

# Municipal Budget Committee - Town of Conway

Tuesday, January 22, 2020

Professional Development Room

Kennett Middle School, Conway, NH

**Present:**

James LeFebvre, Dave Jensen, Terri McCarthy, Michael Fougere, Cherri Sullivan, Greydon Turner, Ellin Leonard, Eric Dzedzic, Mike Laracy, Frank Jost, John Edgerton, Mike Tetreault, John Colbath, also present, recording secretary Nadine Armstrong

**Absent:** Sarah Frechette

**Excused:** Diane Ryan,

**Late Arrival:** Ted Sares

Kevin Richards, Lillie Gilligan

Lloyd Jones, Conway Daily Sun

Meeting called to order by at 18:30 by James LeFebvre; Mike Laracy led pledge of allegiance

**James:** We do have a quorum tonight, 13 people are present. I have talked to several people and I would like to cancel the meeting on January 29 because school board will be done with their presentation tonight. Any objection? Since there is no objection, meeting is cancelled. Default budget committee meeting at 5:30

**Kevin:** Lillie and I were assigned homework. One question was regarding upgrades to mechanical systems, switching from oil to gas; how much was that saving district? Numbers are dependent upon temps. John Fuller has reduced costs by \$4/5k low-\$16k high, not including cost of living increase. At Conway Elementary School, \$10k low-\$16k high, Pine Tree \$8k low-\$17k high per year. Using less fuel, more efficient fuel, also less wear and tear and less maintenance on those pieces. There is a return on the investment that makes sense. Electricity a little different. Some savings but not as much as fuel. \$2k low-\$5k high at each school. About \$50k per year has been saved.

**Lilli:** Tab G, other local revenue, in last 18 months, types of items are Eversource rebate for \$20k for Pine Tree project. Biggest item is not one specific invoice, prior year accounts payable reimbursement of either overpaid invoices or canceled events that have occurred and the revenues are received after chasing them, well after the year end has occurred so they can't go against the expense line because the expense budget has been closed. That can only be counted as that current year's revenue lines. Other types of things could be insurance holiday premiums for prior year bills (ie: workers comp, unemployment, property liability, auto insurance). Insurance often has look back periods and determine that the amount being held in reserve is more than necessary and they issue premiums based off of your experience in the prior 18 months. Small amount of money booked to this area for restitution as assigned by the courts for any student damages to property at the schools. Annually there is amount that is returned by the benefits company that manages the health reimbursement account cards and any unused amounts are returned to the district. Quite a few stale dated checks that were canceled and were from prior year credits couldn't go to expense lines drawn from and went to miscellaneous other revenue. Mary Banfill school fund, should have been sent to the school every year; just the interest on it. An account set up by Mary Banfill to support schools, set up in mid 1800s. Due to clerical error in 1970's that account was misnomered as a cemetery fund and this past year the amount of interest in the account that was sent from trust fund was to the school was a little over \$1300 in interest.

**Kevin:** Lunch accounts as well, sometimes people come in during the summer to pay off balances, revenue for following year as well

**James:** going to go through unit 2-10 in detail.

**Kevin:** however you'd like to do this. If there are individual lines that you have questions with, let us know

**John Edgerton:** went through whole thing, only one big item that stuck out that was 2153 on page 3 366% increase,

**Kevin:** unit 2, hearing impaired, special ed service that is required. I think it's a teacher of the deaf consulting fee for a new student to the district. We don't have a teacher of the deaf on staff in the district and there aren't as many kids; so district hires from outside. We do that sometimes with vision and mobility specialists. We don't budget it unless written into IEP as a service

**James:** There is a typo on the budget comparison sheet, in column 4 should say proposed budget for 20/21. On the grand total of the special education, on the grand total of that proposed budget \$6,650,790 and on detail \$6,5745,00 and curious why there is a differential there.

**Kevin:** Green tab F, special ed summary;

**Lilli:** page 80 on same detailed budget, under transportation, pupil transportation. In the 4th column over, close to the top of page 80, you'll see the subtotal for operations and maintenance of the plant; next subsection is pupil transportation, the 2nd line is salaries of drivers of special ed vans; fourth column over ends with a 994, all other items in this section are associated with this line of salaries; couple lines down you'll see health insurance for those employees driving special ed vans, then dental insurance down 2 lines below that, it's all associated with the section 994, then you'll see the employees retirement, FICA, unemployment, these items add up to \$82k which is the difference between special ed budget and the broken out special education which does include those drivers that are district wide services which is why there are in the transportation section.

**John Colbath:** Do you know the number of students special ed transported?

**Kevin:** I don't have that

**James:** If we could revisit the fund for special ed, trust fund, reserve fund, what is the balance of that?

**Lilli:** Page 84, last page of detail.

**James:** And that's as of June of last year

**Lilli:** Yes, \$412,656

**James:** Adding any more money or leaving as is?

**Kevin:** In the warrant articles, I believe that there is. Goal by Conway School Board is to keep that around \$500,000 and we are pretty close to it

**James:** Do you know when you last tapped it?

**Kevin:** Not here but can get it.

**James:** Moving on to high school, unit 3

**Lilli:** Starts on page 17

**James:** Any questions on Unit 3? If no other questions, I would like to revisit roof. Last year in your write up, you discussed the roof situation saying it was at the 12th year out of 15 year warranty and that it would be very expensive to replace when the time came because of the protrusions on it and all the things that go along with that. I think that might be something for us to get some feel on it, not this year because too late but for next year for us and the school board to take a look at because if it is \$1,000,000 + that is a significant cost for the future.

**Kevin:** Noted.

**James:** Any other questions on unit 3? Seeing none, moving onto unit 4

**Lilli:** Starts on page 33

**James:** Middle school, any questions on middle school? If I recall properly KHS has about 750 students is that correct?

**Kevin:** Oct 1 enrollment, 713 students

**James:** max capacity is 1000? Middle school is 250?

**Kevin:** Built for 1000. Middle school is 281.

**James:** And the middle school could support how many?

**Kevin:** designed for 400 but reduced down because of recreation center; could handle 350 probably without having to do too much differently with the facility

**Frank:** I noticed that there is a zero in the adopted budget for this year for health position, what's going on with that?

**Kevin:** Position has been reorganized to try to more efficient with the declining enrollment; family and consumer science to be taught with health. We reduced a staff member by having that position combined.

**John Edgerton:** Middle school still has ability to take on sixth grade?

**Kevin:** Yes.

**James:** Any other questions on middle school, seeing none; moving on to unit 5, page 44, Conway Elementary School. Total in this school can be...maximum ?

**Kevin:** 225 now but have had 300

**James:** Any other questions on middle school

**Eric:** in regard to the salary, adopted to 2019/20 and proposed budget; most numbers are identical, is there no merit increase?

**Kevin:** If there is a collective bargaining agreement in place than those costs are calculated in. Employees like AFSME (bus drivers, custodians, maintenances workers) they are in the second year of a three year agreement so those salaries are predicted and we know what they are; support staff, CESP, those are our paraprofessionals, administrative assistants, secretaries, they are in the first year of a three year agreement so we know what is budgeted for those. The teachers have been in negotiations with Conway School Board; they have a memorandum of agreement and hopefully there is a ratification vote that takes place in a week or so and will come back and explain all of those pieces. Because they were in negotiations, we do not budget anything until the article is voted on on April 12. That number is declared on the warrant article; sometimes that number has been as high as \$500,000 and sometimes it's for 1, 2 or 3 years so we don't calculate those in because should it go down, you don't have to raise that money, that gets approved.

**James:** Any other questions? On the elementary schools is there any other economy of scale that you would be able to accommodate? Would you be able to split between schools some positions because there isn't enough demand at either school for a full time position?

**Kevin:** Last year in the budget there was a reduction of a special ed teacher. There are some speech services are shared. Now there is a half time person that works at John Fuller and half time at Pine Tree. Some of the speech services are shared throughout. One thing at John Fuller because their enrollment dropped, they reduced a teacher and went to a multi grade classroom and now have 3 sections of grades 1/2 or whatever that configuration is.

**James:** Conway School Board has decided is that there be no more than 20 kids per classroom. State says no more than 25, can you show a significant improvement in the student skills by having a smaller classroom size?

**Kevin:** Have you been into a classroom with 25 kindergarten kids? Walking into those classrooms, you can tell. Anything above 20 especially K, 1, 2, 3, you definitely impact the quality of the educational delivery for those students.

**James:** any other questions, seeing none. Next is John Fuller, page 52. Any questions on John Fuller line items?

**John Colbath:** To be clear, there was combining or changing of class sizes in Conway El, did the same happen at John Fuller?

**Kevin:** John Fuller was the one that did that because of declining enrollment; both Pine Tree and Conway Elementary do some team teaching and looping but it's still pretty much grade level classes that are set up but because John Fuller's enrollment declined over a period of time, we had to reduce

**John Colbath:** Some grades there were traditionally two classrooms and now they're down to just one at some levels?

**Kevin:** It's combined. As I said, you had classes of 14, 12 and 14, 12 for 52 kids; 52 divided by 4 is a small number but if you take 52 divided by 3 and you get 17 it made more sense to have class size of 17 so combined to grade levels equally and they shared resources that way.

**John Colbath:** So what happens the next year? Does it go with the student?

**Kevin:** That's what the principals try to do is project out as they move up does that occur? If you had and influx of kindergarten students at John Fuller, the configuration for the following year might be different. They

take a look at where that bubble is, in or out. Sometimes it will go from a 1/2 to a 3/4 then to a straight grade 1 teacher, grade 2 teacher. It is flexible in that way.

**Frank:** When you are splitting a grade can you have an accelerated cohort or is that not a thing anymore?

**Kevin:** The way education is now, they try, even if you were to do that, you almost have to create ten different classes for the level of students. That's why I think sometimes you'll see the intervention specialist; fortunate to have title one monies which is from the government based on free and reduced hot lunch population and we will hire staffing. If you are a school specific Title One school they're supposed to work just the students that are free and reduced but if you're school wide or district wide, you have the opportunity if you were to hire me as a Title One reading teacher, to work with all of the students so that's where you can modify and develop those pieces.

**James:** Any other questions. Just one more on general terms. Schools A, B, C - if one school has 179 but other schools are at 230/250 recognizing that the school board still supports going to your local school as much as you can, can you do any cross leveling with those students? Has that been looked at?

**Kevin:** Conway School Board has the school choice policy which affords parents the opportunity to request to go to a different school than where they reside geographically; take a look at class sizes, don't want to go over 20. Lots of times for convenience of pickup/drop off because of work or family. Try to be accommodating. John Fuller has been biggest decrease over the past ten years. Those families have moved and have not been replaced with families with kids at John Fuller so they have taken the brunt of the reduction and you will see transference to Center Conway and East Conway where there are new developments. That's where families tend to be going and those numbers have increased over time. Conway Elementary has had the most stable enrollments over time.

**Eric:** Would you be able to look at what schools would look like if there was no school choice?

**Kevin:** There is a minimal impact

**Michael Fougere:** To choose school you have to provide your own transportation?

**Kevin:** Yes.

**James:** Any other questions, moving on to unit 7, Pine Tree, page 60; any questions on Pine Tree? Just a general question on the three schools, are there any other identified issues that would be of concern to the tax payers at the elementary schools in the next 2-3 years?

**Kevin:** I would have to go back to the capital improvement plan to see if there is a cycle. The Conway School Board did take a look at a lighting project, the facilities committee and some of the other upgrades. What they will tell you is that the Town of Conway has done exceptional job of maintaining buildings. A few years ago you did a retrofitting of the lights that saved some money. There are some better lighting projects out there, you can go to LED lights will save you a little money. If you had the building had 15 years ago your return on the investment would be very significant and probably convince the School Board to say let's do it now but because you have upgraded all these other pieces; delicate balance of are we doing it because we need to or it's the right thing to do and the school board and facilities did study and will report on the study; upgrades that would be done wouldn't make a significant increase in budget.

**Michael Fougere:** I have come across that you can actually get the LED replacement bulbs, same outlet, same everything; could start there

**Frank:** my experience that you do have to pull the ballast out to do that, not free of a maintenance problem

**Michael:** smaller ones could be done

**James:** Unit 8, technology page 68; only line item that jumps out at me is new computers at 1000, page 74; the other night we were discussing the computers and you were saying Chromebooks were significantly cheaper than the I would call the Windows 10 operating systems

**Kevin:** you're in unit 9?

**James:** Apologies, I will hold my comment until unit 9, any questions on unit 8? See no questions and move to unit 9 and go to that line item. 1000 Chromebooks enables every student basically to have a Chromebook, is that correct?

**Kevin:** Correct, yes. But in unit 9, career and technical center they have some computer, technology needs that can't be handled on Chromebooks; for example robotics, programming and gaming and those are different computers with significant processor needs, same with CAD drafting and pre-engineering courses and graphic design uses Macintosh computers that are high performance and those needs are different than the Chromebooks

**James:** any other questions on unit 9, unit 10, page 77

**John Colbath:** So on page 77, Project Succeed, substantial cutting of funds, is there a plan to sustain that program?

**Kevin:** That number there is zero right now because that's a warrant article that has to get approved through the vote. Like teachers contract, doesn't get budgeted in. Although that number is quite a bit more than that \$30,000. More like \$65,000.

**James:** As you go through this process with the strategic planning and the cooperative discussion, is someone looking at what we're doing if numbers at schools keep dropping? At what point do we say we can no longer realistically support and this is back to school board more than ourselves, we can no longer can reasonably support five schools based on population. What do we do if population drops to 1200 in the next 5 years (theoretical question)? Do we put a school in mothballs, do we sell off a school, what do we do with the school:

**Kevin:** That is a School Board question. We do revisit that on a periodic basis, did some work this year, two years prior so....

**James:** One of those things that gets studied every once in a while

**Cherri:** It is my understanding that we had an ongoing update of sorts, if we were to close a school, what would those cost savings be. Keeps all of us informed

**James:** Might be beneficial to find out what would happen if we mothballed it like here, theoretical thought

**Dave:** We had Karen Umberger talk to us about schools and data she presented was that over the last ten years, the sum total of the three elementary schools, not looking at each individually had only gone down like 2%, the decrease in the total school population seemed to be driven more by the decrease in the population of the sending towns rather than a decrease in the population of Conway and that they question of trying to figure out which school to close, it might be challenging.

**Kevin:** to talk to Dave's point, it seems like with Birch Hill in North Conway, now we see a reduction of students, Now we see shifting; Pine Tree used to be under 200 at one point and is now at 263; Conway Elementary fluctuates, goes between 225 and 250...Conway not as significant as other towns like Madison and Bartlett (lost significant population over time)

**James:** any other questions on units 2-10?

**James:** Over the course of today should have received two sets of minutes, January 6 and January 8, we know there are long minutes; going to find ways to cut it down.

January 6th first, any questions, comments, corrections, seeing none: Dave motion to approve, seconded by John Edgerton

John Colbath, Ted, Mike Laracy abstaining.

January 8th, questions, comments, concerns

**Mike Laracy:** possible to get them sooner than the before the day of the meeting?

**James:** We are working on this.

John Edgerton motion to approve: Dave seconds

Abstain: John, Ted, Mike

**James:** old business, new business; we will be canceling Jan 29th meeting which was with the school, we have finished that tonight so there is no reason to meet, one item left on school agenda which is the contract for the teachers and I will be working with town to put in at the beginning of the town meeting on February 5. Also, Feb 3, off night unless snow day. On Jan 27, joint meeting between to go over non profits, starts sharply at 6:30 downstairs at library.

**John Colbath:** On the 27th we already know that Selectmen Thibodeau will be out of town for a medical appointment and will not be there.

**Cherri:** I'll be at a school board meeting

**James:** Any public or media comments, proud to see Conway Daily Sun here this evening, happy to see Mr. Jones here and something we hope to see more often.

Dave motion to adjourn, John Edgerton seconded motion.

Meeting adjourned at 19:23.