

## Minutes for Ways and Means Committee Meeting held December 12, 2023

Attendees:

Ways and Means Committee: Caleb Baird, Matt Borden, Brittany Donovan, Caitlin Thompson, Peter Maresco, Matt Comstock (via Zoom)

School Board/Administration: Tom Gauthier, Jason White, Steve Chamberlin, Amy Facey

The meeting was called to order at approximately 6:10 PM.

The first item discussed was the minutes of the previous meeting. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Next, the Amherst School District Budget was discussed. A question was raised regarding whether or not now would be a good time to propose a budget which increases administration contributing to a 4% increase in this budget while both the Souhegan and SAU budgets are increasing by approximately 1.5%. It was explained that, as of now, the budget is still the Superintendent's budget. He is highly focused on improving student outcomes. He believes that the increased administration will lead to greater presence in the classroom allowing more opportunities to provide feedback which improves instruction. When the budget is given to the school board for review, they may decide to delay the proposed changes in administration.

While discussing items that would help clarify the budget for the public, it was noted that the salary increases contributing to the 4% increase in the budget were approved by the voters in last year's warrant article. It was also noted that Souhegan is currently negotiating a new contract so their salaries are flat this year, keeping their overall costs down. There is a need to define how the critical information will be provided to the public in concise, understandable format.

The third item discussed was the School Addition project. At the last board meeting, option 2, which essentially rebuilds most of the Wilkins school, was chosen. At that board meeting there was concern expressed regarding the amount of work the architectural company would need to complete before the March 2024 voting day. It was clarified that, in that time, the effort by the architectural company includes improving the renderings and fine tuning the bid. It was stated that, in the past, there were concerns that there wasn't an exhaustive search of options. This time, various architectures were reviewed and it was decided to go forward with two options. The first option was a renovation project while the second option is a new building. It was noted that it might be important to share with the public information from the end of voting survey last year. At that time, there was clearly a recognized need for a renovation but there was also consensus that the price should be lower. The Ways and Means committee needs to decide what it would like to present at the public hearing on Jan 9. After the public hearing, the Ways and Means Committee needs to decide what it would like to present at the Deliberative Session.

The final item on the agenda was a discussion of any other business. At that time, Caitlin read the proposed wording of the new Mission Statement for the Ways and Means Committee. There was a unanimous vote to accept the new wording.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:30.