person learning might be. Kimberly Saunders said that we have just over 100 K-4 students participating remotely. The total participating remotely, by choice, is 220 across the district K-8.

Abigail Arnold, said that she thinks the district is headed toward a default budget and she asked how this would impact operations.

Kimberly Saunders said that a default would require \$720K in reductions. We would start with the lowest impact on students, move next to programming, next to things outside the school day, and next into the school day or school year, and finally, we would look at core essential programming. When we talk about reductions, with over 70% of the budget spent on personnel, we look at staff.

Dr. Saunders said that a list of items for consideration would be brought to the board and prioritized.

Jim Bosman read a statement thanking school personnel dealing with the educational concerns. The school district capacity to provide an emergency response is commendable. The introduction of this budget landed with a thud among the towns. He offered observations that families are facing food, housing, and employment insecurities. People have to make due with less. A school budget that seeks more appears uncaring. He believes education funding from the State will be reduced. The town's ability to fund towns and schools will suffer from a stingy mood at town meetings this year. He said that asking voters to fund increases will be short sighted and have an impact for years to come.

Kristie LaPlante asked if preschool is a priority over other obligations.

Kimberly Saunders said that administration asked the same question. Expanding preschool has been a long-term commitment for years, knowing that many cannot afford a preschool experience for their children. Children often come to kindergarten unprepared absent the opportunity for preschool. Research shows that NH was a prime place that a "Preschool for All" program is necessary. Administration asked the board if this continues to be a priority for the board. The initial plan was scaled back and the proposal for expansion is half of what was originally proposed.

Rich Cahoon confirmed that this addresses educational equity in the district and expands an existing effort. It remains a high priority for the board and the District.

Janine Lesser said that it was a hard decision for the board. Even though times are dire, children don't wait. If we can't move to give children what they need at this young age, they will fall further behind. It was decided to go forward with this commitment.

Tim Theberge said that there is a financial upside as well. There is a six dollar return for every one dollar spent. Future costs will be kept down as a result.

Kristie LaPlante further asked about positions being funded through trust funds this year and how will they be funded moving forward.

Rich Cahoon said that we are not funding any positions out of the trust. Each trust has a legally defined purpose. For example, the Equipment Capital Reserve would fund equipment purchases. No positions are being funded out of trusts.

Kimberly said that in order to level the ups and downs, some of the trusts are used for purposes that it was designed for to help keep the budget down. It helps level the budget from year to year.

Jim Fredrickson outlined the various trusts in place and purpose of each.

Tim Theberge echoed that the hours spent by the board, administrators and staff was not a light effort. A lot of thought went into the proposed budget put forward. None were made lightly.

Kevin Pobst asked for clarification that the budget includes a new K-8 Remote School of which \$551K is from a trust offset.

The trust offsets are for equipment, a truck, and boilers.

Jim Fredrickson said that in order to do what the board voted on, some items were moved out of the budget to allow funding from trusts as appropriate.

Rich Cahoon said that those expenses are not being funded from the trust; but other items are being funded from trusts that are appropriate to the purpose they were designed.

The board can make transfers related to educational programming by transferring dollars into different lines as appropriate.

Rich Cahoon said that in terms of our ability to offer remote learning, we are under a State mandate to do so.

Kevin Pobst further asked if not under State mandate, would we be able to offer something similar in 21/22.

Kimberly Saunders said that we have been allowed a certain amount of discretion as to how and what is offered in remote instruction. Absent the emergency order, we would be required to meet specific standards in a remote learning situation.

Kimberly Saunders said that there have been significant concerns on the sustainability of the budget. We use trusts year after year. We have done this in order to absorb downshifts from the State as they continue not to fund their responsibilities for an adequate education. It is not sustainable.

Rich Cahoon asked if there were further questions.

Hearing none, Rich Cahoon declared the Public Hearing closed at 7:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Marschok