

MUNICIPAL BUDGET COMMITTEE

Wednesday, March 29, 2017

Professional Development Room

Kennett Middle School, Conway, NH

Vice Chairman, Jim LeFebvre called the meeting to order at 6:30pm. The following members were present: Mike Fougere, Peter Donohoe, John Colbath, Doug Swett, Steve Steiner, Richard Klement, Mike Tetreault, and John Edgerton. Also present: Lisa Towle, recording secretary

Excused: Chairman, Joe Mosca, Pat Sweet, and Frank McCarthy

Absent: Terry McCarthy, Mark Hounsell, Bill Marvel, Bill Masters, and Patrick Kittle

Dick Klement lead those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Vice Chairman, LeFebvre commented I want to thank all who showed up tonight for this abbreviated session of the Conway Budget Committee. We have a quorum of 9 folks.

REVIEW OF MINUTES:

Minutes of February 1, 2017, motion to accept minutes. Motion by John Edgerton and second by Peter Donohoe.

Discussion of minutes: none

In favor: 9; Opposed: 0; Abstain: 0. Motion carried.

Minutes of February 15, 2017, motion to accept minutes. Motion by Mike Fougere and second by Dick Klement.

Discussion of minutes: none

In favor: 7; Opposed: 0; Abstain: 2. Motion carried.

Minutes of February 16, 2017, motion to accept minutes. Motion by Dick Klement and second by Mike Fougere.

Discussion of minutes: none

In favor: 8; Opposed: 0; Abstain: 1. Motion carried.

Minutes of March 6, 2017, motion to accept minutes. Motion by Peter Donohoe and second by Steve Steiner.

Discussion of minutes: none

In favor: 9; Opposed: 0; Abstain: 0. Motion carried.

Minutes of March 8, 2017, motion to accept minutes. Motion by Steve Steiner and second by Peter Donohoe.

Discussion of minutes: none

In favor: 9; Opposed: 0; Abstain: 0. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS:

none

NEW BUSINESS:

Vice Chairman, LeFebvre thanked the budget committee class of 2017; Frank and Terry McCarthy and Bill Masters for their service on the board, as well as myself. John Edgerton commented you're not coming back. Vice Chairman, LeFebvre answered I am running again as well as Terry and I am not sure if Bill is running. John Colbath noted that Bill Masters is not running again as he is running for the School Board.

Vice Chairman, LeFebvre noted for those running for the School Board which includes our absent chairman tonight, I want to wish them luck and for anyone who is running for any position I wish them the best of luck.

OTHER – OPEN TO PUBLIC FOR QUESTIONS:

Cheri Sullivan, a concerned citizen / parent stated I see that Bill Marvel isn't here, he's part of the Budget Committee as well. I see that the Budget Committee voted 15-0 in favor of the teacher's contract, but I was confused by his column yesterday that he seemed to be speaking against the contract. Vice Chairman, LeFebvre responded I will not comment on Bill's personally written commentary. Ms. Sullivan continued it just wasn't clear and part of my concern was as a member of the Budget Committee is that you guys might go to him for some facts and part of that column had referenced 2 high schools, Oyster River and Hanover High School. He said that Kennett didn't really compare and said the school was padded with staff and shouldn't support the teacher contract and had a lot of other negative things to say. I just wanted to point out that it was pretty clear, we know Bill is a good researcher and he forgot to mention that starting teachers at those schools start \$10,000 more a year than our teachers do. That the average teacher makes \$30,000 more a year. So, I just want to make sure that when you

are trying to get information, please make sure you are looking at other sources. Just a little bit further down in grade schools all that information was there. The student to teacher ratio is 12:1 the same as our school district. He attacked our kids and said it was propaganda being used, the news stories about the success of our kids being used to sway voters against the teacher contract and the vote. I just want to say that these are my kids and the stuff that our kids are doing is pretty amazing and I hopefully understand that he wasn't reflecting your views, but the point he bullied our kids and dismissed it. Vice Chairman, LeFebvre responded with all do respect his personal opinions and not as a representative of the budget committee. Ms. Sullivan continued he didn't represent that in his column, he didn't say this was my personal view and he didn't reflect, oh actually by the way I voted for the teacher contract and the budget committee but now I am skewing some facts to say oh maybe you shouldn't vote for it. I wanted to make sure it was on the record that it isn't ok to bully our kids and our community with false facts. Our kids are doing great stuff. Vice Chairman, LeFebvre responded I would suggest the proper forum in the future would be to write your own column to the Sun. Ms. Sullivan noted there will be a column as well. Vice Chairman, LeFebvre responded that you for your time.

Dick Klement asked did you revise your comment by saying this board voted 15 – 0 in favor of the teacher contract? Ms. Sullivan responded isn't that what it said in the ballot. Mr. Klement reviewed the document referred to and provided by Ms. Sullivan and found she was looking at the AFSCME, that's not the teacher's contract. After discussion it was noted by Peter Donohoe that the budget committee voted 4 in favor, 9 opposed, and 2 abstained for the teacher's contract.

Ms. Sullivan left behind a copy of accurate information and pretty sure if our teachers were making more money, you know we would be in the top of what schools are earning. They are working really hard. Our kids are the only ones that built that house all on their own. My kids are in the paper all the time doing good jobs.

Vice Chairman LeFebvre noted for clarification purposes it was 4 – 9 – 2; 4 in favor, 9 opposed, and 2 abstained.

Vice Chairman LeFebvre commented one of the things that was mentioned is Hanover, NH as a former resident of that town years ago, I have to say something. Hanover at the time I was there was the home of Dartmouth College and the Mary Hitchcock Memorial Hospital. Mary Hitchcock Memorial Hospital has since moved to Lebanon, NH. However, trying to compare salaries of that town for their teachers versus this town is probably not accurate representation. The property values in Hanover Proper are much higher than they are here. That analogy from my perspective as a member of the board and as an individual is inaccurate.

John Edgerton commented I am in favor of the teachers being paid however the amount of money that the school budget increases every year with the school teacher's contract, I think next year we are going to have to look at a severe reduction in the total budget. I don't mind the teachers getting the money but the budget overall. Vice Chairman LeFebvre stated it should be noted that Mr. Richard at the deliberative session when specifically asked a question if you take all the warrant articles plus the budget what is your percentage increase, that was 9.1%, almost 10%. On a basis of \$36 million for a base budget a 9.1% increase is about \$3.3 million, which moves you into the range of \$40 million for a school that is supporting 1800 students plus the teachers and the rest of the staff. I would agree with your assessment that next year the Budget Committee [if I am fortunate enough to be on it or not], should take a look at that in some detail because it is very expensive for the community that we have. Not just talking about Conway but I am talking about the sending towns also. That is my personal opinion.

John Edgerton commented I won't name names, but somebody had approached the movement of minus 10% of the total school budget which gives them a 1% reduction. It does two things, one is it screams and yells at everybody that we are spending too much money, but I thought the better aspect was that was the best turn out for a school meeting we had in 40 years. Vice Chairman LeFebvre noted probably since 2011 and everybody remembers 2011.

Dick Klement commented when you look at the overall numbers, the only area that really has taken cuts is the high school. They have taken the cuts because there is just more people there so it is easier to carve out something there. I think we have to seriously ask them to look at what they are spending in the elementary schools and are they being fiscally responsible in trying to keep 3 schools open. I recognize I have been castigated for saying this at meetings by some folks, but you got to save money somehow and you can't keep hitting the high school, it has to be even. John Edgerton responded I respect you, because you probably have better knowledge inside the school than anybody else on the board. What you have said in the past has been right on the button. I have tried for almost 10 years to get the 6th grade into the middle school and they stall.

John Edgerton commented I believe the reason now is I don't believe they are competent enough to be able to put the 6th grade in there and integrate it in the system. They are stalling, they want to stall for another 10 years. The school administration has admitted the best thing for 6th grade would be in a middle school environment. However, they don't want to put them there.

Mike Fougere commented I did some research awhile back, a couple 3 years ago, one of the big stumbling blocks we are going to have or anybody is going to have in closing one of those schools is not that the School Board owns it but each precinct owns their school. The high school is owned by the town. Keep that in mind when you go to close one of these elementary schools you are not going against the School Board you are going

against the precincts. East Conway is owned by East Conway, Center Conway – Pine Tree, Conway L is owned by Conway, and John Fuller is owned by North Conway. You are not going after the school board you are going after a precinct remember that.

Vice Chairman LeFebvre responded I appreciate that, however we are now at the point where have gone past the scope of this meeting tonight because we have already voted on the budget. I think we have gone beyond the scope as we have already voted this year to approve their budget.

John Edgerton moved, seconded by Steve Steiner, to adjourn the meeting at 6:45 PM. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lisa E. Towle, Recording Secretary