

ASD Ways and Means
January 11, 2023

Names of Members:

Dwayne Purvis (Chair) - Present
Jeff Candito - Present
Greg Fritz - Present
Mike Akillian - Present
Mozammel Husainy - Absent
Steve Frades - Remote
Rick Barnes - Present
Marilyn Gibson (Alternate) - Absent

Person(s) appearing before the Committee

Shannon Gascoyne - Present
Ellen Grudzien - Present

Summary of topics discussed

The Minutes were approved for the January 4, 2023 meeting.

We discussed the SAU39 Report. We heard a reading of the RSA 194-C:1. We heard that the SAU has one employee: the Superintendent. It was discussed how it is a challenge to compare SAU39 budgets across years since many services have been added to the SAU budget including technology and special services. We had a discussion about even when the number of SAU employees is reported to be constant, that the roles, salaries, and even part- or full-time of each person is not always constant. Some of the positions have been required by law (such as the Affordable Care Act) and it takes some time to witness the full cost/extent of these positions being added. In any case, there is a net increase in cost over time in the SAU budget.

We discussed the population of the student body by grade. There were some ups and downs in the AMS population and a general decrease in the SHS population by grade. It was mentioned how it would be useful to generate plots of population by class (e.g. class of 2012, class of 2032) to see how we are doing over time with better resolution. It was stated that we need an aggressive budget cut to adapt to the shrinking environment (student population). Many students are choosing options outside of Public schools and this is rising across New Hampshire. About 2.9% of students in Amherst are homeschooled which is higher than the average of peer towns in a comparison.

The SAU report will be due in 2 weeks.

We discussed the draft Facilities Report. We heard that it is now confirmed that there is only in depth cost estimate for the proposed plan on the warrant article. No other option was costed to the same degree and this makes several members uncomfortable with trying to make a judgement on whether or not the proposed plan is the most cost-effective solution to the stated problems. There was discussion that other options such as adding a wing to Wilkins and upgrading the capital items which are at the end of life or the option of using the available space at the high school Annex and moving students around within the existing buildings.

Public Comment I:

Shannon Gascoyne offered a history of JFAC and of the various quotes and estimates that have been discussed. LBA considered many options. It was assumed that the estimates were based on market rates but they may not have been. There is not great detail of the cost estimates for any alternative plans. Shannon discussed concerns over the accuracy of the population estimates discussed previously in this meeting and noted that the LBA numbers were not widely believed to be correct.

Ellen Grudzien mentioned that we had to choose one option to get a detailed estimate and that is what happened. There has been a lot of work put in by JFAC, lots of options discussed and analyzed... the options have been beat to death.

End Public Comment I

We discussed if W&M shall discuss the 2% tax cap proposal at a future meeting and it was agreed we shall discuss it.

We discussed the Special Meeting warrant articles hearing that they are conditional upon the failure to pass the contract articles. Some members were concerned that the voter turnout at a special meeting would not be as representative as at the regular election date in March.

We discussed the Capital Reserve Fund warrant article and that this aligns with a strategic building plan and is key to smooth operations.

Our next meeting will be Tuesday and we expect to host a union representative to discuss the proposed contract. We will have another meeting on Thursday after the ASB meeting to finalize our votes.

Public Comment II:

Insert Ellen Grudzien comments when available.

End Public Comment II.

We discussed our communications plan. Members can speak for themselves but not the W&M to respond to topics online or in person. We heard that our new Facebook page has had a high impact and we should post FAQs as we assemble comments from the public.

End Meeting.