

Sanborn Regional School District Budget Committee Meeting

September 10, 2015

APPROVED Meeting Minutes

Called to Order: 7:32 PM

ATTENDANCE:

PRESENT: Cheryl Gannon, Chair; Jim Doggett, Patty Stephan, Vice-Chair; Beth Scanlon, Barry Gluck, Ami Faria

School Board Rep. Nancy Ross (arrived 7:35 pm), Superintendent Brian Blake

ABSENT: Annie Collyer (Excused)

REVIEW AGENDA/ADDITIONS:

Ms. Stephan described a concern regarding overcrowding on her daughter's bus. Ms. Gannon questioned if that is an issue for the Budget Committee. Ms. Stephan will provide Dr. Blake with her concerns and he will investigate the issue.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

COMMITTEE COMMENT

Mr. Gluck indicated at the last meeting they decided that the unapproved minutes would not be posted on the SAU website but only at the SAU office. He has noticed the unapproved minutes on the website. Ms. Gannon will make sure that does not continue to happen.

MINUTES REVIEW

MOTION made by Mr. Doggett to accept the June 11, 2015 meeting minutes. Seconded by Ms. Scanlon.

The Committee reviewed the minutes and made several grammatical and clarification amendments

ABSTAIN: Nancy Ross and Beth Scanlon

VOTE: 5-2-0 Motion passes

SCHOOL BOARD REPORT

Ms. Ross informed the Committee the School Board has conducted work sessions. School Board members were each asked to bring forward three topics they want addressed in the budget and to categorize them. The topics were discussed. The categories were: technology; facilities; staffing; drug and alcohol abuse issues; teacher contract; custodial. The school board discussion was productive but they have not yet come to a conclusion.

The School Board had discussion on the retention of funds and the new legislation that was passed allowing them to return all, some, or none of the unexpended funds (\$250,000 of the \$1.1 million of the budget). She explained that \$849,000 was in Special Education.

Mr. Gluck is concerned with the public perception that we just didn't need the money.

Ms. Stephan explained \$181,000 was left in the general fund which represents strong fiscal management.

Ms. Faria asked what happens to the money the School Board decides not to retain.

Superintendent Blake explained the legislation that was passed. It allows towns to keep 2.5% of the assessment of the towns. However, the law is very specific in regards to what can be done with that money. The law is very guarded on how you can access and spend the money. The only two purposes the money is allowed to be used for are catastrophic emergencies in the District and permission is required from the Department of Education to access it and the other purpose would be to use the funds in future years to offset taxes. The Board can keep \$250,000 and return the remainder, or to use it to offset future tax rates.

Mr. Gluck questioned whether the money could be used toward the middle school roof.

Ms. Ross explained that even with catastrophic occurrences, we can't tap into that unless our budget has been overspent and that it can't be for something we foresaw. There are a lot of 'ifs' in the law.

Ms. Faria asked when the \$750,000 would go back to the taxpayers. Superintendent Blake said it happens immediately. It gets calculated into the next tax rate. The line is called the Retention Fund.

Ms. Ross informed the Committee it was the Board's intent to begin a trend with monies left over and build the fund.

Ms. Ross informed the Committee that as a result of a grant they wrote through the Department of Health and Human Services, they were awarded the grant for a Student Assistance Counselor. This Counselor started after February 2015 and works closely with the middle and high school students. The grant-funded the position is for one more year and they are hoping it could be renewable.

Ms. Ross announced that the Sanborn Regional School District has been nominated to be considered for a \$100,000 award due to the innovative work the District has done. The voting opened on Tuesday and ends on 9/30/15.

Mr. Gluck inquired into the restrictions on spending the award money. Superintendent Blake explained it would need to be used to further our work with regards to competency-based assessment and

individualized learning and they are looking at some different things. It cannot be used to supplement things that are paid for already by the District. It will all have to be documented. We will know if we win the money on the day voting closes. The decision on who receives the award is solely based on who gets the largest number of votes.

Ms. Gannon asked about the status of moth balling the Seminary and what that would entail. Ms. Ross said it was not discussed at the Board meeting. It will be on their next agenda.

OLD BUSINESS

Committee Function Topics:

Secretary/Minutes

Linda Mahoney was introduced as the new Recording Secretary for the Budget Committee.

The Committee discussed the possibility of having a digital recorder and/or having the meetings videotaped. Superintendent Blake explained there are man-hours with having the meetings videotaped and storage space is needed. He will look into the purchase of a digital recorder.

Ground Rules, Review Revised Document

The committee discussed the generic ground rules provided for by Ms. Gannon.

Ms. Gannon explained it is the goal of the Committee to get a consensus on issues. There was discussion regarding individual members having to publicly support **actions** of the Committee that they don't individually support. Mr. Doggett referenced the First Amendment and that it applies to Committee members. The Committee was in agreement they should strive to come to a consensus on issues.

The Committee discussed start and end times of the meetings. Ms. Gannon said they will start on time and end the meeting at the suggested target end time which will be determined at the start of each meeting. They can then poll the Board ten minutes before the agreed upon end time to determine if they wish to proceed past the end time. The intention is to be mindful of targeting what they are talking about and keeping on topic. She will re-word this ground rule and bring it to the next meeting.

Budgeting Workshops

Mr. Doggett and Ms. Collyer will both be attending an 8 hour workshop held by the NH Municipal Association. Newton Selectmen have agreed to allow the two Budget Committee members to attend under Newton's membership.

Community Outreach

The Committee discussed issuing a second "Did you know..." article. Mr. Gluck suggests asking Superintendent Blake to write about why so much money will end up being returned to the taxpayers. Superintendent Blake believes that information should come from his office and not the Budget Committee. Everyone was in agreement the article needs to be budget related. It was suggested writing about the difference between public input being allowed at a public hearing and deliberative session. Another suggestion was to publicize the survey if it were agreed upon by the end of this meeting.

Online Survey

The Committee discussed the survey and the purpose they hope to achieve/learn from the results.

Mr. Gluck explained the survey gives the residents a venue to express themselves. Ms. Faria said the survey questions in the document provided committee members are not the ones that are posted. Ms. Gannon explained that the Committee's task tonight would be a review of each question, The Committee agreed with the wording of Questions #1 thru #5 and agreed that Questions #6 thru #8 should have the same format of adding: "if the answer is "A" why? If no, why not?"

The word 'school' should be included with District and Budget.

Ms. Ross recommends that Question #3 be placed before Question #9.

Ms. Faria would like it to be determined if the person taking the survey either has kids currently in the system or whether they had kids who graduated and are no longer in the school system.

Ms. Stephan suggested including a question about the quality of education in district schools.

There was a question regarding what that has to do with the task of the Budget Committee. Ms. Gannon explained we are supposed to match the needs of the community with the needs of the District. We can get some idea and might determine a trend. For example, no kids in the district not supporting the budget. The Superintendent feels we already have that answer.

Ms. Gannon stated we are looking for general information and we need to present a budget that can be supported by the community, not just people with kids in the school. Is there something we are missing here?

Mr. Doggett believes they should strip everything out of question #9 and just ask for opinion of the budget...too high? too low?

Mr. Gluck is ok with striking it out.

Ms. Scanlon likes the question. It tells who is responding to the survey. She suggests we can try the survey as it is and we could then always change it.

Ms. Gannon is looking to see if there is a big trend to learn from and determine who to target.

Superintendent Blake informed the Committee there are people who write surveys professionally and can do it unbiased. He worries about someone without the education of creating surveys reading this entire document and how those results could be skewed.

Ms. Ross stated that Question #1 thru #8 ask for factual information. Only #9 is opinion and she doesn't think it should be included. She doesn't understand why it has to differentiate the schools.

Ms. Faria wanted to strike #9 and change #10. She doesn't believe they should invite comments on the quality of education in the District...but only on the Committee we represent.

Ms. Gannon explained they are putting out this survey because they want to get information about what are the most popular sources of obtaining information about the district and about attendance at district hearings and deliberative sessions. She indicated it was not the Committee's intent to publish the results but to use the information to better direct efforts to get information out to the public. However, should someone ask for the results, the Committee needs to be prepared to present them. If the results include personal opinions about the "quality" of education, they could be misconstrued as fact. This is not the intent of the survey. The Committee and Dr. Blake agreed and there was consensus to strike Question #9.

Ms. Gannon asked about just inviting comments on the budget and not the Budget Committee.

It was the consensus of the Committee to strike #9. It was the consensus of the Committee to change #10 asking for comment on the School District Budget only.

Ms. Faria will make the changes to the survey to reflect what they discussed and agreed upon tonight and bring it to the next meeting. With regards to #3, she will incorporate the wording to indicate a past student vs. current student.

NEW BUSINESS

Meeting Schedule

Items to be included on the agenda for Thursday, October 1st:

- Survey
- Budget Review Process
- Issues facing the district
- Each member to bring forward the information they would like to request from the administration.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

COMMITTEE COMMENT

Mr. Gluck stated it is difficult to make an informed decision when they are looking at the budgets without context. He requests that the Administration more fully integrate the goals-based budget budgeting process that they have adopted, by more closely aligning departmental budget requests presented in the budget book, with specific goals. This would make it easier for him to justify expenses or to not justify them.

The Committee discussed the Cable Access Station and whether Kingston still has one. The Town used to have one but needs to have someone running it.

Ms. Gannon informed the Committee that Ms. Collyer had emailed her some comments on items but those items have been tabled to the next meeting so there was no need to bring them forth tonight.

Ms. Gannon is hopeful to get some good information back from the members who attend the upcoming NH Municipal Association workshop that will benefit the Budget Committee in presenting the budget to the public.

Ms. Gannon stated that at the work session, one of the school board members suggested the administration should come in with budgets reflecting 2% increase and 5% increase and what would be included that would represent those increases. Also, present budgets reflecting 2% and 5% decrease and flat (no increase) and what would be reduced to achieve those decreases. Superintendent Blake stated it will never happen. That would be physically impossible for administrators to produce six different budgets.

Mr. Doggett explained that goal-based budgeting means there is no cap.

Ms. Scanlon believes that from a selling standpoint of the budget, having a percentage increase of what would be supported by the community might be the way to go and suggests to that the school board) consider coming up with a percentage of what they believe will be supported by the people.

Superintendent Blake stated they will delineate different levels of budget cuts and the Budget Committee will give the bottom line number.

Ms. Gannon asked whether the Committee wanted to decide what information to use for the “Did you know...?” article. The Committee discussed this and it was agreed that Ms. Gannon will draft something for the next meeting about the district having an opportunity to win an award for which it has been nominated. Superintendent Blake will provide her with the details and information in order for her to draft the text and she will send it to Committee members for feedback before submission for publication.

Ms. Scanlon **MOTIONED** to adjourn the meeting. **SECONDED** by Mr. Gluck. **VOTE:** Unanimous

The meeting adjourned at 9:33 PM.

Minutes submitted by,

Linda Mahoney

Recording Secretary

*MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS ARE UNOFFICIAL UNTIL REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY
VOTE OF THE MEMBERSHIP*