

## Mascenic School District Deliberative Session

January 31, 2015

Attendance: Chairman, Richard Wallace, Earl Somero, Vice Chairman, Jeff Salmonson, Tara Sousa, Jim Kingston, Ruthann Goguen, Superintendent, Dave Jack, MRI Business Consultant, Norm Makechnie, Attorney, Jeanne Cunningham, School Board Clerk.

Call to order 9:15 a.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Bob Romeril introduced himself as the Moderator for the School Board. Mr. Romeril did the housekeeping, letting everyone know where emergency exits were, and other items that needed to be said. He then introduced members of the School Board, and everyone on the stage. He introduced the Principals of the Mascenic schools and the Supervisors of the Checklist, Chairperson Ms. Nellie Huard and Mrs. Candice Fedders from Greenville, and Chairperson Mrs. Geraldine Nelson, Mrs. Marsha Ober and Mrs. Barbara Graham of New Ipswich.

The Moderator thanked the Townspeople for coming to the meeting and thanked the Police and Fire Departments, Town Boards, school staff and teachers, and the custodial staff. He also thanked the Audio/Video Specialist Mr. David Franz and the Mascenic students for all of their help and support.

Mr. Romeril asked for a motion on the floor to accept the points Mr. Romeril made to the audience. Motion was made and approved.

Mr. Mansfield asked to make a motion to reconsider the entire budget. There was much conversation to this request. Mr. Mansfield said that it was his understanding that if he made a motion to reconsider the budget in its entirety, then there would be no default budget. He was told that they can only work on budget items as they come.

Mr. Makechnie said that the only thing that he is aware of is to change the amount of the amount in question. If the budget number is amended at this meeting, then that is the number you will be voting on. Mr. Mansfield says that if he amends the entire budget, then it gets rid of the default budget. You will not be able to go to the default budget. The default budget will be out of play.

There was a back and forth discussion about this motion.

John Veaser asked for a Point of order. John commented that we have not even started the budget, so he can't make a motion that hasn't any value.

Mr. Romeril told Mr. Mansfield that they could talk after the meeting. Mr. Mansfield agreed.

Mr. Romeril made a motion to start the meeting with the rules that he put in motion. Seconded by Wendy Freeman. Motion passed.

Mr. Romeril said to please make sure you direct your discussion through the Moderator.

Art 1 Election of one school board member from New Ipswich.

Article 2, read by Richard Wallace proposed a School District Budget of 19,295,348. The default budget would be 19,048,560. The district budget is 4.74% over last year's budget. Approximately 3.56% of that amount is increases from the collective bargaining agreements. 1% of the 4.74% proposed increase involves other expenditures including discretionary funding to deliver enhanced services to our students.

Moderator said he would like to allow School Board Members to tell the audience how they got to this budget.

Chairman Wallace said they are going to run through the power point. This would be their process for today. We are here today to propose a budget to support our children. Chairman Wallace went through the highlights from the year.

Jim Kingston was next. Thank you all for being here. He talked about all the work that the Board and the townspeople put in to come to this budget. The School District is generally below in math and science. Federal government data. NH versus the US. We are way above the national average. If you look at us versus NH, we show as being below state average in some ways and above the state average in other ways. We are doing a good job educating your kids. Those numbers show us where to focus. Find the problems early and respond to those subjects. We have decreasing number of kids coming in. Through the year we tend to get more kids during the year rather than at the beginning of the year. 775,000 more to account for those 64 kids. There are statutes as to how many kids we can have in a classroom. We are below this, but that is a good thing for your children. We are doing a good job in that department.

Earl Somero talked about the executive summary proposed goals. We are here to educate the students of our district. We are now at a class size to teach properly and give the kids the attention that they need. We have a Superintendent who works tirelessly and she is a great asset to our district. Her number one job is to promote student learning. Mr. Somero discussed the schematic of budgets we have had in the past. We are working with a teacher contract which we voted on last year. We had teachers leaving because of more pay. We feel we are in a good position now and will be able to keep more good teachers.

The slide showed a breakdown of healthcare and why it changed, high speed internet

Jeff Salmonson discussed the cost center allocations. 64% salary and benefits.

I have heard a lot of comments on how the SAU has run amok. The SAU is only 4% of the whole budget. SAU includes salaries and contracts, bussing, debt service and grants. We have not

increased the staff or costs. We have remained static. We have deferred equipment and books, we are identifying costs for the people. In the past, you might not have seen these numbers. We want you to see them. We are showing you our fund balance, so that we can be open with the public.

Tara Sousa spoke about the expenditure side and revenue side. We are anticipating decreasing revenues. We anticipate a loss in revenue over the next year. When we build a budget, we look at all the revenues to begin with. This presentation will be available on line. In revising Title 1, we are receiving more money from the state which is allowing us to have a better program.

Our default budget is a 3.42% increase over last years. The increase is because of salaries, and health benefits. Special education is in the default budget. We run a very lean Special Ed budget.

Moderator. At this time I would like anyone who wants to, to ask questions.

Benti Hoiska from New Ipswich commented that last December we discovered that our tax bills increased significantly. I am planning to propose a cut to the budget. What are the taxpayers supposed to do? It is not up to the citizens to propose a school budget, which is the job of the School Board and administrators. When the final budget is approved, then they can work with that. Another comment is that it is for the kids. Express good intentions. It is used as a tactic to make the citizens look bad. It is intended to shut down conversation. We should continue to improve education, but should also try and get expenses under control.

I would like to propose my amendment now. If the budget stays the way that it is now, next year our tax bills will be huge.

*I move that article 2 be amended so that the proposed operating budget figure of 19,295,348 be replaced by the figure of 17,665,000. The motion was seconded by Woody Mieszner.*

Woody Mieszner stated that he has been here in New Ipswich for 20 years and has always supported the school budget in the past, but I cannot support this \$19 million budget. I looked at the budgets from 2011 to now. There has been an 80% increase since 2011. The town now has to borrow money to pay our obligations. At some point, we will have to seize the tax liens and sell these homes from under people. Students should become proficient in reading writing and arithmetic. Students can be successful in things without all the extra classes that are being offered.

Brian Somero from New Ipswich commented that he would like to request a secret ballot on the amendment to Article 2. He brought his paper for the request to the Moderator.

Mr. Romeril stated that there would be a secret ballot to vote on the amendment.

Susan Williams from New Ipswich stated that she has been an educator for many years at the college level. She wondered if they have gotten back the report from the NEASC evaluators and if so, what did they have to say.

Superintendent Goguen said that the school has received the preliminary report. At this time, she is not able to comment on the report. When it is finalized, the report will become public.

Ms. Williams asked about the slide that showed the reduced revenues. Can someone clarify what these lost revenues are?

David Jack spoke to the revenues and discussed the revenues that are being reduced. There are decreases that are driven by what we are receiving from the state.

Ms. Williams asked if there were any other unexpected expenses like a law suit. David Jack explained that law suits are usually covered by the teachers union or are covered in a line item expressly for legal.

Susan Williams then asked about the \$254K in missing money that she read about in the newspaper. How does it affect the bottom line?

Tara Sousa said that she understood where her question was coming from. The interest rate is an amount that will be reduced each year. We are receiving a reduction in building aid also.

Jim Coffey from New Ipswich, commented that he is not going to repeat anything that has already been said, but he concurs with what has been said. I just want to say that I see this as a challenge. There are things that we can do. Such as putting a cap on the budget and adopting a budget act at the next meeting. I see that there is going to be a huge amount of money we are going to be taxed on. I think a municipal budget act would be the way to go.

Wendy Freeman from New Ipswich commented that she appreciates the additional information that was given today. I think what you gave us was important information. I think we need to work hard to come to an acceptable budget. We are not going to look at all the line items and tell you where you are going wrong. I was looking for a commitment from the Board. I am disappointed that nothing was done.

Chairman Wallace commented that the Board did ask the Superintendent and Administrators to go back and look at the budget and felt that they worked very hard to come up with money to cut. It wasn't enough though to satisfy what you were looking for.

Corrine Joly of New Ipswich commented that she teaches at Mascenic and also lives in New Ipswich. I think that a \$2 million cut in our budget will be devastating to this school system. I love the schools and can't even imagine the devastation. I don't like our tax bills either, but the price of everything is going up. We really work hard to give our kids a good education. It definitely is about the kids.

Mark Mansfield from New Ipswich said he believes that there are places in this budget that are top heavy. But if we literally cut \$2 million from this budget, the teachers and the kids are the ones that are going to suffer. A just across the board slash is going to be painful and I am not sure that is the way to look out for the children in this town.

Mr. Krook from New Ipswich said that at the last elections, close to 50 people signed a petition to look into the expenditures of the school board. The school board denied that petition. I just wanted people to know that.

Brenda Woolcrest commented that a question was raised about a school survey that was conducted. The question was about the NEASC testing. I would like to know how much it costs. I don't understand why we can't get answers to it.

Superintendent Goguen said the entire process costs \$19 thousand and we are bound by the state that when we get this report it is a draft and we are not able to give out the information until it is finalized.

Superintendent Goguen said that the \$19,000 amount of money was from last year's budget and the proposed budget only has about 3 to 5K in it for the NEASC follow up.

Ms. Woolcrest asked again, how does it benefit our children?

Jim Kingston said that we have to go through an accreditation process and if we are not an accredited school they may not get into a good college.

The Moderator stated that along with the accreditation, people moving into town are going to look at the school system and if we are not accredited, they may decide to go to another town to find a house. A good school system is important to families.

Earl Somero stated that he would like to speak to the amendment. I know that we are all going through tough times, and as I look at the number that is being put before us, I am afraid that this is such a large number that our schools are going to be affected in such a bad way. I am respectful of the amendment, but I wanted to state my opinion and I think that it will be devastating to our school system to cut that large a number. I thought if someone were to come in with a 500k cut. That would be reasonable and something that we might be able to work with, but almost 200 million is just devastating.

Brian Somero said he would like to move the question. It was seconded and the motion passed.

A yes vote would lower the budget to \$17,665,000.

A no vote would leave us with the original budget number of \$19,295,348.

All those in favor of ending debate say Aye. Ayes win Secret ballot started at 10:31.

At 11:16 the meeting resumed.

Tara Sousa spoke to Article 3.

This is a step increase for all paraprofessionals, 6,924 for 2015/16 year. The Article is recommended by the School Board.

Tara Sousa said that she would like to move the article.

The Moderator stated that this article was moved because this is a contract article, it cannot be amended. It can only be voted up or down on the voting day.

Moderator read the article 4 – The article was about having a special meeting if the budget didn't pass.

Article 5, read by Jeff Salmonson. It is a Special Education Capital Reserve Fund. This is a fund for unanticipated special education costs. There is now 102,160 in the fund. The district is requesting an additional \$50,000 to add to it. One student alone could cost us up to \$200k. This amount is not additional tax monies beyond those appropriated in the budget article.

The Moderator gave the results of the secret ballot on the Amendment to Article 2. There was a total of 248 votes, 13 votes from Greenville, and 235 from New Ipswich.

164 yes votes, 84 no votes. The affirmative votes win.

Brian Somero said he wanted to restrict reconsideration for article 2. A second was made. There was a vote in the affirmative.

Article 6 was read by Jeff Salmonson. It was to put money into the School Repair and Maintenance Capital Reserve Fund No amount to be raised from taxation. Coming from unexpended funds.

No discussion.

Jeff Salmonson read Article 7, a vote to raise and appropriate up to \$35,000 for the Firefighter Program. Part of this program was initiated with the clause that we would have an EMT program for the school. We have until next year to add the EMT program or both programs will be lost.

Cherry Thomson spoke in favor of this article. She has had occasion to use the firefighters and EMT's in the last month. On each occasion, a car crash and a chimney fire. As a member of this community. I would like to make sure that we have qualified people and young people who can come to the rescue of its residents. We are lucky to have the group that we have and should be training our young people to be a part of those groups.

The question was asked about how many students take this class. There are 10 students in the program, one from this district and nine from other districts.

Eric Maxwell stood and said that he would like to point out that of those students that are out of town, they pay their own way. They pay into the school system.

Article 8 & 9, are housekeeping articles.

Chairman Wallace said he would like to thank everyone for coming out today. We push for more communication from the community. Several weeks ago, I was in Tucson. There was a story about a woman who lost her son. There are literally tons of bells hanging around Tucson and they created these coins which they give to people who have helped other people. I brought one of those coins home and would like to present it today. One person in particular asked some really great questions of the School Board. I would like to give this coin to Meryl Higgins and say thank you for all your support.

Motion to adjourn, voted in the affirmative. Meeting adjourned at 11:36.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanne Cunningham

School Board Clerk