

Minutes
Deliberative Session Meeting for the Amherst School District
February 6, 2023
Souhegan High School Theater
Amherst, New Hampshire

Attendance:

Administration: Steven Chamberlin- Interim Superintendent, Amy Facey- SAU #39 Business Administrator, Assistant Superintendent- Christine Landwehrle, Meg Beauchamp- Director of Student Services, Brian Miller- SAU #39 Director of Technology, Kathleen Murphy- Principal of Clark/Wilkins School, Anna Parrill- Assistant Principal Clark/Wilkins School, and Kristen Gauthier- Principal of Amherst Middle School.

Amherst School Board Members: Ton Gauthier- Chair, Victoria Parisi- Vice Chair, Jason White- Secretary, Terri Behm and Joshua Conklin.

School District Moderator: Nate Jensen

School District Clerk and Treasurer: Catherine Jo Butler

Amherst Ways and Means Committee: Chair- Dwayne Purvis, Vice Chair- Jeff Candito, Secretary-Greg Fritz, Mike Akillian, Rick Barnes, Steve Frades, Mozammel Husainy and Marilyn Gibson (alternate).

Attorney for the District: Alison Minutelli Esq. Wadleigh Starr & Peters PLLC, 95 Market St, Manchester, NH 03101

Meeting Minutes: Danae A. Marotta

Public: (speakers or commenters): Greg Fritz, 2 Deer Hollow Road, Amherst NH, Ken Miller, 2 Old Coach Lane, Amherst NH, Jeff Candito, 36 Buckridge Drive, Amherst NH, Caitlin Thompson, 4 Madison Lane, Amherst NH, Kelly Schmidt, 11 Patricia Lane, Amherst NH, Tricia Towne, 48 Thornton Ferry Road II, Amherst NH, Jason Hennessey, 455 Boston Post Rd, Amherst NH, Mike Akillian, 10 Old Mont Vernon Road, Amherst, NH, Mozammel Husainy, 33 Eagle Rock Rd, Amherst NH, Alison Batey, 12 Joshua Rd, Amherst NH, Terry Reiber, 15 Martingale Rd, Amherst NH, Ellen Gruzdien, 18 Buckridge Drive, Amherst NH, Elizabeth Kuzsma, 10 Nathan Lord Lane, Amherst NH, Barbara Williams, 9 Foundry Street, Amherst NH, Lisa Eastland, 19 River Road, Amherst NH, Carey Glines, 17 Holly Hill Dr., Amherst NH, Chelsea Borden, 28 Buckridge Dr., Amherst NH, Debra Keough, 16 Summerfield Way, Amherst NH, Shannon Gascoyne, 5 Parker Farm Lane, Amherst NH, Marie Panciocco, 151 Amherst St. Amherst NH, Dwayne Purvis, 145 Hollis Rd., Amherst NH, Bob Grunbeck, 6 Fair Oaks, Amherst NH, Peter De Bruyn Kops, 377 Boston Post Rd, Amherst NH, Colleen Tapley, 1 Beechtree Way, Amherst NH, Mozammel Husainy, 33 Eagle Rock Rd, Russ Hodgkins, 39 Thornton Ferry Road, Amherst NH, Terry Reiber, 15 Martingale Rd, Amherst NH, Larry Ballard, 11 Pinewood Drive, Amherst NH, Tim Theberge, 26 Middle St, Amherst NH, Nathan Greer, 12 Boylston Terrace, Amherst, Caitlin Thompson, 4 Madison Ln., Amherst NH, John Glover, 27 Cricket Hill Drive, Amherst NH, Mark Vincent, 2 Nathaniel Dr., Amherst NH and Steve Coughlan, Amherst NH, 11 Eaton Rd., Amherst NH.

42 The number of voting attendees: 193

43 **Moderator of the Amherst School District, Mr. Nate Jensen, called the 2023 Amherst**
44 **School District Deliberative Session to order at 6:10 PM.**

45 The Moderator introduced the Amherst School District Board Chair, Tom Gauthier.

46 Amherst School District Board Chair, Tom Gauthier, introduced the board members Vice Chair
47 Victoria Parisi, Jason White, Josh Conklin and Terri Behm

48 The Moderator introduced SAU #39 Interim Superintendent, Mr. Steven Chamberlin.

49 Interim Superintendent, Mr. Steven Chamberlin, introduced SAU #39 Business Administrator,
50 Ms. Amy Facey, Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Education, Ms. Christine Landwehrle,
51 Director of Student Services, Ms. Meg Beauchamp, Ms. Kathleen Murphy, Principal of
52 Clark/Wilkins School and Kristen Gauthier, Principal of Amherst Middle School.

53 The Moderator introduced Amherst Ways and Means Committee Chair, Mr. Dwayne Purvis.

54 Mr. Purvis introduced Ways and Means Committee Members, Vice Chair, Mr. Jeff Candito,
55 Secretary, Mr. Greg Fritz, Mr. Mike Akillian, Mr. Rick Barnes, Mr. Steve Frades (remote
56 attendance) , Mr. Mozammel Husainy and Ms. Marilyn Gibson (alternate).

57 The Moderator thanked Town Moderator, Mr. Steve Coughlan, School District Clerk and
58 Treasurer, Ms. CJ Butler, George Bower, various members of the Board of Selectmen and the
59 school district council, Alison Minutelli, and Mr. Brian Miller, SAU#39 Director of Technology.

60 The Moderator continued his introduction, explaining that the work tonight is to decide the
61 wording of the articles on which all registered voters will have an opportunity to vote on March
62 14th 6:00AM to 8:00 PM election at the Souhegan High School. Voters at tonight's Deliberative
63 Session under SB2 rules are empowered to discuss, deliberate, and debate each warrant article.
64 They are also required to take one of two courses of action on each warrant article. First,
65 maintain the original wording of the article as prepared by the school board and the petitioners.
66 In which case, that original warrant article wording will be placed on the official ballot. Second,
67 amend the original wording of warrant article. If an amendment is approved, the amended
68 warrant article is placed on the Official Ballot. Please note that it only requires a simple majority
69 to amend. There are rules about what can and cannot be amended. Voters will also be voting to
70 elect two School Board Members, one Moderator and other important school positions on the
71 official ballot, however, the warrant article concerning candidates cannot be altered at this
72 meeting.

73 During the past many years, Amherst School District Moderators have always suggested a small
74 number of meeting rules to facilitate the orderly management of our meeting. The Moderator
75 would again like to ask your support for the following by which he hopes you will agree makes
76 sense for how we govern ourselves this evening. You will find these rules on the back page of
77 the handout. He read the following rules:

1. The Moderator will not follow Robert's Rules. The Moderator will use the following general rules of procedure, to keep things moving, and not get bogged down in procedural quagmires.
2. Non-voters will be permitted in the auditorium only if room permits after the meeting has begun.
3. The Moderator will take Articles in the order they appear on Warrant unless the Moderator announces the intent to take Articles out of order.
4. Motions to amend must be made in writing and will be voted separately. Amendments will not be allowed to accumulate.
5. Each speaker shall state name and limit his or her time at the microphone to three minutes. No individual will be allowed to speak a second time until all others wishing to speak for the first time have done so.
6. Speakers wishing to address the meeting should form a line at either of the two standing microphones (one labeled "For" and one labeled "Against"). The Moderator will attempt to alternate pro and con points.
7. The Moderator will only accept a motion made at a microphone.
8. No motion to call the question shall be accepted by the Moderator until there has been sufficient debate on the article.
9. A Motion to restrict reconsideration in accordance with RSA 40 Section 10 should be made immediately following the announcement of the vote on that article.
10. The Moderator will dispense with reading the warrant at this time; however, each warrant article will be read when it is moved to the floor for deliberation and action. The warrant is also printed in the Voters' Guide. The Annual Report and Voters' Guide to Official Ballot Voting will be sent to all residents prior to March 8th.

The Moderator asked the public if they were in support. A vote was taken by voters holding up their yellow cards. The public was in support. There were no objections.

The Moderator explained that at the completion of voting for each warrant article he will accept a motion to restrict reconsideration of the wording on that article. This is for your protection, when you restrict reconsideration and someone wants to reconsider a vote that has already been approved it cannot be voted on again, until the voters have been warned. They would then meet seven days later to reconsider the wording of that article. He then asked if there were further questions. There were no further questions.

Article 11. Election of Officers (voting by official ballot March 14, 2023)

To the following school district offices:

a. To choose two (2) School Board Members for the ensuing three (3) years:

b. To choose one (1) School District Moderator for the ensuing three (3) years.

c. To choose one (1) School District Clerk for the ensuing three (3) years; and,

d. To choose one (1) School District Treasurer for the ensuing three (3) years.

The Moderator instructed the Clerk to place Warrant Article #11 on the Ballot as currently worded and thus, declared.

He added that this warrant article cannot be changed by this meeting.

The Moderator read Article #12, the School Const

To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of fifty four million two hundred and fifty thousand one hundred seventy nine dollars (\$54,250,179) (gross budget) to finance the major addition, reconstruction and renovation project for the Clark /Wilkins Elementary School, located at 14 Foundry Street, Amherst, NH and 80 Boston Post Road, Amherst, NH and to authorize the issuance of not more than \$54,250,179 of bonds or notes under and in compliance with the Municipal Finance Act, RSA 33:1 et seq., as amended; to authorize the School Board to apply for, obtain and accept federal, state or other aid, if any, which may be available for said project and to comply with all laws applicable to said project; to authorize the School Board to issue, negotiate, sell and deliver said bonds and notes and to determine the rate of interest thereon and the maturity and other terms thereof; and to authorize the School Board to take any action or to pass any other vote relative thereto, and further to raise and appropriate an additional sum of one million three hundred fifty six thousand two hundred fifty five dollars (\$1,356,255) for the first year's interest payment on the bond.

3/5 Ballot vote required.

Recommended by the Amherst School Board (5-0)

Not Recommended by the Amherst School District Ways & Means Committee (1-6)

Estimated tax impact of passing this article is: \$0.57 per thousand.

The Moderator recognized the Amherst School Board to make their presentation.

Amherst School Board Vice Chair, Ms. Victoria Parisi, noted that the Amherst School Board is presenting the construction of a new elementary school on the March 14th ballot. The total bond amount will be \$54,250,179. I am proud to present information regarding this article and how a new building becomes a tailwind in the Amherst School District's improvement journey, rather than a headwind. Since 2017, the Amherst School District and administration have made significant strides in planning for our facilities. Beginning with an external capital needs assessment that analyzed the 20 year costs to operate the schools, the SAU Board then formed JFAC (Joint Facilities Advisory Committee) to review and report on the status of facilities with an eye to the educational future of Amherst as well as the impact to taxpayers in the future. JFAC provides recommendations to the Amherst School Board, who ultimately determines what goes on the ballot. In 2020, once voters approved the costs for investigating options for long term

solutions, Lavallee Brensinger Architects were hired to develop a district-wide master plan for facility options. During that year, a variety of options for ways to address the aging buildings and space constraints were discussed. Eventually, after analyzing all of the options, JFAC brought a recommendation to build a new elementary school to the board and renovate the middle school. This is what was on last year's ballot.

Ms. Parisi continued, this year, after close to a year of further review and revision of cost estimates, the Board has decided to only bring forth a warrant article to build a new elementary school. A long term plan for aging facilities was a focus in 2017. The district needed three things: 1. A plan for completing and funding facilities maintenance for aging buildings, 2. A plan that addressed enrollment seen in the schools and future projections 3. A plan that addressed federal mandates for special needs programming

The firm of Onsite-Insite was hired to complete a capital needs assessment. This report identified every piece of the facilities, it's expected useful life, and a cost estimate associated with in-kind replacement. In the fall of 2019, a meeting was held at Souhegan. Board members from each of the SAU 39 boards, finance committee members, community members, and administration were in attendance. With the Onsite-Insite report as the focus, we discussed how we would financially support the facility needs of the SAU. We discussed bonding projects and saving over several years using the capital reserve fund. It was determined that the first step was to determine the grade configuration of Amherst Schools. The grade configuration conversation would be a central topic to the Master Planning work. Four actionable goals came out of the 2019 Fall Facilities Summit. 1. Create an editable list of Capital Needs Assessment, 2. Determine funding levels per school, 3. Annual project management through executing projects and withdrawing from the expendable trust fund, and 4. Create a capital expenditure plan. Over the last 4 years, All of these steps have been accomplished by administration and the Amherst School Board. Approved as part of the March 2020 ballot, Lavallee Brensinger Architects was hired to complete a district long-range facilities plan, known as a Master Plan. The goals of their work included, understanding current space issues, strengthening curriculum, right sizing facilities, increasing flexibility and planning for adaptability. It was at this time that the Joint facilities Advisory Committee, administration, staff, and community provided feedback to Lavallee Brensinger Architects about possible solutions to address the aging facilities and space concerns.

Ms. Parisi displayed the options and discussions that took place. None were ruled out without thoughtful consideration by multiple stakeholders. There are a variety of reasons that the options listed on the previous slide are not what the Amherst School Board is presenting for the March 14th ballot. Clark, Wilkins, and AMS are all operating at 90-95% capacity. Once a school is operating at 85%, the programming for student education is determined by the building. Increased expenses of some options do not make them ideal solutions. This includes the purchase of a new site, use of Birch Park site, or adding a second story to the current buildings at Clark and Wilkins. Developmentally, 5th graders are elementary age appropriate and developmentally, 8th graders are middle school age appropriate. The use of the Souhegan Annex has many complexities that were analyzed during this process. These have also been analyzed by various boards over the past 20 years. It has been once again reconfirmed that it is not a long term solution. While the focus has been the elementary and middle school buildings, it is always important to keep in mind the students who go to school there. Souhegan High School will educate those students in the years to come. In just 4 years, if all Souhegan students were taught in the main building, the building would operate over 95% capacity. From experience at Clark-Wilkins and AMS, reaching over 90% capacity is not best for Amherst and Mont Vernon

students for programming and school environment. The entirety of the annex is likely not going to become available based on professional enrollment data. The use of the Annex would be solving one problem to create the same problem elsewhere in the district. Additionally, keep in mind, this does not solve the issue of antiquated systems that are due for replacement soon. Over the years, portables have been used to solve space constraint issues in Amherst. Portables are not a favorable solution to address space needs. Portables are temporary solutions constructed with low grade materials and they are not a long term investment. Depreciation becomes an operating expense and does not increase capital improvements. There is a lengthy lead time to receive portables and portables do not have a controlled main entrance sequence. There is loss of academic instructional time when students travel between buildings for interventions, specials, and nurse visits. Custodial and maintenance costs result from mud, salt, and snow that is tracked back and forth from building to portable. Portables do not allow for fresh air circulation.

Ms. Parisi continued, if Clark is not used as a school, it may be repurposed for the residents of Amherst. One building elementary is ideal configuration. It allows for one bus drop off/pick up point-saving time, money, and traffic, efficient use of staff time- no longer wasted commuting between two buildings, pool talent and resources, one less transition for students, efficiencies gained that aren't monetary- including staff culture, and each school will have its own kitchen. After the extensive Master Planning study process was conducted, three options were presented. These options were discussed at several community sessions leading up to the 2020 ASB Bond Hearing. Option A involved the costs to maintain the existing structures and augment with portables. Option B involved a major renovation/refurbishment and addition with costs based on program square footage, and Option C was a new building. The estimates provided were preliminary order of magnitude costs, based on defined space needs and current construction values at the time. The bond warrant article is important in the Amherst School District journey.

She next reviewed the project goals specific to the bond that is Warrant Article 12. When the recent work of analyzing the facilities began, the following categories of goals rose to the surface, address aging, end of life systems with energy efficient systems, utilize the existing sites efficiently, provide secure & technology rich spaces and provide adequate, flexible teaching spaces. Life safety systems at the elementary school are at the end of life. These systems are due for replacement in the capital needs assessment. HVAC systems are at the top of this list, they're not stable or efficient. When HVAC is not dependable in a school, there is concern about heating the space for occupation during the school year as well as flooding from burst pipes. Higher quality replacement HVAC units are energy efficient and cost effective. In 2023, the administration and school board would like to improve the entrance sequence at the elementary school. This includes housing all students within the building as well as altering the configuration of the main entrance to have greater control of visitors. The building simply does not have the space for staff to deliver best practices to students, including full day kindergarten and development of local special programs. The physical space that is available for our students is limited. Amherst has utilized portable classrooms at the 3 school sites over the last two decades to support overcrowding in the main educational buildings. 80 plus students are still in portables at Wilkins. There are un-dampened grill openings in the classroom corridor walls and non-rated corridor doors for storage room uses plus miscellaneous items. Years of discussion have utilized one primary planning lens for our facilities— how do we augment or design spaces that provide the greatest opportunity and educational benefit for the children of this district. Factors such as lighting, indoor air quality, climate control, acoustics, and noise, play a critical

role in a student's ability to focus and learn new information. This board and this district rely on research and evidence-based instructional practices. A new building becomes a tailwind in our improvement journey, rather than a headwind. The new building would increase the ability to implement great instruction in the following ways, increased teacher collaboration space, private and dedicated office space for school counselors and administrators, dedicated unified arts spaces. The current practice to meet enrollment requirements involves moving a unified arts teacher onto a cart to push into classroom learning spaces. This leads to lost instructional time and creates disruption and noise for neighboring classrooms. Current programming is driven by lunch schedules and the limitations of having one large communal space for lunch, physical education, and assemblies. Intervention space for one-on-one programming is shared, high-noise, and high-distraction. In the new building, these programs have dedicated and appropriate space. Library space in the new building supports the board and the administration's goals to improve literacy acquisition throughout the district. One building creates efficiencies for administrators, teachers, and supporting facilities and food services staff.

Ms. Parisi added, throughout this process, we have been asked how the district will measure the impact of a new building. We will look for: reduced staff and student absences demonstrating the impact of effective HVAC, improved standardized test scores and classroom metrics- meaning how students are performing in the classroom - both teacher observation of student performance and assessment scores. There may also be qualitative feedback too - such as doing science experiments more often or having the ability to do more small group work, increased employment applications and increase in new students. The Amherst School Board seeks to make a strategic investment in the facilities of the Amherst School District. The expected life of the Wilkins and AMS buildings is 50 years. Wilkins is 55 years old, and AMS is 50 years old. In Amherst, short term solutions have been favored by the voters. Over the last 30 years, that includes portable trailers and small additions. Larger initiatives, such as building an upper elementary school to alleviate crowding, have narrowly failed. This brings us to the situation we are in today. Systems will require significant funding to replace within the next 15 years. ASB has been dedicated to funding maintenance identified in the 2017 capital needs assessment through the existing capital reserve fund. Once a new elementary is built, the district will receive a maintenance program from the construction management firm. This will ensure proper maintenance, maintain consistency despite inevitable board and administration turnover, and allow future leaders to plan and budget for capital improvements.

Ms. Parisi displayed pictures of Clark School. The picture in the center of the slide shows where kindergarten students receive their lunches in the hallway. There is no kitchen at Clark, so meals are made at Wilkins and driven to Clark in the private car of a staff member. You'll also notice that there are carts being stored in this hallway as well as book storage on the bench near the brick wall. Continuing with the theme of an area doing double duty- the multipurpose room is serving as the lunchroom and the location of all specials- art, music, library, and physical education. The other spaces in the building have been utilized for classroom space and interventions. While we're speaking about Clark, I think it's important to note that the portion of the building which is the MPR was partially funded through private donations when it became clear that a multipurpose room was needed. The addition included the MPR and a classroom, once used for music and art. Without this space, all of these specials and lunch would have to take place in kindergarten classrooms and the specialized special education program delivered in the room would be without a classroom.

Ms. Parisi displayed pictures at the Wilkins School. In the middle, you see the technology teacher pushing a cart through the hallway. Because of the press on classroom space, the building no longer has a technology or computer lab. Instead, this teacher travels to classrooms with devices on a cart. It has been estimated that a large portion of her day is inefficiently used by having to move classrooms. This change occurred when one of the portables housing 2 classrooms of 4th graders caught on fire in 2018. The building was eventually reopened, and the portables pictured now house 4 classrooms of over 80 students. Again, physical space is a large concern in all of these pictures. The picture on the left shows intervention space that is shared by multiple staff and groups of students throughout the day, often times receiving support simultaneously. Last year's conference room has been reassigned for student space, so the picture on the right shows the only conference room table in the building. This is located in an area behind the stage which is also needed for student lunch space. The room also holds many pieces of curriculum. Space that was available for book storage just a few years ago is no longer available. Leadership and staff are trying to leverage every inch of space. Storage closets are currently used as office space, in this case that of a school psychologist. The school counseling team shares one office. Storage of curriculum supplies is now in the hallway leading to the stage. They have maximized every inch of the building, and we are at a breaking point. The picture on the top left of the screen is one of the un-dampened grill openings in the classroom corridor walls where smoke and fire barriers have been compromised. On the JFAC website and the SAU39 YouTube page, there are walkthrough tours for anyone interested in seeing another visual or hearing from staff who see the direct impact of our facilities.

Ms. Parisi displayed pictures of the Amherst Middle School. Two issues that the Amherst School Board is addressing at Amherst Middle School include water damage and space constraints. On the left, you'll see 3 pictures representing the water damage from the original roof and failing HVAC unit ventilators. The other 3 pictures show use of small storage areas as offices for staff and adaptive equipment being stored in an open hallway. Article 12 includes plans for the elementary level only. Through conscious saving over the last four years into the capital reserve fund and paying particular attention to the capital needs assessment, we have identified needs and a long-term funding plan to take necessary steps in facility improvement at AMS. During this school year, AMS has experienced water damage from roof leaks and unit ventilator floods. These items were previously identified as part of the 2017 capital needs assessment and were part of the list of projects to be funded through the capital reserve funding. The board has approved funding for the design work related to these projects and the design work has begun. This will be a phased approach to first replace the original sections of the roof and the ventilators that are in most need of repair. The roof and unit ventilator replacement project is anticipated to cost more than \$1.3 million and will take the first step in making AMS watertight. A more comprehensive plan is laid out in the voter's guide detailing Article 18 and will be delivered to the board in the spring. We have needed space as a district for a long time. Space constraints have been absorbed by the use of temporary portables at all of the Amherst schools over the years. The space constraints at AMS will be lessened by moving fifth grade to the elementary school while not requiring an addition to AMS. Should Article 12 pass and the elementary project begin, the plans for updating the systems at AMS that are noted in the capital needs assessment and living document work will be funded through the capital reserve fund. A new elementary school building would allow the capital reserve funding to focus on improvements at the middle school rather than the need for those annual funds to be spread across the district.

Ms. Parisi noted, as the pictures have shown, space is needed at Clark, Wilkins, and Amherst Middle School. The funny thing about time is that 1970 doesn't seem like 50 years ago, but requirements for space have changed significantly since the buildings were built. The district has needed additional space for a number of years. In order to maintain, the administration has utilized temporary portables, moved staff and intervention space into closets, tripled and quadrupled interventionists (reading and math, speech) into one shared space, and placed integrated arts specialists on carts moving from classroom to classroom (instead of a dedicated teaching space). When an integrated arts teacher travels to individual classrooms with their materials on a cart, as you saw in the picture of the technology teacher at Wilkins, this is inefficient, often disrupts neighboring classrooms, and changes the curriculum offerings that students receive. The NH DOE requirements for space have changed since the buildings were originally designed. The proposed project allows the district to adequately meet current DOE requirements without sacrificing storage closets and intervention space to do so. Special needs educational requirements have changed dramatically over the last 50 years. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires public school districts to offer support and program options for students with a variety of needs. The district is also required to provide these services to Amherst children as early as age 3, before entering kindergarten. These programs currently encompass 8 classrooms across the district with a need for additional space. A community survey conducted in 2020 found that class sizes were the number one concern among respondents. At the time, class sizes were among the highest in the state. Amherst School District has addressed staffing to meet the desired student-teacher ratio over the last four years. Class sizes are now within a reasonable range, but this exacerbates the sacrifices to educational space. When one classroom is needed for another general education section, another program has to compromise. Since class size ratios have been addressed, additional teachers are not projected as a result of the building project. The addition or reduction of staff will be driven by enrollment demands. Enrollment projections are steady and allow the team to feel confident in the size of the proposed project. The graphic on the screen highlights our expected class sizes for FY24.

Ms. Parisi noted the building has been designed after thorough discussion of programming needs with administration and staff. The classroom design has a capacity of 889 students, while the core spaces are designed to accommodate 1,079 students. A professional, external enrollment report was completed to confirm enrollment data and the sizing of the proposed facility project for the NH DOE State Building Aid application. NESDEC (New England School Development Council) was hired to create this enrollment report. The report provides 10-year projections and will be updated annually by NESDEC. The size of the building design is in line with the projected enrollment now and in the future and provides flexibility for the type of needs that arise within the school population. Though this is not anticipated by the professional enrollment reports, should a need arise for additional space, the building will be constructed to accommodate additional classrooms on the second floor.

Ms. Parisi displayed a graphical representation of historic and projected enrollment levels by current grade configuration. Something I'd like to highlight is that enrollment has increased by approximately 100 students since 2015 at the kindergarten through 4th grade levels. After the 2022 bond failed, ASB met with community members, SAU administrators, JFAC, and the hired architectural and construction professionals. Three goals were realized. They are to: Maintain 2020 Facility Project Goals with better communication as focusing on mechanical/electrical/plumbing systems, health and safety, student learning, space constraints, to minimize cost impact

to taxpayers and address the Amherst Middle School projects in a different way, rather than total renovation. We understand this is an expensive project that will greatly impact taxpayers. We have focused on the original goals, ensuring that we do so in a manner that can gain community support. The proposed project will create a one building elementary school to house preschool through 5th grade. Amherst Middle School will house grades 6, 7, and 8. This configuration is developmentally appropriate and allows for AMS to have appropriate student space without requiring an addition which would be an added expense that the Board and JFAC did not wish to present to the community. This configuration was determined to be the most appropriate from a financial standpoint as well as supporting the students. The reconfiguration will continue to provide adequate space to conduct special services while offering privacy and dignity for every student. It continues to offer music, art, and PE to kindergarten students, and will increase the capacity in the cafeteria and gym and eliminate the need and expense of portable classrooms.

Ms. Parisi added, the consolidation of Clark and Wilkins leaves many wondering about the future of Clark. JFAC identified this question early on in the process and developed a committee to engage the community in 2021. The idea was to generate ideas for what the future of the building could be, discuss potential outcomes and concerns, and be sure to include the residents of Amherst in the future plan for the site. With that being said, Clark will remain a school with classroom space during the construction phase until the 26/27 school year. In the long-term, a number of possibilities exist. Should the bond pass, community input will be taken into consideration and formal discussions regarding possibilities between the Amherst School Board and Board of Selectmen will take place.

Now it's time to move on to the conceptual designs which are the work of Banwell Associates, a New England architectural firm with offices in NH and VT, with a proven track record of success with school facility projects. The elementary building will include a renovation of the multipurpose room, including, asbestos abatement, replacement of flooring, doors, and windows, technology, and security upgrades and a new kitchen. It will also include a new addition, making up for the bulk of the building. Significant effort has been put into the programming to ensure the size of the building is adequate for current and future enrollment. This means that administrators at the buildings have discussed what is needed. This programming has been simplified to include the meat and potatoes of what is needed. Not everyone gets what they wish for; everyone makes compromises. The detailed programming document is available at jfac.sau39.org.

Ms. Parisi displayed a picture of a repurposed MPR on left maintaining the traditional feel of Amherst. We consider this one step in the design process. This is not the end as design is an evolving effort and will continue to be refined. There will be several outside play spaces and areas for different age groups. Playgrounds will be located on the south of the building with nearby classroom hallway entrances. The grove area where over the log is played will remain. There will be space in the back field for additional outdoor classroom spaces. This side of the building also shows the parent drop off loop which will accommodate a 75-car pickup.

Ms. Parisi displayed the aerial view from Upper Wilkins field. You'll notice the bus and car loop that are designed to bring traffic off of Boston Post Road and include 2 lanes. Again, this is conceptual and shows a courtyard providing additional daylight to classrooms. This is the initial site plan that was developed with civil engineering firm of Tighe and Bond who have completed a number of successful school projects in New England. It is a priority of the administration and Board to have multiple play areas for multiple grades included in the design. The access road to

Jones Road is likely needed for emergency use and may be used to alleviate Boston Post Road traffic for certain uses at specific times of day pending further traffic studies. The Board has been in touch with the Town committees who plan to review the traffic of the area in the next several years and the 2022 report cites favorably for the combination of the two school buildings. There is increased parking for school and community events as well as parking for the recreation activities that take place on Upper Wilkins Field.

Ms. Parisi displayed a view inside the building. The left side of the picture is Boston Post Road, so the yellow rectangle at the top left of the screen represents the repurposed multipurpose room. With the addition of a proper gymnasium, after hours recreation opportunities will be able to expand after school hours. The rooms at the front of the building will be accessible for this purpose, while the back of the building will be secure. Per DOE regulations, classrooms for the youngest students are on the first floor in the blue areas. The courtyard allows for 8 classrooms on both floors to have windows for natural light and air flow, which has a positive impact on learning. As we go upstairs, you'll notice several staircases. Special service spaces will be located on both floors close to classrooms, and you'll see additional natural light from the courtyard into classrooms and hallways. The design shows 7 classrooms per grade level with 4 additional flex classrooms for years when an additional classroom is needed or when the enrollment population needs require flexibility in floor plans. Should Article 12 pass, design refinement and input sessions for community, staff, administration, and board will take place over the following 10 months. Construction is expected to begin in spring 2024 with completion in time for the 2026-2027 school year. During construction, all schools will remain open, utilizing current space to avoid rental costs of portable classrooms. Phase one includes building the new classroom spaces at the back of the property. Students remain in their current classrooms and schools at this time. Once the classroom portion is complete, the students would occupy those spaces. Construction will begin on the front portion of the building at that time. Two school years will see full construction. The new school would be occupied for the 2026-2027 school year. Placing a dollar amount on the ballot for voters requires the formation of a cost estimate that becomes the legal high-water mark for district borrowing and spending on the project. The cost of the project is \$54,250,179. This cost includes all design work, system upgrades, renovations, additions, and sitework. As a result of the necessary high-water mark figure, when deciding what amount to put forward to voters, the board has chosen to be conservative in selecting a number that includes contingencies for unknown costs that may arise. The cost estimates include several layers of contingencies that are appropriate for this phase of planning.

When the Amherst School Board first brought the project to the 2021 bond hearing, there were estimates from Lavallee Brensinger. The estimate carried a high price tag than the Board chose not to bring forward for the ballot. Through a request for proposal process for the architect of record, Banwell Associates was hired. With feedback from the community, further assessing the programming, and going back to the drawing board, Banwell presented 2 designs, both for a 2-story elementary school building at a lower cost. The design you've seen is what was selected by JFAC and ASB to reuse the multipurpose room and avoid building on the Upper Wilkins Field site. While further confirming the programming needs and analyzing the costs- including construction escalation- the 2023 warrant article is \$54,250,179 dollars. This is a guaranteed maximum price as is standard in working with a construction manager.

As has been presented tonight, since 2017 there has been an eye to the facility needs of the

district. The problems aren't going away. Systems continue to age past their anticipated life. Space constraints continue to impact education with enrollment projections remaining steady with a gradual increase construction escalation and rising interest rates are the primary cost drivers. Using a 4% construction escalation, the same project could cost \$12 million more in just 5 years and \$27 million more in 10 years. This is without any bond rate fluctuations impacting the financing.

Applying for state building aid was deemed a priority by the ASB and Administration. ASB is advocating for an increase in building aid with local legislative representatives later this week. Building projects were ranked on various criteria, including safety and security, obsolete or inefficient conditions, overcrowding/increased enrollment, operational cost efficiency, maintenance program and the District's eligibility for Free & Reduced Meals. This project was ranked 7 out of 17 applicants. This ranking from an outside source demonstrates significant need, considering our district did not receive any of the 200 points available based on eligibility for free and reduced meals. Final Awards will be based on Ranking, State Appropriation, and Voter Approval. Funding is possible but not highly likely.

The role of construction manager is important in this process for both the district as well as the taxpayers. For the district, this firm coordinates all aspects of construction, ensures site safety, and delivers a final "guide to the building" for future usage of systems and maintenance. For the taxpayer (and the district), this firm ensures a guaranteed maximum price for construction. The dollar amount on the ballot is the high-water mark. The Board knows that the community would not support coming back for more funding. In 2021, the request for proposal/qualification was completed for the architect and construction manager. Since then, we have worked closely with DEW Construction to ensure the project can be completed for the cost bonded. DEW reported on the construction market at our January Amherst School Board meeting citing that "CBRE's new Construction Cost Index forecasts a 14.1% year-over-year increase in construction costs by year-end 2022 as labor and material costs continue to rise. Escalation should stabilize to the 2%-4% range in 2023 and 2024, on par with historical averages" and the CPI for 2023 is expected in the 3-4% range. Should the project pass, the construction manager bids the project to subcontractors, agrees to a guaranteed maximum price, and is bound to that cost. The pre-construction schedule and material lead times are understood in advance with scheduled contingencies. This is how all projects are managed and DEW will not start until they know the critical path items are in hand.

The SAU administration has engaged the New Hampshire Municipal Bond Bank to assist with financing. NHMBB pools smaller bonds to reduce cost, increase efficiencies, and has proven record supporting NH school districts. By working with the New Hampshire Municipal Bond Bank, the taxpayers are granted a level of oversight that remains steady despite inevitable change in board members or administrators. The Bond Bank will review our investments and refinance, if appropriate, throughout the life of the loan. Current proposal is level debt with current interest rate of 5.75% It's good to know how building aid impacts our bond process: The Bond Bank application requires submission date of June 19 which is prior to state budget biannual finalization. Should the article pass, the district would obtain a bond anticipation note to start project design before the state budget has been finalized.

Ms. Parisi displayed the tables to show the details of the cost of the bond. For an average home of \$482,000 which is the amount determined by the Town, the cost would begin at .57 cents per thousand (\$277) and then hold steady at \$839 for the life of the loan. This is based on a 5.75%

509 interest rate provided by the New Hampshire Municipal Bond Bank for conservative budgeting
510 purposes.

511 The board's original presentation at the bond hearing and public hearing in January structured
512 bond repayment over a 30-year period. Since that presentation, we have shifted focus to a 25-
513 year period, resulting in a lower projected interest rate with an estimated savings of \$14 million
514 over the life of the loan. The board is currently focused on level-debt repayment of the bond,
515 ensuring the yearly impact is the same for current taxpayers as well as those living in the district
516 in the future. These decisions have been made with our best intentions based on current
517 information, and subtleties could change in order to save taxpayers money when final bond rates
518 are set.

519 To summarize this presentation, the Amherst School Board has supported this warrant article 5
520 to 0. We have had numerous discussions and debates on the finer points as well as the
521 overarching reasons behind coming to the community with such a project. None of us have
522 taken lightly the task to provide the town and taxpayers with a strategic, long-term investment,
523 while creating an optimal environment for educating students across the district.

524 The Moderator asked the Chair of the Ways and Means Committee, Mr. Dwayne Purvis, for a
525 report.

526 Mr. Greg Fritz, Ways and Means Vice Chair, commented that the Ways and Means Committee
527 does not support this article by a vote of one to six. Committee members unanimously agreed
528 that space issues exist at Clark Wilkins which should be addressed, however, most do not believe
529 that a strong case has been made for the town to spend \$104 million dollars, \$54 million dollars
530 plus interest to solve them. We also feel that the Amherst School Board hasn't provided detailed
531 cost benefit analyzes alternative plans. Yes, there was consideration, but they're not cost
532 analyses. Those could also address the space needs and costs more efficiently. For example, we
533 discussed one option where you could retain Clark, add a wing onto Wilkins where the space is
534 lacking and upgrade all the systems to accommodate larger space. Another option that wasn't
535 costed thoroughly is using the space that already exists at the Souhegan Cooperative Annex
536 Building and redistribute grade levels in a different configuration to relieve space issues
537 generally. Because it's not possible to include that the current post plan is the best available
538 option Ways and Means believe that the board has more homework to do prior to asking for an
539 informed vote. It seems design plans haven't accounted for special services growth or volatility.
540 Alternatively, enrollment growth may have been overestimated for the general student
541 population which could be leading to a building that is larger and more expensive than it need be.
542 More work needs to be done to present the alternative choices and general related costs to the
543 community as typically done in these matters. An alternate view of this article is a underfunding
544 of maintenance needs for an aging building with critical systems that are end of life have forced
545 Amherst residents to consider radical action. The current proposal is the only one that has been
546 vetted and can be acted upon in the shortest amount of time. While the project is not likely to
547 receive the state aid to offset the cost of the article, the Amherst School District maintains a
548 relatively favorable ranking of 7 out of 17 on the New Hampshire Department of Education
549 priority list of schools should funds become available. Thank you.

550 The Moderator opened it up to the public for comments or questions.

551 Mr. Greg Fritz, 2 Deer Hollow Road, Amherst NH, speaking as a private person, commented that

552 we heard that alternatives were considered but not costed. We have nice cost per square foot
 553 breakdowns for the proposed plan but nothing for the alternatives. It is impossible to make a
 554 financial decision about what is the most effective way to proceed. We heard the presentation
 555 tonight we want to hear evidence-based decisions, but we don't see any sources. For example, we
 556 saw tonight that HVAC is supposed to reduce absences. Cite your sources. How is HVAC going
 557 to affect absences for full day attendance. I'm not saying it does or does or doesn't. I just would
 558 like to know if you're going to cite your sources it would be nice to see these things why we're
 559 building these schools. We talked about special needs a bunch, you don't have projections for
 560 that, we don't know what we're building. We want to build the right school this time, we don't be
 561 back here in five years building a bigger school or having to find we have empty space. I'd like
 562 you to open a mechanism to donate funds. We heard about the success of donating funds and the
 563 Clark example. We have other examples around town. This has helped driving the cost to people
 564 who are cost sensitive, and I think it would increase the probability of passing this in the future. I
 565 encourage you to open an avenue to donate funds to this project because there's a lot of work to
 566 be done. We heard that the Capital Reserve funds are going to help AMS that's great. Last year
 567 you needed a bond to do it. It's nice that you now are using the CRF to do it after passing the
 568 warrant last year. I saw on your map tonight you had outdoor classrooms, what are those? How's
 569 does that compare to the portables? You complained about portables having all these features
 570 with safety and other issues your outer classrooms have those features that wasn't clear. We hear
 571 about how no one got what they wanted can you talk a little bit about maybe what you didn't get
 572 so we understand there was a compromise in fact. Thank you.

573 Ms. Parisi replied that outdoor classrooms at all of our schools where our teachers take our
 574 students out into the yard to do a variety of projects. They have discussed donations for smaller
 575 portions of the project not necessarily for the entire building. When you mentioned AMS, after
 576 the bond failed last year, they had discussions with the community and understood that we
 577 needed to change something that was we were doing. The only piece we could change was
 578 taking AMS and doing the changes over time rather than doing them all in one swoop, although
 579 would have made more sense with interest rates and construction efficiencies. When you talk
 580 about special needs enrollment, this is a tricky one. It is not a number that is readily projected in
 581 the education world. Instead, we are projecting in this building are flexible classrooms. They do
 582 not have to be for another section of third grade, it could be for a service that is required based
 583 on population or enrollment.

584 Mr. Gauthier added that Mr. Fritz is correct that they do not have the detailed costing that you
 585 see in the plan with Banwell. First, Lavallee Brensinger did not give us that detailed costing they
 586 gave us a different set and then Banwell and DEW provided costing for the project we are
 587 looking at. Lavallee Brensinger quoted them a price of \$66m for that project and \$98m overall
 588 with the middle school. The estimates were upgraded and further refined. It goes back to
 589 2019/2020 the first attempt at this was to put a \$250k warrant article for A&E and that failed.
 590 We had to go through with \$150k adding it to the budget. To say that we should have gone back
 591 to the taxpayers for more money to do detailed costing I do not think it was realistic. It was voted
 592 down that first time and we know that we have long term building things coming up and it is still
 593 something that they needed to get done. That is why we try to do it as economically as possible,
 594 and I think if Mr. Brad Prescott (Banwell Architects) and Mr. Matt Wheaton (DEW
 595 Construction) were running a tab for everything they have done for us it is beyond that \$150k.
 596 We appreciate them and their work. The CRF, yes, we have that now to work on AMS, but it is
 597 because of the shift in focus as Ms. Parisi mentioned. If a project fails, they will still have that
 598 money to do maintenance on the other building. If it were to pass, they could save up and do the
 599 expenses that have been noted in your report that were neglected for so long. We have \$1.5
 600 million to replace critical things in an emergency. We are going to use the CRF in a maintenance
 601 capacity or an emergency situation.

602 Mr. Ken Miller, 2 Old Coach Lane, Amherst NH, commented that he lives on the corner of Old
 603 Coach Lane and Jones Road. My wife and I have lived there for 42 years, this will be the biggest
 604 traffic mess possible. You will have 43 houses going to be built up New Boston and Boston Post
 605 Road towards Mont Vernon and all of this will converge right where we live. It's already a mess.
 606 If you do not believe it come, there between 8:30-9:30am or 2:30-3:00 in the afternoon, it is
 607 terrible. I do not see anything in your presentation for that.

608 Ms. Parisi displayed the Elementary School Site Plan. This plan was developed with the firm
 609 Tighe and Bond. What you'll notice on this site plan is that around the building there's a loop,
 610 it's for cars and buses and it accommodates 75 cars. What we've done in our preliminary work is
 611 stand outside Wilkins during drop-off time with a clicker and click how many cars have come
 612 through and then we gave that information over to Tighe and Bond and discussed it with Banwell
 613 to discuss how we need to get the cars off of the road. We know that area Boston Post Road
 614 traffic in that Jones corner is a problem. The town has discussed it they've done traffic studies
 615 regarding that, and it is something that we are aware of. Without site work being done to
 616 Wilkins, that does not get improved with the site work being done to Wilkins we can help that
 617 situation by getting those 75 cars queued up off of the road.

618 Mr. Ken Miller, 2 Old Coach Road, Amherst NH, added if you drive over the Wilkins School
 619 area any day and count the number of cars that are in that parking lot now, you're going to find
 620 it's around 70 to 80 cars right now. Now you close Clark School and put all the people over there
 621 what are you going to do for parking? This is not going to do it. If you think you are getting up
 622 that hill to Upper Wilkins Field, you got another thought.

623 Mr. Jeff Candito, 36 Buckridge Drive, Amherst NH, thanked the board for all the work that was
 624 done on this project, it is an enormous amount of work. Last year I supported this project and this
 625 year I do not. A big reason is because of level debt funding. There are two choices. Level debt is
 626 going to cost an extra \$10m or so to get nothing in return. He asked the board if they could
 627 explain.

628 Mr. Gauthier responded that it is more of an investment for the community. He explained that
 629 with the level principle you're paying the bulk of that up front you're paying a lot more interest
 630 up front your payments are higher and then they do waterfall over time. If you move in five or
 631 ten years your payments are considerably lower than the people that have lived here the whole
 632 time. By leveling this out, yes, it costs more money that's why we looked at the 25-year option
 633 instead to bring it down about 14 million and we don't know what the bond rates are going to be.
 634 This is going to be an investment where your rate doesn't go down so it's a little more stable. If
 635 you're in town now for better or worse but if you move into town in five years or ten years,
 636 you're still investing in that same your chunk of the school is still the same as it was for
 637 somebody that lived here since the beginning of that project.

638 Ms. Caitlin Thompson, 4 Madison Ln, Amherst NH, commented that the schools in her previous
 639 town were also in need of substantial repairs and improvements. People also moved to that town
 640 for that excellent education, however, voters repeatedly denied repairs and voted down budgets.
 641 In 2018, one of the elementary school's faucets flooded and caused extensive damage to grades
 642 K-12 and those classrooms were displaced for 3 months. They were split up between schools in
 643 town and were displaced. In 2021, the ceiling collapsed in another of the elementary schools.
 644 Thankfully it happened when no one was in the building, but it displaced all 500 students. The
 645 students were bussed to a vacant space the next town over. All of this cost was an add on to the
 646 extensive damage to the school building. I encourage everyone to view the JFAC website and
 647 FAQ specifically. Hopefully my experience in a previous town provides some perspective that
 648 despite the screaming need for action, inaction proved to be more expensive in time, money, and
 649 impact to students. Voting to inappropriately fund our schools cannot continue to be the answer.

650 Ms. Kelly Schmidt, 11 Patricia Lane, Amherst NH, referenced a PDF from the NHDOE, which
 651 states “this project will replace two old, outdated schools that have a multitude of deficiencies
 652 with a new combined Elementary School. It was studied that a new school would be a less
 653 expensive option and save the school district in yearly costs for operation and maintenance”.
 654 That is Derry and not us. They're asking for a \$74 million school. I would urge everyone who's
 655 trying to compare our schools to other schools keep these comparisons in mind. We have more
 656 things in common with other schools than just our test scores and community makeup. We have
 657 the building issues. Many of the families who have been advocating for these school buildings
 658 will not have children in these two buildings and will not have a single benefit from it. My
 659 second grader will not be into it and my kindergartener will have one year. I am still willing to
 660 put all of that money into it for the rest of my time in this community because that is how much
 661 it impacts children and staff.

662 Ms. Marilyn Gibson, 166 Mack Hill Road, Amherst NH, commented that she appreciated the
 663 two parts one is the new elementary school, and one is repairs to the Amherst Middle School.
 664 She can attest that my children went through these schools and succeeded. Their education was
 665 good for them; however, it is not a new building that will increase scores nor change curriculum
 666 for the benefit. I had a conversation with Interim Superintendent, Mr. Steven Chamberlin, and he
 667 did say that a new building does not increase scores. I also realized that the teachers have done a
 668 very commendable job with what they have, and I don't see a lackluster in education by scores at
 669 this point in time because of an issue called “Covid-19”. What I do see is another factor which is
 670 the teachers themselves. Yes, we have administration itself, so I don't think we need a new
 671 building, but I do think we need repairs to end of life factors. As a homeowner, we projected that
 672 that we would have facilities in our home that would require some timing and a budget. Previous
 673 administrators and previous board members were not being responsible in their duties. I'm
 674 looking forward to our upcoming elections in order to change all of that.

675 Ms. Parisi asked Interim Superintendent, Mr. Steven Chamberlin, if he wanted to respond to Ms.
 676 Gibson's comments.

677 Mr. Chamberlin responded that there is a video out there that talks about the impact of a building
 678 on education. What I tried to communicate is that everyday Clark-Wilkins is a barrier to
 679 Principal Murphy and her staff. What happens when you remove that barrier, there is more time
 680 to be in classrooms there is more collaboration, there is more program that's available that does
 681 in fact increase the educational experience. Yes, the building will in fact increase efficiencies and
 682 provide more time for educational leadership and ensure program has the space and dignity for
 683 all of our students. Please understand that was more of a nuanced answer than simply just bricks
 684 and mortar.

685 Mr. White added that part of that building would have more collaborative spaces. This reference
 686 is from *Teaching 2030*. “Collaboration among us is a must. A large-scale research study reported
 687 in 2009 included what we have always known, teachers learn most from each other. Researchers
 688 using 11 years of match teacher and student achievement data found that peer learning among
 689 small groups of experience and qualified teachers seem to be the most powerful predictor of
 690 student achievement over time”. In that respect, with a new building, we would see different
 691 outcomes.

692 Ms. Parisi displayed the Option 1 costs that was presented by Lavallee Brensinger back in 2020.
 693 This is the cost for just updating the systems and using portables to augment our space needs. If
 694 you look down at the bottom, the total for this is \$33 million. When we talk about construction
 695 escalation cost, if you add in the construction escalation cost, you come to over \$60 million, this
 696 is over a 20-year lifetime. Even if you were to do all of those changes, it impacts us with an
 697 unpredictable tax rate spike. What happens if the needs are included in the budget and the budget

698 doesn't pass? Does that put our education operating budget needs at risk? We would still have
 699 multiple buildings to maintain, and the inflation of project costs and the interest rates would still
 700 rise.

701 Ms. Tricia Towne, 48 Thornton Ferry Road II, Amherst NH, mentioned that she is a parent of a
 702 sixth and seventh grader AMS and also the school counselor at Wilkins. She noted her office that
 703 was displayed with other our two wonderful social workers. It's hard I'm not going to lie, our
 704 students are flexible and resilient and they are absolutely wonderful. I moved here 10 years ago
 705 to have an education for my own two kids and two years ago I got the opportunity to work and
 706 live in the same town, it's amazing I love this town. I'm thankful for that. What I would be more
 707 thankful for is for the town to support our educators and our students in this town. I have done
 708 counseling sessions in the cafeteria, on stage, outside, in our hallways that's not conducive to
 709 student learning and student engagement and confidentiality. Our kids deserve better than that.
 710 My AMS sixth grader had to double up for two weeks during the flood with his wonderful two
 711 teachers sitting up there they did it and they rocked it. My seventh grader has had indoor recess
 712 in the gym and the cafeteria leaking roofs. He asked, "mom why is this happening" she replied, "
 713 I don't know buddy". You tried to explain the democratic system to him it's hard and he knows
 714 it. Coming here tonight I had explained to him more that I'm crossing my fingers that this town is
 715 going to stand behind their students. I employ you tonight whether you've had students in the
 716 past, or whether your students are 30 years old, and they've been through these school.

717 Mr. Jason Hennessey, 455 Boston Post Rd, Amherst NH, thanked the JFAC. It is clear that you
 718 have put a lot of work into all of your efforts. He noted that from 2006-to the last year that is
 719 listed, they are down 300 students. If we are down about 300 students, have we done a full
 720 analysis of why we are running out of space.

721 Ms. Parisi responded that the enrollment is on the JFAC@sau39.com website and part of the
 722 NESDEC report. In terms of the use of the school, and when we talk about that declining
 723 enrollment since 2006 and that is town wide. When we talk about our elementary school K-4 we
 724 have seen 100 new students in the last 4 years. She asked Mr. Chamberlin if he wanted to add
 725 anything.

726 Mr. Chamberlin added that the part of the space crunch is trying to eliminate the end-of-life
 727 portables. The pressures on the space are for multiple reasons. Lately, they had an increase in
 728 first grade. They are also increasing their Kindergarten time as well as applying least restrictive
 729 environments locally for our special education students.

730 Mr. Gauthier noted that they are trying to reduce class sizes from the 20 to 16 range. It is better
 731 for students and teacher interaction.

732 Mr. Mike Akillian, 10 Old Mont Vernon Road, Amherst, NH, commented that he feels as though
 733 this is being positioned as leave things the way they are or remediate them by building a new
 734 school. That's not how the Ways and Means Committee has looked at this. We went on tours of
 735 the buildings. Some of the space issues we think are deplorable. We think the issues at AMS that
 736 have been known about since 2017 and persistent are deplorable. The question that we're raising
 737 is are there other alternatives that would cost less than 40 million dollars to put in place that
 738 would meet all the needs that people are so desperately trying to have met. Why do I say that. If
 739 this costs \$54 million dollars and, I want to give a shout out to Greg Fritz who was the person
 740 who looked at all different financing alternatives, the original financing alternative brought
 741 forward by the board was 30 years at 6%. Mr. Fritz found a way to sort of frame this at 5³/₄% for
 742 25 years to bring the cost down to a little over \$100 million dollars. It's not like we're simply
 743 against all of this. Have all the right options been presented. At \$54 million dollars, if we got the
 744 \$14 million dollars of State Aid means it'll be \$40 million dollars out of pocket. We've talked to

745 the principals and others on our tours and whatnot, and it seems that it's quite possible to have
 746 other solutions that have not been costed out, admitted by Mr. Gauthier, that could be well under
 747 40 million dollars in cost. Please bear in mind we're not against making changes we absolutely
 748 believe the changes should happen, we're just not sure that we have enough sensible choices at
 749 different price ranges to move forward. thank you.

750 Mr. Gauthier responded again; we've not fully costed them. We have had experts give us
 751 estimates on this we've had multiple experts from Lavallee Brensinger, DEW and Banwell.
 752 When you get into renovations there's a lot of unknowns. We lose a lot of grandfathering
 753 restrictions that we currently have now, so the renovations are certainly a lot more drastic than
 754 we are going to face with the new build. Yes, it could cost more or the same. We do not know
 755 what they are going to be once they break into those walls. With the estimates that we have had
 756 with the experts and a lot of the costs are similar with less disruption than what they are doing
 757 now.

758 Mr. Mozammel Husainy, 33 Eagle Rock Rd, Amherst NH, echoed Mr. Mike Akillian's points.
 759 He moved here in 2005, lured by the reputation of the schools. Both of my children have had a
 760 fairly decent education but since 2010, there is a degradation in school performance, learning
 761 experience and rising costs. For those of you to say that the citizens of Amherst are not willing
 762 to invest in their children and the school is wrong. We have been very generous, and we have
 763 been supporting ever increasing operating costs and everything else, however, the results have
 764 been declining. The last good batch from our school system was 2017 and Math/ELA scores and
 765 predictions at all on the downward slope. I do not believe any parent wants their children to be
 766 less prepared or inadequately prepared. I wish it was not as binary as people are making it to be.
 767 I wish there was a middle portion here. I would like to see a new addition new space. There is no
 768 debate that we are short of space but like we have been saying I do not believe we have looked at
 769 plausible alternatives and properly costed them out. We need space we are willing to make an
 770 investment, but it has to be done properly otherwise it would be pennywise and a pound foolish.
 771 Thank you.

772 Ms. Alison Batey, 12 Joshua Rd, Amherst NH, asked how many of you have been to a Clark
 773 Wilkins show with Mr. Allwarden. I don't think that anybody in this town would ever suggest
 774 that Mr. Allwarden is not a treasure that we have been able to hold on to for a long time. If we do
 775 not make space Mr. Allwarden will move his Music Class to a cart. All of the percussion
 776 instruments would not be able to get brought to classrooms for students. I also know that living
 777 here is a point of pride for everyone in this room regardless of what you think about this warrant.
 778 The outdoor classroom spaces that are being proposed are favored by the NH Board of Education
 779 without a clear mandate. These classroom spaces are getting us closer to what the state is looking
 780 for.

781 Mr. Terry Reiber, 15 Martingale Rd, Amherst NH, commented that he went to a Ways and
 782 Means Committee meeting, and they were talking about the cost to maintain the schools versus
 783 the cost to build the schools and I think there was a slide that said \$32 million to maintain versus
 784 \$52 million. The impression I got from the Ways and Means Committee was that the costs to
 785 maintain the schools were actually estimated by the same firms that were pitching on the cost of
 786 a new school. To me, that's like you know you need your new roof maybe windows done in your
 787 house, and you bring over a contractor that's known for building new housing. I could be wrong,
 788 but I'd like to know if they looked at the alternatives of maintaining the schools versus building
 789 new schools whether they actually engaged some kind of third party that doesn't have a boat in
 790 the race to actually truly go through and understand what the issues, timelines, and the costs
 791 based on competitive bidding.

792 Ms. Parisi responded that she is not exactly sure what number was being discussed at that
793 meeting or where that number came from, so I'll give a little bit of history about the different
794 numbers that we have seen. To start, we had the 2017 Capital Needs Assessment that was done
795 by a company called On-site Insight. From what I understand, that is the work of On-site Insight.
796 On-site Insight is not our construction manager, not our architect; they are completely separate.
797 That is where our external piece began. At the next level we were working with Lavallee
798 Brensinger, they were working on a master planning study. At that point, there were three
799 different projections that were given. Those projections were to replace the systems in the
800 building and augment with portables, the second was to do a complete renovation of Clark of
801 Wilkins and add an addition and the third was for a complete building which would house pre-k
802 through five. Without knowing exactly where those numbers are I can't really speak to it but
803 what I would like to stress here is that when you work with the construction management firms
804 and the architects the way that we have been meeting with these professionals every two weeks
805 for a year plus now you understand what their role is in the process. Their role in the process is
806 not to upsell us but to understand that they're not going to get paid if this can't pass. If we do not
807 pass this at the Town those firms will not see a penny. They're not trying to get more out of us
808 than what we are able and willing to put into the project.

809 Mr. Gauthier added, in fairness to DEW, Mr. Wheaton you can confirm but we did not ask you
810 and you did not provide costs for the projects if we needed to replace an HVAC system you did
811 not provide that for the current buildings.

812 Mr. Wheaton replied no.

813 Mr. Gauthier added that all those numbers are from previous research that we've done with the
814 On-site Insight Report, Lavallee Brensinger or the Master Plan and then certainly in-house
815 knowledge we have with our Facilities Director as well.

816 Ms. Ellen Gruzdien, 18 Buckridge Drive, Amherst NH, noted that she has spent time on the
817 school board and on the Souhegan Advisory Finance Committee. There is no conspiracy theory
818 here. This group including JFAC has done incredible work and again, they are volunteers and are
819 taxpayers. I own a preschool in town, we expanded and have doubled and tripled their wait list.
820 We are full for next fall and have about 40 kids on our wait list. It is hard to determine who is
821 going to move into town, but I can tell you there are so many littles. I warned Mr. Adam Steel
822 two years ago. I hear a lot of bouncing back and she cannot support the band aids to the building
823 anymore.

824 Ms. Elizabeth Kuzsma, 10 Nathan Lord Lane, Amherst NH, commented that the Ways and
825 Means has alluded to the fact multiple times there were no cost break downs for the alternatives
826 out there. There was no understanding of the financials is what was said. That isn't actually true.
827 We did get numbers of how much these other options would cost, the detailed breakdown that
828 wasn't had was how much exactly to the dollar is floor in the flooring estimate, how much is
829 sheetrock going to cost, how much are we going to pay for the windows in this classroom that's
830 what they wanted the detailed breakdowns for. That's unreasonable, there were multiple other
831 options. Finally, a group of people decided on which one of those options was the most
832 financially responsible and the detailed breakdown. They've also said that the board and JFAC
833 didn't do their homework on the other options. They've been looked at so many times. All of the
834 information and numbers for what has been looked at is available on the JFAC website. Just
835 because people didn't want to do their homework and dive into the work doesn't mean that it
836 hasn't been done and hasn't been happening for years. Thank you.

837 Mr. Mike Akillian, 10 Old Mont Vernon Road, replied that we did not say that we wanted the
838 same level of detail down to windows and moldings and all of that as was just pronounced. What

839 I hear happening is we're hearing cost estimates from Lavallee Brensinger who designed a very
 840 exorbitant building and wasn't rehired to continue. Instead, they went to another architect to say
 841 scale this back. Why are we being presented with cost estimates for an overpriced architectural
 842 firm that even JFAC and the board decided not to continue. It's a very legitimate question. We've
 843 been told it's on the JFAC website. We've been working on this since August. We kept saying
 844 you keep telling us all of this information that we need, it's more than the back of the napkin it's
 845 not the completely detailed cost estimates for every line item. You're telling us it's on JFAC.
 846 None of us can find it, rather than just sending us. JFAC is this vast repository of three or four or
 847 five years of data just pull it out and give it to us. The long and short of it is there's nothing to
 848 pull out and give to us because there's no framing of what the cost of alternatives would be. I just
 849 want to balance this out a little bit with we're not asking for the ridiculous but we're not simply
 850 willing to sign up for the sublime without knowing that there are a couple other options. Thank
 851 you.

852 Ms. Parisi noted that when JFAC, the Amherst School Board and the administration were
 853 working with Lavallee Brensinger Architects they brought forth three proposals. The first
 854 proposal was Kick the Can that was to make repairs to the building and then augment our space
 855 with portables that estimate was \$23 million dollars. The next estimate was to renovate and
 856 refurbish. That's renovate and refurbish Clark Wilkins and add an addition at Wilkins to
 857 accommodate the space in a proper building rather than portables. That estimate was \$64.5
 858 million. Their third estimate, option three, was to build new. We all understand what build new
 859 is, it's pre-k through five on the Wilkins site. That estimate was \$66 million dollars. When you
 860 are presented with three options one is \$23m, one is \$64m and one is \$66m. It would make sense
 861 to say that the \$64m and \$66m option are very close together especially when we're going to be
 862 sharing the cost amongst the community. When you look at those two options, JFAC, the
 863 Amherst School Board and Administration weighed in on what the positive would be to do the
 864 middle. In that moment more detailed costs were provided for the Kick the Can option which is
 865 \$23 million dollars and then more detailed costs were provided for Build New because those
 866 detailed costs were at both ends of the extremes. Rather than asking for detailed costs and
 867 spending taxpayer money to receive detailed costs on something that was less than two million
 868 dollars different. What we have are the Kick the Can detailed estimates and then we have Build
 869 New detailed estimates. What we know about the Lavallee Brensinger work is that the
 870 programming was larger than the programming that we have refined with Banwell. Since we
 871 have joined with Banwell we have as an Administration and School Board we have sat down,
 872 and we have said "what do we absolutely need". When you know what you need, you're able to
 873 cut a little bit of space. Lavallee Brensinger was presenting us with classrooms with nine
 874 classrooms per grade level this plan is presenting us with seven classrooms per grade level.
 875 When you need less space, it will cost less money. What we know is that the renovate and
 876 refurbished number was given to us in terms of how to renovate the building so you can assume
 877 that the Kick the Can cost is what goes into that. Then the addition would be the cost to build a
 878 smaller addition. That smaller addition number was not drawn out of thin air, it was figured out
 879 by what the current cost of building a small construction for a school would be. That's where that
 880 number has come from and that is why we have detailed estimates on both ends and not detailed
 881 estimates in the middle. Further, once we joined with Banwell Architects we decided to continue
 882 we as in JFAC and the school board decided to continue to the Build New option. When you
 883 have one direction that you're going you continue in that direction. Working with Banwell they
 884 provided us with two separate design options one was to use Upper Wilkins field and one was
 885 the option that you've seen today. we have detailed costs of those two options. We chose the
 886 option that you've seen today. Thank you.

887 Ms. Barbara Williams, 9 Foundry Street, Amherst NH, the domino impact of warrant 12 includes
 888 the cessation of Clark as a school. Yet the \$54m does not include any costs relative to the future

889 of Clark. Let's look at not retaining Clark as a school building. She attended a zoom at that time
890 run by the Clark School Exploration Subcommittee back in the spring of 2021. At that time, we
891 were told that there were five options that were being considered. The school board would either
892 sell Clark property to a new owner and it would be developed either for residential purposes or
893 for commercial purposes or the school board would sell it to the town or a related foundation for
894 some community purpose. There were three ideas floated, one was for a children's library, one
895 was for a senior center and a community center. Also, the Clark building would either be razed
896 and a green space would be developed or it would be razed in a completely new building would
897 be put in for a community purpose or it would be partially razed and retrofitted and maybe there
898 would be an addition again for some community purpose. If the town buys Clark, then we are
899 going to lose income that is generated by selling to a private party. What I am saying is that
900 article 12 is the first step in a whole series of things that is going to come before the community
901 as a financial challenge. Everybody wants the best for these kids but what is it going to cost.

902 Mr. Gauthier responded that no decisions have been made. We will be engaging the community
903 if article 12 passes and there are no concrete plans. Clark will still be needed as a school during
904 construction.

905 Ms. Lisa Eastland, 19 River Road, Amherst NH, inquired if an amendment could be added to the
906 ballot for \$250k for A&E costs.

907 The Moderator asked Legal Counsel, Ms. Alison Minutelli for a response.

908 Ms. Minutelli replied that it is too late to add to the warrant. It had to be posted by Monday
909 January 30th.

910 The Moderator inquired if the budget could be amended.

911 Ms. Minutelli responded that the budget could be discussed and amended but an article could not
912 be added.

913 Ms. Lisa Eastland, 19 River Road, Amherst NH, added that the question is between the Board
914 and the Ways and Means Committee. She inquired why was that not presented and put forth as
915 an option.

916 Mr. Gauthier responded that this Ways and Means group was the first that really brought this up
917 to the extent that they have over the few months. We have been talking about this for 4½ years
918 now. At this point were beyond that. It goes to a plan C, and we are going to be bonding
919 something regardless of what happens. It is larger CRF, with no funds going back to the
920 taxpayer, we will have huge budget increases, or we bond items. Those are conversations that we
921 have started to have and will continue to have.

922 Ms. Carey Glines, 17 Holly Hill Dr., Amherst NH, commented that she attended schools in the
923 SAU 39. The elementary schools look no different than when she was in attendance. I am
924 immensely proud of the education I received in Amherst and she and her husband expended all
925 they had to be here and provide the same for their three children in grades, 2, 4 and 6. None of
926 her children will benefit from what is being presented today. We support it regardless. I have
927 spent my entire career in education, 18 years in higher education and a combined six years in the
928 K-12 public system. The success of our students relies on much more than exceptional test
929 scores.

930 The Moderator asked if this is germane to the discussion of the bond or do you want to talk about
931 this in the in the budget discussion.

932 Ms. Glines continued, students require exceptional educators, that we have no doubt, they also
933 require space and air and room to maximize that learning potential, that we do not have.

934 Ms. Chelsea Borden, 28 Buckridge Dr., Amherst NH, commented that she works in facilities
935 maintenance as well as public safety and looking at these pictures is terrifying. She does not
936 know if her children will benefit from this project. They came to Amherst because of the good
937 school system with a good community. Looking at the pictures is scary. The Ways and Means
938 have brought up if they looked at other options and she is not sure if they are looking at the same
939 presentation. Putting all of the students in the same building makes sense to her. I think you have
940 done a really good job and I appreciate that as a relatively new resident.

941 Ms. Debra Keough, 16 Summerfield Way, Amherst NH, noted that she is representing the over
942 65 crowd. First of all, I want to say that I came from a very progressive high school in
943 Massachusetts. In the spirit of transparency, your 0.57 does not adequately address what the
944 whole bond dollar amount is. You say what the bond amount is, but you do not say what the
945 liability is going to be and that is misrepresentation. I would like to see the dollar amount for the
946 other years. You say its flat, then put years two through three. They really need to know what the
947 bang for the buck is going to be. I think that Covid is a moot, I don't buy it. They said Covid had
948 affected the scores.

949 The Moderator redirected Ms. Keough to talk about the facilities bond.

950 Ms. Keough noted that she hopes that past performance is not going to be an indicator of future
951 performance i.e., maintenance.

952 Ms. Shannon Gascoyne, 5 Parker Farm Lane, Amherst NH, noted that 06-07 enrollments were
953 higher than we see today. If you go to the DOE website as Mr. Gauthier mentioned we had
954 multiple portables, she believes that there were 8. Additionally, we did not have the in-house
955 special education programming that we do now. Also were sending IDEA students out of district.
956 It was also cited that healthy air impacted student learning. I wanted to note that the TH Chan
957 School of Public Health has an extensive report on the school building impacts on student health,
958 thinking and performance. I did send this to the Ways and Means Committee in November.
959 There are two arguments here, one that they did not take care of the schools, the other is that we
960 have been paying for these schools where's our money going. I just want to say that the residents
961 of this town have supported Amherst for decades and I don't want anyone to diminish that. The
962 reason our buildings are the age they are today are because they have been maintained and past
963 the point of maintenance. In terms of the money that has been paid into it, the town has favored
964 smaller projects. We were trying to get a 4th and 5th grade building but that building did not pass,
965 the Annex at AMS did.

966 Ms. Marie Panciocco, 151 Amherst St. Amherst NH, noted that she has been a property owner
967 and taxpayer for 40 years. We have supported the schools for as long as she has been here
968 continually voting yes for many years until last year and now everyone seems to be surprised. I
969 understand the timing obviously the school needs work. The irony is not lost, and they are
970 discussing a proposal that is going to make housing much less affordable for those of us that
971 have made our home here. Right now, this represents a 10% increase, on the median home tax. I
972 think everyone can conclude that this is the first in an avalanche of bonds that are coming our
973 way. The average taxes that are paid on a home in Amherst represent 50% of an annual average
974 payout of a social security recipient. That said, most retirees did not accumulate their nest eggs
975 through inheritance or through lottery winnings; they saved and planned and converted a pot of
976 money into a stream of income. Over the past several years I have seen my long term neighbors
977 move from town not because they did not have the money to pay their taxes, but they couldn't
978 justify a double digit expenditure on their budget for one item in this escalating tax culture. We

979 are going to push a lot of people out of town.

980 Ms. Kelly Bennett, 4 Crestwood Ct. Amherst NH, mentioned that she is a parent of two children
 981 at Wilkins and AMS and a Kindergarten teacher at Clark School. I have 21 five-year-olds in my
 982 class this year we are all at 20 and 21. There's been a lot of conversation about test scores and
 983 who's doing great and are we going to prove ourselves. The conditions are not great and if you
 984 think that by waiting and prolonging this need which we have in our facilities by pushing this off
 985 and asking for more credibility, my concern is what's happening with all these kids while we're
 986 waiting. We have kids coming through already, you're talking 2026, that's a lot of kids coming
 987 through. What are we doing to best support them in these couple years, so I ask you to consider.
 988 We've got a volunteer-based committee that's doing so much work for us and yet we're
 989 questioning and analyzing every little bit of volunteer time that they've done. I appreciate the
 990 people who are stepping up and who are looking through information and data and statistics. The
 991 reality is we are in a dire situation in our schools, and we need help now.

992 **The Moderator instructed the Clerk to place Warrant Article #12 on the Ballot as**
 993 **currently worded and thus, declared.**

994 **The Moderator took a motion to restrict consideration.**

995 **Mr. Steve Coughlan, 11 Eaton Rd, Amherst NH, moved to restrict consideration. Ms.**
 996 **Elizabeth Kuzsma, 10 Nathan Lord Road, Amherst NH, seconded the motion. A vote was**
 997 **taken by voters holding up their cards. Motion passed the article is restricted.**

998 The Moderator read article #13, the Operating Budget.

999 *Article 13.*

1000 *Shall the Amherst School District raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including*
 1001 *appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the*
 1002 *amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first*
 1003 *session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling thirty two million three hundred ninety*
 1004 *nine thousand four hundred eighty six dollars (\$32,399,486)? Should this article be defeated,*
 1005 *the default budget shall be thirty one million nine hundred ninety six thousand six hundred*
 1006 *thirty three dollars (\$31,996,633) which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments*
 1007 *required by previous action of the Amherst School District or by law; or the governing body*
 1008 *may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40: 13, X and XVI, to take up the issue*
 1009 *of a revised operating budget only? Majority vote required.*

1010 *Recommended by the Amherst School Board (5-0)*

1011 *Not Recommended by the Amherst School District Ways & Means Committee (0-7)*

1012 *Estimated tax impact of passing this article is: \$0.37 per thousand.*

1013 *Estimated tax impact of not passing this article is: \$0.20 per thousand.*

1014 **NOTE: Warrant Article 13 (operating budget) does not include appropriations proposed in*
 1015 *any other warrant articles.*

1016 The Moderator recognized Amherst School Board Chair, Mr. Tom Gauthier, to present this
 1017 warrant article.

Mr. Gauthier noted that right now, we are currently working in a default budget for FY23 of just over \$31 million. That is the starting point for next year's proposed budget. We are proposing a 3.9% increase for next year, about \$1.2 million to bring the proposed budget to \$32.4 million. The allocation of funds in the budget breaks down to three categories. The general fund, which directly impacts the tax rate. This is up 3.7%. Food services does not affect the tax rate as it's offset by revenue. Think of it as its own business unit within the district. This is up 0.2% so we put it in the budget knowing it should be a wash in the end. It is worth noting that we have a large surplus in food services revenue from last year. Plus, despite inflation, we are trending towards another sizable surplus this year. When you dive into the budget categories, you can see where the changes come from. Our largest increase to one budget line is in special services. This covers the additional services we need to provide for students in the district, including transportation. This does represent a large increase but as we've talked about, sending students to out of district placement with tuition and transportation is significantly higher. Plus, there are huge benefits to the students to keep them in district with their friends and peers. It's worth noting that our facilities budget has morphed over the last few years. We have seen some significant line item decreases in facilities which can appear to be cutbacks in general maintenance overall. In 2019, under Facilities Director, Mr. Roger Preston, we began to hire facilities personnel who have expertise in certain areas, electric, HVAC tech, and carpenters. When we make these hires, we are able to get a significant cost savings compared to contracting with the company for any work that needs to be done. This has brought savings to the district. We have also seen savings by working under service contracts which went up again this year but still represent savings. Staffing factors into the additions at Clark Wilkins and the reduction in budget at AMS. One of the items we added to the budget late in the conversation, in conjunction with recommendations from the Ways and Means Committee, is an investment of about \$70,000 worth of new computers. This will allow us to start a 2 to 1 program for 5th graders, while also replacing some aging devices for the one-to-one program in the rest of the middle school. We also see technology increases with additional equipment replacement and service contracts. There is also increase to our portion of the SAU budget as well.

As with any business and any budget anywhere staffing makes up a large increase in our budget. We are adding a regular education kindergarten teacher and a full-time kindergarten paraprofessional. In the current year we had to move a kindergarten teacher to 1st grade because of a larger than expected first grade class size. Adding a kindergarten level teacher and a paraprofessional back next year will allow us to bring down that kindergarten class size. This is a critical measure for students entering school for the first time. In addition to class size, literacy education and reading is a major focus with our interim Superintendent, Mr. Steven Chamberlin. For a variety of reasons, some of our youngest students are behind in grade level reading. This is a major concern as the longer this goes on the harder it is for students to catch up once they advance beyond 4th grade the focus on reading is the driver behind adding a library assistant at Clark Wilkins. This will make the library available to more students throughout the day. We are also adding a reading specialist at AMS, and we hope to use \$50,000 to partner with St. Anselm College on a Fellows program where we will have two full time certified teachers working on special education certifications. They will be in the building working with students in both reading and math to help them catch up. This is a tremendous bargain, two full-time educators for about \$20 per hour to work on the basics with kids throughout the year. It is only something we can do if our budget passes. You can see the funding of a full-time facilities technician to

work the late shift at Clark Wilkins. This will allow us to more efficiently and effectively clean that building while also having more staff hours to allow for community use. There is also the cook position at Clark Wilkins to fully staff that kitchen. We do have some savings in special services staffing, there are more program needs but less staffing needs, so we no longer need to fund a handful of paraprofessional positions.

Mr. Gauthier displayed the enrollment and class size targets. As we look at enrollment, we talked about that kindergarten class size. You can see right now it is in the red, over 20 at this point. With the addition of the kindergarten paraprofessional next year, we are going to bring that down to about 15. With the addition of that staff member, we still have 2nd and 3rd grade being artificially high at this point. We did not want to add another full-time teacher, but it does allow us to add one teacher to bring another grade level down into a respectable range. I do want to call out one additional thing to look at on this chart. you can see year over year the makeup of the number of teachers needed in each grade differs slightly. we are planning a new Wilkins school to have 7 classrooms per grade, but you can see here that those numbers go up and down for grade levels on a year to year basis. so if we need eight first grade classrooms we have flex space to borrow a room for a year. This new building is not being overbuilt but designed to flex when needed. This is a very big initiative for the board, something that's been going on for four or five years now, smaller class sizes. You can find many studies on this; the most well-known study is the Tennessee Star study. I would encourage you to go online, you will find a comprehensive long term look at effective class sizes on student performance.

In summary, the proposed budget focuses on staffing changes for enrollment and class size moderation, a focus on improving literacy education especially in those lower grades. We also have additional support in facilities and food services. we are seeing a large increase in the need for special services programming but a decrease in special services staffing. Fuel costs are staying elevated, so we've had to budget for additional costs in our bus contract and increases in our fuel budget. Our biggest technology impact is the addition of a 2 to 1 student to laptop program in 5th grade.

The default budget comes into play if the proposed budget fails. The default budget we are currently operating on is just under \$32 million. To get to this number it is a calculation based on RSA 40:13 9 (b). It starts with the last voted budget, which in this case goes back to the FY22 proposed budget then is adjusted further off of the default budget we are currently operating on. The figure is reached when you remove any one time expenditures like our capital reserve fund contribution from surplus last spring, you factor in some contractual obligations such as staff or teacher contracts and then increases and decreases in debt services. If you look at this here's default and the areas of impact student and special services is the largest increase to the default budget. This includes the student services line and 99% of the salary and benefits line item. That is driven by a grant funded position moving from a grant to the regular budget. Our increased contribution to the SAU budget is in the default as is food services, but again that one will be offset by revenue. When everything is totaled, removing the addition to the Capital Reserve Fund last year, our default calculation is an increase of 2.6% from \$31.1 million to just under \$32 million. Factory in the default budget for a 2.6% increase from FY23 you can see the additional 1.3% that gets us to this year's proposed budget.

Again, there are four primary drivers facilities and staffing, transportation, and technology. Those are offset in part by some reduced staffing at Amherst middle school. It is important to note a few extra things when contemplating the default versus the proposed budget. There are some important items in here for next year. I mentioned the Fellows program over at St. Anselm, the additional teacher and paraprofessional for the kindergarten level, the library assistant at Wilkins, and a reading specialist at AMS. If we go into a default, we cannot include items in a default budget such as transportation contracts, or fuel increases. We still have to find other ways to fund them from other areas in the budget.

The Moderator asked Chair of the Ways and Means Committee, Mr. Dwayne Purvis, for a report.

Mr. Purvis turned it over to Ways and Means Vice- Chair, Mr. Jeff Candito.

Mr. Candito responded that the Ways and Means does not support this article by a vote of 0 to 7. there are three main points that I want to make. First some committee members believe that the proposed budget is not tied to targeted outcomes more strategic plan and that the budget represents a business as usual spending request. Second, it is a \$1.2 million increase to the current budget. What was not so clear is that amount does not include any raises for any teachers or any support staff under ASSA. That is an important point here because the Ways and Means wants all the staff to get a raise next year. For that to happen, it has to be more than that 1.2 million, but more like a \$2 million dollar increase. The third point, the proposed budget includes having to spend \$1.7 million for the SAU staff in the Brick School. Many of us on the Ways and Means believe that the SAU budget should be presented as a separate warrant article so that voters can decide on it separately. The school boards, including the Amherst School Board have chosen not to let voters' vote. The Ways and Means believes that the SAU budget should be subject to the same voter review and approval as the other school budgets.

The Moderator asked for public discussion.

Ms. Alison Batey, 12 Joshua Rd, Amherst NH, inquired if that is salary and benefits.

Mr. Gauthier replied correct.

Mr. Greg Fritz, 2 Deer Hollow Road, Amherst NH, noted that the Ways and Means has created a tax estimator.

Mr. Mike Akillian, 10 Old Mont Vernon Road, Amherst NH, asked Mr. Gauthier for clarification. You listed a number of things like the Fellows program from St. Anslem's and you said if this budget doesn't pass, we cannot do that. The reality is what you get voted is a bottom line dollar amount and you can allocate that money any way you want.

Mr. Gauthier clarified that we can't do it anyway because there is not a line item in there. They can hire a reading specialist because we have staffing at AMS, but I don't believe that we could do the Fellows program.

1155 Mr. Chamberlin added that is correct that they have no place to transfer.
1156

1157 Mr. Akillian questioned if you do not have a line for literacy, you can't simply put that in there.
1158

1159 Mr. Chamberlin added that they have added a line to track this but without approval and Ms.
1160 Minutelli just nodded that they do not have a line to transfer it to.
1161

1162 Mr. Akillian noted that this is all additives, one of the things we looked at is our sister
1163 community of Hollis Brookline. They are socioeconomically the same as us, pretty much the
1164 same number of students, multiple buildings et cetera. They're educating their kids every year for
1165 \$5 million less than we are, and their outcomes are equal to or better than ours. We keep looking
1166 at additive things. At some point we also have to start saying how might we bring our costs
1167 down, not \$5 million, but let's weigh the balance between everything we are spending and
1168 burdening the taxpayers with.
1169

1170 Ms. Ellen Gruzdien, 18 Buckridge Dr., Amherst NH, noted that there is a tremendous amount of
1171 knowledge that isn't being shared when some comments and questions come up. This is a
1172 repeating theme that we need to do more with less. She inquired if SAU #39 Business
1173 Administrator, Ms. Amy Facey, could speak to Mr. Akillian's last comment.
1174

1175 Ms. Facey explained that the board sent back some comments on that analysis. There is
1176 definitely some work that you folks need to do with making that comparison because what was
1177 added up were the three school district budgets as well as the SAU budget. You are double
1178 counting that but because the SAU budget was greater it is having more of an impact. In
1179 addition, the comparison that is being made in Hollis Brookline, you were looking at FY22 and
1180 comparing them to SAU 39's FY23 numbers. There is some work we can do, and I know the
1181 board did send back some comments to Ways and Means so before that document gets published
1182 by Ways and Means we probably should work together on that.
1183

1184 Mr. Dwayne Purvis, 145 Hollis Rd., Amherst NH, countered that we are talking about something
1185 that has not been published yet and I apologize but want to add a point of clarity. We were
1186 comparing FY23 to FY23, we were comparing the total SAU 39 cost to SAU 41 with \$57m to
1187 \$52.9m. That is nearly a \$5 million dollar difference. Our SAU cost is buried in each of the
1188 district's cost.
1189

1190 Ms. Facey replied as is theirs. She spoke to the Business Administrator in SAU #41 and that
1191 snapshot that you showed us includes the SAU budget as well as the school district budgets.
1192 Their SAU budget is embedded in their school budgets as well as ours. So, when you add up the
1193 SAU budget and the school district budget in both, you are double counting the SAU budget.
1194

1195 Mr. Purvis added that they will take a look at that for clarity. This year it is \$2.9 million their
1196 SAU budget is \$2.1 million.
1197

1198 Ms. Marylyn Gibson, 166 Mack Hill Road, Amherst NH, commented that she has a problem
1199 with this budget, and it centers on curriculum and administration. There needs to be a real big
1200 moratorium on curriculum, the money spent for curriculum. I don't know if everybody

understands what PD development is so I'm going to quickly go over that. I believe in the AEA union contract there is money for each teacher to go and look for their own professional development. There is money in our budget for PD, I believe that we have a new math program and that there is a new science program or social studies program in AMS. My concern is stick with the materials you have. You already have voted, the board, on keeping and changing materials. It seems to be year after year, the curriculum goes up. You need to prove to the citizens, the taxpayers, that the one you voted on is the one you want to use, not the one that you want to spend money on and support a publishing company. I have spoken with Mr. Chamberlin about this. CTE is extremely important. I heard today that in 25 years AI is going to be the way to go. You need to prepare the kids through a good technological background, focus on that and you might have success.

Mr. Mike Akillian, 10 Old Mont Vernon Road, Amherst NH, commented that he will send information to Ms. Facey, data on the 2020-2021 Hollis Brookline versus the SAU 39 that she reported into. There is other analysis that has been going on maybe there is something there that should be looked at, but we are within 100 students of one another and the difference in our expenditures versus theirs, is a \$5,662,297 difference.

Ms. Facey cautioned that they have a unique situation in SAU 39 where we have students that are tuition into the Amherst School District from Mont Vernon. There is about \$1.5 million in tuition that is paid from the Mount Vernon School District to the Amherst School District. That is being budgeted as an expense in Mont Vernon and that is being included there, also those costs that are associated with educating those students in the Amherst School District so that is also an expense. Then there is an offset in revenue. It is not as simple as just adding all those numbers up because you're double counting expenses. This report is not published, I would definitely suggest that we have more of a conversation with the board and the Ways and Means to work out the details in that. We do other cross billing and Hollis Brookline probably does too. In doing a simple apple to apples comparison across districts you can't really do that simply the way that you are speaking.

Ms. Amy Hanson, 12 Cricket Corner, Amherst NH, commented in regard to professional development. We are one of the lower schools in this area when it comes to professional Development. We as teachers have to maintain our certifications to be hired and keep our jobs, it is 40 to 45 hours and 30 hours every three years in addition to every certification you hold. That's an additional 30 hours per certification. I have to do my 75 hours which is my basic certification and then an additional 60 hours to hold my special ed certification as well as my math specialist certification. I do need that money to be able to keep my certification and do my job. We do offer great training in District but there are things that are more specific to my job or more specific to things that we haven't worked on or areas that I would like to focus on with my students. I encourage that we do not make any changes to professional development at this point unless it's going to be more for the teachers to use to maintain their certification by the DOE.

Mr. Mike Akillian, 10 Old Mont Vernon Road, Amherst NH, noted that this is SAU to SAU comparison. If there are transfers or costs that are crossed out it's a wash.

Ms. Facey replied that it is not though. It is tuition in Mont Vernon that is an expense and then expenses associated with educating those students in the ASD and revenue that is offset by that expense in Mont Vernon. You are budgeting twice for expense and once for revenue. If you are going to add all of the districts you have to discount the Mont Vernon tuition.

The Moderator asked if anyone would like to speak to this warrant article.

Mr. Gauthier noted that this budget continues to focus on class sizes something that we've been moderate in our increases. We very easily could have added two teachers last year two teachers the year before. We are trying to be respectful of the facilities projects we have going on so it's a maybe not fulfilling that strategy that we want all the way but trying to bridge the gap as best we can. We have the new math program this year because we realized the math program, we were getting prior to this with the results wasn't as good as we want. We're in a good spot with math in in that first year of the pilot program. Also, the reading initiatives been a newer part of our strategy.

Mr. Chamberlin responded that this is a step in that direction to get 90% of students on grade level by 4th grade. This is the right place at the right time to invest in those supports. This is a beginning of a plan not a vacuum but a targeted plan. We are ready to attack this and gets this done.

Ms. Lisa Eastland, 19 River Road, Amherst NH, asked why I'm not seeing anything from the Ways and Means Committee suggesting that there be a line item in this budget to pay for further investigation to provide the citizens of Amherst data that they have said is their main sticking point for not building a new school.

The Moderator asked Ms. Eastland if she is making a proposal.

Ms. Eastland responded that she does not know how to word it and understands Mr. Gauthier's point. She inquired if that came up from the Ways and Means and did the board decide not to do it.

Mr. Gauthier responded that they did not discuss that.

Mr. Purvis agreed that they did not discuss it.

Ms. Shannon Gascoyne, 5 Parker Farm Lane, Amherst NH, inquired if the board had data on the state contribution and the resident tax increase over time.

Mr. Gauthier responded that they have some rough numbers, but the state funding has gone down. About 10 years ago their funding was about 9% of our local tax rate. It is now down to about 4-5% of our education taxes that we pay. He displayed the ten-year Amherst tax history. He noted that state funding decreased from 9.97% to 5.5% from 2012 to 2022.

Mr. Bob Grunbeck, 6 Fair Oaks, Amherst NH, inquired about the conversation about literacy and math. He asked if there was anything specifically in the budget that addresses or gets those kids that are excelling.

Mr. Gauthier responded that enrichment specialists are pushing into classrooms and pulling students out of them for enrichment, for example Reading Club. Those programs are planning on staying in the budget.

The Moderator asked for other comments or questions.

Ms. Marilyn Gibson, 166 Mack Hill Road, Amherst NH, commented I appreciate the fact that a lot of people in their own profession seek to get more knowledge. I was a teacher for 29 years, I went between different school districts from Newton, Massachusetts to Rhode Island, Woonsocket. I also came up here and taught at a public school for 16 years. When I was in my 16-year career as a teacher of grades five-eight to teach ELA and Social Studies I was very grateful for the fact that we had deliberative sessions like this that we were encouraged to attend. We also had several years where we would not have a contract. My real concern for PD is when we did not have a contract we did not stop going to PD and I'm sure that the teachers here do the same. I do know that Mr. Chamberlin, the board, community, the SAU has tried to support their teachers. They're doing it the wrong way. Stick with the programs you have now and stop spending money on new things because they're on the cutting edge. It's a waste of taxpayers' money it's a waste of the teachers' time where they could be collaborating and picking each other's brains. What happens is we learn more from our cohorts than we do from publishing companies. They're like drug pharmaceuticals.

The Moderator instructed the Clerk to place Warrant Article #13 on the Ballot as currently worded and thus, declared.

The Moderator took a motion to restrict reconsideration.

Mr. Tom Gauthier, 8 Beaver Brook Circle, Amherst NH, moved to restrict consideration. Ms. Kelly Schmidt, 11 Patricia Lane, Amherst NH, seconded the motion. A vote was taken by voters holding up their cards. Motion passed; the article is restricted.

The Moderator read Article #14.

Article 14. Shall the Amherst School District approve all cost items included in the collective bargaining agreement reached between the Amherst School Board and Amherst Education Association (AEA) which calls for the following estimated increases in salaries and benefits at the current staffing level over the amount paid in the prior fiscal year.

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Estimated Increase</u>
2024	\$691,834
2025	\$648,309
2026	\$640,399

and further to raise and appropriate the sum of \$691,834 for the 2023-2024 fiscal year, such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in salaries and benefits required by the new agreement over those that would be paid at the current staffing levels? Majority vote required.

Recommended by the Amherst School Board (5-0)

Not Recommended by the Amherst School District Ways & Means Committee (3-4)

Estimated tax impact of passing this article is: \$0.29 per thousand.

The Moderator recognized Chairman Mr. Tom Gauthier to present this warrant article.

Mr. Gauthier noted that tonight will be our second bite at the apple with a three-year contract. It expired before the current school year that we are in. It was on the ballot last year for a 4-year agreement that was voted down. The teachers are operating on status quo, no raises same salaries, same professional development. As a board, we discussed the goals we wanted to accomplish with the new CBA. First, to increase student learning time. Second, we wanted to fix a broken salary schedule. We wanted to make us more competitive with surrounding districts, especially on the starting steps in the scale. Lastly, we wanted to increase teacher instructional time to develop their abilities which in turn benefit students. I want to thank Ms. Amy Hanson, AEA Representative, and Mr. Grant Dustin, ASSA Representative, for their partnership in a long negotiation cycle.

First, we fixed the salary scale by leveling them out vertically and horizontally. The main fix was removing what we called a jump step. This is where you were seeing teachers get increases when they hit the top level of the scale of 10-13%. This was not sustainable in any environment. It also resulted in some anomalies where teachers with a bachelor's degree, when they hit their jump step, they would be making more than any teacher with a master's degree in the same step. Teachers can still get to that same earning potential, but it is going to take an extra two to three years to get there. We have also reset the entry points to make us more competitive. Our new base salary is \$45,000 and goes up \$1,500 for each degree differential. This is important because we see upwards of six teachers leave each year. There is no broad-based COLA, in this first year of the contract because of the salary reset. We did add a 3½% increase in year 2 and then a 3% increase in year 3. Last year's contract saw salary increases anywhere between 6 and 13%. In this new proposal, in this first year, 81% of our teachers will see increases from 3 to 7%. In addition to better starting pay, we have increased the training for those new teachers with three additional days before school begins for their first year in the district. For all teachers we have added another day in the summer in year 2 and a second day in year 3. Most importantly, we have picked up additional time in the classroom for students. We are adding a full student day starting in year two of the contract. There will be 176 instructional days in year 2 of the contract. We are getting rid of six Late Start days between years 2 and 3 with the addition of professional development days in the summer. This is the equivalent of two more classroom days. Lastly, we have stopped new enrollments of our most expensive health care plan and we are offering a less expensive high deductible healthcare plan with an HSA for all teachers.

Mr. Gauthier continued, overall, we tried to change a lot of things and we succeeded in two major areas the calendar and the salary scale. If this doesn't pass, morale takes a huge hit, this inevitably impact students. No contract needs a second year in a row with no increase for teachers. We all know how difficult that makes things in the current economy. it also means a third straight year where resources and energy are dedicated to negotiating a contract. This is not ideal with the new Superintendent coming into the district. Lastly, our ability to hire and retain teachers is diminished even further. We have already seen a major reduction in the number of new applicants, keeping them will be even harder for us. He noted the difference between the Amherst School District and Hollis Brookline as a third-year teacher in both districts. If you were in this district and started two years ago, and next year will be your third year, you started on step one and this year he will be on step one because of last year's failed contract. You will be on step one again next year for the third year in a row making just under \$42,000 (\$41,717). Comparatively, if you were in the Hollis Brookline School District, they have not had any delayed contracts. You were also in your third year, but you are already up on Step 3. You are making an additional \$9,000 more than what you'll be making in Amherst next year because you are on step three with a different salary schedule. At this amount compounded, this becomes a lot of money. We know this contract is not perfect and it was a pretty tough negotiation.

The Moderator asked the Chair of Ways and Means, Mr. Dwayne Purvis, for a report.

Mr. Purvis responded that Mr. Akillian will be responding for the Ways and Means Committee.

Mr. Akillian mentioned that the Ways and Means does not support this article by a vote of 3-4. Of all the warrant articles, this is the one that got the most debate and discussion. One thing we all agreed upon is how much we value and support our teachers. We also acknowledge a challenging environment which teachers has operated in the past several years, namely, there's been a lack of strategic planning and targeted academic outcomes which could have provided focused and consistent direction for teachers. There has been an array of educational experimentation that has adversely affected students and teachers and could have been constrained through effective governance and oversight. Teachers bore the brunt of the challenges of Covid and continue with the many needs of parents and students dealing with the crisis, not to mention their own. The management style of the previous SAU administration turned increasingly autocratic. For example, teachers being threatened with dismissal if they spoke to anyone outside of the schools at a time when more transparent community wide collaboration was called for. Also, we unanimously support the proposed AEA contract changes that are redistributed the salary schedule to compensate lower paid teachers more equitably. We certainly applaud the increase in learning time covered by the proposed contract. If this article is defeated these changes may not going to effect until a new contract is ratified. At the same time, we believe that ASD's costs are high and ought to come down. That effort will be thwarted if the AEA contract is not well scrutinized and trimmed as other cost drivers. Here is the reason. Of the \$32 million spent on ASD schools, almost \$18 million or 55% of the total budget is driven directly by this AEA contract. The total salary and benefits portion of the \$32 million is \$25.6 million of that the AEA contract portion represents 70% of all salaries and benefits. This article represents a very big chunk of future budgets in Amherst taxes. We support and value excellence in teaching as the foundation for excellent academic outcomes. Amherst teachers are amongst the highest compensated in the State, comparable to Hanover NH who's academic performance tops

in the state and higher than ours. Instead of reducing costs, this AEA contract increases costs. If approved in 2024 it will increase costs by \$691,000, in 2025 it will increase costs by another \$648,000, and in 2026 it will increase costs by yet another \$640,000. All told in the next three years it will increase baseline costs by \$2 million. These increases would be in addition to the \$1m increase proposed in the operating budget covered in article 13. Also, if approved, it will become an ongoing contractual obligation. This means those costs must be built into ensuing default budgets and proposed budgets in effect perpetuating these costs unless they are changed through negotiations between the union and the school board. The proposed contract in its current form increases cost significantly. If we believe the costs and related taxes should come down then any substantial cost cutting would have to come from the remaining 45% of the budget which include support staff, non-union personnel, and non-personnel costs. Such a narrow focus may prevent any meaningful cost cutting or risk unanticipated degrading of those particular activities.

Mr. Peter De Bruyn Kops, 377 Boston Post Rd, Amherst NH, commented that last year I spoke in favor of this collective bargaining agreement. As he understood it the students were getting more instructional time. Sometime after that, somebody told me that I misunderstood it. As Mr. Gauthier mentioned there are a lot of moving parts. He inquired how much time will teachers be spending with students.

Mr. Gauthier responded overall in this contract we are removing 6 Late Starts. We have added more teacher instructional time which has a benefit to students, and the second year of the contract we are adding a full student day. That will take us from 175 instructional days to 176. We are also adding the equivalent of two extra days by removing the Late Start days. So, three Late Start days go away in the second year of the contract which results in an extra day. In the final year of the contract, we are going to go down another three Late Start days. So instead of having 10 by the end of the contract we will have four Late Start days. The main difference from this year to last year was that we had five snow days. We had discussed not making those up at the end of the year that is in the current contract language. As it stands now, it is at the board's discretion to make those days up. As we go forward it will be a discussion point. The board intends that snow days depending on when they fall will be made-up going forward. That will give us from 170 days to 176 by the end of the contract.

Ms. Colleen Tapley, 1 Beechtree Way, Amherst NH, noted that I am faculty in the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts, and I prepare preservice teachers. I want you to know that we pay our teachers about \$30,000 less than we do in Massachusetts. I made \$52,000 my third year of teaching and that was about 20 years ago. The lengths these teachers go to for our children, I can't tell you. My son had a really bad injury last year and his second grade teacher drove to our house to come check on him. In the pandemic the things these teachers did for our kids, I can't even tell you. To say that we value them and the excellence that they bring into our classroom and not give them a contract is disgusting. Inflation has gone up and we don't have a contract for them. When I worked in Massachusetts they had to back pay when we didn't have a contract. The year I spent in Billerica without a contract I got my back pay, and these teachers don't get that back pay from this year. If you value them, you will give them that contract.

1474 The Moderator asked for other comments.

1475

1476 Ms. Kelly Schmidt, 11 Patricia Lane, Amherst NH, commented that last year the Ways and
1477 Means did not support this. As Chair of the Ways and Means Committee last year, I was very
1478 vocal about not supporting last year's contract. I am in support of this year's contract. I agree in
1479 many ways that there are steps to look deeply at to ensure that our greatest cost is kept in line.
1480 We cannot make all of those changes in an instant because if we do that, we are going to have
1481 catastrophic failure. The changes that this contract makes are in the directions that are desired by
1482 many people as well as creating that balance of supporting our teachers. This is only a 3-year
1483 contract, last year's was a five-year contract.

1484

1485 Mr. Gauthier responded that it was a 4-year contract.

1486

1487 Ms. Schmidt continued, that gives us a shorter period of time before we go back to the table. It
1488 has been brought up to have negotiations every year, it is really hard, and nobody wants to do
1489 that. You also want consistency things going forward. She inquired why we do a flat COLA rate
1490 across all of the steps and the differences compared to other schools.

1491

1492 Mr. Gauthier responded that they are right in line and in some instances are less in our COLA
1493 percentage. The way this teaching contract works is that every year you are gaining more
1494 credentials, and you are earning the experience by going from one step to another. The broad
1495 based range is referred to as a COLA, that provides the same to everybody based on the cost of
1496 living. It is not tied to any inflationary rate. I think our numbers are right in line with other
1497 districts, Bow, Windham, and Hollis Brookline.

1498

1499 Mr. Greg Fritz, 2 Deer Hollow Road, Amherst NH, mentioned that he is in favor of this warrant.
1500 The total cost that you are seeing over the three-year term but over four years is a little less
1501 impactful. I feel like this is not a lot of raise considering the fact that the dollar is falling pretty
1502 fast in the next two years. These are complicated contracts and I appreciate the work that
1503 everyone did on all sides. Let's have a three-year discussion now, let's talk about what needs to
1504 be done this time the next time this comes up so it is more unified. There are good things on both
1505 sides, but it would be nice to have an ongoing conversation during non-contract years. We want
1506 to support our teachers the right way and we want to pass that message on, and don't want to hurt
1507 morale.

1508

1509 Ms. Amy Hanson, 12 Cricket Corner, Amherst NH, remarked that I am a teacher here and the
1510 AEA President. I just wanted to say that I have done negotiations in Amherst for many years and
1511 many contracts. I appreciate the hard work by the board. It is a lot of work, and it did kill me a
1512 little bit when I heard people say to have a one year contract. We spent about 30 hours together,
1513 and that is not including the hours we worked on our own to prepare. It is costly, we are
1514 educators, not negotiators. We do not want to come to the table again to save a percent or half
1515 percent here or there. It is not perfect, but I do feel that it is fair and we do hope that the Town of
1516 Amherst also feels that it is fair.

1517

1518 **The Moderator instructed the Clerk to place Warrant Article #14 on the Ballot as**
1519 **currently worded and thus, declared.**

The Moderator took a motion to restrict consideration.

Ms. Victoria Parisi, 3 Church Street, Amherst NH, moved to restrict consideration. Mr. Mark Vincent, 2 Nathaniel Dr., Amherst NH, seconded the motion. A vote was taken by voters holding up their cards. Motion passed the article is restricted.

The Moderator read Article #15.

Article 15. Shall the Amherst School District, if Article 14 is defeated, authorize the governing body to call one special meeting, at its option, to address Article 14 cost items only? Majority vote required.

Recommended by the Amherst School Board (5-0)

Recommended by the Amherst School District Ways & Means Committee (4-3)

The Moderator recognized Mr. Gauthier to present this article.

Mr. Gauthier discussed that he has a short presentation. This will appear on the ballot along with the AEA CBA. If the AEA agreement fails, this article if it were to pass would give the board the option of calling a one-time special meeting. We would lose all the gains we made in terms of educational days, professional days etcetera. This would include a Public Hearing, Deliberative Session, and Voting Day over the summer to discuss only salary items for teachers.

The Moderator asked for the Ways and Means Committee Report.

Mr. Purvis responded Mr. Mike Akillian will give this report.

Mr. Akillian mentioned that the Ways and Means supports this article in a vote of 4-3. Some Ways and Means Members see no need for taxpayers to incur the cost of a special warrant deliberative session and election in which fewer voters are likely to weigh in on what was already decided upon by a greater number of voters. Conversely, if the AEA contract is voted down this meeting could be a mechanism whereby the school board and union could find a way to provide some additional compensation to teachers until the next contract is renegotiated.

The Moderator opened it up to the public for comments or questions.

The Moderator instructed the Clerk to place Warrant Article #15 on the Ballot as currently worded and thus, declared.

Ms. Victoria Parisi, 3 Church Street, Amherst NH, motioned to restrict consideration. Mr. Mark Vincent, 2 Nathaniel Dr., Amherst NH, seconded the motion. A vote was taken by voters holding up their cards. Motion passed, the article is restricted.

The Moderator read Article #16.

Article 16. Shall the Amherst School District approve all cost items included in the collective bargaining agreement reached between the Amherst School Board and the Amherst Support Staff Association (ASSA) which calls for the following estimated increases in salaries and benefits at the current staffing level over the amount paid in the prior fiscal year:

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Estimated Increase</u>
2024	\$108,214
2025	\$68,769
2026	\$68,879

and further to raise and appropriate the sum of \$108,214 for the 2023-2024 fiscal year, such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in salaries and benefits required by the new agreement over those that would be paid at current staffing levels? Majority vote required.

Recommended by the Amherst School Board (5-0)

Recommended by the Amherst School District Ways & Means Committee (7-0)

Estimated tax impact of passing this article is: \$0.05 per thousand.

The Moderator requested Mr. Gauthier to present this article.

Mr. Gauthier responded that this is a three-year arrangement with the Amherst Support Staff Association. There was one main theme in discussions and that was attracting and retaining employees. The current first step for our ASSA employees ranges from \$12.23 per hour to \$16.64 per hour depending on the position. They still are not fully staffed in some of these positions. Keeping employees has been very difficult in that current salary scale. As such we are proposing a complete restructure of this salary schedule. It will increase the starting pay all but one step, the very first position for kitchen workers. We're going to reduce our overall number of steps from 40 down to 20. It's going to make it a lot easier clerically. We would have folks routinely take three-step increases in one year for a variety of reasons now it's going to be one step every single year and it's also going to provide a little bit more meaningful raise every year they go up one step. We're going to increase the per hour benefit for personnel with Associates or bachelor's degrees. There's a differential if you have a degree so we're going to increase that and then we're also increasing the hourly rate for when a support staff member is thrusting away regular teaching position if they're taking on a teacher role, we're increasing that hourly rate from \$2.75 to \$5 an hour on top of what they're currently making. There are some other smaller things in there, but this is really the main focus. I believe it's a relatively small cost. It's going to allow us to attract more employees, keep those employees and ensure that the people that we entrust to a lot of one-on-one time with our students especially those paraprofessionals that want to be here and then they can actually stay.

The Moderator requested a report from the Ways and Means Committee.

Ms. Gibson remarked that Ways and Means very much appreciates the sustained efforts of members of the ASSA support staff to provide high quality services across our schools. She believes the elements of this article deserve strong public support so that means 7-0.

The Moderator noted that we can have public discussion.

Ms. Marilyn Gibson, 166 Mack Hill Road, Amherst NH, commented that she appreciates the fact that their compensation has gone higher. I do realize that during the "Covid experience" that some teachers did not write any lessons for any of this or for some of the paraprofessionals that were in the class, especially on a one-to-one basis, I know it.

I am very familiar with the paraprofessionals in the school district and feel that they are not appreciated. That is low morality, you need to up their compensation. They put in many hours just like the teachers did. Both of the groups want that appreciation extended to all of the teachers and I extend that too because virtual teaching is not for everybody.

You have a bunch of excellent paraprofessionals in the classroom, but you are not supporting them like you do the teachers to the classroom. Sometimes these paraprofessionals are exactly that, teachers with instructions from the regular teacher or even special ed but from personal experience you lose a lot. Just because you have a competitive job market doesn't mean you should raise what you pay them. You raise what you pay them because of their experience and their love of what they do. Believe me, I've heard from a lot of them that they love what they do because they give support. I watched a teacher get a young person in fourth grade and she was happy with the improvement she gave to that little boy and established a relationship especially during the Covid routine.

The Moderator instructed the Clerk to place Warrant Article #16 on the Ballot as currently worded and thus, declared.

Ms. Victoria Parisi, 3 Church Street, Amherst NH, motioned to restrict reconsideration. Mr. Mark Vincent, 2 Nathaniel Dr., Amherst NH, seconded the motion. A vote was taken by voters holding up their cards. Motion passed the article is restricted.

The Moderator recognized Mr. Gauthier to present warrant article #17.

Article 17. Shall the Amherst School District, if Article 16 is defeated, authorize the governing body to call one special meeting, at its option, to address Article 16 cost items only? Majority vote required.

Recommended by the Amherst School Board (5-0)

Not Recommended by the Amherst School District Ways & Means Committee (2-5)

Mr. Gauthier noted if warrant article #16 fails it gives them the option to host that meeting.

The Moderator recognized Ms. Marilyn Gibson to give the Ways and Means Report.

Ms. Gibson responded that the Ways and Means voted 2-5. It is our hope that this meeting is not necessary because article 16 passes.

The Moderator asked for public discussion or comments.

Ms. Shannon Gascoyne, 5 Parker Farm Lane, Amherst NH, asked if the special meetings were contractual obligations.

Mr. Gauthier responded for the AEA, yes for the ASSA, no.

The Moderator instructed the Clerk to place Warrant Article #17 on the Ballot as currently worded and thus, declared.

Ms. Victoria Parisi, 3 Church Street, Amherst NH, motioned to restrict reconsideration. Mr. Mark Vincent, 2 Nathaniel Dr., Amherst NH, seconded the motion. A vote was taken by voters holding up their cards. Motion passed the article is restricted.

The Moderator read article #18.

Article 18. Shall the Amherst School District raise and appropriate the sum of up to six hundred five thousand dollars (\$605,000) to be added to the Amherst School District Capital Facilities Repair, Maintenance and Improvement Expendable Trust Fund for repairing, maintaining, and improving capital facilities, previously established in March 2003? This sum to come from the June 30, 2023 year-end unassigned fund balance (surplus) available for transfer on July 1, 2023. No amount to be raised from new taxation. Majority vote required.

Recommended by the Amherst School Board (5-0)

Recommended by the Amherst School District Ways & Means Committee (7-0)

Estimated new tax impact of passing this article is: \$0.00 per thousand.

Estimated new tax impact of not passing this article is: -\$0.26 per thousand.

The Moderator recognized Mr. Gauthier to present this warrant article.

Mr. Gauthier noted that we talked about this earlier. Our Capital Reserve Fund is going to allow us to continue some of that long-term planning to maintain the current facilities, in particular, the work that we need to do at AMS. This article calls for \$605,000 to be contributed to the CRF from our Unassigned Fund Balance at the end of the year. There's no additional impact on taxes with the passage of the article. It is simply us using a portion of the unused money at the end of the year to be able to fund this. A lot of that's going to come from revenue that we have at the end of the year as opposed to expenses that are left over. It's essentially a rainy day fund that was started years ago and we've made a diligent effort the last three years to put money into it. You can see right now we have a balance of about \$1.4 million. This will put us up to about \$2 million before we start to take money out for the roof project and unit ventilator project phase one that is currently in the planning stages.

Mr. Gauthier displayed the Capital Needs Assessment Funding Plan. As you look at this list, here are the big projects that are coming up. The amount of \$1.6m is an estimate right now. Part of that immediate goal is to make AMS watertight. The Ways and Means mentioned it tonight that this building is not watertight. It's not out of neglect, it's out of the ability to do small repairs. We're at the point now where small fixes just don't work. It's an immediate goal to make it watertight, this is the priority. There are other projects that will come down the line. Doing this project now will likely change the Master Plan. All these projects that are listed may not happen in the next five years. You can still see the overall story that we have some major withdrawals coming up a couple of years. If everything did stay the same, we're looking at about \$1.3m for a variety of projects in FY26. AMS is not neglected and has not been neglected in the past. It's just simply time for some of those bigger repairs that we've talked about. We're trying to strategically use this fund to repair AMS while putting the elementary school project to the bond vote because that's the best way to address the space needs that we have at the school. It takes care of the structure at Wilkins, but it also allows us to move fifth grade down into Wilkins which clears up a lot of space in AMS. It also gives us some more flexibility for programming needs there. If the bond passes, it also allows us to use this CRF to focus on AMS for the next number of years. If the Wilkins project does not pass and space issues remain in both schools, we also have a much more difficult task of making these CRF funds stretch a lot further in the short term to cover all three of the Amherst buildings, Clark Wilkins, and AMS. It's no extra tax impact it comes out of the Unassigned Fund Balance which we'll discuss later on.

The Moderator recognized Mr. Mozammel Husainy, 33 Eagle Rock Rd, Amherst NH, to present the Ways and Means Committee Report.

Mr. Husainy discussed that the Ways and Means Committee were unhappy that Amherst School District buildings have been allowed to fall into such disrepair. It is especially disturbing that the persistent roof leaks at AMS have not been corrected for several years. These leaks were discussed by the board as early as 2017 continued to damage the vicinity and disrupt activities every time it rains. The current Maintenance Capital Reserve Fund has \$1.3 million dollars. While we believe that normal repairs and maintenance should be covered by the Operating Budget, we unanimously agree that an additional \$605 thousand dollars be added to the reserve fund to address these dire needs. The Ways and Means Committee has no say over where this money might be spent but we believe that the AMS leak problem should be addressed immediately. Going forward, a capital reserve fund should be used for unplanned and emergency issues and normal repairs should be covered in the budget. This is more likely possible going forward because the SAU now has a competent thoughtful Facilities Director who has drafted a sensible multi-year facilities maintenance plan.

Mr. Gauthier responded that the roof projects have not been ignored, the big repairs have been. These are new roof leaks. When they pop up it's mainly in the 50-year-old part of the building. It's different places every time. If you go into AMS, you will see trash cans at different spots, it's not the same spots that have been leaking since 2017, those have been addressed. Any leaks in the newer part of the building have been flashing related on the sides and those have been repaired. It's not neglect. It's just time for the bigger repair that is needed. That's why it is \$1.3 million from the CRF as opposed to adding \$50,000 into the budget here and there.

Ms. Parisi added that the roof project will be a staged project. You won't stop hearing about the roof after this one fix you will hear about it in the future. All the different roofs at AMS were installed at different periods in time and are in different conditions requiring us to make sure that we have a long-range plan.

Mr. Bob Grunbeck, 6 Fair Oaks Amherst NH, commented I support the idea of putting more money into that capital reserve fund but is it the board's intent to only expend funds from this that are major projects and not do regular maintenance out of it.

Mr. Gauthier responded correct and we're not doing that now. In FY 26 we have about \$1.3 million slated in there so a variety of smaller projects. It is the intent to focus on the bigger things on items that would throw off a budget by you know one to two percent. Smaller repairs will come out of the regular maintenance budget and SAU #39 Facilities Director, Mr. Roger Preston, plans for that very well.

Mr. Grunbeck noted that's exactly my point. This should be used for major capital things not putting a sneeze guard in a library.

Mr. Gauthier replied correct.

Mr. Grunbeck added I hope the board sticks to that going forward. Second, you want to make a point about where the money is held. It is held in a Capital Reserve Fund which cannot be invested in markets. You are subject to inflation; we've talked with the board about this several times. If you are going to do the projects, I would encourage you to do them sooner than later because inflation just keeps eating at the value of that fund.

Mr. Gauthier noted that Mr. Preston has made it abundantly clear to the Board and the Administration he wants about a hundred thousand dollars for emergencies in in this fund. There will be roughly three hundred thousand dollars in there after the roof and unit ventilator projects phase one.

Mr. Grunbeck added to please keep in touch with the Trustees of the Trust Funds so that they don't invest it in new CDs and have a problem.

Ms. Kelly Schmidt, 11 Patricia Lane, Amherst NH, asked Ms. Facey to explain we're able to have unexpended fund balances as large as this potentially could be. In a different article it is referenced that potentially that we are not budgeting tightly to allow for doing this sort of work.

Ms. Facey responded that we did prepare some information for the board on past articles.

Mr. Gauthier displayed the Unassigned Fund Balance- Revenues and Expenditures. Ms. Facey put this together this chart of the last five years. You can see leftover fund balances in the expense line and the revenue line. The bulk of what we are putting in the CRF comes from the revenue side. That is money that goes back to the taxpayers or in a fund like this. If this article passes, we will take \$605,000 of the overall expenditure. They are anticipated to have \$775,000

of the Unassigned Fund Balance, the majority will be revenue. If you look at this chart, we have returned roughly 80-90%. Some of the larger amounts have been because of Executive Order #38. At the time Covid happened, the Governor allowed the school districts to retain UFB for emergencies. We did not over budget by \$1.5m in FY22. We are looking at slim margins on the budget. Last year, we had about \$300,000 left over, which is less than 1% of our overall budget in terms of expenses. It is very low compared to the revenue side in most years, about 1 to 2% out of the five years that are listed, that are normal years in terms of expenses excluding those Executive Orders that allowed us to carry over.

Ms. Schmidt inquired how do we create that balance; it was her understanding that they are spending the CRF in that way to pay for AMS. Has the board discussed what we do so that it does not get decimated by inflation, or can it be invested?

Mr. Gauthier responded that he cannot speak to the legal issues of investing. With this fund they are trying to be respectful, they have 5- and 10-year plans and an overall 20-year Capital Needs Assessment. These plans are fluid, and they are trying to save the minimum to give back taxpayers.

Ms. Schmidt asked if there is another vehicle.

Mr. Grunbeck mentioned that this is the most discussion that they have ever had on a Capital Reserve Fund. It is called a trust fund; schools can create a common trust fund in which they use that mechanism to save for the future. There's a trade-off of that because it could be invested in the stock market which does go up and down. If it's a long-term plan, you can use that vehicle and that would just be done through the school board proposing a capital or a common trust fund. The Trustees of the Trust Fund would still manage that whatever the according says. I believe Souhegan has their Maintenance Fund in a trust or in a trust fund which can be invested. It's just a matter of choice and there's no right way or wrong way. With a capital reserve fund, you can't invest in anything that puts the principal at risk, that's why inflation is tough.

Ms. Schmidt responded that it makes sense. I would just encourage the board to continue to look into all those options and make sure we're creating the right balance long term.

The Moderator instructed the Clerk to place Warrant Article #18 on the Ballot as currently worded and thus, declared.

Ms. Victoria Parisi, 3 Church Street, Amherst NH, motioned to restrict reconsideration. Mr. Mark Vincent, 2 Nathaniel Dr., Amherst NH, seconded the motion. A vote was taken by voters holding up their cards. Motion passed the article is restricted.

The Moderator read article #19

Article 19. Shall we adopt the provisions of RSA 32:5-b, and implement a tax cap whereby the governing body (or budget committee) shall not submit a recommended budget that increases the amount to be raised by local taxes, based on the prior fiscal year's actual amount of local taxes raised, by more than the lesser of (a) 2% (two percent); or (b) the annual percentage

increase in the U.S. Consumer Price Index-All Urban Consumers for the Northeast, published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, as of the month of December of the immediately-preceding year? 3/5 Majority vote required.

Not Recommended by the Amherst School Board (0-5)

Not Recommended by the Amherst School District Ways & Means Committee (1-6)

The Moderator called on Mr. Terry Reiber, 15 Martingale Rd, Amherst NH, to speak to this warrant article.

Mr. Reiber noted that group of us got together about May of last year and we were very concerned about the direction that taxes were taking in town. We looked at a bunch of different alternatives and my cohort here Mr. Russ Hodgkins looked into it and found out that the State allows us to have a tax cap if the voters approve it. We put that language that you see there on to a petition and went out and we got over 25 signatures required, I think we got 35. Those signatures were checked to make sure that they were valid, registered voters in town. As a result of getting those signatures getting checked we presented them to SAU #39 and the petition was subsequently put on the warrants. Mr. Russ Hodgkins has a presentation he would like to make to go into this in a little more detail so that there's an understanding of what the tax cap is.

Mr. Russ Hodgkins, 39 Thornton Ferry Road I, Amherst NH, commented that I've lived here in Amherst since 2009. There's a lot of misconceptions about the tax cap. The tax cap was enabled by New Hampshire Legislature about 10 years ago, initially in 2011 and then it was amended in 2013. It is a relatively new concept as far as being implemented for towns. Many cities in New Hampshire such as Nashua and Manchester that have city governments have tax caps. If it were to be adopted here in Amherst, we would only be the third town in the state to adopt a tax cap which is in the RSAs, and we'll talk about that a little bit. It's the body of State laws, RSA stands for Revised Standards Annotated. We are going to talk about what is a tax cap, how will it be adopted, if it were adopted and then what happens, and when it will be adopted.

First, what is a tax cap. It's a mechanism to control the growth of taxes, by limiting the increases in budgets. The guidance is in the RSA Chapter 32, and it applies to essentially towns, school districts. If you create a budget, then this particular section of the RSA can be adopted in your budget making process. There are two sections of the RSA that deal with tax caps, the first is how do you adopt a tax cap RSA 32.5 C and then if the voters approve it.

First, we will talk about how a tax cap would be adopted. It has to be adopted by a three-fifths majority of the voters, it requires a public hearing and then the RSA provides mandatory wording for the article. That's what's in the RSA, we have to copy the RSA verbatim into our warrant article. Finally, that section of the RSA provides a means for a town after they adopt the tax cap to rescind the tax cap that they could then rescind a tax cap by a three-fifths majority.

What would happen if the tax cap warrant article were approved? You go to a different section of the RSA's, which incidentally comes before the part about how you adopted. It requires the taxes to be increased as shown in the budget by a fixed amount every year and you cannot exceed that

unless you have an ability to override the tax cap which is also part of the RSA. There's a lot of misconceptions that the tax cap somehow ties the hands of the budgeters but there are provisions in the RSA for the tax cap to be overridden on a year-by-year basis. It has to be done in a very transparent and open manner and you can't have a whole bunch of mysteriousness in there.

There is provision in this guide, and I call attention to the section on page 19. There appears to be an erroneous assumption that was in that section where they talked about the tax cap as if the tax cap would be mandatory. That may be based on an erroneous assumption that section there, so I'll just let everybody at your leisure look at that. There is a provision in the tax cap if it were to be adopted for it to be overridden on an annual basis should circumstances warrant but that's a very transparent process.

So, when would the tax cap take effect? We have been talking about the budget and the spending that will take effect starting this summer in June for the fiscal year, if the town of Amherst were to a vote and adopt this tax cap it would not commence until the next year so that would be July 1st of 2024. The budgets that would be built for that year would then be under the tax cap legislation were Amherst to adopt it.

What are the advantages of a tax cap to Amherst and Amherst voters and Amherst taxpayers? First is it puts a constraint and a check and balance on annual increases in taxes and any increases in taxes have to be done in an open and transparent manner. Second, there's less chance of Amherst taxpayers who may be living on a fixed income or maybe at the lower or middle income spectrum to find themselves in a position where they get priced out of their home in a situation where we have significant increases in taxes on a year by year basis. Finally, it could make moving to Amherst more attractive to people who are of say moderate means because they knew that they could move to Amherst, and they would not be faced with a situation where they would see a large increase in taxes in their property after they move to Amherst.

Mr. Hodgkins noted that he would be happy to answer any questions. There are links on Facebook with more information.

The Moderator recognized Mr. Gauthier to respond to this article.

Mr. Gauthier replied that the board voted against this 0-5. I would be happy to speak with Mr. Hodgkins. There is some confusion in the Voter's Guide. If it's a two percent tax increase or increase every single year, it takes a lot of the planning process. Any strategic planning you have, you either have to put that aside to fit in another two percent or you also have to go through the process of overriding the tax cap at deliberative. The three-fifths majority can be overridden by the group of folks that's here tonight seems like a lot of paperwork for something that's restrictive to what we have going on and that would be against what the town had already voted for. Essentially, we'd be stuck at that two percent increase. This limits how we can strategically plan for the budget, and it does not take into consideration if we have a six hundred thousand dollar increase in Special Needs Services, which is pretty close to what we had this year. All of a sudden, we're making those decisions, and as Ways and Means pointed out and as we know the biggest part of our budget is staffing. When you need to reduce a budget, you're not going to get there by cutting out nickels and dimes you're going to be cutting out dollars. All of a

1934 sudden we're taking out four or five teachers in elementary school and then we're raising class
 1935 sizes to 25 so a lot of unintended consequences with something like this. That's why the board
 1936 voted against 0-5.

1937
 1938 The Moderator asked the Ways and Means Committee for a report.

1939
 1940 Chair of the Ways and Means, Mr. Dwayne Purvis, commented that we did not support this
 1941 article by a vote of 1-6. The tax cap proposal reflects the public's frustration with excessive
 1942 school spending; however, it is an artificial constraint and a blunt instrument to what should be
 1943 more effective management and governance. The reality is that ASD School spending should be
 1944 reduced significantly if our schools are to ever provide the fiscal parity that comparable
 1945 communities enjoy. Setting an artificial two percent limit will likely only keep our spending high
 1946 with school boards bumping up against a two percent tax cap every year rather than looking for
 1947 ways to lower spending. Another view is that the tax cap will impose some predictable limits on
 1948 higher taxes each year. The effect might be negligible in spending this year as the proposed
 1949 budget increase is 3.9% but the school board will likely spend only half of that ask. The other
 1950 two percent to be transferred to the capital reserve at a no new tax impact next year. The same
 1951 view holds that a tax cap may also motivate more residents to increase their voluntary funding of
 1952 school projects.

1953
 1954 Mr. Terry Reiber, 15 Martingale Rd, Amherst NH, remarked I would like to respond to Mr.
 1955 Purvis. I share your concern that if we put a tax cap in place that voters would somehow become
 1956 complacent and accept a 2% or inflation or whatever is a less tight budget. A tax cap does not
 1957 imply that we could get together and for instance cut a budget or keep a budget the same. It just
 1958 puts an upper limit on increases. I think your concern is whether people will just be complacent
 1959 about it. I don't think we should be complacent about this at all.

1960
 1961 Mr. Reiber noted that he spoke to community members in town explaining what the tax cap was.
 1962 I'm doing it for those people that aren't probably even here in this room because they've got
 1963 people they have to take care of.

1964
 1965 Mr. Bob Julian, 9 Georgetown, Amherst NH, inquired if this applies to the budget or all of the
 1966 warrant articles.

1967
 1968 Mr. Hodgkins replied that the way it's worded it uses the term "tax cap" but then it talks about
 1969 budgets that then drive taxes.

1970
 1971 Mr. Julian responded that my question is that if you're going to put a two percent tax on their
 1972 budget are they going to then take line items out of their budget and put it into separate warrant
 1973 articles so they can get the town to pay for the stuff that they need. Suddenly, your budget is flat
 1974 every year but then you have a separate warrant for transportation or for special education.

1975
 1976 Mr. Gauthier remarked that speaking from a board's perspective just using these specific
 1977 examples you said will be the most cost ineffective way for us to do things. If you had a bunch of
 1978 one-year contracts, it seems to make no sense to be able to do that.

1979

1980 Mr. Hodgkins mentioned that the RSA that describes it is silent on that fact. There's no
 1981 specificity in the RSA other than to say the "budget shall be prepared to keep the tax within a
 1982 certain limit".

1983
 1984 Mr. Larry Ballard, 11 Pinewood Drive, Amherst NH, commented given the amount of
 1985 uncertainty that this seems to inject in the process as given by the example cited by the board as
 1986 well as Ways and Means, what is the process? I'd like to offer an amendment.

1987
 1988 The Moderator responded that the language in the article has to go as is and cannot be amended.
 1989 There's some question about the actual percentage.

1990
 1991 The Moderator requested Ms. Alison Minutelli, Legal Counsel, to speak to this question.

1992
 1993 Ms. Minutelli responded that the language in the article up to the point where it says "by more
 1994 than" is required by Statute that cannot be amended. The statute has a blank and then says insert
 1995 either a fixed dollar amount or a fixed percentage. There is a percentage, so the percentage can
 1996 be amended.

1997
 1998 Mr. Ballard asked if it could be amended from "shall we adopt the provisions" to "shall the
 1999 school district establish a study committee to investigate the provisions."

2000
 2001 Ms. Minutelli responded no.

2002
 2003 Mr. Tim Theberge, 26 Middle St, Amherst NH, remarked that RSA actually is very specific
 2004 about the budget cap, and it says, "as shown on the budget certified by the government body or
 2005 the budget committee and posted with the warrant". I could be wrong ; I was the school board
 2006 chair in ConVal, but we follow the same rules. There is only one item on the warrant that is a
 2007 certified budget. 32.5 The statute is very clear that the adopted 2% applies only to the certified
 2008 budget. That's different than all of the other stuff that can get added to the warrant. The budget is
 2009 a very specific document that's signed by the school board. This is a very bad idea. That's the
 2010 purpose of tonight and the ballot. You don't need this.

2011
 2012 **Mr. Nathan Greer, 12 Boylston Terrace, Amherst NH, moved to amend the warrant**
 2013 **article. Article 19. Shall we adopt the provisions of RSA 32:5-b, and implement a tax cap**
 2014 **whereby the governing body (or budget committee) shall not submit a recommended**
 2015 **budget that increases the amount to be raised by local taxes, based on the prior fiscal year's**
 2016 **actual amount of local taxes raised, by more than 100%? 3/5 Majority vote required.**

2017
 2018 The Moderator requested it in writing.

2019
 2020 **Mr. Tim Theberge, 26 Middle Street, Amherst NH, seconded the motion.**

2021
 2022 Mr. Reiber countered, as I read the State Law it says "warrant articles whose wording is
 2023 prescribed by law shall not be amended." It does not say a "portion or some of the wording of
 2024 the State Law can be amended."

2025

The Moderator remarked that in my position I need to rule on this. I've discussed this at length with Council and discussed it with other Moderators. There is not a lot of case law about this specific issue. I feel that it is perfectly germane to modify the section that is not prescribed by the RSA. I know that you'll probably take legal action as a result but that is the best interpretation that I have at this time.

The Moderator asked for further discussion.

A vote was taken by voters holding up their cards. Amendment passed.

Ms. Caitlin Thompson, 4 Madison Ln., Amherst NH, commented that it's important to note that this tax cap with similar wording is also up for debate at the Souhegan Deliberative Session as well as the Town of Amherst Deliberative Session.

Mr. Reiber responded that I will be contacting the State tomorrow about this clause which I understand there's an interpretation by their counsel. I'm going to go to the State for clarification because as I understand it can't be amended in any way. If that's the case, what would be the next step that I would take to work with you to ensure that it stays as is on the warrant.

The Moderator responded that he does not know. The Moderator asked Council if she had any suggestions.

Ms. Minutelli replied I think you need to take advice of your own counsel in terms of steps that you'd like to take.

Mr. Greer added that he would like to see this article voted down and that was his reason for the amendment.

Mr. Peter De Bruyn Kops, 377 Boston Post Rd, Amherst NH, inquired if it goes on the ballot as originally worded or amended.

The Moderator responded that it would go on the Ballot as amended.

Mr. John Glover, 27 Cricket Hill Drive, Amherst NH, commented that I appreciate you guys thinking about this. You questioned "what do you do?" I say show up to our board meetings, join Ways and Means, Souhegan Advisory Finance Committee, make persuasive cases here at the legislative body and good ideals will rise to the surface and be successful. That's a really good way to keep spending your time, I appreciate the thinking. Although Ways and Means has brought some things to our attention we've got some challenges here tax wise, we've got some space issues. There's ways to do that in our community and all are welcome you don't even have to be a committee, you can just show up and raise your hand and join the conversation. Please do that.

Mr. Reiber replied I have been going to Ways and Means. I'd like to remind everyone that citizen petitions and citizen legislation is legal in this state.

Ms. Alison Batey, 12 Joshua Rd, Amherst NH, commented citizen petitions are legal. New Hampshire is one of the very few places we are still a direct democracy. I feel that this would take that away. It would reduce our ability to have an impact on the direct democracy that we currently get to have in our town and in our small towns across New Hampshire.

Mr. Bob Julian, 9 Georgetown Dr. Amherst, noted that we still have the wording.

The Moderator remarked that it was amended.

The Moderator instructed the Clerk to place Warrant Article #19 on the Ballot as currently amended and thus, declared.

Ms. Victoria Parisi, 3 Church Street, Amherst NH, motioned to restrict reconsideration. Mr. Mark Vincent, 2 Nathaniel Dr., Amherst NH, seconded the motion. A vote was taken by voters holding up their cards. Motion passed the article is restricted.

The Moderator noted that they have concluded the business for the evening. I would like to thank everyone for their attendance and participation.

The Moderator closed the Deliberative Session at 10:14PM.