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## School Board Proposed 2026-27 Operating Budget

The Hooksett School Board had two budget-focused meetings on Oct 28 and Nov 4 to discuss and amend next year's operating budgets, following rigorous budget preparation by our administrative team.

There are two school district budgets submitted to the Budget Committee, and subsequently to the town residents at the Town Deliberative Session and March election: a “**default budget**”, which is the prior approved operating budget plus any contractual obligations (such as health insurance increases, staff contract salary increases, or changes in special education), and a “**proposed budget**”, which typically has additional requests of taxpayers.

In March 2025, voters selected the default operating budget of \$43,959,116 over the proposed budget of \$44,850,349 on ballot for the 2025-2026 school year, which was the “general fund” for school operations plus a federal/state fund budget of \$550,000 and a food service budget of \$860,000. **The default operating budget for 2026-27 is \$45,355,597**, a \$1,396,481 or 3.18% increase from our current budget. The largest increases come from:

- Contractual increases for staff as specified in the HESPA (support) staff contract, plus a conversion of some grant and contract staff to direct-employed, for \$429k - partially offset by reductions in contract accounting lines
- Increases to employee insurance costs, notably a 7.7% increase for health from SchoolCare (not including the “surcharge” surprise) of \$260k plus increased usage for a total of \$460k
- Transportation (regular and special ed busing) increase of \$141k
- High School Tuition. Final tuition costs from Pinkerton Academy are expected next week, so we have used a 5% placeholder for tuition/student. However, HS sees a decrease due to a large bubble class graduating last year, so currently we estimate a \$239k HS increase or 2.73%.

The 2026-7 default budget does not include any teaching staff compensation increases as the current HEA contract ends June 30, 2026. A future contract will be a separate warrant article for approval by town voters.

**The proposed operating budget for 2026-27** is built on top of this default operating budget. At our Nov 4 meeting, the Board approved a proposed general fund operating budget of \$480,000 more than the default budget. This request was for restoring three teaching positions removed two years ago, and additional maintenance funding to address increased expenses for repairs to aging building infrastructure. Adjusting for updated insurance costs, we budget \$351k for 3 teaching positions (salary, 19% employer pension contribution, health & dental insurance, etc.) and \$120k for maintenance.

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Combined with a \$20k projected food services increase (outside the general fund), **this brings a total proposed operating budget of \$45,847,055.**

These budget totals here are different than those cited at our last meeting, which reflects removing a grant-funded position, adjusting health insurance down from our 16% placeholder to 7.7%, and adding the two lines (grants, food services) outside the general fund total.

If you would like more information, budget resources are available online at <https://hooksettschoolboard.sau15.net> under Documents & Reports.

The budgets have moved on to the Budget Committee for their review and possible amendment.

Again, I'd like to thank our administrative team for assembling the budgets the Board considered, always a challenging endeavor given these are forecasts for services 9-21 months in the future.

## School Facilities Update

Our Facilities committee has been working diligently to prepare an updated proposal to address needed building maintenance work for the School Board to consider at the November 18th meeting. This proposal differs from last year's focus solely on Hooksett Memorial School, in that it also will address some "Priority 1" issues at David R. Cawley Middle School and Fred C. Underhill School. The scope of work proposed has a cost of \$7.25 million, following assessments by the Turner Group and Harvey Construction.

The Facilities Committee held two events for the public on October 20 and 29 to present findings and solicit community feedback. Thanks to everyone who was able to attend in person, or view the recorded presentation from the October 20<sup>th</sup> meeting.

## Stay in Touch Online

You can find the School Board online at:

<https://hooksettschoolboard.sau15.net>

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

Respectfully submitted,

Wayne Goertel

Hooksett School Board Chair