

**Monadnock Regional School District  
Budget Committee Meeting Minutes  
January 10, 2024  
MRMHS Library, Swanzey, NH**

**Members Present:** Wayne Lechliden, Edward Sheldon, Robert Audette, Doug Bersaw, Jon Hoden, Betty Tatro, School Board liaison, Dan Coffman and Robert Young.

**Absent:** Richie HKS Thackston, Adam Hopkins, Nancy Carney, Anne Marie Osheyack, Unassigned seat for Gilsum and Unassigned seat for Roxbury.

**Also Present:** J. Rathbun, Superintendent, J. Morin, Business Administrator and L. Aivaliotis, Recording Secretary.

1. **Call the Meeting to Order:** E.Sheldon called the meeting to order at 7:10PM.

2. **Public Comments:** There were no public comments.

3. **Approval of Meeting Minutes:**

a. **December 20, 2023 Budget Committee Meeting Minutes: MOTION:** J. Hoden **MOVED** to approve the December 20, 2023 Budget Committee Meeting Minutes as presented. **SECOND:** D.Coffman **VOTE:** Unanimous for those present **Motion passes.**

4. **Budget:**

a. **Default:** J.Morin had presented the proposed Default Budget to the Budget Committee at their previous meeting. R. Young questioned a number of large increases in the Default. J.Morin explained that the original proposed Default Budget was larger but the administration and vote by the Board was able to reduce it. There was a reduction in Special Ed. and not filling two retiring positions. J.Hoden said that he appreciated the notes and comments for the difference in the proposed and last year's default. J. Morin reminded the committee that the GMR came in at 19.5% in October but the actual will not come in until March or April. The GMR in the proposed default and the proposed budget is almost 1 million dollars. R. Young would like to request an additional column on the spreadsheet for explanations. E. Sheldon explained that the budget books show the major increases. D. Coffman and E. Sheldon commented that the committee needs to focus on the default. J.Morin explained the \$87,000.00 plus

benefits increase. She said it was for 2 positions which had been paid for through the CARES/ESSER Grant. Current staffing is part of the default. She also said new equipment in the default would mean new initiatives which we do not have. W.Lechlider asked what account the flags in the parking lot are under. J.Morin explained they would be under supplies. Out of District placements are not contractual because they are moving all the time. J. Rathbun explained that the out of district placements are paid for the entire year but there is an escape clause.

**b. Proposed Operating Budget:** R.Young asked about the increase in Special Ed. related services. J. Morin explained that there are required services for the Out of District placements. It was explained that the 2 At-Risk-Counselors at the MS/HS had been funded under the CARES/ESSER Grant. The two positions are certified staff and fall under the MDEA CBA. W. Lechliden asked with these positions could the Out of District student come back to the district. J. Rathbun explained that the hope is to bring our kids back. The At-Risk-Counselors have made a significant difference in MS suspensions. They have decreased by 50%. The new Assistant Principal and the guidance are working very hard on behavior. The SRO and the SSO are very involved and work with the students. W.Lechlider commented that there is a lot of cash for the Out of District placements as well as behavioral counselors, SRO and SSO. Bring in the parents. J. Rathbun said we see a significant increase in behavior and there is no support from the parents. W.Lechlider asked B.Tatro if the School Board had approached those parents. B. Tatro responded that the School Board is not working with the parents. J. Rathbun explained the composition of the IEP teams. Most of the Out of District placements are directly related to a disability. It is required that they are placed in the least restrictive environment. This is not only in Monadnock, this is a National trend. It was explained that the budgeted vacancies are in the proposed budget at a rate of MA 7 and a 2 person health plan. D.Coffman is requesting the cost for the vacancies and the retirements. He does not feel the voters should pay for the vacancies. He is asking for the dollar value. J. Morin explained last year the budget committee reduced the proposed budget by \$250,000.00. The reduction had to be taken from somewhere and they decided to reduce the Out of District placement line. The administration knew there was not going to be enough in that account but it had to be done. The Special Education Expendable Trust can be used only if the district has exhausted all of the funds in their current budget. She feels a little more comfortable knowing that there are CARES/ESSER Funds that can be used for out of district

students. She is watching the current budget very closely. J.Rathbun explained that the CARES/ESSER Grant will be done in September. The district will use  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the amount for education and  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the amount for Out of District costs. We will spend down to zero. J. Morin was asked about the \$68,000 in the supply line. She explained that it is not related to a specific school, it is a mix of schools, district, building and grounds etc.

**c. Trust Fund Deposits:** J. Morin reviewed the Expendable Trusts and the amounts. Currently there is \$346,240 in the Special Education Expendable Trust.

**d. Contract:** B. Tatro explained that the Board and the Specialists have settled on an agreement. There are about 12 or 13 in the unit but all of the positions are not filled. The increases for the 3 year contract for the salary are \$36,000 for the 1st year, \$33,000 for the 2nd year and \$32,000 for the 3rd year.

**e. Other Warrant Articles:** W.Lechlider would like to add \$25,000.00 to the Special Ed. Expendable Trust. J. Hoden and W.Lechlider would like to increase it to \$54,000 in order for the total in the Trust to be \$400,000.00. J. Morin explained the retained fund balance the Board voted on last year can not be used except in an emergency situation and the district has to apply to the State. The one example the State gave was a failed septic. The School Board voted to retain the \$240,000. It will go back to the voters at the end of the year. It was asked of J.Morin to see if the retained funds could be used. She will look into it. D. Bersaw asked if we need to add the \$54,000 if we have the retained funds. **MOTION:** W.Lechlider **MOVED** to recommend to the School Board to increase the \$1.00 in the Special Education Expendable Trust proposed warrant article to \$54,000. **SECOND:** J. Hoden. **VOTE:** Unanimous for those present. **Motion passes.**

**5. Superintendent Comments:** Superintendent Rathbun is happy to work with the Budget Committee. We will not always see eye to eye. He hopes the budget process is smooth and transparent. What are you looking for? Have that conversation, what are you expecting and if it is reasonable to discuss. W.Lechlider commented that the most important things are the kids and the checkbooks. J. Rathbun commented that he is dedicated to the district. He has worked in the district for 23 years. He cares about this community just as much as this committee. W.Lechlider would like to know the results from the money being spent. J. Hoden would like the Superintendent to be visible in the community. He feels that is very important. D.Bersaw is pleased that the Board promoted in-house. Twenty-three years is important. You must have the faith and confidence of the Board.

**6. School Board Liaison Comments:** B. Tatro does not have a report but will discuss the behavior issue with the Education Committee. D. Coffman asked how many parent visits have the principals and the Assistant Principals done? W. Lechliden commented that it is not typically in the School Board business but it is driving the cost. J. Rathbun commented that they have data that shows that the At-Risk-Counselors are working.

**7. Chairperson Comments:** A.Hopkins is not in attendance tonight.

**8. Upcoming Meetings:**

**January 11 Public Hearing**

**January 23 7PM (if needed)**

**February 3 Deliberative Session 9 AM**

**9. Public Comments:** There were no public comments.

**10. Motion to adjourn: MOTION:** J. Hoden **MOVED** to adjourn the meeting at 9:01 PM. **SECOND:** W. Lechliden **VOTE:** Unanimous for those present. **Motion passes.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Laura L. Aivaliotis**

**Recording Secretary**