

CONWAY MUNICIPAL BUDGET COMMITTEE AGENDA  
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER  
KENNETT MIDDLE SCHOOL  
CONWAY, NH

January 3, 2024, AT 6:30 PM

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM. The following Budget Committee members were present: Steve Angers, Bill Marvel, Steven Steiner, Bob Drinkhall, Dave Jensen, Vice-Chair Frank Jost, Chair Peter Donohoe, Stacy Sand, Randy Davison, Ryan Shepard, Michael Lacey, Ellin Leonard, Quentin Lewis, and Jim LeFebvre.

**Absent-** Terry McCarthy

**Pledge of Allegiance-** Chair Peter Donohoe led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Approval of Minuets**

***Bill Marvel motioned to approve the December 13, 2023, meeting minutes; seconded by Frank Jost.***

***Vote in favor 14-0***

K. Richard- Tab A is the budget summary. This gives you each of the school districts we have unit 2 through unit 10 and gives an overview if they are up or down, and some of the pieces have transferred from one place to another. For example, unit 5 and unit 6 in Conway, there is a \$60,000 rotating maintenance fund, it was in John Fuller last year and now it is in Conway Elementary for next year. We did talk that the overall budget is down \$711,000 but we also acknowledged the fact that you are losing the bond on the High School. Next tab is the warrant articles. Negotiations and the lease purchase agreement will be updated as we go along and progress. The actual warrant articles are there and have been officially voted and placed on the warrant at this time by the Conway School Board. At the very end you will see a document that covers Project Succeed. It does a bit of a highlight of pieces related to that. You will see the bus replacement schedule. The default we will be working on, and the school adopts the default budget. Tab D the function summary gives you an overall look at the functions themselves. The real tab that is important is Tab F. Tab E is the object summary that gives salaries. There is a green special ED summary. Revenue is Tab G. It is a best-case conservative estimate of revenues that we expect to receive in. At the top you can see fund balance and last years was \$3.479 million, this year's conservative estimate is \$2.5 million, and under that you will see all the other revenue sources we expect in total revenue projected to be \$13 million, total appropriations are \$40,000,109 and that includes grants. If you go over to Tab J you will see the estimated capital improvement plans. That is your budget book, we will bring in the associated documents as things change and give them to you. At this time, we will go through unit 2.

Pam Stimson Director of Student Services- we will start on Tab F, the special Ed budget is down, that is not any magic that we do other than some students have been discharged from services. We are looking at staffing changes by hiring new staff, perhaps at a lower rate or lower benefits. Additionally, students shift in per numbers based on where students are in their education. Students moving from elementary to middle. I want to point out that unit 2 the special Ed, which is all our special Ed units combined, is down 7%. One significant piece of that \$400,000 change is we reorganized at the High School. Almost 100k shifted into unit 3 from unit 2. Currently our total budgeted amount to provide for nineteen special Ed students at our two charter schools in town the total would be about \$393,000 of that \$96,000 to \$97,000 are reimbursement costs, for a total cost of \$290,000. Our highs and lows are all based on specific student services and needs. You do have reimbursement from your Albany and Eaton for students who come to the elementary school if they have services outside of the tuition agreement. The 7% decrease this year is based on changes in student needs and services.

S. Sand- are the charter school services are those services shared with other schools in some cases?

P. Stimson- currently we have district wide staff, special Ed staff who provide all evaluations at the charter schools. So, they conduct the evaluations. We have diagnostic prescriptive teacher, we have a school psychologist group, and we also have occupational therapists. For the special Ed teacher positions that we have budgeted for, for the charter school, currently only one full-time teacher has been hired. We have a combination of some are in house and stay at the school and some are itinerant.

F. Jost- My sense is that this area of responsibility has the greatest number of unfilled positions.

P. Stimson- we have a lot of unfilled positions, about 25% unfilled and resulted in going outside to professionals.

F. Jost- is that a trend that is going to continue and how will that affect costs for the district?

P. Stimson- unfortunately, I do not see it getting better.

R. Davison- in this area through Pam monitoring it, has sent funds back in as surplus to the town of Conway. If there are any funds brought forward for special services, they must be spent on special services. The returned surplus was because staff were not there, or the program placement has changed. The board has been frugal, and they have not put forth an additional warrant article asking for more funds.

S. Sand- I have been looking at your budgets for a few years now and it seems like you have had this problem for awhile in terms of staffing, and my concern is, do you feel you lost staff because they got burnt out?

P. Stimson- that topic keeps us all up at night. We are often able to find staff who are interested in living here, interested in working with us and one of our biggest drawbacks here in the valley is housing.

S. Sand- do you feel that the salaries are attractive enough?

P. Stimson- no because it is expensive to live here. We are starting to get closer to a living wage.

J. LeFebvre- projecting 18 months out is difficult, have you seen an increase in the number of students who need assistance as it stable or is it declining?

P. Stimson- for special education we saw an increase after covid. Now that those numbers are starting to go back to pre-covid numbers.

S. Angers- do we have any students that are going without services?

P. Stimson- yes, we are looking at different structures, by end of the year well be caught up but right now were rotating services.

Kevin Carpenter Principal- we have made structural changes that we have made without asking for any additional resources, we are shifting resources around to meet the needs of the students. We are looking at a reduction of one full time physical Ed teacher, one science teacher and a math teacher. The need for our student body is to have a full-time family support liaison. We have started an alternative program that is about to kick off, the alternative teacher and career tech, making the ELO coordinator full time. I want to highlight our budget was up about \$500,000 so in Pam budget there was a position previously budgeted that has shifted into this unit so that is why it shows an increase. We have also done some redistribution among the other members of the administrative team. I line 1054 there is a significant increase in repairs and that is an increase in the building and taking care of repairs and maintenance.

J. LeFebvre- it has been briefed earlier or discussed that there is a \$75,000 relocation of the principals' offices from the rear of the building to the front of the building, is that correct?

K. Carpenter- that is not in this current budget, which is something that we'd like to explore.

B. Marvel- I have heard about vandalism in the recent past at high school, are there any maintenance funds here for that?

K. Carpenter- that is in our regular maintenance budget.

B. Marvel- we had a child start at the high school 16 years ago, and your furniture is already needing replacement?

K. Carpenter- not all of it needs to be replaced but some of it we are seeing does. It was all purchased at once and we do not want to have to replace it at once.

S. Angers- a year ago you switched from assistant principals to deans, how is that working out?

K. Carpenter- were still in transition with that.

S. Angers- we as a country are falling behind in math and science and being a math and science head myself it upsets me that we would do something like lose these positions, but I understand the reason.

K. Carpenter- it was due to numbers and enrollment.

S. Angers- a year ago you cut the arts positions, do you plan to bring that back?

K. Carpenter- the position was reduced but utilized funds for contracted service to bring in outside people in potentially.

S. Angers- has there been a difference in the performance of the students and the teachers by going with longer blocks? And is there a cost to operate the school in black and white vs what we are currently doing?

K. Carpenter- I want to make clear there was zero change to the length of the classes. The difference between black and white and what we have right now, what is called an AB, or two semester is that the black and white system is that you alternated days and flipped back and forth throughout the semester. Now we just have four classes every day for a semester, the length of classes did not change at all.

Q. Lewis- with the decrease in the bond then you went from \$211,000 to \$414,000 in that very year the bond finished it seems as it was planned.

K. Carpenter- when the administrators are developing their budgets, we look at mandates then we look at needs. The needs have changed dramatically over time, and it is a balance of interest. We have tried to demonstrate if we can find alternative resources we will.

J. LeFebvre- given that a vast majority of us were given our budget books today that units 2,3,4 and 5 be subject to additional questioning later in the process.

P. Donohoe- yes, funnel them through me and we will get them to Kevin.

B. Marvel- we see all the increase and have a proposed \$49 million dollar budget and a 3% reduction over last year and with all these expenses you wonder how there was a reduction,

there is not a reduction. The process year after year and compare the actual to the proposed. What we are really looking at is a 19% increase in the overall budget.

K. Carpenter- unit 4 rep had a personal issue come up and cannot show up tonight may I recommend that units 5,6,7 present together tonight as they all build their budgets together tonight at the same time.

P. Donohoe- we did this last year, and I am concerned with time, but let us give it a shot.

Unit 5,6,7 reps- we do not have m much to highlight. Most of the increases or decreases are a result of health increases or decreases, salary adjustments. Most were shifted from one place or another, or we were able to reduce some costs. We have tried collectively over the years as an elementary school team to really adopt these budgets and align where each of the funds are being taken from so that they're consistent from school to school in order to be able to really analyze our budget over time and do a deep dive into increases and decreases as students needs change and enrollment changes and things like that and as a result you might see lines zeroed out over time. It does not always mean a reduction just means it has been reallocated to a more appropriate title of a line based on what the funds are used for.

J. LeFebvre- do you have any spare equipment you can spare to go to eh destroyed charter school?

Unit 5,6,7 reps- I personally speaking for Pine Tree, we do not have excess furniture hanging around. When we do have excess, we do reach out to see if any other school or dept is in need.

F. Jost- can you give me an overview of future staffing changes you foresee in a continued declining enrolment environment.

Unit 5,6,7 reps- I think it is different at each of our schools, I would say over the course of the last 4-5 years we have cut positions, we do not have title 1 funding support at John Fuller. We have added and subtracted in different areas over the years. Enrolment has been stabling the past few years and I do not foresee reducing.

S. Angers- what do you need for support for supplies to be able to up our game at the elementary level. What would be a want if there was no budget?

Unit 5,6,7 reps- we presented a needs-based budget based on what our students need and every child. We briefly discussed a direct family support liaison. We must be careful of what is sustainable and what is not.

S. Angers- Last year the school stressed the staff being strained due to shortages in staff, one way to fix that is to consolidate schools.

S. Sand- last year the committee proposed the equivalent decrease in the budget of closing out the schools. Infrastructure costs are not just the day to day, and we are coming into some huge costs. We have an opportunity right now where we may want to consider this as staff are making changes. What would you propose, the best way is to reduce our infrastructure?

Unit 5,6,7 reps- that is not up to us, we have made up proposals as to how we think the configurations will work.

S. Sand- if we gave them more time to prepare would that be the best route to see the best configurations?

Unit 5,6,7 reps- we are not prepared to answer that.

J. LeFebvre- the \$1.2 million cut last year was initially proposed by me and the school district did indeed return \$3.4 million plus.

S. Steiner- we need some waivers to start some major building in the town.

***Frank Jost motioned table item #5 on the agenda, town questions; seconded by J. LeFebvre.***

***motion amended not vote taken.***

S. Sand- if we keep tabling it will become irrelevant in terms of the answers because we will just be asking the questions when we meet with them, if they have some chance to prepare, they might, especially if it comes to numbers. So, I propose that we quickly go over it.

J. LeFebvre- I think as the superintendent stated we should be asking the same personnel cost as we asked the schools.

P. Donohue- we have asked that before, and the previous town manager reluctantly supplied that information.

Q. Lewis- some of these questions are not yes or no.

E. Leonard- I think these are good questions and I agree we need to give town staff time to answer.

***F. Jost amended his motion to suggest that we submit the proposed questions with the addition of the requested information about salary details to include names, seconded by J. LeFebvre.***

***Vote in favor 14-0***

P. Donohoe- I think Steve has put a lot of time into this and I think if we can just send these along as is with the addition of question 11.

### **Default Budget**

P. Donohoe - I need two volunteers to help on this extra duty of working with town staff to assist in the process. Dave has offered to help, anyone else? We had one meeting last year and we were done. To be clear you are a volunteer in another evening meeting, and we simply go through the town budget line by line and determine the default budget. The school does their own, but the Town does not.

J. LeFebvre- many moons ago the town gave the budget committee the default and the operating budget and the school district retained the default budget to the school board and giving us the operating budget.

S. Sand also volunteered.

### **Old Business**

### **New Business**

R. Davison- not one of us noticed on the school board, that the grant positions at the high school, and they will now be funded.

S. Angers- it boggles my mind with Kevins school board, how to build a budget thing that no one is talking about closing the middle school. With \$4 million worth of repairs. The high school was built to handle 1,200, it can absorb the 200 students from the middle school. You heard Kevin say that the dean thing is starting to work for him, that could be a seventh and eighth grade dean, not a full principal. All the maintenance people that there short in the high school could come down from the middle school. Close the sixth grade. Close this place then to Pam's point make this an apartment complex for entry level employees.

B. Marvel- the issues I heard with putting junior high in the high school is the social problem of putting seventh graders with 18-year-olds. And no matter what the suggestion there will be a block that is against it.

J. LeFebvre- it all comes down to the deliberative session, unless we are able to motivate people who are concerned about their taxes, to get out there and do something, we are going to run across the standard community of school people, their teachers, parents and staff who are going to come in and vote a mass at the deliberative and we will be out voted. We need to convince people that it is in their best interest to get out there and do something positive.

A large discussion was had on how to get more voters educated and involved in the meetings, the deliberative session and how to educate the masses.

P. Donohoe- we are not meeting here on Monday night we are meeting at Town Hall. David Page is co-sponsoring some of our shifting to tourism legislation to relieve Conway taxpayers has asked to come to speak before this Board to inform us and through Valley Vision is another way to advocate for some of the work that is being done at the State House. We have a tight schedule.

**Adjournment**

***J. LeFebvre motioned to adjourn the December 3, 2024, meeting; seconded by F. Jost  
Motion carries 14-0***

Respectfully Submitted,  
*Alicia Jipson*  
Recording Secretary