

CONTOOCCOOK VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Annual Meeting
ConVal High School
District Meeting – Part I (Deliberative Session)
Tuesday, February 8, 2022
6:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Call to Order:

Moderator Bob Edwards called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Moderator Edwards reminded those present of the locations of the fire exits. For the safety of everyone, masks are required to be worn at this assembly. In addition, a separate room is available for those that do not wish to wear a mask. Mr. Edwards said that he will enforce this throughout the meeting.

Mr. Edwards introduced Mr. Cronin as Assistant Moderator. Abby Tucker was present to serve as legal counsel. Tonight's meeting is for those present serving as the body. The moderator will recognize a School Board member or school official to speak on each of the warrant articles. There is a petitioned warrant article tonight. If anyone who signed the petition is present, he asked that they speak on the article.

This is a Deliberative Session and votes do not occur tonight but rather on March 8, 2022 in each of the towns.

If you wish to make an amendment tonight, he asked that it be done in writing and presented to the Moderator. Once all discussion on an article is complete, the article will be closed.

The Legislative body may move to restrict reconsideration of an article. Only voters from the nine ConVal towns may speak and vote at this session.

A voter may request that a non-voter be allowed to speak. If there are no objections, they may speak.

All those that ask questions or make comments must state his/her name and town of record and purpose to address the meeting. All questions and comments should be directed to the Moderator.

A speaker may not speak to an article and make a motion on the same trip to the microphone. Speakers will be recognized in order. Anyone calling Point of Order will be the exception.

Voter cards will be used to count a voice vote as needed.

A signature card must be signed to request a secret ballot vote. A request must be made immediately after a voice vote is taken and before any other business begins.

The moderator asked that cell phones be silenced.

Anyone wishing to move the question must take their place in line to speak.

The Moderator asked that full attention be devoted to the discussion at hand. Each speaker's perspective deserves attention.

The Moderator read the following:

WARRANT

THE STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

To the Inhabitants of the Contoocook Valley School District consisting of the Towns of Antrim, Bennington, Dublin, Frankestown, Greenfield, Hancock, Peterborough, Sharon, and Temple qualified to vote in District affairs:

You are hereby notified to meet at **ConVal High School** at 184 Hancock Rd., (Route 202 North) in Peterborough on the **eighth day of February, 2022**, next at **6 o'clock in the evening** for the first session of the Annual School District Meeting (snow date: tenth day of February next at 6 o'clock in the evening), to deliberate upon the warrant articles listed below. Warrant articles may be amended subject to the following limitations: (a) warrant articles whose wording is prescribed by law shall not be amended; (b) warrant articles that are amended shall be placed on the official ballot for a final vote on the main motion, as amended; and, (c) no warrant article shall be amended to eliminate the subject matter of the article. An amendment that changes the dollar amount of an appropriation in a warrant article shall not be deemed to violate this provision.

You are further notified to meet at the following places in the Town of your residence:

Antrim	Antrim Town Hall	8 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Bennington	Pierce Elementary School	8 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Dublin	Dublin Town Hall	8 a.m. – 7 p.m.

Francestown	Francestown Town Hall	10 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Greenfield	Greenfield Meeting House	10 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Hancock	Hancock Elementary School	8 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Peterborough	Peterborough Community Center	8 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Sharon	Sharon Meeting House	11 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Temple	Temple Town Hall	7 a.m. – 7 p.m.

on the **eighth day of March** next for the second session of the Meeting (polls will be open for voting by official ballot at the second session)

Moderator Edwards introduced Tim Theberge, School Board Chair. Tim Theberge thanked members of the board and administration for preparing and presenting a responsible budget for the district. He thanked the community members for coming out tonight and for the Supervisors of the Checklist for attending tonight. He asked that those present ask questions about the warrant. ConVal has served member towns well for over 50 years.

Article 01: Operating Budget-School District-SB2

Shall the Contoocook Valley School District raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling \$53,766,080? Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$52,842,414 which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Contoocook Valley School District or by law; or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only. (The ConVal School Board RECOMMENDS adoption of this article.)

Jim Fredrickson, Chair of Budget & Property Committee, said that the proposed budget includes approximately \$2M of federal program costs. The proposed budget is roughly \$300K more than last year, which equates to a .65% increase.

This does not include any operating costs associated with the proposed Collective Bargaining Agreement. If the budget is not passed, we would go to a default budget requiring a \$588K decrease. He highly recommended supporting this budget.

The Moderator asked if there was any discussion on this article. Hearing none, the Moderator closed this Article for further debate.

Article 02: Accept the Collective Bargaining Agreement

To see if the Contoocook Valley Regional School District will vote to approve the cost items included in the Collective Bargaining Agreement reached between the ConVal School Board and the ConVal Education Association which calls for the following increases in salaries and benefits at the current staffing level:

Fiscal Year	Estimated Increase
2022-2023	\$877,844
2023-2024	\$737,576
2024-2025	\$714,868

And further to raise and appropriate the sum of \$877,844 for the 2022-2023 fiscal year, such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in salaries and benefits required by the new agreement over those that would be paid at current staffing levels.

(The ConVal School Board RECOMMENDS adoption of this article.)

Kevin Pobst said that the School Board bargains with the ConVal Education Association on behalf of three groups of employees, teachers, paras and specialized services staff. This is a three-year contract. The advantage is that it provides stability in building budgets.

The total next year is \$877,844 which is in line with previous years. The increases for the following two years are significantly lower. Salary increases will vary in following years depending on where an employee falls on the salary scale. Other details were shared. Mr. Pobst said that this is a good contract, especially in this economy.

The Moderator closed Article 02 to further debate after hearing no discussion.

Article 03: Special Meeting for Defeated/Amended Collective Bargaining Agreement

Shall the District, if Article 02 is defeated, authorize the governing body to call one special meeting, at its option, to address Article 02 cost items only? (Majority vote required)

Kevin Pobst said that if the voters do not approve of Article 02, this would enable negotiators to continue to meet and bargain and bring another agreement forward. If an agreement is not reached, they will not receive any increase for the following year.

The Moderator closed Article 03 to further debate after hearing no discussion.

Article 04: Expansion of Current Preschool Program

Shall the Contoocook Valley School District vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$744,112 for the 2022-2023 fiscal year for the purpose of expanding the existing preschool program? (The ConVal School Board designates this article as a SPECIAL warrant article.) (The ConVal School Board RECOMMENDS adoption of this article.)

Rich Cahoon said that this proposal arises from a 2016 report raising serious concerns that more and more students were entering kindergarten and were not ready. They did not recognize letters, unable to associate sounds with letters, and unable to recognize colors. In order to address this issue, the district worked to expand preschool offerings. We are looking to expand to eight classrooms. The board and administration recognize that a significant investment is asked of the voters. At least 70% of incoming students will be kindergarten ready if this passes. The School Board voted unanimously to support Article 04 and they asked for the voters' support.

David DeWitt asked if the federal government decides to provide funds for this preschool program what would happen to this money?

Dr. Saunders said that it would go into an unreserved fund balance and would be returned to the taxpayers, or be used to fund trust fund balances, or it would be up to 2.5% would be used for an unreserved fund retention as previously voted.

Tricia Saenger, Temple, asked where the classrooms would be located.

Dr. Saunders said that they would be centrally located in Peterborough, Hancock, Antrim, and Greenfield.

Tricia Saenger further asked about busing or if parents are responsible for transporting. Parents would be responsible for transportation at this time.

Hearing no further debate, the Moderator closed debate on Article 04 for further discussion.

Article 05: Establish and Appropriate to Technology Trust Fund

Shall the Contoocook Valley School District vote to establish an expendable trust fund under the provisions of RSA 198:20-c, to be known as the Technology Trust Fund, for the purpose of acquiring and maintaining hardware, software, and services as necessary to support the use of digital equipment and technology throughout the District, and shall it raise and appropriate the sum of \$100,000 to be placed in the fund, and further to name the School Board as agents to expend from this fund. (The ConVal School Board designates this article as a SPECIAL warrant article.) (The ConVal School Board RECOMMENDS adoption of this article.)

Katherine Heck respectfully asked the voters to consider approving establishing a trust fund for technology. This is an expense and we have fully budgeted for technology needs for the current year. Technology is highly expensive and this would allow in the event to pivot or incur a cost with no additional taxation and provide what is needed for the students in the ConVal School District.

Sarah Edwards, Antrim, asked what deems a warrant article to be a "Special Warrant Article"?

Abby Tucker, legal counsel, said that a special warrant article is one where the money would be appropriated only for that use. The operating budget is line by line. Here, if this were to be increased or decreased, the money would still be for the purpose outlined.

The Moderator closed Article 05 for further debate after hearing no further discussion.

Article 06: Appropriate to the Energy Trust Fund from Fund Balance

Shall the Contoocook Valley School District vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$100,000 to be added to the Contoocook Valley School District Energy Trust Fund, previously established? This sum to come from June 30, 2022 fund balance available for transfer on July 1, 2022, with no amount to be raised from taxation. (The ConVal School Board designates this article as a SPECIAL warrant article.) (The ConVal School Board RECOMMENDS adoption of this article.)

Katherine Heck said that this Warrant Article is directly related to the solar project which is complete and on the high school roof. This would allow a buyout of that solar contract and maximize the savings on that contract. We are saving money and there are investors. It would take six years for the current investors to fully realize their investment and allow the district to buy out. This would also allow for any other energy efficient project that might come forward.

Ms. Heck recommended adoption of this article.

The Moderator closed Article 06 for further debate after hearing no discussion.

Article 07: Appropriate to the Building Capital Reserve Fund from Fund Balance

Shall the Contoocook Valley School District vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$500,000 to be added to the Building Capital Reserve Fund, previously established? This sum to come from the June 30, 2022 fund balance available for transfer on July 1, 2022, with no amount to be raised from taxation. (The ConVal School Board designates this article as a SPECIAL warrant article.) (The ConVal School Board RECOMMENDS adoption of this article.)

Janine Lesser said that this asks the voters for the transfer of unreserved funds to the Building Capital Reserve Fund. These are not new dollars raised and would allow the district to maintain its Capital Improvement Plan.

Tricia Saenger, Temple, noted that there are several trust fund articles and asked how it is decided which are funded.

Tim Theberge responded stating that they are funded in the order that they appear on the ballot.

Ms. Saenger asked if these represent all of the trust funds the district has. Tim Theberge responded that there are several others that are not on this year's warrant. Target balances are set for the trusts and those at or near have not been placed on the warrant.

Ms. Saenger asked if the balances of the trust funds are available. Jim Fredrickson shared that information is available online.

The Moderator closed this article for further debate after hearing no further discussion.

Article 08: Appropriate to the Health Trust Fund from Fund Balance

Shall the Contoocook Valley School District vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$50,000 to be added to the Health Trust Fund as previously established? This sum to come from June 30, 2022 fund balance available for transfer on July 1, 2022, with no amount to be raised from taxation. (The ConVal School Board designates this article as a SPECIAL warrant article.) (The ConVal School Board RECOMMENDS adoption of this article.)

Tim Theberge said that this trust manages the ups and downs related to health care costs.

The Moderator closed this article for further debate after hearing no further discussion.

Article 09: Appropriate to the Building Capital Reserve Fund from Fund Balance

Shall the Contoocook Valley School District vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$250,000 to be added to the Building Capital Reserve Fund as previously established? This sum to come from the June 30, 2022 fund balance available for transfer on July 1, 2022, with no amount to be raised from taxation. In the event

that Article 07 passes, this appropriation shall be in addition to any appropriation to the Building Capital Reserve pursuant to Article 07.

(The ConVal School Board designates this article as a SPECIAL warrant article.) (The ConVal School Board RECOMMENDS adoption of this article.)

Dick Dunning said that if monies are depleted from the unreserved fund balance, this fund would be funded. Building the assets to deal with capital improvements is the goal to minimize the impact on our taxpayers as our buildings age and require attention.

The Moderator closed this article for further debate after hearing no further discussion.

Article 10: Accept Reports of Agents and Auditors

Shall the Contoocook Valley School District accept the reports of Agents, Auditors, Committees, and Officers chosen?

Tom Burgess said that this is an article to accept the reports that are seen in the annual report tonight.

The Moderator closed the article to further debate after hearing no discussion.

Article 11: School Board Salaries

Shall the Contoocook Valley School District appoint the salaries of the School Board and fix the annual compensation of any other officers or agents of the District as follows: School Board Chair, \$1,500; each member, \$1,000; Treasurer, \$2,500; Deputy Treasurer, \$2,000; Moderator, \$300? (The ConVal School Board RECOMMENDS adoption of this article.)

Alan Edelkind said that the School Board salaries are stipends that don't cover board expenses. Why do board members do this? We give our time and energy to students to provide the best cost-effective education possible.

The Moderator closed this article to further debate after hearing no discussion.

Article 12: Petitioned Warrant Article

Shall the voters of the CONVAL Regional School District approve the following warrant article?

Whereas an educated citizenry is necessary for the effective functioning and preservation of a representative democracy and

Whereas full transparency in government is a bedrock principle for ensuring accountability in a democracy and

Whereas the primary purpose of our schools is to provide a quality education that prepares students to become active and knowledgeable citizens and productive community members and schools must provide the tools students need to acquire and develop analytical thinking skills that enable them to navigate the complexity of a modern economy and

Whereas the primary responsibility for guiding the education of children and overseeing what is being taught in our schools and classrooms falls primarily to parents/grandparents/legal guardians in conjunction with elected School Boards and appointed administrators and

Whereas taxpayers also have an absolute right to know how their educational tax dollars are being spent then therefore

Consistent with the above this article shall require that the CONVAL Regional School District School Board of Education/SAU 1 SHALL make available by September 15th of each year and as available thereafter throughout the school year ALL instructional materials, including, but not limited to, textbooks, printed matter and/or materials in electronic form used in classrooms, to the general public in libraries in each of the Towns in the CONVAL School District (PETERBOROUGH, DUBLIN, FRANCESTOWN, GREENFIELD, HANCOCK, TEMPLE, ANTRIM, SHARON, AND BENNINGTON).

In addition, copies of all professional training materials provided to teachers, administrators and staff shall also be made available to the public.

The School District is hereby instructed to spend \$200 from existing budgeted funds to publicize the availability of these materials to the public.

(MAJORITY VOTE REQUIRED) (SUBMITTED BY PETITION)

Moderator Edwards asked if there is a petitioner present who would like to speak on Article 12.

Ms. Matson, Dublin, said that this caught her attention as a result of things going on all over the country. As a grandmother of future ConVal students, she would like to go to the library to see what is being taught. The best thing about it is that the library will be a place to have accessibility to these materials.

Abby Tucker, legal counsel, said that this warrant article is advisory in nature and is unclear if the ConVal School Board can impose on town libraries. There is a town in this district that does not have its own public library but enjoys access to another that is in a town not in this district.

Furthermore, this article does not appropriate funds for materials from all of the classes from all grades, but only to publish that materials would be available. There is an issue if the intent is for materials to be present in school libraries as well.

Katherine Heck, Greenfield, taxpayer and resident, said that she believes in the right to petition. However, there are already mechanisms in place for parents, guardians, and the public, including state and federal law as well as School Policy that provide the opportunity for materials that are available from curriculum adoption, parent objections to materials, and library collection development. Additionally, copyright policies are in place that prevent reproduction of materials. She said that this petition is on approximately a dozen ballots across New Hampshire and nationally on hundreds of ballots. ConVal is open to sharing information and materials with the public and can be done so by requesting to see information.

Pierre Groleau, Sharon, asked if this was to take place and ConVal had to allocate resources to hire people and make this happen, what might it cost in approximation.

Tim Theberge spoke about one specific course in music in particular. To purchase material alone for DVD's alone would total \$500. We offer hundreds of courses. Looking at sheet music for every piece, text books, etc., coupled with staff, is not a small number.

Mr. Groleau asked if this could be amended or withdrawn.

Abby Tucker said that a petitioner could withdraw, or one that signed could withdraw the petition.

Mr. Groleau said that this is simply not feasible.

Abby Tucker said that it is advisory in nature. Even if it were to pass, the law informs the board that they are not mandated to do what is outlined in this article. They do not have the authority to mandate that libraries find the space for all of these materials. None of the libraries can accommodate the space required.

Mr. Groleau said that if the petitioner would withdraw, it would be most sensible.

Tim Iwanowicz offered an amendment to this article. It read as follows:

The amendment included everything in base article with the addition:

The school district will raise and appropriate the sum of \$200,000 for the purpose of hiring staff to manage all of the collection, organization, and distribution necessary to manage the requirements of this warrant article”.

Walter Turner, Frankestown, seconded the amendment.

Twenty-two were in favor of the amendment as proposed.

Katherine Heck clarified that if we amend and add \$200K plus the \$200.00 already in the petitioned article, does it make it compulsory or still advisory in nature?

Counsel said that it has no binding authority on town libraries regardless.

Opposed: Majority.

Article 12 will appear at respective voting halls as originally read and not as amended.

Stephen Ullman, Antrim, said that he has been a Library Trustee in Antrim for nine years. The key point is that parents and legal guardians have the right to access instructional materials that students are consuming.

Legally speaking, libraries are independent entities and have limited space. Libraries determine, independently, what resources will be offered to patrons. What appears in libraries changes over time. If this warrant were to pass and if a library were asked to find room for all of the instructional materials that were prescribed, a space or no space might be granted. Libraries do not have to do what school boards ask them to do.

Richard Sanders, Peterborough, said that if this were to become a reality he thought about what the school board and educators were to do if everyone were to pick on some piece of the curriculum or how a teacher is pursuing professional training. This is going too far. Having access to materials is already there. He said that he found this article scary.

The Moderator closed this article to further debate after hearing no further discussion.

Article 13: School Board Members

To choose Contoocook Valley School District Officers as follows: Six (6) Members of the School Board; one (1) from the Town of Antrim for a term of three (3) years; one (1) from the Town of Dublin for a term of three (3) years; one (1) from the Town of Hancock for a term of three (3) years; two (2) from the Town of Peterborough for a term of three (3) years; one (1) from the Town of Peterborough for a term of one (1) year.

Moderator read the article. This is an article that is regulatory governed and is not subject to debate. It has to be on here as a matter of compliance.

Moderator Edwards reported that this completes the articles.

Moderator Edwards asked if there are special awards or declarations to come before the meeting.

Tim Theberge said that let it be resolved that the Contoocook Valley School District recognize Rich Cahoon, School Board Representative from Antrim for his 9 years of dedicated service to the children and residents of the ConVal community. Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be

The Moderator asked if there was any other business that may legally come before this meeting? There was none.

Moderator Edwards thanked everyone for coming out tonight to share thoughts and opinions with the School Board. He appreciated compliance with mask requirements.

Dick Dunning motioned to adjourn at 7:15 p.m. Greg Kriebel seconded the motion. Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Marschok