

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

**CONTOOCOOK VALLEY SCHOOL BOARD**

**Selectmen's Advisory Committee**

**Thursday, February 23, 2023**

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

**Agenda**

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Approve Minutes of December 22, 2022**
- 3. Approve Minutes of January 26, 2023**
- 4. Coordinate participation in Community Forum**
- 5. SAC and Strategic Plan**
- 6. Budget Support**
- 7. Other**
- 8. Adjourn**

# 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

# 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