

HOOKSETT SCHOOL BOARD MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, April 10, 2024 6:00 pm.
David R. Cawley Middle School Media Center

Approved

CALL TO ORDER / PLEDGE of ALLEGIANCE

Wayne Goertel, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Those in attendance were Board members Jillian Godbout, Jason Hyde, Amy Tremblay, Vanessa Gelinias, Lynn Baker, and Jim Sullivan. The Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, Interim Business Administrator, Principals and staff were also in attendance.

Wayne Goertel led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

PROOF OF POSTING

Wayne Goertel provided proof of posting.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE BOARD

No participation.

OLD BUSINESS

2023/2024 Budget Discussion

Wayne Goertel invited Interim Business Administrator, Karen Lessard to address the Board and public with where we are financially for the current year, and for the upcoming year. Karen stated that there will be a shortfall for the current year. She said things changes on a daily bases due to the fluctuation in purchase orders being created and those being closed. She said some of this can be funded with the Contingency and Construction Funds. She said ERate grants can be used for technology purchases. She reminded the Board that no money will be set aside for the trust funds next year because of the way the warrant article was written. Karen summarized a Powerpoint she presented and said a previous motion made by the Board was for an incorrect amount which has since been identified and fixed and asked the Board to re-make a motion for the correct amount.

2024/2025 Budget Discussion

Karen Lessard then spoke to the 2024/2025 default budget, saying that if the Board wanted to add items requested in the proposed budget, other items in the default would have to be cut. Karen explained the remaining shortfall for the 2024/2025 budget which included homeless transportation, paraprofessional salaries. The default budget only included 10 at each building as opposed to 15 at both Underhill and Memorial as requested, resulting in a shortage of 10 paras.

Jillian Godbout asked how we could save money for busing. Karen said \$80,000 worth of credits have already been taken against bus invoices so far and more are expected.

When asked if he could push some things off until a later date, Maintenance Director Dean Farmer said he would do what he could with whatever the Board gave him, but that the district will be receiving an invoice for a recent generator issue at Memorial.

Motion by Jillian Godbout, seconded by Jim Sullivan, to clarify the correct amount we are going to move into the maintenance line for building repairs in the amount of \$212,644. A roll call vote was taken. With all in favor, the motion carried.

Motion by Wayne Goertel, seconded by Jillian Godbout, to re-institute the bus pass program for high school transportation to not more than \$200 per student per term starting next year. Karen Lessard clarified that this would create revenue and won't help with the budget issue for next year. Jonah Schulte asked what the current cost per student for busing is, to which Wayne Goertel said it was a complicated question with no clear answer. With Amy Tremblay voting no, all others in favor, the motion carried.

Considerable discussion ensued relative to bus ridership, increasing communication to parents, specifically about the bus passes, how best to make cuts and clarification of the different grade level Reading Specialists and the benefits of each.

Motion by Wayne Goertel, seconded by Jillian Godbout to reconfigure the 6th grade team to a 3-person team for a savings of \$74,054. Meg Largy, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment said the district would save money by reallocation as opposed to laying off staff. Jim Sullivan said they must be careful of reassigning positions because of certifications. Amy Tremblay said the Board is looking at cuts causing the least amount of damage. Jillian Godbout said the Superintendent said he did not want to cut staff, but the Board has to come up with \$600,000. Jonah Schulte felt that there were other special education options or alternatives to research to look at solutions. Lynn Baker said by law, you cannot cut special education services. Principal Matt Benson

said the middle school model is successful; once you give up a position, you rarely get it back. Meg Largy said it is not ideal, but that none of this is ideal. Amy Tremblay said shaking up the model of Cawley was not in the best interest of the students. She said cuts of least harm would be of a Reading Specialist position and a Reading Teacher Assistant. These would hurt, but less so than cutting a classroom teacher.

Motion by Amy Tremblay, seconded by Jonah Schulte, to table the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

Principal Ben Loi said it's been a hard year and the administration can review line by line to find more ways to cut. Brad Largy said they need to see a bigger picture. Jim Sullivan said to refer to the initial list of proposals. Addressing Jonah Schulte's comments, Director of Student Services, Chris Osborne said the district has never had the number of homeless students as it does now and the reasons for this are unknown. She said getting multiple bids with multiple vendors is practice. It is supply and demand and this year the district has been operating short-staffed. Chris assured the Board that her department does due diligence and uses cost-effective measures whenever possible.

Discussion ensued about not filling retiree positions, restructuring grade-levels. Lynn Baker said to leave classroom teachers alone, Jonah Schulte said look at other places than teachers to restructure. Wayne Goertel said all staff is critical, and Vanessa Gelinias felt that it seems like this is catch-up and the Board doesn't have all the information it needs. She said she understands that some positions must be cut and that they should go line by line again to find cuts.

The Board took a break at 7:30 p.m. and returned at 7:45 p.m.

Motion by Lynn Baker, seconded by Amy Tremblay, to eliminate the Director of Math, Accountability and Assessment position for the 2024/2025 school year. Lynn said we have no choice about cutting personnel; this cut is not directly affecting the students, but will affect the teachers. Amy Tremblay said this is an administrative position. Every staff member has an impact on students, but there is a difference between those staff members who have face-to-face interactions with students; this allows for cost savings. Jillian Godbout said this is a hard decision and a step backward for the district but there are team leaders and mentors. Some of the responsibilities will have to shift to others. Meg Largy described the various responsibilities that are performed by this position, to which Amy Tremblay said she was disturbed to hear all the other responsibility, and that one person seems to have 'the keys to the kingdom' on student information systems.

A vote on the motion was taken. With Wayne Goertel voting no, all others in favor, the motion carried.

Motion by Amy Tremblay, seconded by Jonah Schulte, to eliminate the Reading Specialist position at Cawley. Amy said this is in light of information gathered from building administrators, stating that others could absorb those responsibilities. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.

Vanessa Gelinias suggested that, instead of eliminating the Media Assistant position, the department find \$30,000 in their budget to cut. Media Director, Justine Thain said she could reduce purchases throughout the three schools to come up with that.

Motion by Vanessa Gelinias, seconded by Amy Tremblay to reduce \$30,000 from the Educational Media Service (2220 account). A roll call vote was taken. With all in favor, the motion carried unanimously.

More discussion ensued related to the reading supports team at Underhill. Principal Loi said there are currently two, but there has been only one in the past. He said the literacy team provides crucial intervention for K-2 students. He said building reading foundations at an early age, and eliminating this position at Underhill would mean a 50% decrease in service. Jonah Schulte asked if this support wasn't in place would more students be referred for special education services. Mr. Loi said there has been a definite correlation between not having early reading support intervention and special education referrals.

Principal Benson said he could cut the Project Safeguard line as we no longer go to SNHU where most of the cost was for, and the graduation line, as it has moved back to Cawley from having it at Fisher Cats Stadium from the 2024/2025 budget.

Motion by Wayne Goertel, seconded by Jillian Godbout, to reduce the Cawley 'support services-Cawley, other professional services' line from \$9,615 to zero. A roll call vote was taken. With all in favor, the motion carried.

Motion by Amy Tremblay, seconded by Wayne Goertel, to eliminate \$4,000 for 8th grade graduation costs. A roll call vote was taken.

Amy Tremblay asked the number of students impacted by the ALPS program, to which Matt Benson said ALPs is no longer for few students and is no longer exclusive.

Discussions ensued relative to how reduction of teachers' affects class size. Ben Loi stated it would be a definite impact and Brad Largy said the impact would be catastrophic for classes to increase to 26 students per class.

Amy Tremblay thanked administrators saying it was honorable of them to fight to keep staff.

Chris Osborne said she just found out about a change in placement that affects this year and next.

Motion by Jillian Godbout, seconded by Jonah Schulte, to reduce the special education tuition line by \$81,600. A roll call vote was taken. With all in favor, the motion carried unanimously. Considerable discussion ensued relative to reducing and consolidating bus routes. Amy Tremblay said longer bus rides will be an inconvenience for parents, but that you would trade bus routes for staff any day. Matt Benson said the Superintendent and principals designed the bus routes this year and can do it again for next. Ben Loi said looking at the budget, he can cut \$24,000. Jonah Schulte asked how that could be done tonight, when the Board has been looking at this for a while.

After tallying up cuts made tonight, Jillian Godbout asked administrators if they could find \$190,000 so that there will be no more reductions to staff, so that the Board might put teachers minds at ease and approve their 2024/2025 nominations this evening. Some discussion ensued. Mr. Benson and Mr. Loi felt it could be done. Mr. Largy said he would make every effort, but expressed trepidation that it could be done.

At 9:05 p.m. to Board took a break and returned at 9:20 p.m.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE BOARD

Resident Sarah Mackey, Joanne Drive, thanked the Board for doing the impossible tonight. Consider fundraising and volunteering for clubs and athletics. ALPS is a big ticket item.

Resident Maureen McDonald, Springwood Drive appreciates keeping classroom teachers. Consider cutting ALPS if they have to do more.

PERSONNEL

Staff Nominations

Motion by Jillian Godbout, seconded by Jim Sullivan, to approve the staff list for 2024/2025 with updates made at tonight's meeting. A roll call vote was taken. With all in favor, the revised staff nominations carried unanimously.

Administrator Nominations

Motion by Jim Sullivan, seconded by Amy Tremblay, to approve the administrator nominations with updates made at tonight's meeting. A roll call vote was taken. With all in favor, the revised administrator nomination carried unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Jillian Godbout, seconded by Amy Tremblay, to adjourn the meeting at 9:26 p.m., and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca McCarthy
School Board Recorder

The Hooksett School Board will meet on Tuesday, April 16, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. at the David R. Cawley Middle School Media Center.