

LINCOLN-WOODSTOCK COOPERATIVE SCHOOL BOARD

SAU #68

DATE: February 14, 2024

SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET HEARING

SCHOOL BOARD PRESENT:

Tamra Ham, Vice-Chairperson
Kevin Bell
Casey Caulder
Jasmine Weeden
Joe Bossie
Ashley Youngheim

SCHOOL BOARD ABSENT:

Jay Duguay

ADMINISTRATION/STAFF/STUDENT PRESENT:

Judith McGann, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools
Jason Robert, Principal
Debbie O'Connor, Financial Manager
Sharon Holt, Assistant to the Superintendent
Bart King, Technology Support
Shaun Hagan, Teacher Representative

PUBLIC PRESENT:

Jerry Stringham
Diane Tardiff

Nancy Ingalls
Nancy Cuning

PUBLIC PRESENT REMOTELY:

Sally Nicoll

Faith Bossie

The School District Budget Hearing was held in the Elementary School Multipurpose Room.

Call to Order:

School Board Vice-Chairperson, Tamra Ham called the Budget Hearing to order at 6:32 PM.

Tamra Ham mentioned the budget presented includes the needs for 42 teachers, 24 support staff and 6 administrators for 251 students as well as two buildings and grounds.

Tamra Ham mentioned the administration and staff did a great job on the budget before it reached the Board level.

Tamra Ham mentioned the Support Staff CBA (collective bargaining agreement) cost items are additionally on the warrant.

Tamra Ham opened public comment.

Jerry Stringham asked if the majority of the budget (3/4) was still related to salaries and the District's current standing with class sizes versus the number of teachers? Mr. Stringham also mentioned a spreadsheet developed regarding teachers versus enrollments.

- Tamra Ham mentioned enrollments will not be changing much in the next school year. The incoming kindergarten class is estimated to be small however, the graduating senior class is also small.
- Debbie O'Connor noted administration still utilizes a spreadsheet report to study future enrollments and utilizes the information to determine teacher ratios. When teachers leave the District, administration takes that opportunity to determine if the position needs to be filled or if the position can be filled in another way.
- Debbie O'Connor noted the issue with decreasing enrollments is a wide-ranging problem throughout the towns because of the lack of affordable housing.
- Superintendent McGann mentioned as enrollments drop, staff members are becoming multi-certified to cover multiple class subject areas.
- Superintendent McGann noted because of the estimated small kindergarten class, there may be only one kindergarten class and the second teacher will be moved to another area where there is a need.

Nancy Ingalls asked of the total K-12 enrollment of 251, how many of those students are in the high school?

- Jason Robert noted there are approximately 80 students in the high school.

Jasmine Weeden discussed warrant article 6 which relates to the Lin-Wood Support Staff Association CBA noting that the negotiations process went smoothly. The majority of the costs associated with the article are relating to a salary increase to bring the support staff salaries in line with current standards (\$5 per hour in the first year and \$1.50 per hour in the second year). The remaining negotiated terms included an increase in the insurance buy-out and changes in the number

of paid holidays. (Juneteenth will be added as a paid holiday and paraprofessionals will now receive eight paid holidays throughout the school year without a waiting period.)

- Tamra Ham mentioned the starting salary for paraprofessionals is currently \$13.50 and this will bring that up to a living wage.
- Nancy Ingalls asked how many staff members were included in the support staff contract?
 - Debbie O'Connor mentioned there were approximately 20 staff positions in the union.

Tamra Ham discussed warrant article 8 noting this article is related to adding funds received from state Special Education Aid reimbursement to the Special Education Capital Reserve Fund.

- Debbie O'Connor mentioned this article allows the District to put the estimated reimbursement monies to be received from state Special Education Aid back into the Special Education Capital Reserve Fund. Without the approval of this article, the reimbursements received would roll into general surplus.
- Jerry Stringham mentioned in general, the special education (SpEd) budget appears lower than it was a couple of years ago and asked how many students were now placed out of District?
 - Tamra Ham noted there is currently one student placed out of District.
 - Jerry Stringham mentioned a couple of years ago the Special Education Capital Reserve Fund had been low because of an out of district placement and a large sum was allocated to replenish the Fund.
 - Debbie O'Connor mentioned that known SpEd costs are budgeted and the Special Education Capital Reserve is funded to respond to unknown issues that may arise. Placing the Special Aid reimbursement funds in the Special Education Capital Reserve fund helps level out the process.
 - Tamra Ham noted for instance, if another student needs to be placed out of district, the Special Education Capital Reserve fund would be utilized and then would need to be rebuilt again.
 - Nancy Ingalls noted that adding the Partner Program in the Elementary School has limited the number of students that need to be placed out of district.

Tamra Ham mentioned warrant articles 9, 10, and 11 are relating to funding the Facilities Trust Fund, Equipment Trust Fund, and Technology Trust Fund. These articles appear on the warrant yearly.

- Nancy Ingalls asked if these Trust Funds were also funded through state reimbursements?
 - Debbie O'Connor explained the Facilities, Equipment, and Technology Trust funds are funded through the unassigned fund balance if available at the end of the year.
- Nancy Ingalls asked if the warrant amount for the Facilities Trust Fund was typical?
 - Debbie O'Connor answered yes, the Facilities Trust Fund currently has approximately \$95,000 but this year the District utilized the fund for approximately \$100,000 in facilities' needs.
- Nancy Ingalls asked for clarification between the different Trust Funds?
 - Debbie O'Connor noted the Technology Fund has been utilized in the past year for Wi-Fi upgrades. The Equipment Trust Fund has been utilized for fitness room equipment as well as clocks and a PA system in the Elementary School. The Facilities Trust Fund was utilized for part of the Middle/High School HVAC system project.
- Nancy Ingalls asked about COVID related grants?
 - Debbie O'Connor mentioned the COVID related grants have been utilized and were a great help with funding projects including a significant portion of the Middle/High School HVAC system project.

Tamra Ham asked for further public comment, hearing none she asked for a motion to close the public comment period.

Jasmine Weeden made a motion to close the Budget Hearing public comment period. Casey Caulder seconded the motion. Discussion: None. **Tamra Ham called a vote to approve the motion. All Board members present were in favor and public comment closed at 6:48 PM.**

Jasmine Weeden discussed warrant article 4 relating to the salaries for School District officers and election workers. The officers salaries are included in the budget warrant article 5. Most Districts do not have a separate article on the warrant for these salaries however, Lin-Wood has historically had this warrant article. The salaries for the Moderator, Supervisors of the Checklist, and Ballot Clerks were increased over past years.

- Debbie O'Connor mentioned research was done as to what the Towns were paying the Moderator, Supervisors, and Ballot Clerks. The increase in the salaries referenced in article 4 bring the School District in-line with the Town salaries for those positions.

Tamra Ham read ARTICLE 4, To see if the District will set the salaries of the School Board at \$1,000, the Vice Chairperson at \$1,250, the Chairperson at \$1,500, the Moderator at \$200 per meeting, the School District Clerk at \$250 per meeting, the Ballot Clerks at \$160 per meeting, the Supervisors of the Checklist at \$180 per meeting, and the School District Treasurer at \$4,500 per year. The money for this article is included in Article 5.

Jasmine Weeden made a motion to support article 4. Joe Bossie seconded the motion. Discussion: None. **Tamra Ham called a vote to approve the motion. All Board members present were in favor and the motion carried.**

Tamra Ham read ARTICLE 5, To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the School Board's recommended amount of nine million three hundred thirty-five thousand nine hundred ninety-one dollars (\$9,335,991) for the support of schools; for the salaries of school district officials, employees and agents, and for the payment of statutory obligations of the District, and to authorize the application against said appropriation such sums as are estimated to be received from state aid, together with other income; the School Board to certify to the Selectmen of each of the Towns of Lincoln and Woodstock, respectively, the balance to be raised by taxes by the Towns of Lincoln and Woodstock in accordance with the formula adopted by the Lincoln-Woodstock Cooperative School District; and the School Board further to certify to the Selectmen of each of the Towns of Lincoln and Woodstock the amount to be raised by taxation by each of said two towns. This article does not include appropriations contained in special or individual articles addressed separately. (Majority vote required)

Joe Bossie made a motion to support article 5. Kevin Bell seconded the motion. Discussion: None. **Tamra Ham called a vote to approve the motion. All Board members present were in favor and the motion carried.**

Tamra Ham read ARTICLE 6, To see if the District will vote to approve the cost items included in the collective bargaining agreement reached between the Lincoln-Woodstock Cooperative School Board and Lin-Wood Support Staff Association/NEA-New Hampshire which calls for the following increases in salaries and benefits over those paid in the prior fiscal year:

<u>FISCAL YEAR</u>	<u>ESTIMATED INCREASE</u>
2024-2025	\$141,456
2025-2026	\$ 38,303

and further to raise and appropriate the sum of one hundred forty-one thousand four hundred fifty-six dollars (\$141,456) for the 2024-2025 fiscal year, such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in salaries and benefits over those that would be paid at current staffing levels. The School Board recommends this appropriation. (Majority vote required)

Jasmine Weeden made a motion to support article 6. Casey Caulder seconded the motion. Discussion: None. **Tamra Ham called a vote to approve the motion. All Board members present were in favor and the motion carried.**

Tamra Ham read ARTICLE 8, To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of sixty-thousand dollars (\$60,000) to be added to the Special Education Capital Reserve Fund (created in 1998, amended in 2021). This sum represents the amount estimated to be received from state Special Education Aid from the prior year expenditures.

Joe Bossie made a motion to support article 8. Jasmine Weeden seconded the motion. Discussion: None. **Tamra Ham called a vote to approve the motion. All Board members present were in favor and the motion carried.**

Tamra Ham read ARTICLE 9, To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate sixty percent (60%) up to the amount of sixty thousand dollars (\$60,000) to be placed in the School Facilities Expendable Trust Fund (created in 1999), with said funds to come from the June 30, 2024, unassigned fund balance available for transfer on July 1, 2024.

Jasmine Weeden made a motion to support article 9. Casey Caulder seconded the motion. Discussion: None. **Tamra Ham called a vote to approve the motion. All Board members present were in favor and the motion carried.**

Tamra Ham read ARTICLE 10, To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate thirty percent (30%) up to the amount of thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000) to be placed in the School Technology Expendable Trust Fund (created in 1999), with said funds to come from the June 30, 2024, unassigned fund balance available for transfer on July 1, 2024.

Joe Bossie made a motion to support article 10. Kevin Bell seconded the motion. Discussion: None. **Tamra Ham called a vote to approve the motion. All Board members present were in favor and the motion carried.**

Tamra Ham read ARTICLE 11, To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate ten percent (10%) up to the amount of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) to be placed in the School Equipment Expendable Trust Fund (created in 1999), with said funds to come from the June 30, 2024, unassigned fund balance available for transfer on July 1, 2024.

Jasmine Weeden made a motion to support article 11. Casey Caulder seconded the motion. Discussion: None. **Tamra Ham called a vote to approve the motion. All Board members present were in favor and the motion carried.**

Debbie O'Connor mentioned she would reach out to Board members when the official warrant and budget form (MS-26) are ready to be signed and asked that Board members stop in to the SAU office to sign no later than Thursday, February 22nd in order to meet necessary posting requirements.

Jasmine Weeden made a motion to adjourn the Budget Hearing. Joe Bossie seconded the motion. Discussion: None. **Tamra Ham called a vote to approve the motion. All Board members present were in favor and the Budget Hearing adjourned at 6:57 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,
Sharon Holt, Assistant to the Superintendent