

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

CONTOOCOOK VALLEY SCHOOL BOARD

Selectmen's Advisory Committee

Thursday, January 26, 2023

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

Minutes

Present: John Robertson, Jeff Brown, Mike Borden, George Willard, Dr. Kimberly Saunders, Janine Lesser, Alan Edelkind

1. Call to Order

John Robertson called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

2. Approve Minutes of December 22, 2022

Passed over.

3. ConVal Final Proposed Budget Update

Janine Lesser said that budget information is on the website including articles written by Jim Fredrickson.

Kimberly Saunders shared information about the operational budget. The Mascenic School District is up over 10%, Jaffrey-Rindge is up 5.5%, and Monadnock 3.5%.

ConVal is up 1.35%. We have leveraged grant dollars and ESSER monies. Approximately \$425,000 for one-time expenses have been placed in ESSER grant for one-time expenses. The flip side of that is a 7.9% CPI increase, and the absorption of the teachers' contract. We are reducing staff through attrition. When you cut a budget this close, our default budget is \$1.36M that would have to be found for cuts if the budget does not pass. Kimberly said that this is not the year for the budget to fail.

The gross budget is all of our revenue plus our expenditures and is \$56,106,282. This includes state aid and adequacy money. We estimate giving \$250K back to the towns. Traditionally we return more. We have trust funds that need to have money placed in them.

District Assessment is always the question; it is 3.86% based on the budget passing. Overall, the salaries, in the second year of a teacher's contract are up \$236,000. Benefits are up \$473,000 which includes a Guaranteed Maximum Rate (GMR) of 4% for health insurance. Professional Services includes specific needs for students that might require contracting services; they are up \$274,000. An example might include physical or occupational therapy among others. We often contract because we cannot meet the salary requirement they would demand if hired as an employee because of the contract. This is hiring additional people that we cannot get on our own.

Kimberly shared that ConVal has a custodial contract which has saved the district money.

Property Services went down due to work done last year not required next year.

Professional Services might include tuition and transportation costs as well as insurance. This line is down.

Electricity, propane, heating fuel was up \$429K due to increased costs.

Furniture and equipment were decreased by \$33K. Dues and fees and debt services decreased by \$366K due to two bonds coming due.

If there is money remaining at the end of the school year, trust funds are asked to be funded.

The articles are funded in the order that they appear on the warrant as long as remaining funds are available.

The proposed budget maintains our present level of service.

Jeff Brown asked how town budgets are estimated. Once the Department of Revenue (DRA) determines apportionment, the budgets are estimated.

Select board members shared the increases anticipated for town budgets.

Kimberly Saunders shared that buildings are not being run as efficiently as we could because we cannot close them.

Janine Lesser said that one committee report that will be heard about tonight is the Strategic Organization Planning Committee.

Jeff Brown asked if consolidation is the answer.

Kimberly Saunders said that educationally, effective wise for children, while the buildings feel nice for adults, we can give more services for more children and provide a stronger program if we consolidate. We exacerbate the problem by keeping our buildings small with contracted services when trying to get services from one school to the next. More importantly, the staff is at a point now where most of our staff have near 20 years of experience. Shrinking staff through attrition would be better than closing schools and letting staff go.

4. School Board Committee Reports

Alan Edelkind reported that a new committee, Strategic Organization Planning Committee (SOPC) will study all aspects of consolidation by engaging an outside firm with experience to provide a fresh look on what might be possible and recommended. A process begins with the Request for Information (RFI) with consulting firms. Responses from five of the 20 solicited are anticipated. A request for proposal (RFP) would follow that would result in selecting a firm. Communities would be involved and engaged with. A report will result that will identify a recommendation. If it deals with the elementary schools, a change in the Articles of Agreement will require a vote. The RFI's will be analyzed.

Janine Lesser said that representation from the Select board will be sought for this committee.

Mike Borden shared interest in serving on the committee.

Jeff Brown said that looking at what the ideal education would look like should be the focus.

Kimberly said that in 2016, administration was asked to go through this process and a suggestion came out of that work that was decided against.

Janine said that the whole board is on board. The value of the education that students get in larger schools is recognized more and more.

Alan Edelkind reported that the Communication Committee has held community forums where presentations on certain subjects have taken place. People can attend in person or attend online. Q&A periods are available for both audiences. The next forum is on March 6th at 6:00 p.m. on the budget. Four presentations will include a layman's view of the budget, how administration works through the budget, how the board works through the budget, and a review of the budget and warrant articles.

Alan suggested that when communications are put out for this forum that the Selectmen's Advisory be on the distribution list to help communicate further in the towns.

Community Forums in towns were suggested.

John Robertson was asking if the ability to project the forums in the towns was possible.

Manpower and technology in the towns make that challenging.

Janine Lesser reported that the last Education Committee heard a presentation by the high school about the examination of the high school schedule. They are looking at different school schedules and examining to determine what would work best for ConVal High students.

A new building renovation committee met for the first time to meet with the Lavallee Brensinger Architectural firm reps to discuss timelines.

Policy committee has been reviewing the dress code policy and the policy around transgender students from other districts. There is controversy in the state about transgender students and whether there should be parental involvement. ConVal has a non-discrimination policy on how to deal with different discriminations. ConVal does believe that parents should be involved.

The Food Service and Wellness Committee are rolling out a pilot program for distribution of meals to the elementary schools. There have been problems hiring staff to work in the food service program, coupled with the increases in food products, have resulted in the recommendation to prepare food on site and use a packaging system to maintain quality and temperature and deliver them to schools.

Budget & Property Committee discussed issues including the high school parking lot as well as a review of fiscal management policies.

5. Open School Board Positions

The open School Board positions were shared; Antrim, Bennington, Frankestown, Hancock, Peterborough, Sharon. Of the six open positions, three people have expressed their intent to run.

6. Other

None.

7. Adjourn

Mike Borden motioned to adjourn at 8:08 p.m. Jeff Brown seconded. Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Marschok