

Budget Committee
Town of Hinsdale, NH
Town Hall
Meeting March 23, 2023

Members Present: Alex, Duso, Josh Green, Ken Howe, Dennis Nadeau, Karen Johnson, Sean Leary, Richard Johnson (selectmen Rep), April Anderson (School Board Rep)

Excused: Janice Nichols, Mike Bomba and Dan Seymour

Outgoing Members Present: Bill Nebelski, Steve Diorio (Selectmen)

Others Present: Jodie Holmquist (School District Business Administrator), Kathryn Lynch (Town Administrator)

6pm Chair Nadeau called the meeting to order and expressed thanks to all the members of the committee for the work they did during the previous budget season.

K Howe motioned to approve the slate of past minutes for

A. Duso seconded.

Discussion on minutes:

- 12/8/2022-next meeting 12/20, incorrect date.
- No minutes for the 1/20/2022 work session, Board will use School Board Minutes.
- 1/19/2023-work session, not listed as present James MacDonell, Mike Bomba and excused Janice Nichols.
- 2/6/2023-Public meeting, not listed as discussion Article 2 furniture and Article 3 discontinuing capitol reserve. Budget Committee vote was 8 to 1 not 6 to 2. No mention of paper ballot and April discussing Point of Order RSA 91 A-2.
- Correction of the spelling of Duso in minutes dated 11/22/2022 and 11/30/2022. Correction of spelling of MacDonell throughout minutes.

School Board Rep. Anderson made a motion to approve the minutes with corrections. She was seconded by K. Howe. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Nadeau welcomed the new board members and thanked J Holmquist for attending. Since Sean was joining the budget committee after completing his time on the school board, Chair Nadeau expressed his hope that Sean could provide some insight into the school budget moving forward. Chair Nadeau also expressed his desire for a better working relationship with the school district after a contentious budget season.

S. Diorio announced that Richard Johnson will be taking over his spot as ex-officio representative from the select board to the budget committee. Chair Nadeau recognized Richard and thanked Steve for his service.

Chair Nadeau explained that these are very difficult times, we need information to make an honest decision, we need more clarification from the Town. He understands the school budget is complex, and it will be better since Jodie has joined the board meeting.

R. Johnson suggested that financials be sent to the budget committee from both school and town on a monthly basis. He believes that will provide the budget committee with a more well-rounded view of the overall budgets. Ken supported this idea and thinks it should be achievable now that there is a new town administrator and school district BA. Jodie indicated that this request should not pose any difficulty. She was unaware that the committee would want these documents but would be happy to comply contingent upon approval from the school board. Ken indicated that an electronic version would be more efficient than paper copies. Chair Nadeau hoped the school board would agree.

B. Nebelski brought up the request made at town meeting that teacher's names and salaries be printed in the annual report each year. He is opposed to printing teacher's names and would prefer that just positions be listed. The budget committee agreed with Bill. Jodie mentioned that there is a house bill currently under review that, if passed, would require listing salaries and names. She is not opposed to listing names. She had given that information out before district meeting in response to a Right to Know request she had received. She did consult with legal before responding to the request. Ken suggested maybe just having the name sat the budget hearing and not in the report. Chair Nadeau expressed his opposition to listing names. He stated that the budget process is business and not personal. He felt as though listing names gives the public an excuse to make it personal.

K Johnson would like to see a list of SAU positions, a list of ELO administrators and the number of ELO students, along with ELO budget numbers and the total number of staff involved with ELOs. Jodie replied that it might be difficult to provide exactly what Karen is asking for since people in the district "wear many hats" so the positions mentioned may not be defined in "whole number". For example, there are two people drawing funds from the ELO line, but they are also paid 50% Title 1 Grant and 50% general fund. List of employees paid by grants.

A. Anderson proposed looking at the budget differently this coming year. She suggested reviewing smaller sections of the budget at a time (possibly starting earlier in the year) to make things less confusing. Jodie conferred with April and agreed. Jodie also stated that she made notes of all the information the budget committee members wanted this past season and will work to provide that information for the upcoming season proactively. Ken stated that he like April & Jodie's proposal and requested more clarity on how much of the school budget is grant funded. Jodie spoke to grants and how they come in as well as how they are spent. Federal grants are Title 1 (k-8th grade instruction), Title 4 (IDEA-special education, and their competitive grants are Century 21 (HASP every 5 years) and SAFE Grant (Homeland Security). She offered to create a spreadsheet for the grants they receive and share with the budget committee. She commented that the district is current with all grants at this time. The question of lottery revenues for education was asked. Sean stated that he believes that could be part of what makes up the SWEPT tax but is unsure. Jodie was also unsure.

A. Duso would like to see what kind of open positions remain and what monies are unspent due to open positions. Jodie explained it is a moving target, the open positions are posted on the website. As far as the budget these numbers will be included in the monthly statements we will provide. Jodie gave the example of the school psychologist position which has remained unfilled for some time. She mentioned that the district will be going with a contracted service for this instead of hiring a person.

Chair Nadeau complimented Justin Therieau (School Director of Technology) on his explanation of student population (numbers reporting). Jodie explained that the student population is reported on October 1st. That number stays consistent at DOE even though the population fluctuates throughout the year. That fluctuation can affect the cost per pupil. She also noted that out of district placements are not counted in the student population and that can skew the cost per pupil figure. Richard asked if the student population figure could be included with the monthly financials.

K Howe stated that he had a conversation with Justin and Jodie before district meeting and believes that a lot of the confusion and misinformation came from having too many voices speak for the district.

B. Nebelski left the meeting at 6:30

K Lynch asked if the tuition exploratory committee had started meeting again. She was part of that group before covid hit and shut things down. She is interested in reprising her role with that group. Jodie stated that she and the interim superintendent have met with Winchester regarding the possibility of tuition students from Winchester High School students to Hinsdale. Ken noted that the average class size at HHS is 14. He believes that adding 5 more students per class would not require hiring any additional teachers. He had a source in Winchester say that the regular ed. Tuition to Keene was \$16k and that SPED tuition was \$32k. He also stated that Winchester supplies and funds the paras for their SPED students. Jodie reported that Winchester does not believe their students are thriving in Keene. She also stated her belief that Winchester's SPED population is not made up of any "high needs" students. She also stated that Hinsdale tries to keep kids in district since out of district placements can be very costly.

Karen Johnson left the meeting at 6:49

J. Green note that district budget forum was confusing. People couldn't hear well, and he suggested more microphones. He also expressed concern that the budget committee seemed to have a number in mind for the school budget that was not discussed prior at any budget meeting. He feels that numbers should have been discussed amongst the committee and agreed upon by a majority. Ken apologized for any confusion his email may have caused as that message was his personal opinion only. Chair Nadeau noted "We've never had a number to give to the school." Josh stated his belief that the point of the budget committee should be to come up with the numbers as a committee, not as individuals. Jodie noted that having two numbers at district meeting doesn't serve anyone well. She would like to know of any number the budget committee has in mind before the budget hearing so she can get the needed forms ready in a timely manner. Dennis stated that seeing the monthly financials should help the committee meet

Jodie's request. Steve agreed to having a number by the public hearing. Ken noted that meeting before the hearing to determine any final number may require an earlier start in the season. He emphasized that everyone needs to get their questions out on the table and not wait until the last minute. Other committee members agreed with Josh that the numbers presented at the hearing lacked a sound foundation. Richard restated his belief that monthly financials would help with the issue being discussed. Dennis agreed that everyone should feel comfortable speaking up.

Jodie also explained moving forward it would be beneficial to have one budgeted number for the public to vote on not two, the committee agreed.

K. Howe thanked Jodie for the budget books and the breakdown of line item, grants, and general fund.

Selectman Johnson explained having monthly financials, starting to meet quarterly starting in August will be very beneficial.

Chair Nadeau explained the next meeting will be posted for mid-August, school and town will email financials monthly to the committee.

K Howe made a motion to continue with the current slate of officers for this coming year.

A. Duso seconded.

Discussion: Sean mentioned he would be willing to serve as secretary. Since Janice was not present it was felt that she should be given right of first refusal. Sean agreed.

Officers will be:

Dennis Nadeau -Chairman

Ken Howe – Vice Chair

Janice Nichols- Secretary

If Janice declines the position, the committee would be happy to have Sean serve as secretary.

Next meeting will take place mid-August. Exact date: TBD

April will send financials monthly. The budget committee will meet quarterly.

K. Howe brought up the trash pick-up contract for the town. He believes the town would save money by looking at alternate trash pick-up option. Richard stated that every time the issue has been put before the town the voters opted to keep our current method of trash collection by an overwhelming majority. He is not opposed to putting the question on a warrant and letting the voters decide.

Goals: School and Town can send monthly financials reports in a digital version; summaries to include revenue, grant, expense; budget committee will begin to meet monthly up until the

budget season; enrollment numbers moving forward everyone will use figures as of October 1, so all on the same page because the number changes daily.

S. Diorio motioned to adjourn at 7:10

K. Howe seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathryn Lynch

Draft of minutes until signed and approved.