

# Hooksett School Board

## Chair's Report

November, 2023



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### Hooksett School District Operating Budget for 2024-25

On November 7, the Hooksett School Board (HSB) proposed a \$41,625,359 operating budget for the upcoming fiscal year. The Board appreciates the considerable work by our school administration and staff in diligently planning for next year. Budgeting continues to be complicated by post-pandemic challenges finding certain staff and materials, and the concerning inflationary economic environment.

Next year's "default budget" is the current (2023-24) operating budget plus contractual obligations, and is \$40,933,923. For reference, the current school operating budget approved by voters in March, 2023 was \$38,442,000 (total gross appropriation including grants and food services). The "proposed budget" includes some additional requests of taxpayers beyond the default. Both budgets have increased from the current year, but are still incomplete pending some final external estimates.

The larger contractual obligations increasing the default budget include:

1. Staff contracts approved by voters in March. The \$38.4 million operating budget on the ballot did not include any increases for salary, retirement contribution, or benefits for teaching staff, nor the contract adjustment for support staff, as those were separate warrant articles.
  - a. The HEA (teacher) contract had estimated cost increases of \$414,352 for 2023-24, and \$427,221 for 2024-25.
  - b. The HESPA (support staff) contract was modified to increase hourly rates and benefits at a cost of \$345,482.
  - c. These effectively increased the current (2023-24) budget by \$760,000 (to \$39.2 million), and then the 2024-25 budget by \$1.2 million.
  - d. Note that a new HESPA contract is under negotiation, so the proposed budget for next year doesn't include proposed changes there, which will be a separate warrant article.
2. Special education costs, both in number of students qualifying for services and cost of providing services. Special education plans are legal obligations, increasing nearly \$1 million.
3. High School tuition
4. Health insurance increases
5. Transportation increases
6. Teacher retirement bonus for three retiring teachers
7. Competitive salary adjustments for certain administrative staff

Notable requests for the proposed budget include

1. Two staff positions; one current position no longer funded by grants, and a new teaching position at Hooksett Memorial School
2. Student information access fees, currently paid from grant funding which will expire
3. Scheduled building maintenance
4. Repairs to HVAC units at two schools
5. Accounting for increased cost of supplies

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For the final accounting action closing last year's operating budget, the Hooksett School Board voted to retain \$200,000 from fund balance (unspent budget), returning the remaining \$737,000 to taxpayers.

Hooksett school district budget materials are available for your review online at:

<https://hooksettschoolboard.sau15.net/documents-reports>

### Capital Improvement Projects

The Board proposed a \$13,342,120 maintenance project for significant work at all three schools, notably two roof replacements, structural improvements, replacement ventilation units, and replacement boilers. This is proposed as a 15 year lease with a roughly estimated \$1.3 yearly payment, ultimately based on current financing rates should the warrant be approved by voters. It should be noted that municipal borrowing rates are lower than consumer or commercial rates because they are tax-exempt.

The last major capital improvement project in the Hooksett School District was for the construction of David R. Cawley Middle School and significant renovations at Hooksett Memorial School over twenty years ago. A large amount of equipment is thus reaching end of forecast operational life at the same time. More details are available in the Communications Committee report in last month's Board packet.

Ultimately, the project - if approved by voters - wouldn't start in earnest until summer of 2025. Hooksett Memorial is most pressingly in need of repairs and would be worked on first.

### Stay in Touch Online

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<https://hooksettschoolboard.sau15.net>

<https://facebook.com/hooksett.school.board/>

Respectfully submitted,

Wayne Goertel

Hooksett School Board Chair

*The mission of the Hooksett School District is to develop a community of learners who are intellectually curious, resourceful, and respectful of self and others. Academic achievement, through constantly improving standards, is the District's highest priority.*