

LINCOLN-WOODSTOCK COOPERATIVE SCHOOL BOARD

SAU #68

DATE: February 15, 2023

SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET HEARING MINUTES

SCHOOL BOARD PRESENT:

Jay Duguay, Chairperson
Kevin Bell
Joe Bossie
Jasmine Weeden
Tamra Ham
Ashley Youngheim
Brian Angelone

ADMINISTRATION/STAFF PRESENT:

Judith McGann, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools
Mark Pribbenow, Principal
Debbie O'Connor, Financial Manager
Sharon Holt, Assistant to the Superintendent
Bart King, Technical Support

PUBLIC PRESENT:

Mark Houde
Sally Nicoll

Megan Woods
Judy Boyle

PUBLIC PRESENT REMOTELY:

None

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

Hearing Call to Order:

School Board Chairperson, Jay Duguay called the School District Budget Hearing to order at 6:30 PM.

Jay Duguay welcomed all participants to the meeting and provided an overview of the budget. Mr. Duguay noted the 2023-2024 budget presented includes 42 teachers plus a total of 30 support staff and Administrators for approximately 270 students including 52 children with IEP's and educational plans under IDEA. Also included in the budget are technology resources, materials, supplies, transportation services, health services, food services, CTE programming, summer programs, and many other programs and services to support the School District.

Jay Duguay noted the District, like the nation, is feeling the squeeze of inflation. With that in mind, the Board tried to limit budget increases by flat-funding school operations wherever possible resulting in a modest increase of 1.3% over the 2022-2023 budget. The majority of the increase is related to fixed costs such as fuel and transportation.

Jay Duguay mentioned 77% of the budget includes salary and benefits. Over the last couple of years, there has been a reduction of 2.5 full-time equivalent teachers. The 2023-2024 budget represents current staffing levels.

Jay Duguay noted, aside from the budget warrant article (article 6), there are two other articles that will affect the tax rate. The first is article 7 which relates to the 2-year agreement negotiated with the teachers' union and includes a \$183,413 increase in salaries and benefits over those paid in the prior year. This will make the starting salary for new teachers more marketable as it has become harder to fill positions.

Jay Duguay mentioned the other article to affect taxation is article 3 which is in regards to upgrading the Middle/High School HVAC system as was done with the Elementary School last year.

Brian Angelone noted although there have been upgrades to parts of the system in the past, essentially the HVAC system and boiler are original to the Middle/High School building's construction in 1963. Because of the age of the system, parts for repairs are getting more difficult to find. It is time to upgrade the system and controls of the HVAC system and improve the air quality in the School. Currently, the District has over \$500,000 in federal ESSER grant monies available to put towards the project. These ESSER grant funds can only be used for certain projects including projects to improve air quality and the funds are set to expire in 2024 if not utilized. Aside from the grant funding, the major funding for the project will be through a bond of approximately \$430,000. Additional funding for the project will be from the end of year fund balance (\$150,000), from the Facilities Trust Fund (\$100,000), and approximately \$147,000 from general taxation.

Generally, the District typically has between \$100,000 and \$150,000 in large facilities maintenance projects such as flooring, etc. included on the Warrant, this year those projects are being put on hold in order for the Middle/High School HVAC project to receive that funding which accounts for approximately \$147,000 from general taxation. If approved, the Middle/High School HVAC project will be completed this summer. The project will allow for remote access to the system and improve air quality throughout the building.

Jay Duguay mentioned the total project cost of the Middle/High School HVAC project is \$1.4 million. The ESSER grant to be used for the project is a specific use grant which needs to be used by 2024. The \$150,000 from the year end fund balance and the \$100,000 from the Facilities Trust Fund will not affect taxation.

Jay Duguay noted the District received approximately \$300,000 in SAFE grant funds that will be utilized for facilities projects including window and door repairs/replacement. Again, the SAFE grant is a specific use grant in this case, for projects relating to security risk.

Jay Duguay mentioned Debbie O'Connor, Board members, and other members of the Administration team continue to work hard to identify funding opportunities outside of taxation.

Jay Duguay noted aside from the major articles discussed; budget, teachers' agreement, and the Middle/High HVAC system, the remaining articles on the Warrant relate to the general disbursement of funds to the Trust Funds as in the past.

Jay Duguay opened the meeting to public comment.

Sally Nicoll ask about the Student Support Services line on the Budget that includes a figure in the 2023-2024 budget but had not been funded in the past. Jay Duguay mentioned this is the District's portion of the funding for a School Resource Officer. Tamra Ham mentioned the Lincoln Police Department received a grant for funding a resource officer. The grant covers 75% of the resource officer's salary the first year, 50% the second year, and 25% the third year. The position would need to be kept for at least one more (fourth) year being funded in full by the Town and District. The salary for the resource officer not covered by the grant will be split between the Town of Lincoln and the School District. The position will be a full year police officer position for the Town of Lincoln and the School District's portion will be pro-rated based on the school year. As the grant is through the Lincoln Police Department, the school resource officer position will be a separate article on the Town's Warrant during Town meeting. Sally Nicoll asked if the school resource officer position were not approved by the Lincoln voters, would the Student Support Services funding be removed from the District's budget? Tamra Ham answered yes, a motion could be made from the floor during the Annual District Meeting to decrease the School District budget to remove the funding in the Student Support Services line. Sally Nicoll noted there had been a School Resource Officer in the past and, as the officer was from Lincoln, support was not provided for students from Woodstock. Mrs. Nicoll expressed concerns that the lack of support for Woodstock students would continue to be an issue as the officer would again be a Lincoln officer. Tamra Ham noted past issues relating to the school resource officer program were due to the management of the Police Department at that time. Jay Duguay mentioned there would be a Memorandum of Understanding put in place that will describe the duties of the resource officer.

Sally Nicoll asked about the number of teachers and staff members mentioned by Mr. Duguay during his introduction. Debbie O'Connor mentioned the 42 teachers and 30 support staff and administration are current staffing numbers and the 2023-2024 budget is based on those numbers. The 2022-2023 budget included funding for 43 teachers while the 2023-2024 budget reduces that number to 42, consistent with current staffing.

Sally Nicoll noted the 2023-2024 budget line for enrichment has zero dollars indicated and asked how enrichment programs like the robotics club would be funded? Debbie O'Connor noted the enrichment programs, such as the robotics club, are not included in the general funds as those programs are grant funded and there is at least one more year of funding available for the robotics club. Judy Boyle noted her grandchildren are enjoying the robotics program and suggested that a dollar or other small dollar amount be included on the enrichment budget line in the 2023-2024 budget. This would allow the District to pull from other parts of the budget to cover enrichment should grant monies become unavailable. If a budget line is not funded at all, no money can be pulled in to cover costs associated with that budget line. Tamra Ham noted this was a good catch on Mrs. Boyle's part and agreed an individual budget line could be overspent as long as it had been originally funded in the budget and the full budget was not exceeded. Tamra Ham mentioned other budget lines that had zero funding. Debbie O'Connor noted that the inability to move funds to line items with zero dollar funding is only a concern with major function lines of the budget.

Tamra Ham made a motion to adjourn the School District Budget Hearing. Joe Bossie seconded the motion. Discussion: None. Jay Duguay called a vote to approve the motion. All Board members were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 6:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Sharon Holt, Assistant to the Superintendent, SAU#68