

HOOKSETT SCHOOL BOARD MEETING – October 26, 2021

Approved

HOOKSETT SCHOOL BOARD BUDGET WORKSHOP MINUTES TUESDAY, October 26, 2021-5:00 pm David R. Cowley Middle School Media Center

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Martakos called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm

ATTENDANCE

Greg Martakos, Chair, Jill Godbout, Wayne Goertel, Jason Hyde, Lindsey Laliberte, Jim Sullivan, and Amy Tremblay
Superintendent William Rearick, Assistant Superintendent Marge Polak, Business Administrator, Amy Ransom, and Principals and Directors

Chair Martakos stated that there was a request for public input. Per the procedures, it requires a unanimous vote of the Board to allow.

Vote 6:1 (A. Tremblay) request fails.

BUDGET REVIEW

J. Hyde motioned to reduce line 31231000000-5810 by \$5347. Seconded by W. Goertel.

J. Hyde stated based on items read and information from the NHSBA and they claim they don't use public funds to lobbying purposes; they do. Once we give it to them, they are no longer public funds. That is how they justify that. In my experience, they tend to lobby for things that are not in the interest of the school board but other people's interest. We have our own attorney therefore we don't have to rely on their attorneys. With regard to policies, there are all kinds of policies on the books. We have a policy committee and attorneys to review those if necessary. The NHSBA is a subset of the the National SBA. The only publication on the NHSBA website is a book called "How To Be a Better Board Member" which was published by the National SBA. We should not be spending taxpayer dollar on an organization that is willing to send a letter to the Attorney General of United States requesting the FBI come after folks who disagree with us. I say that because it isn't right for the Federal Government to attempt to put a chilling effect on the citizens of this town if they want to come and give us feedback. There are folks of a certain political bent in the oval office now. But in the future it will someone else. I don't want anybody in the Federal Government to have that power. I don't want our money to go to an organization that thinks it's ok for that to happen; actually requests that it happens. That's the kind of thing you see in countries I don't want to live in.

W. Goertel stated that when he attended the Delegate Assembly there was a resolution by one of the member districts to split out lobbying money from non-lobbying money. The NHSB is

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lobbying for a small group of the districts. There was a situation last year with some Budget Legislation that the NHSBA did not act on any behalf of resolutions on their books; testifying against it therefore is in support of removing this from the Hooksett budget.

A. Tremblay spoke in support of the NHSBA and the action of the NHSBA mention by Mr. Hyde and they sent a letter to the School Boards stating they were not in support of the action of the National SBA. With any organizations there will be things that you don't agree with and this is a valuable resource. This is \$6000 which is pennies in the budget. This isn't a big deal to stay in.

J. Godbout asked how many districts are not members of the NSBA?

W. Goertel stated that there are 288 districts in NH and half of them are not members with 141 members and 50 of those attended the delegation.

L. Laliberte feels there are some benefits and to remove Hooksett from the organization could be more harmful than good and would take away any voice that the district has.

J. Sullivan asked beyond policies, what direct assistance do they provide?

W. Rearick stated the primary service is the policies by monitoring legislation at the State and National level and offer draft policies for districts to remain in compliance. Hooksett uses their own legal services and does not utilize the legal services of the NHSBA.

Roll Call Vote

<i>J. Sullivan</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>W. Goertel</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>J. Godbout</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>L. Laliberte</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>A. Tremblay</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>J. Hyde</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>G. Martakos</i>	<i>No</i>

Vote 2:5 motion fails

W. Goertel would like to get to a smaller default budget with 70% of the budget being staff. There is a one million dollar increase with a bubble class; the K-8 is smaller. As we reduce our student body there is a chance to reduce our staff. The Kindergarten pilot has served it's purpose. We should make a decision as to whether we are a full day or half day kindergarten. I would like to remove the pilot from the default and then take those adjustments and put 7 people in the proposed budget for full day kindergarten.

W. Rearick: If we used 5 of the retirements and take it out it gets us to 3.8 but no additional funds for the 7 teachers. To fully staff kindergarten we need 3.5 more teachers. We need to fill at

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least 3 of the retired positions. My experience is to lower staffing if you don't have the student population. I have never tried to lower the number and add programs.

Special Ed costs are required by law and it is difficult to budget 18 months in advance on the Special Ed money. I believe in using actuals and the last two years have been difficult because of COVID.

J. Hyde: There is still elements of the pilot in the default. With regard to Special Ed, if you look at trends in 2017 we underspent by \$361,000; 2018 underspent by \$874,000; 2019 underspent by \$786,000; 2020 underspent by \$339,000; 2021 underspent by \$406,000. All said, over 5 years we have underspent that one budget by \$2.8 million. We have never overspent that budget by more than we have in our emergency fund. There is room in the default budget and the proposed budget. There is room to give voters a choice. The default would be no pilot and no all day kindergarten and the proposed is with all day kindergarten.

A. Ransom stated that the trend by percentage is going down since she and Mr. Rearick have been here. The Special Ed Trust Fund is only for those new students that move in. Those funds are not available.

W. Rearick stated there are 145 students in grade 1 which is 10-15 more than normal. In accounting for all day Kindergarten, there are two assumptions; if we went to all day Kindergarten we would have 145 students and carried them forward to 2nd grade. The reduction is at Memorial of 3 teachers. At Cawley, if you take reductions it would upset the teams. This is a projection of 7 sections of Kindergarten with 20 students in a class.

L. Laliberte asked if we were not replacing an ALPS teacher, would we take a step back?

W. Rearick stated this is a step back but with a 6% increase in default and the projected enrollments in 3-8 it is difficult to justify the full compliment of teachers we had, however the decision is up to this Board.

J. Godbout asked if there were any cost savings in doing 3 full day sessions rather than all full day sessions.

W. Rearick stated that the only model that was looked at was all or none. There would be a cost savings in doing only 3 in the savings in teachers.

J. Hyde asked if the default budget included all the teachers that have retired?

W. Rearick: We are proposing the current staff.

J. Hyde: There are 4 positions that are in the default and maybe we should remove that from default and put everything in the proposed budget. That would be a choice for all in.

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The Board entered into a discussion regarding the legislation regarding the retainage of 2.5% of the fund balance.

L. Laliberte motioned to move forward with full day Kindergarten and reassigning retirements to staff the program. Seconded by W. Goertel.

W. Goertel: This is regarding the proposed budget and not the default. This is to reassign the staff and not to increase.

J. Sullivan: We currently have 3.5 kindergarten teachers. We need 7 full time.

W. Rearick: You will still need 4 of the retirees positions to replace staff.

J. Sullivan: The reassignment vote is today Memorial has 7 sections in each grade and there would be 6?

W. Rearick: You are only voting on a model. We could move staff as needed.

A. Tremblay: I am in support of full day kindergarten but not at a cost of reducing other teachers which have direct contact with students.

W. Rearick: If the motion passes and I'm not sure we will move the default number. We have a declining enrollment 3-8. My experience is not to expand with a 6% increase. We have had less of an increase in the past and the budget failed.

J. Hyde: I would support this because it is in the current budget and we are reassigning it. I understand Amy's point but we have to compromise. We can still reduce the default and give the voters the choice. Reduce the default by the teachers we are not going to replace.

J. Godbout: I could find the middle ground and not replace the classroom teachers and reassign but I'm not in favor of not replacing the reading teacher and the ALPS. As much as I want all day kindergarten, I, in good faith, cannot support not having a reading specialist.

L. Laliberte: If we move forward with this motion, we are moving forward with full day kindergarten.

W. Rearick: We are locking ourselves into the all day kindergarten.

L. Laliberte: I feel that the community supports all day kindergarten. If we don't do this we will come out without our Kindergarten program, down our reading specialist and down the ALPS teacher.

A. Ransom: This motion is to reassign 4 teachers to kindergarten and would have no impact on the budget. It would not go up or down.

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J. Hyde moved to amend the motion so that all day kindergarten be included in the 2022-23 proposed budget and not included in the default budget. Seconded by W. Goertel.

J. Hyde stated that the reason for the amendment is to give the option to the voters to either reduced staff or have all day kindergarten. This is to let the town decide.

L. Laliberte: My fear is that we would end up without the kindergarten and no reading or ALPS teacher. For that reason, I would not support the amendment.

J. Sullivan: Since SB2, this Board and the Municipal Board has not voted themselves to determine what was in default. It is based on the requirements of the Statute. It has always been determined by the law. If the proposed budgets fails, we would have to make up \$349,000.

W. Rearick: The number Jim referenced to is the entire package of the teachers and benefits.

Roll Call Vote on amendment

<i>J. Sullivan</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>W. Goertel</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>J. Godbout</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>L. Laliberte</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>A. Tremblay</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>J. Hyde</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>G. Martakos</i>	<i>No</i>

Vote 2:5 amendment fails

Roll Call Vote on original motion

<i>J. Sullivan</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>W. Goertel</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>J. Godbout</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>L. Laliberte</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>A. Tremblay</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>J. Hyde</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>G. Martakos</i>	<i>Yes</i>

Vote 3:4 motion failed

W. Rearick: In the current proposed budget is new requests; 1.5 full time equivalent. One is to expand, so we would have 2 full time teachers and the .5 is to cover the person we had to hire this year due to enrollment. That is not in the default; that is in addition. That is something the Board has to take on with the final number.

W. Goertel: I did not vote for the motion because it is rolled into the default. I do support the all day kindergarten because with the lottery you potentially as a taxpayer paying for all day kindergarten as well as private kindergarten. I would support all half day.

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A. Tremblay: I would rather some kids get it than no one get it and build it into future budgets.

J. Hyde motioned to adopt the changes to the default budget as reflected on the handout (A. Ransom) to reduce the default budget \$799,478. Seconded by W. Goertel.

J. Hyde: This will offer voters a choice. This is a default budget. This is reduced staff and save the taxes or do we want to have everything.

W. Goertel: We are up \$900,000 for high school, it would seem responsible to reduce that for the K-8 budget.

W. Goertel moved to amend the motion to leave two positions (Reading Specialist and ALPS) in the default budget. Seconded by J. Godbout.

L. Laliberte: Most of your voters don't know what they are voting about. They are not going to understand what is happening. I wish it were different but unfortunately that is how it is. You want to give them a choice but I don't think they know what their option is. They are just looking at the dollar amount.

J. Hyde: Our meetings are public; the deliberative session is public. We have the opportunity to talk to people in town. We have the ability to explain that to people. I understand that this Board hasn't necessarily in the past done a great job of doing that but we know that and are conscious of that and can do something about it. We can make the case for what we want to do. Some taxpayers just look at the numbers which is understandable given the economic climate.

W. Rearick: For any budget to pass we need the budget committee's buy in. Without it, it stands little chance to pass. Voters are not as informed as we would like them to be.

What is in the default is more important. If all day Kindergarten had passed, it would be easier for voters to understand. We need both bodies on the same page to get whatever the number is.

Vote on amendment

J. Hyde ***Yes***

A. Tremblay ***No***

L. Laliberte ***Yes***

J. Godbout ***Yes***

W. Goertel ***Yes***

J. Sullivan ***No***

G. Martakos ***Yes***

Vote 5:2 amendment carries

Vote on amended motion

J. Sullivan ***No***

W. Goertel ***Yes***

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J. Godbout *Yes*
L. Laliberte *Yes*
A. Tremblay *No*
J. Hyde *Yes*
G. Martakos *Yes*
Vote 5:2 motion carries

W. Goertel motioned to reconsider the motion on full day kindergarten. Seconded by J. Godbout.

W. Goertel: I was opposed to the full day kindergarten without reducing the default. Now that we have reduced default, we are giving the voters a choice.

Vote on motion to reconsider

J. Sullivan *No*
W. Goertel *Yes*
J. Godbout *Yes*
L. Laliberte *Yes*
A. Tremblay *Yes*
J. Hyde *Yes*
G. Martakos *Yes*

Vote 6:1 motion carries to reconsider

If approved, all day Kindergarten would be available; take 4 teaching positions and roll them into the propose \$37,910,618. The difference between the default and operating is about \$994,000.

Vote motion to reassign staff to all day kindergarten(reassigning 4 positions)

J. Sullivan *No*
W. Goertel *Yes*
J. Godbout *Yes*
L. Laliberte *Yes*
A. Tremblay *Yes*
J. Hyde *Yes*
G. Martakos *Yes*

Vote 6:1 motion carries

L. Laliberte motioned to reconsider the motion to reassign teachers to kindergarten. Seconded by W. Geortel.

L. Laliberte: After thinking about this, we changed the default budget; if that passes, we will have to go back to half day kindergarten. If the proposed budget doesn't pass we can't do anything with kindergarten. I think we should have the default budget, the proposed budget and the plan for full day kindergarten.

J. Sullivan stated that you are looking for a warrant article for the all day kindergarten staff.

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L. Laliberte stated that way the voters know what they are voting for.

A. Ransom: This would be just to take out the 3 additional Kindergarten teachers. You would leave in the 1.5 original. She is talking about taking out the ones that were just added, the \$570,391. Do a warrant for the additional and make it all k. If the proposed fails you lose everything. If you leave it as it is now, and the budget fails, you can still hire a teacher. If the warrant article fails, you cannot hire those kindergarten teachers, no means no.

L. Laliberte: I want people to know if you vote the proposed budget, you get everything but if you vote default you go back to all half day kindergarten.

Vote to reconsider motion for all kindergarten(reassigning 4 positions)

J. Sullivan ***Yes***

W. Goertel ***No***

J. Godbout ***No***

L. Laliberte ***Yes***

A. Tremblay ***Yes***

J. Hyde ***No***

G. Martakos ***Yes***

Vote 4:3 motion to reconsider carries

L. Laliberte stated she just wants to be clear and transparent and I don't like the idea of going backwards. With the world and town situation it will not pass and we will go backwards.

A. Ransom stated now it is to put teachers in to expand Kindergarten.

Vote on motion to reassigned teachers to Kindergarten.

J. Sullivan ***No***

W. Goertel ***Yes***

J. Godbout ***Yes***

L. Laliberte ***Yes***

A. Tremblay ***Yes***

J. Hyde ***Yes***

G. Martakos ***Yes***

Vote 6:1 motion carried

J. Hyde motioned to reduce the proposed operating budget function 1200 Special Education by \$300,000 which would make that function \$7,474,798. Seconded by W. Goertel.

J. Hyde stated that budget is underspent every year by over \$300,000. I only went back 5 years but it goes back more than 10 years and is consistently underspent.

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W. Goertel stated that the comments earlier by staff regarding trending are compelling. We do have the town contingency fund for unexpected cases. I do think we need to do something but I'm not sure this is where we make the cuts.

A. Tremblay asked where unspent money goes?

A. Ransom stated that it go back to offset taxes.

A. Tremblay stated that if goes back to the taxpayer anyway, I'm not in favor of cutting this.

G. Martakos stated that he doesn't necessarily support this cut but thinks the Board should start putting money in a Special Ed reserve.

J. Hyde: This is just 1% and we have the money. Every year we underspend by a million dollars. This would give the Budget Committee more confidence in our budget.

Roll Call Vote

<i>J. Sullivan</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>W. Goertel</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>J. Godbout</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>L. Laliberte</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>A. Tremblay</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>J. Hyde</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>G. Martakos</i>	<i>No</i>

Vote 1:6 motion fails

W. Goertel motioned to accept the budgets as amended. Seconded by A. Tremblay

<i>J. Sullivan</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>W. Goertel</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>J. Godbout</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>L. Laliberte</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>A. Tremblay</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>J. Hyde</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>G. Martakos</i>	<i>Yes</i>

Vote 5:2 motion carried

ADJOURNMENT

W. Goertel motioned to adjourn. Seconded by L. Laliberte

Vote unanimously in favor

Respectfully submitted,