

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

**CONTOOCOOK VALLEY SCHOOL BOARD**

**Selectmen's Advisory Committee**

**Thursday, December 22, 2022**

**SAU Office Board Room**  
**7:00 p.m.**

**Minutes**

**Present:** John Robertson, Jeff Brown, George Willard, Mike Borden, Bill Kennedy, Diane Callahan, Janine Lesser, Katherine Heck, Dr. Kimberly Saunders

**1. Call to Order**

**John Robertson called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.**

**2. Approve Minutes of October 27, 2022**

**Bill Kennedy moved to approve the minutes of October 27, 2022. Jeff Brown seconded. Unanimous.**

**3. ConVal Proposed Budget Update**

The proposed Budget by Object was shared.

John Robertson noted that it is \$281,000 less than last year.

Kimberly Saunders said that one-time expenditures were taken out and ESSER funds will be applied.

Some items will be covered 50% by ESSER funds and will be fully in the budget next year. Declining enrollment impacts a decrease in salaries. We have lost an average of 900 students total over the years that Kimberly has been employed in the district. It was not completely unexpected. Demographic studies projected a decline in enrollment.

Jeff Brown asked what the impact of other schools in the district is.

Kimberly Saunders said that approximately 32 students opted to attend the Charter School that previously were in district. We also gained 30 students as a result of an influx. It is up or down by approximately 10 students in any given year. New Hampshire has a significant decline in enrollment.

Janine Lesser said that there is a decline nationwide.

Katherine Heck shared that from 2015 to today, town population has remained flat. Demographic is aging. We are losing between 2 and 11% in school population.

John Robertson said that there is a new development in his town where the average age was estimated in the mid 40's.

Kimberly Saunders reported that enrollment for elementary; kindergarten in particular has been up. We are a classroom teacher short for preschool. We have a waiting list for this year and next year.

The NESDEC enrollment projections will be interesting to see.

Kimberly said that she estimates that we will stay pretty flat over the next ten years based on last year's demographics.

What COLA was used to calculate salaries? Kimberly Saunders replied sharing that the district does not use a COLA because there is a bargaining agreement with teachers. Administrators are on an agreed upon merit range. Those not covered by the CVEA are subject up to 4% merit based.

Facilities will receive a dollar per hour raise, based on market salaries, plus raises. They are highly skilled staff.

We are in the first year of the collective bargaining agreement for teachers and paras. What are the lines in the budget that increased the most? Department heads are up but the total dollars are not that much. The principal model is being changed up and includes 50% of a Data and Equity position to accomplish the goals set in the Strategic Plan. Water and sewer are up considerably. Energy costs are up. The budget cycle was entered in with no more than a 2% increase. ESSER dollars were used to accomplish that. The ability to use ESSER dollars will be in place for two more years before it is gone. The impact of returning \$4.7 million dollars last year, coupled with an increase this year, caused a swing enough to impact taxes. The proposed budget is in the hands of the School Board. Katherine Heck said that the Board will now go through the budget line by line and make a recommendation. The Public Hearing on the proposed budget is scheduled for January 10th at 6:00 p.m. Revenues will factor in. The operating budget is up 1.3%. How much of ESSER dollars were used? Approximately \$450K for one-time expenses. ESSER dollars are COVID relief funds. It is the single largest influx of dollars for education ever. When the dollars are used, they are used for very specific purposes. Making sure that the dollars are spent for one-time expenses is critical so as it does not fall into the budget.

John Robertson asked about Warrant Articles. Katherine Heck said that there are none to raise money. Funding trust funds are some of the articles totaling \$1M.

#### **4. Strategic Plan Update**

Kimberly Saunders reported that the Board voted to adopt the Strategic Plan. There are five priority areas embedded in the plan. The Strategic Plan is on the school district website. Goals and objectives are in place for each of the priority areas.

John Robertson asked for an organized presentation at a future meeting in January.

Kimberly reminded the committee that the district has always asked for Selectmen's Advisory Committee (SAC) to take a vote of support for the proposed budget.

Kimberly urged SAC to follow ConVal news by subscribing to ConValNews.com

#### **5. Town of Hancock Letter**

Jeff Brown referenced a letter from the Town of Hancock.

Janine Lesser said that the board took the topic up. Unsure what Hancock is asking for.

Jeff Brown said that it appears that the payment schedule changes in July based on an estimate of what was voted in March. The tax rates are set and it is recalculated in December.

Katherine Heck shared that the district runs on a fiscal year and the towns on a calendar year. We vote and don't collect the difference of what was voted on until December. The calendar is a unique issue. Several combined factors play into why this is problematic; cash flow, fiscal capacity, change in valuation etc. There are some solutions that would have to happen in the school and in the town while others could be collaborative. Retention rates impact. The recommended retention rate is 5-7%. Some towns retain significantly more than that which allows flexibility.

On the school district side, wiggle room can be determined by looking at cash flow. ConVal had a long-time Business Administrator. We are conservative with a newer Business Administrator. A payment holiday by not charging anything in November and having the increase be spread out over several months might be an option. It may or may not be conducive to all of the towns. Setting the tax rate impacts the ability to send bills out and begin collection to allow a cash flow. There are challenges.

Katherine Heck shared that she has been working on fiscal capacity for each of the towns.

Katherine said that the feedback from the towns will be valuable as will the narrative. Coming to a place where relief can be seen is the goal.

Kimberly Saunders said that it was SAC that asked to go to monthly payments. It would be easier for the school district if we didn't have monthly payments. However, whatever is decided, all of the towns have

to be on the same payment schedule. It cannot be different from town to town. There is no easy answer.

Katherine Heck said that up to 2.5% may be retained by the school district as a result of a recent vote. It can be used for emergency purposes only.

Work and discussion will continue. Hancock has been the only town that has struggled and contacts the district. Other towns have asked for a few days extra to make a payment.

Uncollected taxes reflect fiscal capacity.

Kimberly asked Jeff Brown to look at what Hancock might choose to retain.

Changing to a fiscal year is under review in communities such as Greenfield.

**6. Other**

None.

**7. Adjourn**

**Bill Kennedy motioned to adjourn at 8:06 p.m. George Willard seconded.**

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Marschok