

**Minutes of the School District Deliberative Session of February 6, 2021
Community Center, Lyons Avenue
Hudson, New Hampshire 03051**

1. CALL TO ORDER BY THE MODERATOR

The Honorable Paul Inderbitzen called the meeting to order at 9:00 am.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE led by Darcy Orellana, School Board Chairman.

2. REMARKS BY THE MODERATOR

Town Moderator Inderbitzen reminded attendees of COVID-19 guidelines.

Moderator announced "This is the Deliberative Session of the Hudson School District Meeting. You will act as a legislative body to determine the final form of the Warrant Articles that will be voted on at the March 9th. Election. All the Articles, by law, MUST be placed on the ballot....As a Legislature, we will be discussing the Warrant Articles before us....Only registered voters of Hudson are allowed to participate in the discussion of the warrant. There are some non-voters, staff members of the School District and some others who will be allowed to speak and answer questions to assist us in the meeting."

Moderator stated "This meeting is being televised and streamed live on Hudson Cable and will be available for viewing and streaming after today on HCTV."

Moderator further stated "If you have registered on the Hudson Town or School web site to participate remotely, you can use the 'raise your hand' option when you want to speak on an article. You can still register during the meeting to participate remotely."

3. NONVOTERS

Nonvoter staff will be allowed to speak to assist with the meeting.

Lawrence Russell, Superintendent

Kimberly Organck, Assistant Superintendent

Rachel Borge, Director of Special Services

Jennifer Burk, Business Administrator

Hannah LoVerdi, Student Representative

Barbara Loughman, Attorney for the District

4. INTRODUCTION OF SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS BY CHAIRMAN DARCY ORELLANA

Gary Gasdia, Vice-chairman: in person

Diana Lamothe, Member: in person

Fabiana Fickett, Member: remote

Ethan Beals, Member: absent

5. INTRODUCTION OF BUDGET COMMITTEE MEMBERS BY CHAIRMAN SHAWN MURRAY

Hasan Goode, Vice-chairman: in person

Richard Weissgarger, Clerk: in person

Robert Guessferd, Member: in person

Ted Trost, Member: in person

Alejandro Urrutia, Member: in person

Michael Fedele, Member: in person

Norman Martin, Selectman Representative

Nicole DeJesus, Member: absent

6. RETURN OF THE WARRANT TO THE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Moderator Inderbitzen confirmed that the appointed School District Clerk, Diane Cannava, was in possession of the Warrant.

7. READING OF THE WARRANT ARTICLES AND ACTION OF THE MEETING:

Moderator Inderbitzen made the following notifications to the inhabitants of the School District of Hudson, New Hampshire, qualified to vote in district affairs:

You are hereby notified to meet in the Hudson Community Center in said district on the 6th. Day of February 2021 at 9:00 am for the first session of the annual meeting, for explanation, discussion, and debate of the Warrant Articles 1 through 5. Warrant articles may be amended subject to the following limitations: (a) warrant articles whose wording is prescribed by law shall not be amended, (b) warrant articles that are amended shall be placed on the official ballot for a final vote on the main motion, as amended, and (c) no warrant shall be amended to eliminate the subject matter of the article.

You are hereby notified to meet again at the Hudson Community Center in said district on Tuesday, March 9, 2021 between the hours of 7:00 am and 8:00 pm for the second session of the annual school district meeting to vote by official ballot upon the following subjects:

ELECTION OF OFFICERS (separate ballot vote)

- * To choose one (1) member of the School Board for the ensuing three (3) years
- * To choose one (1) member of the School Board for the ensuing two (2) years
- * To choose one (1) School District Clerk for the ensuing three (3) years

WARRANT ARTICLE 1 Alvirne High School Renovation Bond Amount: \$9,900,000

Shall the Hudson School District raise and appropriate the sum of \$9,900,000 for the design, construction, and equipping of additions and renovations to Alvirne High School; and further authorize the School Board to issue not more than \$9,900,000 in bonds and notes for the balance of the project costs in accordance with the Municipal Finance Act, (RSA Chapter 33) and authorize the School Board to issue, negotiate, sell, and deliver such bonds and notes and to determine the rate of interest thereon and the maturity and other terms thereof; and further raise and appropriate the additional sum of \$250,000 for the first year payment on the bond and authorize the School Board to take any other action necessary to carry out this vote or pass any other vote relative thereto?

(3/5 ballot vote required)
Estimated tax rate impact: \$0.08

Recommended by the Hudson School Board 3-2
Recommended by the Budget Committee 8-2

PRESENTED BY: School Board Member Diana Lamothe; Superintendent Lawrence Russell

School Board Member Lamothe began by sharing history about Alvirne High School renovations that have been proposed for the last three years. Stated that because this is a Bond Warrant Article, it requires a 3/5 ballot vote which is 60% of the voters that must vote "yes" for it to pass. In 2018, 58.7% voted "yes", in 2019, 58.3% voted "yes", in 2020, after a recount, 59.8% voted "yes", thus the Warrant Article failed by 6 votes. Lamothe explained, "We decided to focus this year's warrant article on safety improvements... We selected an option that would involve minimal reconstruction...in light of the pandemic and

some economic uncertainty, we felt that we selected the best option for the year...we focussed on safety improvements for the safety of students, staff, and visitors."

In conjunction with a slide presentation, Lamothe continued her explanation emphasizing the *Project Priorities: safe/secure drop-off sequence (site improvements); safe/secure building entrance with main office; improved function for high school cafeteria (student safety & accessibility)*. Lamothe stated, "We want to provide 21st. century safety in a 1975 building." Further explanation included the estimated tax impact of \$0.08 per thousand that when based on a \$300,00 home value would be \$24 for Year 1(interest only) and \$108 for Year 2 (principal and interest). Also explained was *Bond Term Comparison* for Warrant Article Years 2020 and 2021. In comparison, \$18,000,000 bond for 2020 was for 30 years with an estimated interest rate of 4.25%, and the \$9,900,000 bond for 2021 is for 10 years with an estimated interest rate of 1.50%. Lamothe pointed out that we are looking at an approximate eight million dollar lower project cost that will save us eleven million dollars in interest alone. Lamothe concluded, "This is a great opportunity to address safety needs this year."

Superintendent Russell stated "the important aspect of this project as it is being presented today is that this is the core of the projects that were presented over the last three years. This is the heart of it, this is the main starting point for everything."

In conjunction with additional slides, Russell explained *Changes From 2020 Proposal: Focus is on safety & security components only - building entrance, cafeteria; Removes or reduces: Gymnasium work (only relocate locker room from 1st. floor to 2nd. floor), No auditorium, No exterior addition with offices (only a small addition for added doors/vestibule)*. Russell further explained *Parking Lot/Drop Off and Plan Highlights*.

Russell concluded, "So, those are the things we are putting in place to focus purely on safety, ABA compliance, and they do meet all the guidelines that were presented by the Homeland Security recommendations that were given to us, so it does check all those boxes off for us." Russell closed with, "...this is the opportune time, in my opinion, for the people who want the most streamlined, easiest project...this is the year to do it."

Moderator opened Warrant Article 1, The Alvirne High School Renovation Bond, for questions, comments; anyone wishes to speak on Warrant Article 1....

Kathy Leary, 8 Par Lane: I also work as a paraeducator at Alvirne, so I just rise in favor of the project because I can speak from personal experience what it's like having to go through the cafeteria to get to the various offices. And, even under this plan, the nurse's office is still upstairs. So, I just wanted to kinda give you my personal opinion and my personal experience. Thank you.

Tom Barrett, 37 Winnhaven Drive: I'd like to move the question.

Moderator: Well, we've only had one person speak, Mr. Barrett. I am not going to take a motion to move the question when we haven't really moved anything yet.

Tom Barrett: That's fine.

Moderator: So, I'm just going to ask one more time, does anyone else wish to speak on Warrant Article number 1, for or against - seeing none, I will close the discussion on Warrant Article number 1.

Tom Barrett: motioned to restrict reconsideration on Warrant Article 1.

**MOTION TO RESTRICT THE QUESTION FOR RECONSIDERATION
MOVED BY: TOM BARRETT SECONDED BY: DIANA LAMOTHE**

Moderator called for a vote by raising vote cards. The Motion failed.
A voter asked for a count of the vote. Moderator called for a vote count which tallied 22-11.
Moderator declared that the Motion failed because a two-thirds vote in favor was not received.

NOTE: Later in the meeting, the Moderator corrected the outcome of the above Motion. He was in error calling for a two-thirds vote; his correction called for a majority vote to pass.

THE MOTION CARRIED TO RESTRICT RECONSIDERATION:22 YEA;11 NAY[majority vote]

Moderator: Closed discussion on Warrant Article number 1; Introduces Warrant Article 2

WARRANT ARTICLE 2 Operating Budget Amount: \$58,260,827

Shall the Hudson School District vote to raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant article and other appropriations voted separately, the amount set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by the vote at the first session for the purposes set forth therein, totaling \$58,260,827? Should this article be defeated, the operating budget will be \$57,449,171 which is the same as last year with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Hudson School District or by law; or the governing body may hold one special meeting under RSA 40:13-X and XVI to take up a revised operating budget only.

Estimated tax rate impact: \$0.22

Default tax rate impact: \$0.00

Estimated tax rate: \$14.30

Recommended by the Hudson School Board 5-0

Default estimated tax rate: \$14.08

Recommended by the Budget Committee 10-0

[The Budget Committee vote was misprinted in today's meeting handout as 5-0; the correct Budget Committee vote taken was 10-0, as written in today's Minutes.]

PRESENTED BY: Budget Committee Chairman Shawn Murray; School Board Vice-chairman Gary Gasdia

Budget Committee Chairman Murray initiated his presentation by giving a brief description of the *Budget Process* (slide) as it involves the interactions of school level teachers, department heads, principals, SAU administration, Superintendent, School Board and the Budget Committee.

Murray stated, "The School District and School Board believe that the Budget as presented this year ensures that the needs of the students are met through a fiscally responsible Budget. The 20-21 school year provided some challenges to the staff and their students so planning for the 21-22 school year focussed on a return to fully in-person learning and the next steps in the Strategic Plan which was designed for the 2018-2019 school year.

From the Budget Committee's perspective, with the pandemic, we agreed with the School District that there are a lot of financial challenges and whether there was going to be state or federal reimbursement was a question that we looked into carefully.

So after our deliberations in a Public Hearing, the Warrant Article bringing forth is an Operating Budget of \$58,260,827 and a Default Budget of \$57,449,171... so the difference between the the Operating and the Default Budget this year is \$811,656, and this Budget will result in an estimated tax irate increase of \$0.22 per thousand."

School Board Vice-Chairman Gasdia presented detailed information with the assistance of slides: *Budget Overview (All Funds); Tax Impact & Default Budget; General Fund Summary; General Fund Budget History FY21; Community School Tax Rates 2021 [Hudson Local Tax Rate 12.00, State Ed Tax 2.08, Total Tax Rate 14.08]; Cost Per Pupil FY20 [State \$16,824, Hudson \$15,432].*

Gasdia concluded, "Hats off to everyone in the District for being below the average from a funding standpoint and delivering above the average for results. But again, when we look at the Budget, I think it's clear... that we are not going above and beyond. We are meeting the needs. We are moving forward, but we are maintaining fiscal responsibility."

Moderator: announced that there was a typo in the Warrant handed out today; the recommendation of the the Budget Committee was 10-0, not 5-0
Opened Warrant Article 2 to questions, comments, amendments;
anyone wishes to speak on Warrant Article 2

Shawn Jasper, 83 Old Derry Road: rise more with questions toward the future, and perhaps comments; "Dollars by themselves do not provide Education; it's a number of other things." Voiced concern about the Budget increase that when you add everything up, all the tax rate impacts, the tax rate is a little bit north of 5% for this year.
Put question to School Board concerning "planning for decline in enrollment".

Vice-Chairman Gasdia: responded that another dynamic that is happening in our schools is the support we need is very different...we are asking our teachers to do a lot...to play many different roles because it's expanded beyond reading, writing, and arithmetic.. there are Para supports... I think what you're probably going to see over the next years initially is a shift where the resources go...may not result in a decline, per se, but it is something we spent a lot of time talking about...this year we did move some money from some positions to earmark in other ways...but it is something we are keeping an eye on.

Superintendent Russell: stated that while there definitely is a declining student enrollment trend it is one with longitudinal ups and downs...we need to address the next ten years, be ready, that is what this town really values, planning ahead...that is the whole point of the Strategic Plan to make this as attractive as possible of a place to bring your family and become educated and raise your children....beyond that, I suggest, we are transparent, very open to collaborating with any group...there are very complex dynamics that go into public education that have to be parsed out and looked at and applied to what is going on in his specific town... the school district does a lot more than what was traditional, we are in a sense the social service of the community addressing the changing demographics of the town, the state and the country, that's where a lot of the funds have to go towards unfortunately, if you go without that you'll have bigger problems than you do now...that all has to be put in to consideration... there is a trend, we must go about it wisely, we can't be shortsighted, and go about it wisely.

Heather Smally, 18 Farmington Drive: commented that she has a daughter in fourth grade who has had three brand new teachers within those years, She stated this is quite sad and questioned why we can't retain teachers. Suspects it may be salaries, town of commuters, retirement community; we need to invest in our future.

Bob Guessferd, 39 Flying Rock Road: shared that the Budget Committee did talk about, discuss the headcount, we requested headcount information from the school district, very forthcoming...there is a concern, population going down...school has been very cooperative in providing information...our town, the population is increasing and the student population is decreasing; that is a symptom...there are bigger things at play here for our future...what do we want to be when we grow up...ten years from now...what do we want to attract; do we want to attract young families with children...we need to collaborate as a town what we want to do about it.

Lana Pally, 19 Library Street: asked what kind of an impact on budget will there be if the state voucher program passes. Commented that most people do not show up for local election, important to do so, mostly elderly who do not have children in the system.

Superintendent Russell: referenced that there are two Bills going to the Legislature right now, one being House Bill 20 for a statewide individual education account (voucher program) and another that may have a local effect in the long run, in about five years. No immediate impact, HB20 is a pretty broad Bill, needs some work, should be on narrowing the achievement gap. This is a politically charge conversation of educational financing. There are 2,000 students not in public school system, at \$5,000 per student, if half of parents took the voucher, the expense would equal \$44 million impact among the state. This would significantly impact the state as a whole and local funds.

School Board Member Lamothe: commented that as these Bills come to the Legislature, they need to hear from us. The School Board is planning to give their input. We will add information to our website for where to direct your input.

Randy Brownrigg, 2 Little Hills Lane: wanted to point out that maybe teachers aren't paid enough, but it is 80% of the Budget.

Shawn Jasper, 83 Old Derry Road: in reference to a previous question that has been discussed for years, that money be shifted to private schools. He believed the State Adequacy Grant is approximately \$3,500 per student range. [corrected by Superintendent Russell to \$3,600]. The argument being if you take a student out of the district, needs to be more than a few, enough to cut classrooms, then you're better off financially...don't imagine many parents affording private school...kind of a red herring, not necessarily a negative if we lose that \$3,600.

Superintendent Russell: commented that it's important not to look at the polarized views of this...so many more factors that go into this...absolutely going to be a financial impact and how you would operate in a school, how much to work with...if we do get into a smaller student population with a smaller financial background, it will be much more difficult to operate and there are going to be sacrifices in what we do for our students today.

Budget Committee Member Michael Fedele: raised to a point of order his concern that the discussion of the voucher program was not relevant to the discussion of this Warrant Article.

Moderator: replied that it was relevant because speakers questioned its impact on the budget, but did asked speakers to refocus on the Operating Budget.

Lana Pally, 19 Library Street: commented that schools are still responsible for special needs students that attend private schools ... concerned that non-public education schools are not held to same standards and that a student could go out to one of those schools and come back needing significant assistance to catch up on graduation requirements.

Moderator: reminded speakers that we are going to limit discussion as to things that affect this budget.

Budget Committee Member, Selectman Norman Martin: moves the question to cut off debate.

**MOTION TO MOVE THE QUESTION AND TO CUT OFF DEBATE
MOVED BY: NORMAN MARTIN SECONDED BY: MICHAEL FEDELE
MOTION FAILED: 18 YEA; 13 NAY [two-thirds vote]**

Randy Brownrigg, 2 Little Hills Lane: asked if he could move restriction on Warrant Article I

Moderator: "Restrictions can be offered at any time for previously acted on Articles."

Brownrigg: asked if he could do that now, just for Article 1

Budget Committee Chairman, Shawn Murray: asked for a point of order: "Haven't we already voted on that...."

Moderator: explained that Motion failed, but could still be voted on again. The Moderator reviewed his rules and stated, "I made a mistake, ladies and gentlemen." He explained that a majority vote was needed to carry a Motion to restrict reconsideration and a two-thirds vote to cut off debate.

The Moderator corrected his decision on Warrant Article 1:

**THE MOTION CARRIED TO RESTRICT RECONSIDERATION; 22 YAH, 11 NAY
THE ARTICLE WAS RESTRICTED.**

**MOTION TO RESTRICT RECONSIDERATION ON WARRANT ARTICLE 2
MOVED BY: TED TROST SECONDED BY: DARCY ORELLANA
MOTION FAILED: 11 YEA, 14 NAY [majority vote]**

WARRANT ARTICLE 3

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

Shall the Hudson School District vote to approve the cost items in the collective bargaining agreement between the Hudson Federation of Teachers, Local 2263 AFT-NH, AFL-CIO and the Hudson School Board which calls for the following increases in salaries and benefits at the current staffing levels over the amount paid in the prior fiscal year:

2021-22	\$587,977
2022-23	\$693,268

And to further raise and appropriate \$587,977 for the upcoming fiscal year, such sum representing the additional cost attributable to the increase in salaries and benefits required by the new agreement that would be paid under current staffing conditions.

Estimated tax rate impact: \$0.18

Recommended by the Hudson School Board 5-0
Recommended by the Budget Committee 10-0

[The Budget Committee vote was misprinted in today's handout as 5-0; the correct Budget Committee vote taken was 10-0, as written in today's Minutes]

PRESENTED BY: Darcy Orellana, School Board Chairman

Darcy Orellana: began by saying that "Our teachers make up 278 employees, they are not nice to have, they are we have to have. This collective bargaining agreement and this body of employees are the heart of our educational system."

Referring to slides *Warrant Article 3 Hudson Federation of Teachers*, listed staff Included in agreement: full and part time teachers, speech pathologists, occupational and physical therapists, nurses, plus our full time paraeducators and Licensed Practical Nurses...and explained that this contract is a two year agreement negotiated in good faith which will have a total increase of \$1,281,245...year one represents an average increase of 4.1% over this year's cost...year two has a projected wage increase of 3.9%.

Stressing the importance of retaining teachers: "we need to create a dynamic environment where employees feel that they are being fairly paid while they give their time, their hearts, their minds to our children, to our students, to our families."

Orellana further explained that the increase is partial offset by Union agreement to modify insurance Employer Paid/Employee Paid contributions in FY 2021/2022 and FY 2022/2023... current year: 93%/7%, 2021/2022: 90%/10%(savings around \$159,000), 2022/2023: 89.5%/10.5%(savings around \$26,500).

Orellana concluded: that this contract provides the beginning of that notion of retaining teachers and providing a wage that will allow us to both attract and retain them.

Moderator: I will now open Article 3, the Collective Bargaining Agreement Between the Hudson School Board and the Hudson Federation of Teachers to questions, comments, concerns....

Ted Trost, 63 Rangers Drive: stated that teachers deserve to be paid fairly and adequately so we retain the good ones; will leave to get paid more; vote "yes" on Article 3.

Shawn Jasper, 83 Old Derry Road: first question on teacher turnover, where are we at, do we have a very senior staff...unfortunately we are still on an agrarian calendar ...accounts for discrepancy in pay, we need to move that calendar...

Moderator: try to stick to the Article.

Jasper: continued that this is about our teachers and the salaries, because when people say we don't pay our teacher enough, we need to be working on that schedule if we want to get them up there, we need to start moving that calendar to have our students in school long day or longer year...crazy to still be in that model, a hundred years later

Jacqueline Duane, 64 Glen Drive: wanted to speak in favor of Warrant Article 3, so impressed with Hudson teachers through remote learning and so grateful able to be in-person most of the year due to our teachers..seems fair, not asking for a lot...worry about filling some positions as teaching staff starts to ages...if we don't stay competitive we may not be able to hire staff that is qualified.

Jack Gasdia, 4 McCann Road: former Alvirne High School student, Class of 2020; stated that this is the most important thing on the school side of the ballot this year...teachers and the staff are the life blood of our education system...especially during these difficult times...it's high time that we appreciate them to that next level...rises in support of our Hudson teachers...vote "yes" on Article 3.

School Board Member Fabiana Fickett, 13 Tamarac Street: participating remotely; emphasized worked closely with the Hudson Federation of Teachers...impressed with their flexibility, professionalism, love, and support they give to our youngest members of the town...working with same salary for the last five years...contract averages s \$1,000 extra, at most \$1,500 to \$1,800.

Moderator: further discussion Warrant Article 3; seeing none, we will close the discussion on Warrant Article 3

WARRANT ARTICLE 4 Partial Roof Replacement at Hudson Memorial School

Shall the Hudson School District vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$355,000 to replace a section of the roof at Hudson Memorial School?

Estimated tax rate impact: \$0.11

Recommended by the Hudson School Board 5-0

Recommended by the Budget Committee 10-0

[The Budget Committee vote was misprinted in today's handout as 5-0; the correct Budget Committee vote taken was 10-0, as written in today's Minutes]

PRESENTED BY: School Board Member Diana Lamothe

Diana Lamothe: with the assistance of a slide *Warrant Article 4 Roof Replacement at Hudson Memorial*; explained the color coded diagram depicting areas for roof replacement and the scope of work...stated this will complete the roof replacement phasing, over last three years.

Moderator: I will now open Warrant Article 3 the Partial Roof Replacement at Hudson Memorial School for questions, comments, concerns. Anyone have any questions. Seeing none, closing Warrant Article number 4.

WARRANT ARTICLE 5 Partial Roof Replacement at Hills Garrison School

Shall the Hudson School District vote to raise and appropriate a sum of \$345,000 to replace a section of the roof at the Hills Garrison School?

Estimated tax rate impact: \$0.11

Recommended by the Hudson School Board 5-0

Recommended by the Budget Committee 10-0

[The Budget Committee vote was misprinted in today's handout as 5-0; the correct Budget Committee vote taken was 10-0, as written in today's Minutes]

PRESENTED BY: School Board Vice-chairman Gary Gasdia

Gary Gasdia: with the assistance of slide *Warrant Article 5 Hills Garrison Partial Roof Replacement*; explained the color coded diagram depicting areas for roof replacement and scope of work...these sections are beyond their useable life...stated that this will fully complete the membrane roof project...the metal sections are under warranty until 2026.

Moderator: will now open Warrant Article 5 to questions, comments, concerns....anyone to discuss Warrant Article 5 the partial Roof Replacement at Hills Garrison School

Kara Roy, 46 March Road: questioned is this the last of a cycle for roof replacements...when would we see another roof replacement

Superintendent Russell: stated that this is the last of both of these roofs...probably Library Street and Nottingham next...we do have a long term facilities plan

Moderator: further discussion on Warrant Article 5; seeing none, we will close the discussion on Warrant Article 5

Election Day will be Tuesday, March 9, 2021, from 7:00 am to 8:00 pm at the Hudson Community Center.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Moderator; I will entertain Motion to adjourn

MOTION TO ADJOURN

MOVED BY: NORMAM MARTIN SECONDED BY: LEO BERNARD

MOTION CARRIED

The meeting is adjourned at 10:44 am.

Transcribed by

Diane Cannava, School District Clerk