



HUDSON SCHOOL BOARD

18 Library Street Hudson, New Hampshire

6:30 pm Regular Meeting
Non-Public Session

Minutes – October 26, 2022

In Attendance

Board Members

Gary Gasdia, Chairman
Gretchen Whiting, Vice Chair
Ethan Beals
Mike Campbell
Maureen Dionne

SAU Staff

Dan Moulis, Superintendent of Schools
Rachel Borge, Director Special Services
Jen Burk, Business Administrator

A. Call to Order [0:00:15]

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Gary Gasdia called the meeting to order at 6:30pm. Ethan Beals led the Pledge of Allegiance.

B. Public Input [0:00:30]

There was no public input.

C. New Business [0:00:45]

1. FY2024 Budget (Discussion)

a. Special Services

Rachel Borge, Director of Special Services, presented the Special Services FY24 budget, with a 0.13% increase over FY23.

Variables impacting this change include:

- Increased number of students requiring out of district programs with increasing specialized needs

- Increased costs associated with students returning from remote learning and the cumulative impact of reduced and fully remote early intervention services
- NH state authorized 5% annual increase in out of district tuition rates
- Investment in improved instructional practices and associated materials
- Careful evaluation and selection of budgeted items needed to effect student progress, meet state and federal mandates, and maintain fiscal responsibility
- Currently, because of demand and unavailability in NH, there are eleven placements in Massachusetts, where a 14% increase was authorized on out of district private placements: an increase of \$88,700.88, over the 5% previously calculated
- Few items have increased by \$5,000; most have decreased.
- Charter school services increased by \$10,000 due to related services.
- Salaries and benefits are down in professional services: life skills, for students up to age twenty-two.

Mr. Gasdia mentioned the \$580K expendable trust fund for Special Education, noting that historically, the budget was underspent by about \$500,000. Ms. Burke noted that plans are made as if that money isn't there so it could be used if necessary for emergencies (e.g., residential placements). To use the trust, a public hearing would need to be held in order to access those funds. Uncontrollable variables include charter schools, foster placements, court ordered placements, and transportation. There is a new system whereby episodic treatment is available in facilities for emotional crises; discussions concerning costs for educational components are taking place in Concord.

Items not included in the budget are improvement of instructional spaces for students with disabilities and continued work with SERESC to improve and enhance programs for students with disabilities.

There was discussion about using some of the reserve fund given the history of underspent end of year funding. Ms. Borge noted that the risk with cutting the budget further is that when money runs out, the district still has the obligation to provide services. Ms. Burk noted that looking at the budget again might reveal savings in attrition and suggested considering the end of year fund balance. Mr. Beals suggested budgeting the life skills lines for \$1 then transferring into that line item at the end of the year. H.O. Smith and Library Street have the most needs.

b. SAU/Districtwide (0:33:13)

Jen Burk reviewed the SAU/District budget for FY24. This encompasses:

- SAU staff
- Districtwide positions such as music, athletics, food service and CTE, ESL staff, school counseling and nursing staff, and substitutes
- School Board and related costs
- Professional and curriculum development costs
- Financing costs

Highlights include:

- Total district wide budget decrease of 9.39% over FY23
- Decrease in salaries and benefits due to: positions funded through ESSER grant line that were moved to building levels in Title 1; ending of the Summer Scholars program; decrease in the NHRS rate; vacant and new position benefit assumptions; and the addition of an instructional coach moving from a grant into the general fund.
- Other expenses decreased by \$33,075 including software programs moved to the technology budget and implementation of a reading program (Collaborative Classroom)
- \$57,104 increase in transportation
- Decrease of \$19,635 in debt/fund transfer interest
- Increase in legal negotiation
- Miscellaneous expenses under School Board line 2311 include: police details, mailer for the annual report, cost for Greater Hudson Chamber of Commerce; the supply line covers flowers for a death in the district, retirement gifts, name plates, etc. There was a question of \$10,000 to be used for miscellaneous expenses; it was noted that historically, the amount has been more than that and has varied. So far, \$188.83 had been used.
- The supplies line under 2320 Superintendent Services will be used towards employee hiring, recruiting and retention initiatives. There was discussion about how to generate more community engagement.
- There was discussion about cell phones and usage.
- It was clarified that school boards cannot give out scholarships from general fund money.
- The Professional Learning Coordinator helps with the mentorship program
- The Curriculum Coordinator establishes K-12 curriculum, evaluates the program, supports staff with pilot programs, provides professional development, etc.
- Two instructional coaches are paid for with ESSER funds

c. Warrant Articles Draft

The warrant articles are under review by Attorney Gordon Graham.

There are two versions of the Alvirne High School Renovation Warrant:

- Raise the full amount without a contingency for building aid, or
- Raise and appropriate the balance and do the project if the building aid was available

Warrant Article 1 Draft version 1 and 2, Alvirne High School Renovation

Warrant Article 2 Operating Budget (\$64,066,172; default \$63,748,201)

Warrant Article 3 Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Hudson School Board and the Hudson Federation of Teachers

Warrant Article 4 Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Hudson School Board and the Teamsters

- Warrant Article 5 Partial Roof Replacement at Library Street Elementary School (\$250,000)
- Warrant Article 6 Paving at the SAU Office (\$150,000 based on quote which will be made available)
- Warrant Article 7 Increasing Funds in the Capital Reserve School Renovation Fund (\$100,000)
- Warrant Article 8 Update to the Fund Balance Retention (allows up to 5% retention of net assessment)

It was noted that the partial roof replacement at Library Street Elementary School and the SAU paving project are part of the Capital Improvement Plan. There was a request for an updated quote for the roof replacement and more detail on the pavement project.

Other possible warrant articles include Hudson Memorial School science lab renovations, and phase 2 of the H.O. Smith playground.

Principal Steven Beals wondered if, regarding Article 1, if community members can conduct a capital campaign for the community auditorium, is possible under the jurisdiction of the School District. He asked if it is possible to access school impact fees for the paving project under "roadway" since it is used as a transport for Library School drop off.

There were concerns about supporting the fund balance article considering the financial climate and due to the wording (as an emergency). There were concerns regarding the Alvirne renovation during this time also, and that the focus should be on staff.

d. Default Budget

The default budget is based on the removal of one-time expenditures such as the Nottingham roof replacement and debt services, and the addition of contractual obligations such as CBAs and Special Education costs.

- The FY23 Adjusted operating budget is \$63,169,849
- Total deductions equal \$55,804,696
- Total additions equal \$56,383,048
- The total 2024 default budget is \$63,748,201

Ms. Burk does not suggest cutting the window replacement as it was put out to bid the Board approved the project over multiple years.

There was discussion about publicizing the document that Mr. Gasdia sent to the Board members on the website or social media. Details include looking at historical data, fund balances, vacancies, budgets, actual salaries and benefits, and which administrators spoke about needing more staff.

Mr. Gasdia noted four goals that included:

- Reducing the proposed budget below the default budget (telling the community that the Board understands the economic climate)
- Leveraging the upcoming end of year fund balance to pay for large ticket items

- Putting big ticket items on warrant articles and using savings to fund additional positions requested by administrators to help drive student success
- Reducing overall salaries and benefits to better reflect historical actual spending rates

Mr. Gasdia suggested removing from the operating budget and creating warrant articles for:

- Chairlift replacement (\$75,000)
- Science lab updates (\$200,000)
- Playground phase 2 (\$70,000)
- Marching band uniforms (\$44,960 - do a higher warrant article)
- Food service transfer (\$200,000) - as a contingency since the district could not run a large debt.

Mr. Gasdia suggested partially funding fifteen new positions:

- 3 elementary Interventionists
- 2 HMS social and emotional learning coaches
- HMS board certified behavior analyst position
- HMS family interventionist
- HMS athletic trainer
- 2 Alvirne academic supports
- 3 Alvirne elective teachers
- 2 additional CTE head counts

The positions would be in the budget and the district would have a “salary gap” from support staff, etc. that were unstaffed. He then suggested bringing vacant positions in the budget to \$1, reducing the salaries and benefits total by \$501,000 based on historical spending, with a 3% cushion. He suggested a 1% cushion. All this would provide a budget that is \$33,000 over the default budget.

Ms. Burk noted that the HMS athletic trainer is a contracted service costing about \$20,000 (vs. salaries/benefits). Mr. Gasdia favored giving flexibility to administration to meet academic needs.

Principal Beals noted that support staff, math, English and science teacher positions are needed for academic improvement even if they are vacant. Mr. Gasdia ensured that if the line is brought to \$1, it is not cutting the position; it is for accounting, and money can be tapped into as needed. Principal Beals stated appropriate interpretation is important. Mr. Gasdia clarified that he suggests raising the salary cap and allowing more positions.

Principal Beals suggested adding the music replacement purchase (\$27,000) since it is similar in concept (potentially getting them sooner than later) to the playground project.

The teachers' contract is the biggest budgetary item, and it is necessary to have it pass. Mr. Gasdia feels everything needs to show that this is the biggest priority.

There was discussion about "renting to own" musical equipment and about warrantees.

There will be discussion about the position requests and final decisions on November 7th.

The proposal would be publicized with the intent to fund what was possible and not have a large fund balance because of unfilled positions.

Alvirne High School Proposed Cuts:

Ethan Beals made a motion to cut \$2500 from Alvirne agenda books line item (bringing the total to \$5,000). Mike Campbell seconded the motion. Motion passed 5:0.

Ethan Beals made a motion to cut The Week magazine line by \$750 for one subscription. (\$750 remaining). Mike Campbell seconded the motion. Motion passed 5:0.

There was discussion about the "Author Visit" line. Ms. Whiting had concerns about the amount of interaction via Zoom for a quantity of students outside of advanced placement classes. Mr. Beals does not think for an additional \$3,000 someone would be physically present, and to serve the freshman class, a virtual piece is beneficial due to scheduling with other grades.

Ms. Dionne questioned the value of online visits. Principal Beals noted it depends on the author (one person for one day for \$8,000, or \$4,000 for two visits, etc.)

He said that the Zoom based field trip for AP was different than an author visit. Speakers cost between \$3,000 and \$5,000 per day. Some visits could be covered with student activity money. He feels money should be kept in this account. The original concept was to serve the whole freshman class with an author visit. Ms. Whiting felt better in knowing the actual cost of speakers.

Ethan Beals made a motion to cut \$3,000 from the Author Visit line item bringing the line to \$5,000. Mike Campbell seconded the motion. Motion passed 5:0.

Ethan Beals made a motion to cut EHall Pass subscription in full (\$3,600). Maureen Dionne seconded the motion. Motion passed 5:0.

Ethan Beals made a motion to reduce the game officials line by \$6,575. Mike Campbell seconded the motion. Motion passed 5:0.

Ethan Beals made a motion to reduce fiction/nonfiction to \$9,000 (cut \$500) and eliminate the DVDs line (cut \$500). Gretchen Whiting seconded the motion. Motion passed 5:0.

Ethan Beals made a motion to cut \$800 from the LEDs/AV equipment line. Mike Campbell seconded the motion. Motion passed 5:0.

Ethan Beals made a motion to reduce NEASC accreditation visit to/by \$2500. Mike Campbell seconded the motion. Motion passed 5:0.

There was discussion about AP testing and the 50/50 split. \$27,000 represented a 100% payment for students taking the test. Ms. Whiting is concerned about cutting cost assistance Exams cost about \$100 each. Principal Beals suggested that paying for half the cost is beneficial.

- This line item was added in FY17.
- For FY22, the cost for testing was \$16,457 (AP, PSAT and HiSet).
- The line item for the current year was \$38,250.
- For FY20, the actual cost in the line item was 22,484.70.
- In FY19, the cost was \$30,446.
- In FY18, it was \$32,140.
- In FY17, it was \$29,053.58.
- The highest number of AP exams was in 2019. Covid impacted numbers.
- If a student could not afford the test, a request was done through the College Board. Otherwise, the school activities line was used. Principal Beals noted that 95 students paid to take the test on the Saturday test day.

Gretchen Whiting made a motion to reduce the AP/SAT testing line to \$18,000 based on historical data and remove \$5,000 for PSAT. Mike Campbell seconded the motion. Motion passed 5:0.

Mr. Beals spoke about classroom monitoring software, stating there should be some buy-in from the student; that it leads to teachers watching what students are doing vs. actively teaching; and it is not a perfect solution. Ms. Whiting suggested consulting the IT Director regarding this, as it is in his budget. She is in favor of the concept but not in funding something if it does not work. Mr. Campbell said there seems to be interest in the middle school. Ms. Dionne agrees that more information is necessary. It was noted the program can not be accessed by substitutes. Mr. Gasdia thinks the software is good but is concerned that some teachers manage classrooms well without it, and some did not. He wants to ensure that the software is being used if implemented. Some suggested having Mr. Peterson be present for questions, and perhaps a teacher for comment.

Other discussion topics were the volleyball net at the high school follow-up and cutting the choral cabinet.

CTE Budget

Administrative position (converting Department Head to Assistant Director)

There was discussion on how this would directly affect students, and concern with losing teaching time with this move. More explanation on the value of the conversion was requested.

The Welding Mechanics F/T teacher was not moved forward. Superintendent Moulis felt that bringing forward four positions was a lot, and he suggested looking to the next fiscal cycle. Ms. Burk noted that classroom space was an issue so creative scheduling would be necessary.

The Board discussed removing the \$1100 stipend for being School Board members or reducing it to \$200/each.

Mike Campbell made a motion to cut line item 46-50 for a total of \$5,925. Gretchen Whiting seconded the motion.

Mike Campbell amended his motion to assign \$1 to lines 46-50 (\$5) for a savings of \$5,920. Gretchen Whiting seconded the motion. Motion passed 5:0.

D. Non-Public Session - RSA 91-A:3 II a and b [3:11:32]

At 9:42pm, Ethan Beals made a motion to enter into non-public session per RSA 91-A:3 II a and b. Mike Campbell seconded the motion. Motion passed 5:0. Roll call vote.

Items discussed were the hiring of an Assistant Principal at HMS and a personnel matter.

E. Leave Non-Public Session and Adjourn [3:27:32]

At 9:58pm, Ms. Whiting made a motion to leave non-public session and adjourn. Mr. Beals seconded the motion. Motion passed 5:0. Roll call vote.

Submitted by
Susan DeFelice
Non-Public by Dan Moulis