

Amherst Ways and Means Committee
Meeting Notes
December 20, 2021 at 6:30pm, Brick School

Note: The December 7, 2021 7pm meeting was canceled as a quorum of members were not present in person at the start.

In Attendance

Ways and Means Committee: Kelly Schmidt (Chair), Jeff Candito, Greg Fritz, Marilyn Gibson, Samantha Linton, Christine Grayson

Amherst School Board: Beth Kuzsma, Josh Conklin

Administration: Amy Facey (SAU 39 Business Administrator)

Kelly reviewed Right to Know rules, especially in regards to emails. All emails sent between a quorum of committee members that relate to more than scheduling will be put in meeting notes.

AEA Contract

- The Amherst Education Association (AEA) contract was approved by the AEA and ASB.
- Discussions were regarding the Question and Answer Sheet and summary email, both provided



W&M Questions on
AEA Contract.pdf
by Beth Kuzsma

- Marilyn questioned the length of the contract being 4 years over other options. Beth answered that there are benefits to a longer term; it depends on what makes sense to both parties.
- Marilyn reported that she asked the superintendent about the imposing hiring freezes. Adam told her they could not legally be imposed. Discussion occurred related to reasoning and “non-rehiring” of open positions in place.
- Many W&M members were unaware that the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) is separate, and in addition to Step increases in the contract.
- Discussion brought forth that step increases remain at the same level as the previous contract and occur annually regardless of other factors such being performance related. They were not renegotiated.
- Last contract COLA was 2%, this contract is 3%.
- Jeff stated that by his calculations for a net effect, the \$552k increase from the first year of this contract, would bring the ASD Operating Budget to a 6.6% increase.
- Sections 14.4 & 14.5 were reviewed. This retirement package is closed to any new employees. Any employee that was eligible for this has already made their choice, and it is known to the district.
- The 8 additional days of education within the school year and removal of the scheduled late start days for professional development time was appreciated by all. Not only was this considered more value for taxpayers, but it would improve educational outcomes and make it easier for families. Christine mentioned that it would eliminate a current operational cost to provide late start care for those in need. Marilyn stated she has disliked the use of late start days for PD as it does not provide the right learning modality for teachers.

Warrant Article 12 (Facilities Project Bond)

- Beth reiterated changes voted in during the previous board meeting. The wording of the article now includes taking into account the estimated interest that could be earned off bonds while leaving the total as \$83 mil. As advised by Bond Council, bond wording needs to include interest values. It will reduce the \$83 million bond, but the district can spend the interest specified.
- HVAC is included in both buildings.
- Clarification on the address being used for Clark School's physical location of 14 Foundry St. – no work is being done on the Clark building; that address is there because Clark-Wilkins is defined as one school.

Warrant Article 13 (Solar Panels)

- The roof construction will be such that solar panels can be added after the construction of the building.
- Research has been done on solar panels; there will be a payback to schools if we generate more power than needed.
- Solar panels have a 40-year life.
- The Return on Investment (ROI) is 17 years.

Warrant Article 15 (Capital Reserve Fund)

- This is money being put aside based on the Capital Needs Assessment (CNA) done a few years ago. It is for expected repairs on the buildings.
- It will be funded by Undesignated Fund Balance (UFB), if available at the end of the fiscal year. It can be partially funded (no new tax impact). This funding would have priority over any other items the board might want to fund, if UFB is available.
- This can be used for the new/refurbished buildings – to reduce debt, or save for future use.

Warrant Article 14 (Operating Budget)

- The \$238k in reductions were reviewed. The increase over FY22 budget stands at 4.48%. If the \$552K increase for the first year of the AEA contract is factored in, the increase becomes 6.6%.
- It was noted by Kelly that there was not much board discussion on the \$33k funding of a Math Domain Leader, which will be employed by the Souhegan Cooperative School District. If passed in the SCSD budget, this position will work with Amherst Middle School, Clark-Wilkins Elementary School, and Mont Vernon Village School. The ASD portion to be paid to SCSD is estimated at .25 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE). It was mentioned by Greg that improving the SAT scores at the high school level would begin at the elementary and middle school levels.
- Kelly pointed out that discussions regarding various opportunities to adjust para staffing for K classes occurred during last years budget review. Waiting to make the adjustment at the end of this cycle gives the perception that this is more motivated by financial reductions than educational benefit. Amy relayed that the change had been considered since the beginning of this cycle, however, confirmation of contract implications needed to occur before being implemented.
- It was mentioned by Christine that \$600k of the operating budget is due to increases in the Special Services budget, which is mandated by law. This is a piece of the budget that the board/administration cannot reduce. Any reductions in the Operating Budget would only affect the Regular Education budget.

Voting occurred on each warrant article as follows:

Warrant Article 14 (Operating Budget)-

Not recommended 2-4-0

<u>Member</u>	<u>Vote</u>	<u>Reasoning</u>
Schmidt	Yes	The administration and board have thoroughly reviewed and adjusted where possible. The bulk of the increases are things out of their control such as existing contract values. While higher than desired, cutting further will have negative impacts to the education provided to all students.
Linton	No	More creative saving solutions are needed to bring the total amount down.
Gibson	No	Compensation all around is too inflationary and needs to be drastically adjusted.
Candito	No	The overall increase amount compared to last year is too high.
Grayson	Yes	There are huge amounts of the budget that are out of board control to change. Any additional cuts only result in "regular" kids getting impacted.
Fritz	No	There is too much fluff included making it not thoughtful and serious. The overall approach to the budget process is reactionary. It needs to be reconfigured to start from zero and work upwards based on need.

Warrant Article 12 (Facilities Bond)-

Recommended 4-1-1

<u>Member</u>	<u>Vote</u>	<u>Reasoning</u>
Schmidt	Yes	Having followed the JFAC since its inception, they have made a strong case for the need for facility improvements while continuing to reduce costs during each iteration. A mostly new build at C-W and the AMS renovation is a cost-effective way to meet huge looming capital needs while reducing future operating costs by having more efficient systems. It aligns well with board class size goals which have mostly been met but have created further space strains in already tight buildings.
Linton	Yes	The facilities projects outlined are important. They are good for the town overall even with the financial burden they will cause.
Gibson	No	This is far too much burden for taxpayers to support.
Candito	Yes	The projects make financial sense to do.
Grayson	Yes	Agreed with the other yes reasons especially those given by Linton and did not have anything extra to add.
Fritz	Abstain	Does not feel sufficiently versed in the subject matter to make a decision. Would have liked to have information on the total cost of ownership that would occur with all options.

Warrant Article 13 (Solar Panels)-

Recommended 5-1-0

<u>Member</u>	<u>Vote</u>	<u>Reasoning</u>
Schmidt	Yes	In favor more to give residents the option than anything else. Solar is a great power source to utilize, however, as a non-essential component the expense could be done without.

Linton	Yes	Agreed with Schmidt and Grayson's thoughts and had nothing further to add.
Gibson	No	The benefits to the town are not known. Does not feel certain about trusting solar as a power source or the companies that provide it as an option.
Candito	Yes	Likes solar in general and would like to see it applied in our school facilities.
Grayson	Yes	This is a want option not a need. Would like the town to decide if the burden is worth the value.
Fritz	Yes	Makes financial sense since the ROI is shorter than the life of the building.

Warrant Article 16 (Capital Facility Planning)-

Recommended 6-0-0

<u>Member</u>	<u>Vote</u>	<u>Reasoning</u>
Schmidt	Yes	No additional reasoning beyond what Grayson stated.
Linton	Yes	No additional reasoning beyond what Grayson stated.
Gibson	Yes	No additional reasoning beyond what Grayson stated.
Candito	Yes	No additional reasoning beyond what Grayson stated.
Grayson	Yes	Having a capital reserve fund for capital facility needs is good for planning and more uniformly spreading the tax burden caused by facility expenses over time while limiting the cost of interest.
Fritz	Yes	No additional reasoning beyond what Grayson stated.

Warrant Article 15 (AEA Contract)-

Not recommended 1-5-0

<u>Member</u>	<u>Vote</u>	<u>Reasoning</u>
Schmidt	No	This was a very hard and uncomfortable choice since there are so many wonderful teachers/staff in our district and supporting their effort is of the utmost importance. The concept of a fixed COLA and fixed steps that are not tied to anything other than longevity or individual contract renewals does not match the desire to be compensated more similarly to the free market. With other major district needs and asks of taxpayers, especially this year, a little more give in this component of the budget is needed.
Linton	No	Felt rushed for reviewing since the agreement was finalized and approved so late in budget season. Does not have enough info to be comfortable with it.
Gibson	No	It continues to be too much overall and is the biggest driver of her concern with recent operating budgets.
Candito	No	It is just too much money.
Grayson	No	This is the biggest cost within annual operating budgets and it keeps significantly increasing. General commendations for the board's negotiations were given especially for meeting the goal of getting more education time within the school year including removing scheduled late start days. Unfortunately, it just is not enough.
Fritz	Yes	Feels the agreement is reasonable and generally agrees with labor valuing their hard work.

The meeting wrapped up with wishes for happy holidays and awaiting knowing meeting in the new year would be warranted.

-----Submitted by Christine Grayson

Committee Communications prior to 12/20:

NWEA in the news

Greg Fritz <gfritz@sau39.org>

Wed, Nov 17, 4:15
AM

to Kelly, Josh, Christine, Amy, Marilyn, ekuzsma, Samantha, Jeff, Tom, Victoria, Terri

Here is the article I was referring to tonight. The USAToday version had a paywall but Yahoo republished the same story here.

<https://news.yahoo.com/pandemic-first-graders-way-behind-100131035.html>

A key takeaway from this is that the NWEA scores are down across the board from year to year which means that a slight increase in a classroom's percentile number is actually a decrease in performance relative to previous years and education goals. Furthermore, a decrease in a classroom's percentile number is actually worse than it appears.

The value the schools are providing the residents is down.... a lot.

Justifying a YES vote on this proposed budget is harder as a result.

In many of our discussions, I hear some of your concerns over the precise use of language. For example, "textbooks" vs "books". It is inaccurate to say that the poor education performance of our schools is due to the "Pandemic", "COVID-19", or "the coronavirus."

Instead the retardation of learning is due to the Lockdowns and Reopening Plan policies.

This means that you can help end the disaster of poor learning. Please end the masking policy of teachers and students. Please end all practices that discourage safe social interactions between students such as the use of televisions during lunchtimes and pick up. Please allow the students to learn as much as they can and allow teachers to teach as well as they can.

This also means that you can allow the disaster to continue. To do nothing, and allow these anti-education practices to continue is an option. Please dont choose this option.

Thank you for your continued consideration of these policies,

Greg

Marilyn Gibson <mgibson@sau39.org>

Wed, Nov 17, 8:22
AM

to Greg, Amy, Christine, Jeff, Josh, Kelly, Samantha, Terri, Tom, Victoria, ekuzsma

Greg,

Thank you for forwarding your source origin.

Your narrative also is important for all members of our district's admin to read due to its logic.

Marilyn

Marilyn Gibson <mgibson@sau39.org>

Wed, Nov 17, 8:26
AM

to Greg, Amy, Christine, Jeff, Josh, Kelly, Samantha, Terri, Tom, Victoria, ekuzsma

I would like to ask all what facts can anyone provide as a substantial opposing argument.

Samantha Linton <slinton@sau39.org>

Wed, Nov 17, 4:17 PM

to Marilyn, Greg, Amy, Christine, Jeff, Josh, Kelly, Terri, Tom, Victoria, Elizabeth

Thank you Greg for providing this link and opinion

I firmly believe it is not the responsibility of the Ways & Means to make decisions related to policy for the school district. Additionally, this conversation is taking away from our main task - which is to impartially review the school budget and make recommendations to the ASD community.

I respectfully ask that we stop this repeated conversation and focus on what we were appointed to do. If you feel passionately about this topic, I suggest using the local papers, personal social media pages, and other resources outside of this committee to discuss separately from your W&M committee position.

Warm regards,

Samantha

Marilyn Gibson <mgibson@sau39.org>

Wed, Nov 17, 5:17 PM

to Samantha, Amy, Christine, Elizabeth, Greg, Jeff, Josh, Kelly, Terri, Tom, Victoria

Samantha, our position (W&M) is to be impartial. However, as you mentioned, there are other avenues for information to be broadcasted and those avenues can include school board meetings.

As Mr. O'Keefe often mentions he as others do not avail themselves of local publications either in paper form or electronic.

I look forward to advancing the task of W&M, to bring a justifiable verdict to the ASD.

Marilyn

Samantha Linton <slinton@sau39.org>

Wed, Nov 17, 6:25 PM

to Marilyn, Amy, Christine, Elizabeth, Greg, Jeff, Josh, Kelly, Terri, Tom, Victoria

Thank you Marilyn for your insight.

My concern is that this topic is continually brought up at each W&M meeting and has no relevance to what our job is - whether or not we see the budget as presented, is in the best interests to the school and community. Sharing of opinions is always appreciated and at this juncture, I believe we understand where each of us stand on various issues. Repeatedly bringing it up when our group can not change the policy of the SAU/ASD/MV board is taking time away from our critical objective. I simply ask that we refocus on our task at hand and bring policy concerns up during appropriate school board meetings.

Respectfully,

Samantha

Jeff Candito <jcandito@sau39.org>

Thu, Nov 18, 8:49 PM

to Samantha, Marilyn, Amy, Christine, Elizabeth, Greg, Josh, Kelly, Terri, Tom, Victoria

Thanks Greg. I agree with your "key takeaway" mentioned above. I personally don't put a lot of stock in test scores one way or the other, and I do not factor them in when deciding whether to support a budget.

Jeff

Kelly Schmidt <kschmidt@sau39.org>

Thu, Nov 18, 9:39
PM

to Jeff, Samantha, Marilyn, Amy, Christine, Elizabeth, Greg, Josh, Terri, Tom, Victoria

Ways and Means committee members,

Please refrain on responding all any further on this thread. As previously discussed, mass back and forth email communication is not appropriate.

????

Jeff Candito <jcandito@sau39.org>

Nov 19, 2021, 8:13
PM

to Kelly, Greg, Christine, Marilyn, Samantha

Hi Kelly,

I'm confused at your request in the previous email regarding refraining from mass back and forth communications in emails. I'm not sure what this means, and I am not aware of any previous discussion concerning this matter. Could we discuss this at our next meeting?

Jeff

Marilyn Gibson <mgibson@sau39.org>

Nov 19, 2021, 8:38
PM

to Jeff, Christine, Greg, Kelly, Samantha

Thank you Jeff for following up on Kelly's message.

Next Ways and Means Meeting

Christine Grayson

Nov 23, 2021, 4:06
PM

to Samantha, Marilyn, Jeff, Kelly, Greg

I spoke with Victoria Parisi this afternoon. On 12/6, ASB is planning to vote on what goes on the ballot, so we will be asked for our official vote very shortly thereafter. Therefore, if there are any things that any of us would ask the board to consider in order to receive an affirmative vote, we should discuss this PRIOR to 12/6 so that we can let them know. This would need to be done in an officially noticed Ways and Means meeting. If there are no topics that we need to discuss for the board's consideration, we do not need to meet prior to 12/6. If you are not going to vote in the affirmative regardless of any reasonable changes by the board, that is absolutely acceptable.

The expected warrant articles the board will be voting on are as follows:

-Operating Budget

-Facilities Project
-Capital Reserve Fund
-Special Education Contingency Fund
-AEA Contract

I will find out the final amounts and percentages as soon as I can. I will post a question in the Q&A section of the budget document so that everyone (W&M, ASB, and administration) can see the request.

Please respond to this email with the following information:

1. Do you have anything that you'd like to ask the board to consider/adjust before you'd vote in the affirmative?
2. If so, BRIEFLY state the subject/nature of the consideration, so that we can all review our notes and/or meeting notes on the subject and be prepared for a discussion.
3. Please give a few dates/times that you would be able to meet BEFORE 12/6.
4. We will still need to meet after 12/6 for our official vote, so please indicated your availability AFTER 12/6.

Thank you!
Christine

Sent from my iPhone

Marilyn Gibson

Nov 23, 2021, 6:31 PM

to Christine, Kelly, Samantha, Greg, Jeff

As noted previously I can make any day any time by zoom.

Marilyn

Jeff Candito

Nov 23, 2021, 8:26 PM

to Marilyn, Christine, Kelly, Samantha, Greg

Thanks for the info Christine. We have not been given any real information regarding the warrant articles other than the operating budget. I need more information regarding all of these warrant articles before I consider voting in the affirmative, particularly the JFAC project and the teacher contract. Regarding contracts, in the past Ways and Means has been given copies of the current contract, and the changes to be made for the new contract.

Regarding JFAC, I'd like to know how many other districts have asked their voters to pass an 83M dollar bond.. I'm assuming this large dollar amount is unusual, but would like more certainty as to what other districts have done in the past in terms of bond amounts for building projects. I also haven't been sold on the actual needs for new building/new renovation for ASD. I've watched most of the stuff JFAC posted online, but triangle-shaped classrooms, leaky pipes, and poor heating and poor ventilation to me aren't automatic justifications for a new building, or even for a major renovation. What are the primary needs for these projects? I understand a general lack of space is a problem, but couldn't that be solved with an addition to an existing building? I think JFAC has done a lot of good work, but from the outset it seemed that the decision to go forward with a brand new building and a major renovation to the tune of 80+ million seemed rushed. Was the cost of fixing and maybe adding a new addition to these buildings ever really costed out and discussed? I remember seeing a spreadsheet about two years ago created by the administration that showed the cost of doing nothing, but that's it.

I think we should meet before 12/6, with the hope of gaining additional information on the warrant articles. I'm available in the evenings during the week Christine mentioned above, and the following week as well.

Regarding the operating budget, I would ask the board to reduce the proposed FY23 budget so that it is no larger than a 1% increase to the FY22 operating budget. If this is done, I will vote in the affirmative.

Jeff

Marilyn Gibson

Nov 23, 2021, 9:23 PM

to Jeff, Christine, Greg, Kelly, Samantha

Thank you Jeff, I concur with your request for more information regarding warrant article, teacher contracts, as well as what is the likelihood of hiring freeze and salary freeze.

Christine Grayson

Nov 24, 2021, 7:10 AM

to Marilyn, Jeff, Greg, Kelly, Samantha

We should be able to have final numbers (at least the numbers the board will be voting on at their 12/6 meeting) on all of the warrant articles in my current ask. The AEA contract was declared an impasse by the AEA, and mediation will begin next week. I don't know when we will have that information.

Christine

Sent from my iPhone

Marilyn Gibson

Nov 24, 2021, 7:59 AM

to Christine, Greg, Jeff, Kelly, Samantha

Teacher contracts are on the tipping point for me, as well as the self-serving pool, hiring of potential SAU admin staff.

Marilyn

Jeff Candito

Nov 24, 2021, 7:10 PM

to Marilyn, Christine, Greg, Kelly, Samantha

Thanks Christine and Marilyn,

One other thing I would like to know regarding the JFAC project: What is the estimated tax impact for funding an 83 million dollar bond on the typical household? Specifically, how much money will a typical household (now assessed at around \$480,000 I believe) have to contribute each year to fund these building projects? Also, will this be over 30 years, or fewer? I'd like to know more than just the increase per thousand to the tax rate. I'd like to know the actual dollar amount per year. For example: "The typical household will need to pay approximately X (\$200, \$500, etc.) each year for the next 30 years to fund these building projects." I understand this would be an estimate, but I believe it's important to know.

Jeff

Marilyn Gibson

Nov 25, 2021, 8:55 PM

to Jeff, Christine, Greg, Kelly, Samantha

Thanks Jeff, the answers would also be vital to residents.

Negotiations

Kelly Schmidt <kschmidt@sau39.org>

Nov 28, 2021, 6:15 PM

to Christine, Jeff, Samantha, Marilyn, Greg

All,

This is the link for the current AEA contract for your review.

Link to contract is by permissioned access only. As such it has been redacted from these minutes. Please reach out to a member of the Amherst School Board for a copy of the contract if needed.

As Christine stated, negotiations for the new contract are still on going and therefore we need to wait to discuss and vote on that.

*** Please do not respond to this email****

-Kelly

Marilyn Gibson

Nov 28, 2021, 7:53 PM

to Kelly, Christine, Greg, Jeff, Samantha

Thank you.

MV Middle School Exploration Committee

Jeff Candito

Mon, Nov 29, 1:28 PM

to Kelly, Christine, Marilyn, Samantha, Greg

Hi,

I see on the SAU 39 homepage that there is a Mont Vernon Middle School Exploration Committee meeting on 11/30. I assume this means MV is considering building their own middle school. How will this affect the JFAC building project for AMS middle school? The renovation plan is designed to have MV students at AMS MS, correct?

Kelly Schmidt <kschmidt@sau39.org>

Mon, Nov 29, 1:52 PM

to Jeff, Christine, Marilyn, Samantha, Greg

Hi,

My understanding is that that exploration committee has the potential to pull MV students from AMS. Currently, they are tuitioned in for grades 7 and 8. They want to ensure that it's their best alternative. It is possible that tuitioning to a different middle school would benefit them the most. That doesn't necessarily mean they would build their own school. Conversely, they could decide that once AMS has been renovated, that sending 6th graders to AMS is in their best interest.

Both designs (AMS and Wilkins) take into account fluctuating student numbers. If anything, I'm more worried about outgrowing the new space too soon as has happened multiple times in the past.

What I think is important to factor in is that the facilities bond is an up to number. Therefore, if MV makes a quick decision, the designs can be altered and the price can be reduced.

I'd encourage all to attend the monthly JFAC public forums with this type of question. There's another one on 12/9. If for some reason several people attend that and change their stance on the warrant article, there should still be time for us to meet again and revote.

****Please note that in order to adhere to public notice laws, I will be including emails to all committee members that are not related to scheduling in meeting minutes. ****

-Kelly

Marilyn Gibson

Mon, Nov 29, 1:54 PM

to Kelly, Christine, Greg, Jeff, Samantha

TY

Jeff Candito

Tue, Nov 30, 4:24 PM

to Marilyn, Kelly, Christine, Greg, Samantha

Thanks Kelly. It seems like there are a lot of moving parts, which makes me concerned when it involves a \$83 million ask. Shouldn't we have a commitment from Mont Vernon prior to moving forward with this building project? It seems that Amherst has everything to lose, and MV everything to gain. What if MV pulls out after the building is complete, or halfway through construction? Enrollment statewide is decreasing, and has been consistently for a number of years. Even if it's currently on the rise in Amherst, it may not last too long. I understand these are more JFAC/school board questions than Ways and Means questions.

As a side note, I have watched the JFAC forums online. This was never brought up in any of the presentations. Has this project really been thoroughly thought through (nice alliteration)? Could we invite a spokesperson from JFAC to our next meeting? Or maybe Christine would be comfortable fielding these types of questions. It sounds like we'll be asked to vote by the end of our meeting, and we haven't really discussed any of the warrant articles as a WM Committee.

Marilyn Gibson

Tue, Nov 30, 8:28 PM

to Jeff, Christine, Greg, Kelly, Samantha

Thank you Jeff for bringing MV and its cricks spit in ASD moving forward

Marilyn Gibson

Tue, Nov 30, 8:29 PM

to Jeff, Christine, Greg, Kelly, Samantha

CRITICAL SPOT

Link to kick-the-can options

Christine Grayson

Mon, Dec 6, 5:57 PM

to Kelly, Jeff, Samantha, Marilyn, Greg

<https://jfac.sau39.org/clark-wilkins-initial-recommendation/>

Marilyn Gibson

Mon, Dec 6, 6:00 PM

to Christine, Greg, Jeff, me, Samantha

TY CHRISTINE

*******W&M Meeting tonight updates**

Kelly Schmidt <kschmidt@sau39.org>

Dec 7, 2021, 8:05 AM

to Christine, Marilyn, Greg, Samantha, Jeff, Elizabeth, Josh

In case you didn't see the change of info within the meeting invite---

Updating location---- to Brick School

Please note that there is an SAU non public scheduled there from 6-7 (hence the change to allow our board liasons to remain at the same location). Being a very sensitive non-public and a building where sound travels, the doors will be locked when we get there if still in session. We will need to play it by ear whether or not we meet if they go severely over. If you are attending by Zoom, watch your email for updates as we feel the situation out. The SAU board chairman is aware of our meeting and is hoping that helps them be as timely as possible.

We have 2 backup plan scenario's besides rescheduling.

Please be prepared to give an official vote on

warrant articles 12, 14, and 15 as outlined in the forwarded power point presentation from last night.

We will have a follow up meeting to revote on 14 as the AEA contracts and info gets entered and a vote on the AEA contract once voted on by AEA and ASB. Until then, contract info is confidential, so we still do not know impacts even though a verbal agreement was reached last Thursday. They expect to be able to hold votes within the next 2 weeks.

Marilyn Gibson

Dec 7, 2021, 10:10 AM

to Christine, Greg, Jeff, Josh, Samantha, Kelly, Elizabeth

TY Kelly, meeting tonight are we expected to vote on the FY23 budget? I apologize if I missed it in any of the emails.

Marilyn

Kelly Schmidt <kschmidt@sau39.org>

Dec 7, 2021, 10:43 AM

to Christine, Elizabeth, Greg, Jeff, Josh, Samantha, Marilyn

Yes. We understand that it does not yet include any potential changes from AEA contract agreement and therefore, there will be a revote as soon as we have that impact. However, we are looking to give the board as much feedback on current state as possible. As such, vote with the thought that it could go up or down but only from the contract.

Although, as Adam stated last night and we experienced last year, between Public Hearing and Deliberative, the board has the ability to lower or remove all warrant articles. They also have the ability to make any changes up or down before Public Hearing. They indicated to us last night that they do not plan to change anything. We all know plans often go astray, so who knows, say a system catastrophically fails over winter break and has the ability to be temporarily fixed until next FY but then really needs replacement. Then the board could choose to add that replacement to the budget. Or we could all vote no (all giving the same specific reason), the board could decide that reason is worthy of consideration and make that change because they feel we are a good indicator of public sentiment. With any change, we would vote again.

Kelly Schmidt <kschmidt@sau39.org>

Dec 7, 2021, 11:03 AM

to Marilyn, Christine, Elizabeth, Greg, Jeff, Josh, Samantha

All,

Just thought I'd send this follow up related to some of my phrasing.

I apologize for my characterization of it as very sensitive. That was quite biased of me and my personal interpretation of tonight's non-public and the RSA referenced for its use. Could they will be talking about the rumors and controversy citizens have discussed on social media? Possibly and I personally hope so just to move that past its current seemingly staled state. But in reality, I do not know that and have not been told anything further than no public is allowed in the building until complete as sound travels there. All non-publics can be sensitive, hence being confidential. It's an RSA used for standard discussions on hiring as well, so can equally be seen as a positive reason to be utilized.

Kelly

Jeff Candito

Dec 7, 2021, 5:17 PM

to Marilyn, Christine, Greg, Josh, Samantha, Kelly, Elizabeth

Thanks for the info Kelly. Just an fyi, I need to attend tonight's meeting via Zoom. I think you mentioned at some point that we need to have a certain number of members physically present in order to have an official meeting. I'll be one who won't be physically present.

Note: The 12/7/21 meeting referenced was canceled as not enough members were able to be present in person. As a quorum did not show up, the meeting was rescheduled for 12/2021.

Mont Vernon Information

Victoria Parisi

Thu, Dec 9, 7:51 AM

to Kelly, Christine, Jeff, Marilyn, Samantha, Greg, Elizabeth

Hi W&M,

Here's some information regarding Mont Vernon tuitioned 7th and 8th graders:

Per their tuition agreement, their portion of renovation payment is proportional based on enrollment. Example- If they're 10% of the AMS population, they pay for 10% of the bond payment for that year. If they were to pull out of AMS, we would not get their tuition (revenue). Next year's tuition is approx \$1,400,000.

Please let me know if you have any questions regarding this.

I have not received any other questions in email regarding the facility project.

Thanks,

Victoria

Greg Fritz

Thu, Dec 9, 8:14 AM

to Victoria, Kelly, Christine, Jeff, Marilyn, Samantha, Elizabeth

Hi Victoria,

Thank you for this information.

I just forwarded you my questions that I sent to Kelly. There may be others coming separately.

Thank you,

Greg

Kelly Schmidt <kschmidt@sau39.org>

Thu, Dec 9, 8:46 AM

to Greg, Victoria, Christine, Jeff, Marilyn, Samantha, Elizabeth

Victoria,

Thank you!

Is the approx. \$1,400,000 tuition the increased amount if the \$83 mil bond passes, just the amount of tuition based off the FY23 operating budget or the amount for both combined? If both, what is the amount of tuition we are expecting to receive this year? If that's not a figure you have handy, I can always ask Amy.

Greg,

You beat me to it. I was just about to take your questions and add them to this as a response. Definitely ok to email Victoria directly as she ordered that approach. The downside is only you get the answers in a direct email. Flip side of mass communication even routed through me is caution with right to know RSA.

For those interested, here are Greg's questions-

- 1) What are the costs for the new buildings compared to the two next best options over 1 year? over 10 years? over 50 years?
- 2) How will the students' education and preparation for high school vary with these options?
- 3) What is the projected benefit authorizing the \$83M price when the schools are projected to cost significantly less?
- 4) What is the source of this information? Victoria's statement to me the other night at SHS made it sound like she is taking the numbers from the sales guy at the General Contractor to be an "expert's opinion." Is there any independent experts' numbers available?

I hope this is a straight forward exercise. Question 1 covers the Cost over time. Question 2 covers the Benefit over time. Question 3 covers a curiosity about this level of funding. Question 4 covers the validity of the information.

***As a reminder, any responses to this email chain will be added to publicly submitted meeting minutes.

-Kelly

Victoria Parisi

Thu, Dec 9, 2:10 PM

to Greg, Adam, Kelly, Christine, Jeff, Marilyn, Samantha, Elizabeth

Here are answers to Greg's questions:

- 1) What are the costs for the new buildings compared to the two next best options over 1 year? over 10 years? over 50 years?
Over the last 4 years, JFAC has consulted with various architects and construction companies to understand the options. The architect and engineering fees that were voter supported through the ASD budget led us to 3 basic options last year: kick the can (fix something only when it breaks and add portables), renovate/refurbish (take current facilities and fix their failing systems, add classroom space), and build new (current plan). After reviewing cost differences, JFAC recommended to build new and ASB moved forward with that recommendation. These descriptions can be found on the JFAC site: <https://jfac.sau39.org/clark-wilkins-initial-recommendation/>
- 2) How will the students' education and preparation for high school vary with these options?
The additional classroom space will also allow for smaller class sizes. In the last 5 years, Amherst has had some of the largest class sizes in the state of NH. Studies show that appropriately sized class sizes have a positive impact on educational outcomes. The rooms will be ready to support a technology-rich setting. Interventionists, social emotional supports, and special educators will have appropriate space to support students. Additionally, healthy buildings matter to student learning. Information and links can be found on the JFAC site: <https://jfac.sau39.org/healthy-buildings/>
- 3) What is the projected benefit authorizing the \$83M price when the schools are projected to cost significantly less?
I don't fully understand your question.
Elementary School= \$52.2 million
AMS= \$30.8 million
Total= \$83 million
JFAC has progressed over the last 4 years to right size the building project to a program that is sufficient for the current student population as well as allowing growth for the future while having longterm stability in mind. Several architects and construction companies have been in consultation which leads us to believe that the costs we bring forward are standard industry level.
- 4) What is the source of this information?
Throughout this project, we have engaged the services of DEW Construction Management and Banwell Architects in conjunction with the SAU, ASB, and JFAC. Additionally, at various times, we have consulted with administrators, Board of Selectmen, Bike/Ped leadership, Harvey Construction, Lavallee Brensinger Architects, and Tighe and Bond civil engineers.

Kelly's question:

Is the approx. \$1,400,000 tuition the increased amount if the \$83 mil bond passes, just the amount of tuition based off the FY23 operating budget or the amount for both combined? If both, what is the amount of tuition we are expecting to receive this year? If that's not a figure you have handy, I can always ask Amy.

I would feel most confident if you confirm with Amy on this. I believe the \$1.4 is without the bond addition. Again, please check with Amy on that.

I have included Adam and Beth on this email to keep them apprised of my answers.

Marilyn Gibson

Thu, Dec 9, 5:37 PM

to Victoria, Adam, Christine, Elizabeth, Greg, Jeff, Kelly, Samantha

TY FOR YOUR INPUT.

#2 Is not class size but student population. However, with smaller class due to fewer pupils does not guarantee individual educational success.

To continue to use fewer pupils in each class room is a travesty.

Jeff Candito

Fri, Dec 10, 4:30 PM

to Marilyn, Victoria, Adam, Christine, Elizabeth, Greg, Kelly, Samantha

Thanks everyone.

FY23 proposed operating budget

Jeff Candito

Dec 18, 2021, 10:44 AM (6 days ago)

to Kelly, Christine, Greg, Marilyn, Samantha, Elizabeth, Josh

Hi everyone,

I am currently listening to the ASB 12/16 meeting. The teacher contract has been approved by the board.

This is my understanding of the contract, and how it affects the FY23 operating budget: The contract is a 4 year contract, with a total 4 year increase of \$2,4 million. In FY23, the increased cost is \$552,000. The proposed FY23 operating budget prior to including the teacher contract is a \$1,473,881 increase from the FY22 operating budget, which is a 4.84% increase. If this contract passes, the FY23 proposed operating budget will increase by an additional \$552,000. This means that the FY23 proposed op. budget will be a \$2,025,881 increase from the FY22 operating budget, which is a 6.66% increase.

Beth or Josh, please send Ways and Means a copy of this contract when you can (we are expected to vote on this Monday 12/20), and if I misstated anything above, please make the correction.

Thanks.

Jeff

Marilyn Gibson

Dec 18, 2021, 11:16 AM (6 days ago)

to Jeff, Christine, Elizabeth, Greg, Josh, Kelly, Samantha

Hi Jeff, your email is greatly appreciated. The AEA contract places great burden on our citizens. The escalation for taxes is overwhelming when the % is knowledgeable.

If your calculations are correct the citizens must ultimately know if presented in an honest transparent way by W&M.

You are an asset to our committee.

Marilyn

Elizabeth Kuzsma

Dec 18, 2021, 12:07 PM (6 days ago)

to Marilyn, Jeff, Kelly, Christine, Greg, Samantha, Josh

Thank you Jeff! I just got the thumbs up from Kelly to send this directly to all of you so she doesn't need to craft a new email from what I sent her. And sorry for the delay, I know I was supposed send it yesterday but I jumped in at the last second to assist with stuff at AMS yesterday and it threw me off.

Please send me (and Kelly if you would like) any questions you have by 8am Monday. I am going to compile the questions and answers so they are ready for Monday night.

Here are the highlights

Highlights:

Four-year impact - \$2,438,185 million

Year 1 - \$551,975

Year 2 - \$620,319

Year 3 - \$637,878

Year 4 - \$628,013

Teacher COLA - 3% each year

Additional teacher-paid health-insurance premium

Savings:

Year 1 - 2% (\$67,364)

Year 2 - 1% (\$33,682)

Year 3 - .5% (\$8,421)

Year 4 - .25% (\$8,420)

We have the equivalent of 8 additional instructional days for students (no more built in snow days and no more PD related late starts).

By year 3 we will have added 2 additional working days for staff for PD, 1 in year 1 and 1 in year 3.

The most expensive health insurance plan is locked out so that any staff member who is not currently enrolled in it no longer has the option to enroll in it.

The attachment is not included in meeting minutes as it is a public document in its own right. Please reach out to Amherst School Board members to get a copy of the ASB-AEA approved agreement for 2022-2026.

Marilyn Gibson

Dec 18, 2021, 12:12 PM (6 days ago)

to Elizabeth, Christine, Greg, Jeff, Josh, Kelly, Samantha

A very wise choice, but is it as of FY23?

"The most expensive health insurance plan is locked out so that any staff member who is not currently enrolled in it no longer has the option to enroll in it."

Elizabeth Kuzsma

Mon, Dec 20, 6:37 PM (4 days ago)

to Kelly, Jeff, Greg, Marilyn, Samantha, Christine

All,

Here are the answers to the questions that have been asked over the weekend by everyone.

Beth



W&M Questions on
AEA Contract.pdf

DRAFT