

Amherst School Board

Public Hearing- Souhegan High School Learning Commons

Tuesday, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Meeting Minutes- Approved 02 22 2024

Attendance: Mike Berry- Superintendent, Steven Chamberlin- Assistant Superintendent, Christine Landwehrle- Assistant Superintendent, and Amy Facey-SAU #39 Business Administrator.

Amherst School Board Members: Tom Gauthier- Chair, Jason White- Vice Chair, Tim Theberge- Secretary, Terri Behm, and Shannon Gascoyne.

Meeting Minutes: Danae A. Marotta

Public: Christine Grayson, 7 New South Drive, Amherst NH.

I. Public Hearing

**Chair of the Amherst School Board, Mr. Tom Gauthier, opened the Public Hearing at 5:00PM.**

The purpose of tonight's meeting is one of two that we will have in the next month to go over the Amherst School Budget. We will be presenting it to the public for the first time tonight and then a month from now they will have their Deliberative Session which will finalize the budget. This will be the amount that you will see on voting day in March.

He introduced Amherst School Board Members Vice Chair, Mr. Jason White, Secretary, Mr. Tim Theberge, Ms. Terri Behm Ms. Shannon Gascoyne and the administrative team of Superintendent, Mr. Mike Berry, SAU #39 Business Administrator, Ms. Amy Facey and Assistant Superintendent (Secondary) Mr. Steven Chamberlin and Assistant Superintendent (Elementary) Ms. Christine Landwehrle.

Mr. Gauthier noted that we will review the five articles spread over the five different categories that will appear on the ballot starting off with the elementary school construction project bond. That will be the last item that we will discuss tonight as we saw that in greater detail last night in our bond hearing with Ms. Gascoyne and Ms. Behm. If you haven't had a chance to view that recording, I would highly suggest it. We will have a more condensed version of that tonight and do a full recap of it at the Deliberative Session. Next, we have the proposed budget. If the proposed should fail that's what the default would be. Third, we have the Capital Reserve Fund contribution out of Unassigned Fund Balance. At the bottom there are two new funds that we will review technology and vehicle. These are two new Capital Reserve Expendable Trust Funds that we are looking to make initial contributions this year. Those will be used to fund long-term projects for technology equipment, replacement, network replacement repairs, etc. Then the vehicle fund which will allow us to purchase vehicles to assist with supplemental transportation in the district. Think of a 12-passenger van for extracurriculars, athletics, clubs, etc.

The main goal of the Board and the administration is to present a budget that will pass muster with voters for the first time in three years. It'll be the first time in three years that we've had a budget proposed pass if we're able to do that. We are currently operating under a default budget for the second straight year because it failed on voting day in 2022 and 2023. Using a zero-based budgeting approach Superintendent, Mr. Mike Berry, the administration, and the board are presenting that budget that you'll see here tonight.

In the creation of the budget three central themes really drove the decisions on what got cut, funded, or proposed to be funded. Number one was a focus on reading using evidence and research-based practices that Assistant Superintendent, Mr. Steven Chamberlin has talked about over the last year and a half. We know that literacy is the foundation upon which a lifetime of skills is built and certainly want to make sure that the kids in Amherst have that. Our reading metrics aren't necessarily where they need to be for any Community but particularly for a community like Amherst so working to build that foundation for all kids but particularly those younger elementary grades. We want to capture and expand instructional time as much as possible ensuring that every minute that the kids are in the building counts. This effort began with the new contracts with teachers and support staff that passed with the voters last year and then the board and the administration are continuing to look for ways to expand that instructional time and quality. It's not just the amount of time in the classroom but the quality of the time that the kids are spending with the teachers as well. In regard to that last comment the last item that really drove a lot of the budget was the supervision and evaluation of the teachers and staff setting expectations, providing constructive feedback and ensuring that teachers can grow. By developing their craft, it will benefit students as well. As we go through the presentation you will see which items impacted the budget the most.

There is one major driver that really impacted everything more than any other category and that was the cost of health and dental insurance. For comparison, last year's rate increase was roughly 5%. This year the figure is 21.8% for an increase for health and then a 4.7% for dental. Dental last year was a negligible increase.

We do see the impact of the new collective bargaining agreements approved by voters last March for both the teachers and the support staff. We do have changes in Staffing due to enrollment and student needs that's both in regular education and in special education. Under Superintendent Berry we continue to focus on the work that we started last year with Mr. Chamberlin with a focus on districtwide literacy. We do have an additional bus built into the budget this year. This will help get kids to school on time. We are currently operating with 15 looking to go to 16. This will help pare down the bus routes and make sure that again we're getting every value out of every minute that we have in school. We'll also continue to work on our long-term and short-term facility needs which we discussed last night, and we'll discuss further on in a couple of different points tonight.

Mr. Gauthier displayed Article 13- Operating Budget

*Shall the Amherst School District raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as*

79 *amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling thirty*  
 80 *four million fifty five thousand nine hundred sixty-five dollars (\$34,055,985)?*

81  
 82 *Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be thirty three million one*  
 83 *hundred sixteen thousand five hundred and nine dollars (\$33,116,509) which is the*  
 84 *same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Amherst*  
 85 *School District or by law; or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in*  
 86 *accordance with RSA 40: 13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating*  
 87 *budget only?*

88  
 89 *Majority Vote Required.*

90  
 91 Mr. Gauthier continued, if we dig into the budget categories and start to break down what we are  
 92 proposing, currently on that default budget for the second straight year for FY 24 that is  
 93 approximately 32.8 million. That is really the starting point of next year's proposed budget. To  
 94 give some context to that 3.8%, I do think it's worth noting and this is a tribute to the  
 95 administration as they work together to craft their budgets that last year's proposed budget was a  
 96 3.9% increase. That did not include any wage increases for teachers those were not built into that  
 97 budget last year it only included all the other items that were in that budget. The two CBAs on  
 98 last year's ballot are where you saw the raises for the teachers and the support staff. This year  
 99 those numbers are rolled into the contract as part of the default budget because they were  
 100 approved by the voters and are now part of our default budget going forward. If you look at this  
 101 year's increase factoring in the fact that those CBAs are part of the default budget now this year's  
 102 increase is only a 3.8% total increase. It includes the first two years of each of those CBAs, the  
 103 numbers that were passed last year and then year two of those contracts which will come up next  
 104 year as well. It does also include an extra student day, which will impact  
 105 overall budget items when kids and staff are in the schools.

106  
 107 Mr. Gauthier presented the budget comparison by fund. The allocation of funds in the budget  
 108 breaks down into three categories. The general fund that's up about 3.3% this year. Year-over-  
 109 year our food services and grants budgets those are both increases by about a half a percent  
 110 combined. The way that those work those are offset by revenue. We have to put grants in the  
 111 budget, but we have grants coming in to cover that \$332,000 so it's a \$19,000 increase. With  
 112 Food Services it's about \$132,000 increase but that is going to be offset by revenue. Think of  
 113 Food Services as its own separate business running within the school district. It is worth noting  
 114 that even though that's a big increase for the food service from this year to next year. There is a  
 115 \$192,000 surplus that we had in food services at the end of last year. This year we're expecting  
 116 about another \$35,000 in surplus to be added to that fund as well. Estimates are early at this  
 117 point. That money can be used to support renovations or repairs to the kitchen equipment. It can  
 118 also be used to offset tax rate, although saving some of that for a rainy day for the kitchen staff  
 119 certainly goes a long way. We will discuss more about that at our regular board meeting next  
 120 week.

121  
 122 He displayed the budget by category. Clark Wilkins is the topline item. That's again primarily  
 123 due to the inclusion of the wages and benefits and then the huge health insurance increases. We  
 124 also have two special education fellows from St. Anslem that were not included in the default

budget. We're going to be adding those back in as we continue to reach our literacy goals with the addition of a new school day next year. There are additional days for office staff, that is going to drive up cost a little bit as well, it is in exchange for an extra student day. So going from 175 to 176 in year two of that collective bargaining agreement. Facilities is going to include the preventive maintenance increases, repair, security and then service contracts. Student Services programming continues to adjust as needed to meet student needs. There is a large increase in the Special Education Transportation but that is being offset by overall a reduction in the out of district special education tuition. At our last meeting in December, we talked with the administration about a special education administrator position they were looking to add at AMS. We ended up deciding not to go forward with that after discussion with the board and with the Administration. Instead of a full-time admin level position they will have a part-time LEA administrator. That position will supervise the individualized education plans (IEP) that special education students have over at AMS. That's going to free up building leaders to be able to go in in classrooms, work with teachers, do their evaluations, make sure that teachers are using best practices, advancing in their craft, and coming up with plans to make themselves better at their craft. With Special Education, we saw the initial stages of an audit last month in our meeting just looking at the overall program. Ms. Heather Jennings is going to continue to work on that as she comes into the full-time Student Services Director position in the SAU starting on July 1<sup>st</sup>. She is working to audit this program to make sure that the budgets are aligning with the student outcomes in the coming years. Technology is ongoing replacements, network enhancements, and equipment upgrades. That is a big increase this year. That number can fluctuate which is why we're proposing the technology fund. They can plan A five-year plan, we know that we have the capital reserve funds to replace fifth grade computers this year and then sixth grade computers the next year etc. Another bus being added to the daily transportation schedule those are proposed transportation contracts. Contracts cannot be included in default budgets, even if we don't have the proposed budget pass we still have to make room for those 16 buses in the default budget. We are going from 15 to 16 again to make sure that kids get to school on time every day which maximizes the educational time kids get will spend in the classroom.

Mr. Gauthier discussed the budget by personnel/non personnel. This is going to highlight the majority of our budget increases. I mentioned earlier about the health and benefits and the salaries that are that are getting into the budget with two years of the teacher contract now going to the default budget. Overall, a 3.8% increase even though we have two more years of teacher contracts. We're proposing about a \$1.2 million change that's the proposed budget increase. You see about \$800,000 of that comes in benefits for health and dental. That makes up about two-thirds of the overall increase that we're proposing from the default to the proposed for this year.

He noted the proposed staffing changes. Overall, you can see it's a net savings about \$188,000 that's primarily because of retirements and then new teachers coming in with different salary scales. We also have a reduction of one full-time regular education teacher at AMS. That was a position that was eliminated just based on student enrollment and student need. We also have one less lunch recess monitor at Clark Wilkins and \$200,000 in savings from paraprofessionals. That more than makes up for the increases that we see in the LEA representative for AMS. There is a kindergarten paraprofessional as well. We have seven sections of kindergarten next year; we have six this year so adding another classroom para for another kindergarten class next year.

170 Also, a .4 FTE library assistant at Clark Wilkins, which is not in the default. You can see that  
171 those top three items are not in the default budget those are items that we really value.

172 Mr. Gauthier displayed the enrollment and class size targets. In the middle column is the current  
173 FY24 population. Every class is green or blue which is what they prefer. Next year, they are  
174 projecting that 7 out of the 9 cohorts will be within their range. Two of them will be slightly  
175 over, grade two and four. One of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade teachers will go to 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

176 He turned it over to Mr. Theberge to explain the default calculation.

177 Mr. Theberge explained that the default budget is a calculation. It takes the last approved budget,  
178 fiscal year 22. For additional reading you can look up New Hampshire RSA 40:13 IX (b). If the  
179 proposed budget is not approved by the voters, the district operating budget will be based on that  
180 default calculation which is described in the RSA. There are potential significant reductions in  
181 program, staffing and/or facilities related activities that will need to be made. From the voter,  
182 taxpayer, and school administrator perspective the difference between the operating budget is  
183 what matters. That's what determines which programs the districts can offer. Decisions on  
184 specific reductions will be made by the board based on a hierarchy of priorities provided by the  
185 superintendent.

186 The FY25 Default Budget as calculated is \$33,116,509. This is calculated by starting with the  
187 last approved budget, adding, and removing various costs. First, removing one-time  
188 expenditures, factoring in contractual obligations (such as the new contracts), plus the additions  
189 or subtractions of any debt services costs. The difference between the FY25 default calculation  
190 to the proposed budget is roughly 2.8%.

191 Mr. Gauthier displayed the projected revenue. This gives you a breakdown of the what the entire  
192 revenue piece looks like. Food Service has an increase, but it will be offset by revenue and  
193 \$192,000 in surplus last year and expecting another \$35,000 add to it this year. We do see the  
194 additional grant money coming in the district as well as additional federal, state, and local aid  
195 and then we expect another \$780,000 in fund balance to be used for the Capital Reserve Funds.  
196 If all goes according to plan, we'll have about \$385,000 in Unassigned Fund Balance that will be  
197 able to offset the tax rate at end of the year.

198 Mr. Gauthier commented on the tax rate. Overall, for budget specifically we will talk about the  
199 general fund. We do expect an increase of about .56 cents per thousand in valuation. For the  
200 average house value of about \$482,000 you're looking at an increase of about \$270 to your  
201 yearly tax bill. That's approximately \$22.50 per month.

202 II. Public Comment- Article 13 Operating Budget

203 Mr. Gauthier noted the Public Comment Procedure.

204 No Public Comment

205 **Ms. Gascoyne motioned to move Warrant Article #13 Operating Budget to the Deliberative**  
206 **Session. Mr. White to second the motion. The vote was unanimous, motion passed. (5-0)**

207

208 Mr. White noted that he will be speaking about Article 14- Capital Reserve Expendable Trust  
209 Fund.

210 He added that with these articles they are tax neutral, no amount to be raised from new taxation.  
211 Additionally, they are funded in the order they are listed on the warrant.

212 *Article 14- Capital Reserve Expendable Trust*

213 *Shall the Amherst School District raise and appropriate the sum of six hundred seventy five*  
214 *thousand dollars (\$675,000) to be added to the Amherst School District Capital Facilities*  
215 *Repair, Maintenance and Improvement Expendable Trust Fund for repairing, maintaining, and*  
216 *improving capital facilities, previously established in March 2003? This anticipated sum to*  
217 *come from the June 30, 2024 year-end unassigned fund balance (surplus) available for transfer*  
218 *on July 1, 2024. No amount to be raised from new taxation.*

219 *Majority vote required.*

220 Mr. White explained that they have already voted to take \$1.7m for the AMS Phase 2 roof. That  
221 doesn't even get us the full roof but a good chunk. I'm mentioning that to emphasize how costly  
222 these things are.

223 He continued displaying the Capital Needs Assessment Funding Plan. There is more roof work  
224 planned for FY27. In FY26, they are looking at a lot of Wilkins projects for boilers, HVAC,  
225 lighting, Exterior walls, caulking trim, soffits, and fascia. With Facilities Director, Mr. Roger  
226 Preston, they are trying to come up with a new CNA.

227 III. Public Comment- Article 14 Capital Reserve Expendable Trust

228 Mr. Gauthier opened it up for Public Comment

229 Ms. Caitlin Thompson, Amherst NH, inquired about getting the AMS roof to completion.

230 Ms. Gascoyne replied that it is a 6-phase plan but there are a few different ways to break them  
231 up. They also could look at a potential bond or lease. With the lease they would build that into  
232 the budget. Their hope is to complete this over the next decade.

233 Mr. Gauthier added that it also depends on the vote for March and that will help them prioritize.

234 Mr. White added that the board and administration prioritize based on student centered needs.

235 **Ms. Gascoyne motioned to move Article 14 Capital Reserve Expendable Trust to the**  
236 **Deliberative Session. Mr. White to second the motion. The vote was unanimous, motion**  
237 **passed.**

238 IV. Article 15 Technology Expendable Trust Fund

239 *Article 15 Technology Expendable Trust Fund*

240 *Shall the Amherst School District establish a Technology Expendable Trust Fund under the*  
241 *provisions of RSA 198:20-c V for the purpose of purchasing, updating, maintaining, and*  
242 *replacing technology infrastructure and to raise and appropriate the sum of seventy five*

243 *thousand dollars (\$75,000) to be placed in this fund? Further, to name the Amherst School*  
 244 *Board as agents to expend from said fund. This anticipated sum to come from up to the June 30,*  
 245 *2024 unassigned fund balance (surplus) available for transfer on July 1, 2024. No amount to be*  
 246 *raised from new taxation.*

247 *Majority Vote Required.*

248 Mr. White discussed that this is again no new taxation. As Mr. Gauthier mentioned earlier this  
 249 would help them to have a backup. They have a longer technology plan. It is also a student  
 250 safety issue as well as a budget issue.

251 V. Public Comment on Article 15- Technology Expendable Trust Fund

252 No Public Comment.

253 Mr. Theberge noted that he has a possible amendment. After the word “replacing” it would read  
 254 “hardware software, services and technology infrastructure”.

255 He would like to include the full breadth of what technology includes.

256 **Mr. Theberge motioned to add into the warrant “updating, maintaining, and replacing**  
 257 **hardware, software, services and technology infrastructure.” Mr. White to second the**  
 258 **motion. The vote was unanimous, motion passed.**

259 **Ms. Gascoyne motioned to move Article 15- Technology Expendable Trust Fund, as**  
 260 **amended, to the Deliberative Session. Mr. White to second the motion. The vote was**  
 261 **unanimous, motion passed.**

262 VI. Article 16 Vehicle Expendable Trust Fund

263 *Article 16 Vehicle Expendable Trust Fund*

264 *Shall the Amherst School District establish a Vehicle Expendable Trust Fund per RSA 198:20-c,*  
 265 *V for the purpose of purchasing new vehicles, replacing existing vehicles, and for major repairs*  
 266 *and to raise and appropriate the sum of thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000) to be placed in this*  
 267 *fund? Further, to name the Amherst School Board as agents to expend from said fund. This*  
 268 *anticipated sum to come from the June 30, 2024 unassigned fund balance (surplus) available for*  
 269 *transfer on July 1, 2024. No amount to be raised from new taxation.*

270 *Majority Vote Required.*

271 Mr. White noted that again no amount to be raised from new taxation. This is a student-centered  
 272 item for some of the athletics and clubs that need transportation. Long term this saves us money  
 273 as we maintain it. This is about being financially responsible and making sure that students have  
 274 the most opportunities that we can provide to them.

275 Mr. Gauthier added that they have seen inconsistencies with the sports transportation at the  
 276 middle school.

277 VII. Public Comment Article 16

278 No public comment

279 **Ms. Gascoyne motioned to move Article 16 Vehicle Expendable Trust Fund to the**  
 280 **Deliberative Session. Mr. White to second the motion.**

281 Ms. Gascoyne noted that this makes a lot of sense, the High School uses them for their CTE  
 282 programs.

283 **The vote was unanimous, motion passed.**

284 VIII. Article 12- Bond Warrant Article

285 *Article 12- Bond Warrant Article*

286 *To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of forty nine million nine hundred*  
 287 *and ninety seven thousand two hundred fourteen dollars (\$49,997,214) (gross budget) to finance*  
 288 *the major addition, reconstruction and renovation project for the Wilkins Elementary School*  
 289 *building, located at 80 Boston Post Road, Amherst, NH and to authorize the issuance of not*  
 290 *more than forty nine million nine hundred and ninety seven thousand two hundred fourteen*  
 291 *dollars (\$49,997,214) of bonds or notes under and in compliance with the Municipal Finance*  
 292 *Act, RSA 33:1 et seq., as amended; to authorize the School Board to apply for, obtain and accept*  
 293 *federal, state or other aid, if any, which may be available for said project and to comply with all*  
 294 *laws applicable to said project; to authorize the School Board to issue, negotiate, sell and*  
 295 *deliver said bonds and notes and to determine the rate of interest thereon and the maturity and*  
 296 *other terms thereof; and to authorize the School Board to take any action or to pass any other*  
 297 *vote relative thereto, and further to raise and appropriate an additional sum of one million two*  
 298 *hundred forty nine thousand nine hundred thirty dollars (\$1,249,930) for the first year's interest*  
 299 *payment on the bond. 3/5 ballot vote required.*

300 Ms. Gascoyne noted that he last two years we have seen defeated bond requests for a new PreK-  
 301 Gr 5 Clark Wilkins school on the existing site. Following post-election resident surveys and  
 302 feedback sessions, the ASB spent time in retreat during the summer of 23' focused on facilities.  
 303 While the community support for a bond request has received slight gains year-over-year the  
 304 overwhelming response from you, our community, has been that while you understand the need,  
 305 the size of the request have been too great. You asked to see fully costed renovation and addition  
 306 options and the majority of survey respondents indicated you would like to see a smaller project  
 307 brought forward. Additionally, you shared your concerns with us regarding the future of the  
 308 Clark school and your wonders about utilization at the Souhegan High School. We appreciate  
 309 your feedback.

310 The warrant article being presented and proposed seeks to strike a balance between what you  
 311 have told us and what meets the needs of our students and educators. Following our summer  
 312 retreat, we explored the possibility with the Souhegan Cooperative School Board of relocating a  
 313 preschool program to the Annex. After a lengthy discussion, it was determined not to move  
 314 forward with this idea. Additionally, the Souhegan Cooperative School Board undertook an  
 315 exhaustive space utilization analysis of current square footage use at Souhegan High School. The  
 316 ASB is appreciative of the Souhegan Cooperative School Board and all of their work in this area.  
 317 Their work in discussion at their September 11th, 2023, meeting revealed that adding an



318 additional grade or grades of students beyond 9 to 12 would create significant crowding and  
319 constraints in the main building. Any discussion to bring additional grades onto the campus  
320 would require further discussion and potentially new construction on the existing Souhegan High  
321 School site. The Amherst School Board does not find this to be a realistic or viable option to  
322 meet the many needs across each of our districts.

323 The Amherst School Board directed The SAU leadership, the Building and Grounds Committee  
324 and the building administration at Clark Wilkins to work with our architect and construction  
325 manager to develop two fully costed proposals, a renovation and addition and a build to suit with  
326 cost breakdowns for a grade one to five Wilkins School configuration on the existing site.  
327 Bringing grade five to the elementary school remains a critical component of the plan to alleviate  
328 a bit of the space constraints that we continue to experience and endure at the Amherst Middle  
329 School. This plan also maintains the Clark School for PreK and Kindergarten where we will  
330 continue to maintain and plan for program needs.

331 Ms. Gascoyne continued, two options were fully costed, and I presented those last night with Ms.  
332 Behm. The build to suit option was favored unanimously by the Building and Grounds  
333 Committee and the Amherst School Board. This option represents the most reasonable design  
334 based on the needs of students and our educational program. It's a functional design that meets  
335 our present need and is built to carry us into the future for decades to come. You see that it's  
336 \$49.9 million.

337 The design being presented maintains and renovates the existing multi-purpose room for use as a  
338 cafeteria. The design represents an 18.5% reduction in overall square footage to last year's plan.  
339 This was achieved by removing two grades from the plan and working through each space in  
340 detail to ensure the final floor plan design was appropriately sized. Additionally, adjustments  
341 were made to the design for improved value. For example, masonry exterior walls are now  
342 concentrated to high visibility areas and locations and the interior masonry walls are limited to  
343 corridors toilets and gyms. This design represents a classic elementary school structure, specials  
344 cafeteria, gym, library first floor along with first and second grade . The second floor is going to  
345 house grades three four and five and they're associated educational supports and administrative  
346 offices.

347 The site design takes up a smaller footprint than what you saw brought on the ballot last year, it's  
348 18% smaller. It's also further away from the edge of the wetland buffer which was something  
349 that we were getting some feedback on last year. It offers an efficient drop off and pickup loop  
350 along with ample parking for school events. The conceptual exterior renderings maintain a  
351 familiar look, profile and feel to what we've had in the village for the last 57 years.

352 What's different this year? You see that there's a reduction in the cost. The grade configuration  
353 has changed, a decrease in square footage, we're maintaining the Clark School and it's a smaller  
354 footprint. We had some great feedback from our Building and Grounds Committee and also from  
355 folks who showed up last night that it's really important for us to show a variety of comparisons  
356 and considerations on this. We are working towards providing those should this move forward to  
357 the Deliberative

358 We've grouped the features of this project into four categories. It offers functional spaces that  
 359 will endure the test of time, enhanced and present-day security features, new mechanical  
 360 electrical and plumbing systems and improve traffic flow.

361 There was a bond sale today and we are in the process of getting updated information from the  
 362 Bond Bank. We'll have more for you should this move to the Deliberative Session. The most  
 363 updated bond rate for 30 years, which we are intending to look at 25 years, is 4.09%. The  
 364 Municipal Bond Bank is different than a regular Bank in that the rate is unknown until the time  
 365 of the sale on the open market and the bond bank will provide us an updated conservative rate to  
 366 use for planning.

367 Mr. Gauthier opened it up for Public Comment.

368 IX. Public Comment Article 12

369 Ms. Christine Grayson, 7 New South Drive, Amherst NH, encouraged the Board to move this to  
 370 the Deliberative Session. She is part of the Building and Grounds. They have addressed all of the  
 371 concerns.

372 **Ms. Gascoyne motioned to move Article 12 Bond Warrant Article to the Deliberative**  
 373 **Session. Mr. White to second the motion.**

374 Mr. Gauthier asked for discussion.

375 Ms. Gascoyne mentioned that we discussed this in December, the Public Hearing preparation  
 376 that she did solidified the path forward.

377 Mr. Theberge added that every year this gets kicked, the more it costs and the less that you get.

378 Mr. White commented that there is an 18.5% reduction in square footage. They took time for a  
 379 retreat and took square footage out of rooms. This isn't a Cadillac; this is a responsible project  
 380 that our administration feels will allow educators to deliver programming in education.

381 Ms. Behm encouraged the public to review the Bond Hearing from last night. There is no more  
 382 tuning to be done. If they had to bring it back, it would be at a 4% increase.

383 Mr. Theberge noted that the board has been trying to get to that number and it was something  
 384 that the board has been thing about for years.

385 Ms. Gascoyne noted that there is no room to continue tweaking it. They will be waiting for cost  
 386 escalation.

387 Mr. Gauthier commented that his concern is what is the next step. At some point escalation will  
 388 be factored in. The next steps are very bleak because he does not know if you can do this 4 years  
 389 in a row. That is why he is not comfortable bringing this to the Deliberative Session. He  
 390 understands their thoughts.

391 Ms. Gascoyne replied that if this fails, they will still have Music on the stage. Any year that you  
 392 do this you can play the numbers game of can you get enough votes. They have heard the  
 393 community.

394 She asked him if there was a supplemental flaw with the plan.

395 Mr. Gauthier replied that he agrees with the plan but is concerned about the timing. Does this  
396 hinder the budget or CRF from passing? He does support the project itself.

397 Ms. Behm recommended if they do bring it forward to the Deliberative Session that they discuss  
398 strategy. They have fine tuned it, and this is it.

399 She suggested that they partner with the PTA.

400 Mr. Gauthier called a vote.

401 **The motion passed with 4 votes in favor, 1 against. Mr. Gauthier opposed.**

402 Mr. Gauthier asked for further comments.

403 He suggested that members bring their ideas for the meeting next week.

404 There were no further comments.

405 He noted that February 5<sup>th</sup> is their Deliberative Session 6:00PM in the Souhegan High School  
406 Auditorium and voting is March 12<sup>th</sup> in the SHS Gym.

407 X. Public Hearing Adjourned

408 **Ms. Gascoyne motioned to close the Public Hearing at 6:08PM. Mr. White to second the**  
409 **motion. The vote was unanimous, motion passed.**

410