



BUDGET COMMITTEE
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MINUTES OF THE BUDGET COMMITTEE HEARING

Thursday, January 16, 2014 – 6:30 p.m. – Greenland Central School

Members Present: Chair Mary McDonough, Steve Gerrato, Chris Halligan, Bob Krasko, Don Miller, John Penacho - Selectmen's Rep, Pat Walsh – School Board Rep

Members Absent: Toby Fedder, Steve McKenzie, Mark Raque, Jim Trowell

Also Present: School Board Members, Jim Katkin – SAU 50 Business Administrator, Peter Smith – Greenland Central School Principal, George Cushing, SAU 50 Superintendent

Chair McDonough opened the Budget Committee meeting at 6:00 p.m. and a roll call was taken. The Chair stated that a quorum was present and the meeting was being recorded.

Before reviewing the school proposed budget, Chairperson McDonough made the following remarks:

- The Budget Committee's role: to be a second set of eyes to look at both the School and Town budgets.
 - Our goal is to ensure that the Town's people's needs are being met without incurring drastic spikes in our taxes. In conjunction with the selectmen, we try to make sure your tax bill is fairly steady year to year.
 - We also have the opportunity to meet with all the departments to get a good understanding of what everyone's needs are. For example, Chief Cresta is looking for funds to replace our old fire truck and at some point we will need a new fire station.
 - The Budget committee looks at how all these needs will potentially effect tax bills and ultimately Towns people's ability to afford to stay within Greenland.
 - Our job is to work together with the entire town.

Chairperson McDonough then reviewed the SB2 hand-out (attached) to help clarify the new system; she also made the follow statements.

- We have been working hard this year to understand the SB2 system.
- Need to clarify that it will be the school board that decides how to handle the default budget. They have not even discussed how they would manage the dollars. It is a bottom line budget; the school board will have to decide how to manage it. For example, the Math Program was budgeted in last year; those funds are not needed this year, thus, the school board would decide how to spend these dollars. (*If needed have Len Couture speak to this point)
- We as the Budget Committee have not cut teachers, technology, etc. from the default budget.
- I want to clarify how we approached this budget:
 - We did not and never would reduce dollars from the special education department. These are mandated services and the budget committee clearly understands this.

- The school budget is a bottom line budget which means that once the monies are appropriated, the school has control. If some issue comes up, money may be taken from one budget line and spend on another. For example, with both the town and the school, removing snow can cost more than we planned for- we do live in New England. When this occurs, either the town or the school may have to choose to not purchase an item that they had budgeted for since they have to play the person who plowed. Neither the town nor the school can spend more than is appropriated.
- We don't know how the town's people will vote in March. One hypocrisies is that if people enter the voting booth and see who numbers for the school, some may vote for the lower number since there was a take hike this past year. If the numbers are similar, a few dollars more may not stand out as much.
- To date, we have recommended only \$38,300 in reductions.
- The goal tonight is to hear feedback from the town's people. No decisions are made tonight. We will reconvene Jan 22 to make our final recommendations. The Deliberative session is scheduled for Feb 3rd.
- It is nice to see so much interest in the school budget and I highly encourage everyone to also take an active role in the town budget process by attending the public hearing for the town budget on Feb 11 and Town Meeting on March 15!
- Town Books- available at Town Hall- a great resource

Chairperson McDonough then began review of the proposed school budget as prepared by Mr. Katkin (please see copy). Chairperson McDonough asked that persons who want to speak come up the microphone, clearly state your name and address before addressing the assembly. She asked that if points are being made, it is not necessary to have multiple people get up to state the same thoughts and to please be respectful when address the assembly.

- Chairperson McDonough reviewed the line by line hand-out opening the floor to any questions or comments: The following remarks were made:
 - Mr. Mark Fleming asked that the default budget line be explained in regards to the math expenditure line. Mr. Katkin explained that this reflects the removal of the cost for the Math in Focus program which was purchased last year since this was a warrant article and thus a one-time expense.
 - Carrie Lynsink asked if there were funds planned to cover the cost of summer programs for children with special needs. Mr. Cushing noted that the final decisions for summer programs would be made in March or April and that was money budgeted. Ms. Lynsink asked if this included PT/OT and ST services. Mr. Cushing stated that it did.
 - Mr. James Brown, 91 Ridgecrest Road, asked for clarification as to why there was such a hike in special education funds. Mr. Katkin addressed this by reviewing the increase in pupil transportation, number of students in need of service and tuition to private schools.
 - Chairperson McDonough then reviewed the other major increases as found on pages 26-27 in the proposed operating budget:
 - Maintenance Objectives: an increase of \$15,000; this item was reduced last year by the school board when it was asked to reduce it's budget. They re-instated it this year.
 - Technology Hardware Additional: an increase of \$14,660
 - Technology Replacement: an increase of \$13,767
 - Chairperson McDonough also reviewed the major decreases to the proposed budget as found on pages 28-29 of the budget books:
 - Transfer to the expendable trust funds- tuition: \$200,860

- done through a warrant article last year. This is technically not a decrease, however needs to be listed as such. It is really a transfer of funds by a warrant article, that needs to be reflected in the operating budget.
 - Mathematics (Math in Focus Series): \$41,934
 - this was a one-time purchase for the program last year
 - Health insurance: \$40,678
 - due to retirement of 4 teachers. New employees do not have access to the same insurance policies which were previously available. This was part of the collective bargaining agreement
 - Classroom teacher salaries: \$24,669
 - even with the additional teacher budgeted, there is a decrease due to the fact the salaries of the new teachers hired this year are less than the salaries of the teachers who retired.
 - Transfer to the Expendable Trust fund- school buildings and grounds: \$20,400
 - rental income from the SAU 50 office. This is technically not a decrease, however needs to be listed as such. It is really a transfer of funds by a warrant article, that needs to be reflected in the operating budget.
 - Pupil transportation: \$14,567
 - Mr. Katkin bid out the transportation contract. First Student came with a lower rate than the previous contract.
 - Interest on bonds: \$13,569
 - as the bond matures, the interest payable on the bond decreases
 - ESOL teacher salary: \$6,372
 - 20% of this position was transferred to the special education teacher's salary
 - Special Education Aide Salaries: \$5,249
 - due to change in personnel
 - Natural Gas: \$4,043
 - due to the installation of energy saving devices
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- Tammy Westberg, 15 Holly Lane, read a prepared statement which she distributed copies to the committee members. Please see attached copy.
 - Tammy Perkins, asked for clarification of the technology line. Chairperson McDonough stated that this line includes the purchase of more iPads. Mr. Katkin added that it also includes upgrades to the server and that iPads are shared over several grade levels. Mrs. Perkins stated that she did not see the educational value in purchasing more iPads.
 - Mark Fleming asked for the line items to be explained in further detail. Mr. Katkin obliged when called upon by Chairperson McDonough to do so.
 - David Gill asked why the math budget line was so high. Chairperson McDonough explained that this covers the cost of the workbooks associated with the Math in Focus Program.
 - Bruce Steinberg asked if there was a plan to increase the number of teachers. Mr. Katkin responded stating that there is money in the budget for an additional teacher and that they are monitoring the enrollment to determine if there will be a need to hire (the additional teacher). It is anticipated that if needed, the teacher would be hired to teach grade one. Mr. Steinberg asked that if the default budget passes, will the additional teacher be in the budget. Mr. Katkin explained that if the default budget passes, the school board will have to make hard decisions as to how they will appropriate those funds.
 - Nathan Weiner, Skyview Drive asked about the number of kids in the school. Mr. Katkin stated there are 16 more kids this year than the previous year (as of the count on October 1, 2014).
 - There was discussion about the fact Greenland is growing due to the fact there are more houses being built. The point was made that when we build more homes, it will increase the cost to the

school, since the taxes one pays on their homes may not cover the cost of students they are sending to the schools (Greenland Central and Portsmouth High Schools).

- Erica Coombs asked how many teachers there would be in 3rd grade next year. Mr. Smith explained that at times, they will reduce the number of teachers from 3 to 2 with increased class sizes as the kids get older and are more independent. He doesn't foresee a change in this upcoming year.
- Mr. Krasko asked to speak to the assembly. He remarked that we have to budget a significant amount of money for high school tuitions (about \$14,500 per student) and that we need to take this into consideration when planning the budgets so that we can keep our taxes manageable.
- Mark Connley, Meadow Lane, asked if the assistant principal was included in the building administrator line. Mr. Katkin stated yes and Chairperson McDonough stated that the budget committee's recommendation to reduce this line to \$5,000 is reflected here.
- Kathy O'Neil asked what the current capacity of the school is. Mr. Katkin stated it is 525 students, thus we do have room for growth since we currently have 392.
- Mo Sodoni, Sunnyside Drive, asked what the current unassigned fund balance stands at: Mr. Katkin stated \$160,703.91. This money can be used to reduce taxation or as an emergency fund. We would have to apply to the Department of Education in order to use the funds for an emergency. The amount in this account may change by the end of the fiscal year.
- Ron Holt asked what the per pupil cost was. Mr. Katkin reported it to be \$12,825. After which Mr. Holt stated he had moved here from Somersworth and feels we provide a better education and with less tax dollars than he was paying at his previous residence.
- Mr. Fleming asked us to get an article in the newspaper explaining the SB2 system and how it affects our townspeople. He noted that the majority of people at the meeting were parents who heard about the meeting through school but that this affects everyone. He did state that although the meeting was properly posted, he felt the font was difficult to read and the posting were difficult to find in the newspaper.

With no further comments from the public, Chairperson McDonough adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary McDonough, Chairperson