

# **Kearsarge Regional School District**

**THE STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE**

**ANNUAL DISTRICT MEETING - 1ST SESSION, JANUARY 6, 2024**

To the inhabitants of the pre-existing School Districts of Bradford, New London, Newbury, Springfield, Sutton, Warner, and Wilmot, comprising  
the  
Kearsarge Regional School District, qualified to vote in Kearsarge Regional School District affairs.

## **Annual Meeting: Deliberative Session**

**Kearsarge Regional High School, North Road, N. Sutton**

**January 6, 2024**

9:00 AM

### **Attendees Representing the Kearsarge Regional School District -**

Mr. Winfried Feneberg, Superintendent  
Mr. Michael Bessette, Assistant Superintendent  
Mr. Larry LeBoeuf, Business Administrator

### **Attendees Representing the Kearsarge Regional School Board -**

Mr. Kenneth Bartholomew, Chair - Warner  
Ms. Alison Mastin, Vice-Chair - Wilmot  
Dr. Arthur Bobruff - Springfield  
Mr. David Keith - New London  
Mr. Kyle Lombard - Sutton  
Ms. Kristen Schultz - Newbury

### **Attendees Representing the Municipal Budget Committee -**

Mr. Richard Anderson, Chair - New London  
Mr. James Bibbo - Bradford  
Ms. Lyndsay Lund Harkins - New London  
Mr. Robert Hemenway - Newbury  
Mr. Luke Gorman – Springfield  
Mr. Patrick McGowan - Warner

Mr. Lick called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

Mr. Lick led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Superintendent stated that he had the pleasure and honor of acknowledging Andrea Castaldo who has been chosen as the New Hampshire Assistant Principal of the year. He thanked Ms. Castaldo for her service to the District.

Mr. Bartholomew acknowledged Ms. Sharron Scherer, Special Education teacher, and Elise Bundy, Math teacher at the Middle School, as they will be retiring at the end of the school year. He thanked both of them for their service to the students of the District.

Mr. Bartholomew also acknowledged and thanked Superintendent Feneberg as he will be retiring in June 2024. Supt. Feneberg has led the district since July 2015. During his tenure, he has been awarded Superintendent of the year. He stated that the Superintendent has always been a great proponent of the students and public education. He has done a great job representing the District at both the state and federal level. He successfully guided the District through the COVID-19 Pandemic and has been a strong supporter of early childhood intervention, playing a key role in developing the preschool program in Bradford. Mr. Bartholomew thanked Supt. Feneberg for his leadership.

Ms. Mastin acknowledged Mr. Bartholomew as he will not be seeking reelection in March. Mr. Bartholomew has represented the town of Warner on the Board since 2009 and has served as Chair since 2015. He has given countless hours to the District, servicing on committees and has represented the Board during contract negotiations. Ms. Mastin thanked Mr. Bartholomew for his service.

Ms. Mastin acknowledged Mr. John Fortney, the incoming Superintendent, who was in attendance from Missouri to witness this year's Deliberative Session.

Mr. Lick reminded those in attendance that there will be no formal vote on the warrant articles as presented during the meeting, rather they will be on the ballot in March. He noted that this is the opportunity for any discussion about the warrant articles.

Mr. Bartholomew read Article 1.

**Article 1** To see if the School District will vote to raise and appropriate the **Municipal Budget Committee's recommended amount \$54,320,531** for the support of schools, for the payment of salaries for the school district officials and agents, and for the payment for the statutory obligations of the District. The **School Board** recommends **\$54,320,531**. This article does not include appropriations voted in other warrant articles. This warrant article asks the voters to raise and appropriate for the support of schools, the salaries of School District Officials and Agents, and for the statutory obligations of said District, and to authorize the application against said appropriation of such sums as are estimated to be received from the State sources, together with other income, the School Board to certify to the Selectmen of each of the Towns of Bradford, New London, Newbury, Springfield, Sutton, Warner, and Wilmot, the amount to be raised by taxation by said towns.

**(School Board Recommends 7-0) (Municipal Budget Committee Recommends 9-0)**

Mr. Bartholomew explained that administration begins prepping the budget in the Spring, through May and June, the year prior. Administrators talk with buildings leaders and Department chairs, and they all come up with a budget that they want to recommend to the School Board. The budget is then presented to the School Board and the MBC. The School Board and the MBC then

recommend separate numbers, which may be different, but this year are the same. He noted that this year, the School Board and MBC requested that the budget be paired down from the initially presented number. The budget came back before the Boards with a reduction of \$500,000.00. The Superintendent was consulted on each of the reductions to ensure that nothing that was being cut would hurt the District's mission to the students and the staff.

Mr. Bartholomew read the explanation.

***School Board Explanation:*** *The 2024-25 Operating Budget proposed by the Kearsarge Regional School Board and the Municipal Budget Committee of \$54,320,531 is an increase of approximately \$2,968,126 or 5.78% from the 2023-24 budget.*

*The areas of increase within the School Board's operating budget are a result of a variety of factors that are explained in the following paragraphs.*

***Wages and Fringe*** - *The requested budget for 2024-25 reflects a net increase of .4 teacher FTE's.*

*Added were .2FTE HS Tech Ed, .2FTE Language/Freshman Seminar, 1 FTE Special Education, 1 FTE Elementary, 1 FTE MS Math Specialist. Decreased (1) FTE Guidance Elementary, (2) FTE Elem due to enrollments. In addition, 1 non teacher FTE was added for an Assistant Athletic Director. As a result, the wage line for employees requires an increase of approximately \$516,018 or 17.39% of the budget increase.*

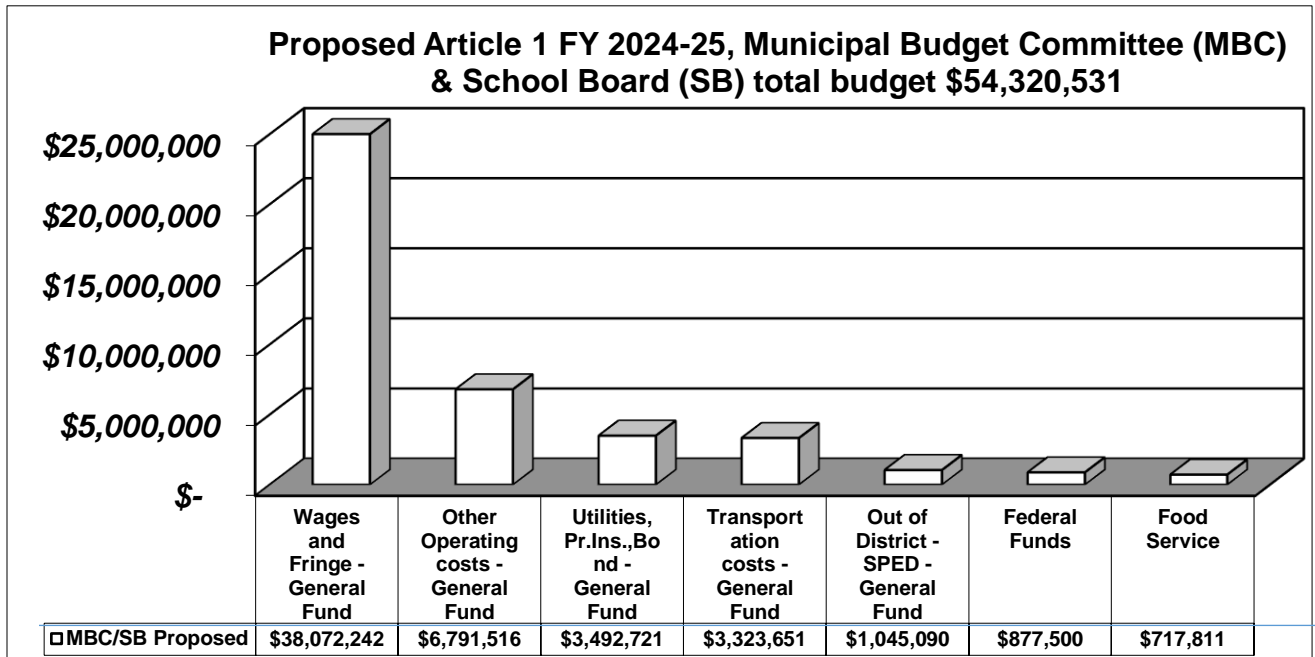
*The actual increase in health benefit costs for (24-25) was a 9.1% increase from the current (23-24) health effective rates. Based on this increase, health benefits alone represent 23.53% of the total budget increase or \$698,455.*

*Included under "Other payroll benefits" are dental, life, long term disability, workers compensation insurances, taxes, workshops, and tax sheltered annuities. The overall other payroll benefits increase represents 3.42% of the total budget increase or \$101,614. New Hampshire State Retirement increased 2.81% or \$83,429.*

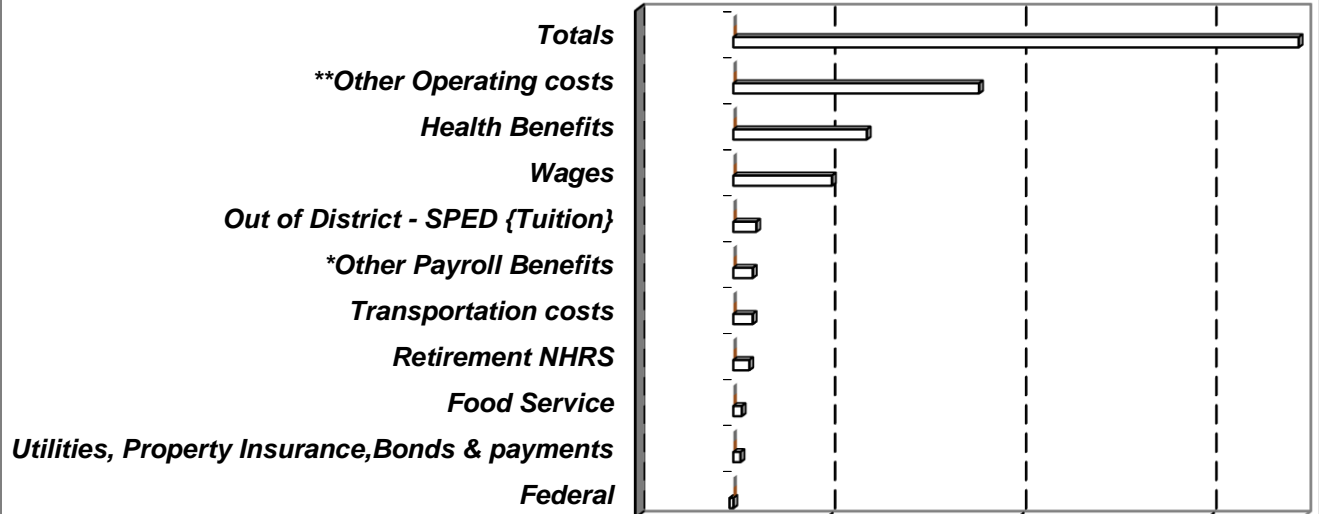
***Out of District*** - *Our out of district costs for 2024-25 school year are estimated to be an increase of \$120,090 or 4.05% of the budget increase at this point in time. Each year, Out of District Special Education costs are very fluid and are driven by a variety of factors. Those factors include: the ability of our local staff to meet the needs of intensive behaviorally or medically challenged students, families who move into the district, and the costs associated with delivering highly specialized services in environments outside of the district whose costs keep rising. We make every attempt to meet each child's needs in the least restrictive educational environment here at the local level. There are times, however, when the child's special needs exceed our local capacity to meet them. In addition, federal law also requires us to provide for those needs until the age of 22. Placements for out of district services can range from \$80,000 per student to upwards of \$300,000 depending on the residential requirements.*

**Other Operating Costs** - Included in this area are textbooks, technology, contracted services, supplies, repairs, replacement equipment, capital improvements, new equipment, furniture, dues and fees, printing, telephone, copiers, assessment, and others. These costs reflect a total budget increase of approximately 43.33% or \$1,286,216.

**Other Expenses** - Transportation represents a 3.40% or \$100,992 budget increase, and Utilities, Bonds, Lease payments and Property Insurance budget increased by approximately 1.25% or \$37,194. Food Service represents an increase in budget of 1.48% or \$43,883. Federal funds represents a decrease of (.67%) or (\$19,765) of the decrease. Note, all federal dollars appropriated are offset by matching federal funds. The result is no effect to the local tax rate.



**Proposed Article 1, Operating differences between 2023-24 and 2024-25 increase of 5.78% or \$2,968,126**



\*Other Payroll Benefits {Dental, Life, LTD, Taxes, Workshops, TSA's}

\*\*Other Operating {Books, Technology, Communications, Contract Services, Supplies, Repairs and Services, Equipment, Dues/Fees, Travel, Printing, Voc, et}

	Federal	Utilities, Property Insurance, Bonds & payments	Food Service	Retirement NHRS	Transportation costs	*Other Payroll Benefits	Out of District - SPED {Tuition}	Wages	Health Benefits	**Other Operating costs	Totals
■ % to Prior Year Budget	-0.04%	0.07%	0.09%	0.16%	0.20%	0.20%	0.23%	1.00%	1.36%	2.50%	5.78%
■ % of Total Increase	-0.67%	1.25%	1.48%	2.81%	3.40%	3.42%	4.05%	17.39%	23.53%	43.33%	100.00%
□ School Board/MBC	\$(19,765)	\$37,194	\$43,883	\$83,429	\$100,992	\$101,614	\$120,090	\$516,018	\$698,455	\$1,286,216	\$2,968,126

**Martha Hunt – Sutton**

Ms. Hunt stated that she appreciated the explanation on the budget. She noted that capital improvements are in the operating costs. She stated that surprised her as she thought capital improvements might be in a warrant article. Since that is a major part of the increase, she asked if the Board would speak a little more as to why capital improvements are in the operating costs and what that increase entails.

Mr. LeBoeuf spoke to the reason capital improvements are in the operating costs, stating that capital improvements have always been in the operating fund. He stated those could be separated if the Board chose to do so.

The Superintendent stated that this has been common practice. He spoke to why this increase isn't its own warrant article, noting that this increase is not just one project. He discussed the STEAM renovation that was proposed a few years ago in a warrant article. That was a warrant article specific to the High School. The capital improvements covered in this budget are spread across multiple schools and are of a smaller nature that add up to a larger amount.

Mr. Bartholomew discussed why the School Board chose not to break out any of the projects into specific warrant articles, giving examples of past warrant articles that addressed larger specific projects. Those projects that Board felt that they didn't want to speak on behalf of the voters, although they are elected by the voters to represent them, without them having a say as to a capital project that is going to be expensive and increase taxes. Additionally, they have been projects that didn't necessarily have to be done. The projects in this capital improvement line are not choices; boilers that are at the end of life and sprinkler systems required by the Fire Chiefs for example. The options are weighed by the Board as to whether different projects should be specific warrant articles or if they should be covered in the operating budget.

### **John Ellis – New London**

Mr. Ellis asked what the top three capital projects are that need to be done this year.

Mr. Paré stated that the top three projects are the sprinkler systems at Simonds and New London, phase 1 of boiler work at the SAU as well as HVAC replacement at New London Elementary.

Mr. Ellis asked about the status of the roof at New London Elementary. Mr. Paré stated that the roof of New London is not a project the District is concerned about at this time.

Mr. Ellis asked if solar energy is being addressed. Mr. Paré stated that this week, the District entered a contract with an engineering firm that will be doing a comprehensive review of the District's facilities that will include the consideration of renewable energy sources such as solar. Mr. Ellis asked if this is something the District would be looking forward to next year. Mr. Paré stated that this will be an ongoing project over the new few fiscal years. He stated that this will be school-by-school review. Mr. Ellis asked how it would be determined which school would be number 1 on the list of schools that would be a good fit for solar energy. Mr. Paré stated that the District would work closely with experts in the field to help determine that.

Mr. Ellis asked what the average class size is. Mr. Bartholomew stated that it depends on what level you're referencing. Elementary ranges from 12 to 25 at the highest, noting that the current largest class is 24 students. Supt. Feneberg stated that there is a maximum class size that is allowed by the School Board. As to the total number of students, there are around 1,700 in the District. Projections show that this number will stay very stable at about 1,700 students +/- 100 students. Through the COVID-19 Pandemic, the District increased in size; some of those students stayed and some went. Mr. Ellis asked if that is the projection for the next four years. Supt. Feneberg stated that is the projection for the next 10 years.

Mr. Ellis asked about the wages and fringe lines, asking about the increase in teachers as mentioned. Mr. Bartholomew noted that the increase would be 0.4 FTE.

Mr. Lick closed discussion on Article 1.

Mr. Lombard read Article 2.

**Article 2** To see if the School District will vote to raise and appropriate up to **\$100,000** to be placed in the School Buildings Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund for the purpose of repair, unanticipated utility costs, and maintaining the school buildings and equipment, with such amount to be funded **from unassigned fund balance (surplus funds) remaining** on hand as of June 30, 2024.

**(School Board Recommends 7-0) (Municipal Budget Committee Recommends 8-1)**

***School Board Explanation:** In 2009 the voters established an expendable trust fund for the purpose of repairs, unanticipated utility costs, and maintaining school buildings and equipment. If approved, this article will set aside up to \$100,000 toward that purpose from operating surplus funds remaining on hand as of June 30, 2024. The balance of the fund as of November 2, 2023, is approximately \$416,147.*

**Joe Cardillo – New London**

Mr. Cardillo asked if there is any limit to the trust fund. Mr. Bartholomew stated that number would be the target, which is a number determined by the Finance and Audit Committee and recommended to the School Board. The target on this trust fund is \$750,000.00.

**Dick Wright**

Mr. Wright noted that the article says to raise and appropriate up to \$100,000.00. He asked if it is \$100,000.00 or not. Mr. Bartholomew stated that it depends on whether there are surplus funds at the end of the school year. He explained that if there were limited funds, Article 2 would be funded first and then Article 3.

Mr. Lick closed discussion on Article 2.

Ms. Schultz read the Article.

**Article 3** To see if the School District will vote to raise and appropriate up to **\$100,000** to be placed in the Capital Reserve Roof Fund for the purpose of replacement or major repairs to roofs in the district with such amounts to be funded **from unassigned fund balance (surplus funds) remaining** on hand as of June 30, 2024.

**(School Board Recommends 7-0) (Municipal Budget Committee Recommends 8-1)**

***School Board Explanation:** In 1994 the voters established a capital reserve fund for the purpose of reconstructing or adding to existing schools of the District. If approved, this article will set aside up to \$100,000 toward that purpose from operating surplus*



*funds remaining on hand as of June 30, 2024. The balance of the fund as of November 2, 2023, is approximately \$192,792.*

Mr. Bartholomew noted that the target for this trust fund is \$1.2 million.

**Dick Wright – Newbury**

Mr. Wright stated that he read somewhere that the District may have \$6 million in roof repairs some time in the future. He asked if that is correct. Mr. Paré stated that over the summer, the District did a roof analysis of all roofs in the District. The recommendation that came from that was that all roofs in the District should be replaced within one to three years. The cost of a roof for a building like the High School would be upwards of \$1.2 million. \$6 million may be possible.

Mr. Bartholomew noted that when the roof fund was established the roofs were all also replaced at this time. The time to replace the roof is before it creates structural damage. The High School is past that point. He noted that's one of the reasons the Board proposed the High School bond which would have included the roof repairs. The District can't wait any longer. He stated that other times something should be repaired and a decision has to be made on how to allocate funds, be it from budget transfers of trust funds.

Mr. Wright asked if \$6 million is an eventuality. Mr. Bartholomew stated that is an estimate of what it would cost to replace all the roofs in the District and they all do need to be done. Mr. Wright requested that the Board reconsider that, stating that only contributing \$100,000.00 for \$6 million worth of repairs gets eaten up by inflation quickly. He stated that it might be wise to budget and pay off a bond and it may eventually be cheaper. Mr. Bartholomew stated that is definitely an option and the District has looked at some leasing options.

Ms. Schultz received an updated number on the total currently in the trust. That number being \$819,288.00.

Supt. Feneberg stated that is one the reasons the Board has just authorized a comprehensive facilities review. Coming to the voters with little projects would seem endless. The review of the buildings will show anything that needs to be done in the District. The purpose is to come to the voters with a comprehensive capital improvement process that can be bonded. He noted that there is some opportunity to complete this with the Middle School Bond soon falling off.

Mr. Lick closed discussion on Article 3.

**Article 4** To transact any other business that may legally come before the meeting

No additional business was brought before the Boards.

Mr. Lick thanked everyone for attending.



APPROVED

Mr. Bartholomew thanked the Supervisors of the Checklist for their efforts.

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Thomas Hilton  
School Board Note Taker

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Doreen Salera  
School District Clerk