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Kearsarge Regional School District

THE STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

ANNUAL DISTRICT MEETING - 1ST SESSION, JANUARY 8, 2022

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 8, 2022

9:00 AM

Attendees representing the Kearsarge Regional School District:

Superintendent - Mr. Winfried Feneberg, Assistant Superintendent - Mr. Michael Bessette, and Business Administrator – Mr. Larry Lebeouf

Attendees representing the Kearsarge School Board:

Mr. Emilio Cancio-Bello, Mr. Ben Cushing, Dr. Art Bobruff, Mr. Kenneth Bartholomew (Chair), Ms. Emma Bates, Ms. Alison Mastin, Mr. Eric Gregoire, Ms. Kristin Schultz.

Attendees representing the Municipal Budget Committee (MBC):

Mr. James Bibbo, Mr. Luke Gorman, Mr. David Bates, Mr. Tom Schamberg, Mr. Robert Hemenway, Mr. Brian Dumais, Mr. Richard Anderson.

At 9:00 a.m. the Moderator, Derek Lick, called the meeting to order. Mr. Lick then led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Lick introduced Mr. Cancio-Bello to present Article 1.

Mr. Cancio-Bello read Article 1:

Article 1 *To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **Twenty-Two Million Two Hundred Seventy Thousand Three Hundred Forty-Four Dollars (\$22,270,344.00)** for the purpose of financing [the renovation and construction costs of a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Applied Arts, & Math) wing at the Kearsarge Regional High School], **Twenty-Two Million Two Hundred Seventy Thousand Three Hundred Forty-Four Dollars (\$22,270,344.00)** of such sum to be raised through the issuance 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*

APPROVED

*apply for, obtain and accept federal, state or other aid, if any, which may be available for said project, including, but not limited to, New Hampshire Department of Education School Building Aid estimated to be in the amount approximately thirty percent (30%) of the eligible project costs, and to use such funds to reduce the amount of bonds or notes issued for the 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 other action or to pass any other vote relative thereto; [and further to raise and appropriate the additional sum of **Five Hundred Fifty-Six Thousand, Seven Hundred Fifty-Nine Dollars** (\$556,759) for the first year's payment on the bond]. (3/5 ballot vote required). (**School Board Recommends 8-0**) (**MBC Recommends 7-1**)*

School Board Explanation *The renovation and construction of the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Applied Arts, and Mathematics) wing at the Kearsarge Regional High School seeks to create and improve classroom space for the effective instruction of students in the following content areas: Robotics, Computer Science, Technical Education, Culinary Arts, Media and Communication Technology, Art (2-D and 3-D), Theater, Music, and Drama. It will support project based learning that allows students to develop and show competency across multiple content areas. For example: a learning task of building a functioning household robot may require the student to use math, computer programming, artistic design, applied business, finance, and accounting skills, as well as hands-on technical knowledge. Multiple teachers will provide instruction in their respective subjects to help students complete the learning task. The STEAM project aims to increase hands-on learning opportunities in new and adequate facilities. It addresses the needs of those students who plan to enter directly into the world of work upon graduation from high school, as well as offer additional options for those students who pursue traditional post-secondary studies at the college and university level.*

The STEAM construction project will add approximately 16,500 square ft. of new facility space to the existing school building. In addition, over 33,000 square ft. of classroom space in the original 1970 building will be renovated and modernized. This includes a complete remodeling of the physical education and athletic locker rooms adjacent to the gymnasium. To the extent feasible, the construction will incorporate energy saving opportunities, "green" building materials, improved roof and wall insulation, digital mechanical and electrical controls, LED lighting, and other reductions in carbon footprint. The project also addresses a substantial number of end-of-useful-life issues with HVAC, roofing, structural, electrical, and life safety systems which otherwise would need to be financed within the next few years with additional funds in the annual operating budget. Approximately \$5.2 mil. of necessary capital improvement work is included in the total bond warrant of \$22,270,344.

The current low interest rates available through the New Hampshire Municipal Bond Bank provide a favorable opportunity to achieve cost savings over the life of the 20-year bond. The annual tax impact of the bond (starting in 2023-24) by district town will be as follows, assuming a property assessed at \$300,000, and will decrease over the life of the bond: Bradford (\$190), New London (\$101), Newbury (\$119), Springfield (\$186), Sutton (\$213), Warner (\$248), and Wilmot (\$181).

Mr. Lick introduced Superintendent Feneberg to give a presentation regarding the proposed project in Article 1.

Supt. Feneberg thanked the audience for their attendance and proceeded to give a presentation regarding the proposed STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Applied Arts, & Math) Wing addition to Kearsarge Regional High School. He explained that at the core of this project is program redesign, renovation, and new construction. Currently, there is adequate instruction space in the high school for Science, Mathematics, and

APPROVED

Performing Arts; however, he explained that there are certain instructional spaces that are inadequate. There currently is not adequate space for instruction in areas such as Computer Science, Robotics, Technical Education, Digital Photography and Graphic Design, Musical and Performing Arts, Culinary Arts, Print and Media Production, Communications, and an up to date Library.

Currently, trade and vocational tracks are outsourced. The proposed STEAM Wing would allow students to have a hands-on learning experience. With the current space available at the High School, the students do the best they can with that space that is available to them. The only space dedicated to this at this time is the woodshop. This is not adequate space to accommodate all of the different vocations students should get the chance to explore.

Supt. Feneberg went on to explain how there are new and good paying jobs in the fields of Digital Photography and the Visual and Performing Arts. Employers and Colleges are looking for students to enter this field who have had hands-on-experience and that is what this project is all about. The new STEAM Wing would give students that opportunity to have that hands-on experience that will help them succeed in their pursuit of employment and post-secondary education.

75% of Kearsarge graduates seek post-secondary education, while 25% do not seek post-secondary education, choosing a different path such as immediately entering the workforce. Our goal with the STEAM addition is to impart skills that both colleges and employers are looking for. We want our students to have the education and the tools that they need to succeed in the workforce and that allows them to stay in this area if they so choose. We want our graduates to contribute to the Kearsarge area and help advance our communities.

For many disciplines, a high school diploma is no longer sufficient, as it was 40 or 50 years ago. In many cases, a college degree may not even be sufficient to land that first job. What we want to be able to do with this STEAM addition is give our students the skills and credentials that set them apart from the rest. We want our students to be able to market themselves to employers.

In order to give our students the skills and experiences to market themselves, we need to focus on project based learning. We want education that makes sense for our kids; connecting project based learning with subjects. An example of this would be taking an accounting class. Accounting by itself may not seem so exciting to some students; however, if a student is interested in opening a business that they are passionate about, they are able to see the need for an understanding of accounting. It gives them a path to be excited about how accounting can be applied to something that matters to them.

We are asking for two things: new construction and renovation. The new construction would consist of 16,500 new square feet. This would include a new front to the school. The renovation of our current space would impact about 30,000 square feet. We are looking at creating new space and redesigning our current space to make it more functional.

There are a few key elements we are asking for in regards to this project. We are asking for a second art classroom. We currently have one art classroom and one art teacher. Once the project is complete, we would request that a position for second Art teacher be created. We would ask that there be one central space for Photography and Graphic Design. We are also asking that we increase our band room. Our current music space is very undersized and an increase in space would allow for the proper storage of instruments. We would also be including a computer science and robotics lab.

Supt. Feneberg began explaining that the level of interest in the Culinary Arts program at the school has tripled. In explaining this, the Superintendent shared a story regarding how project based learning was taking place in the Culinary Arts program.

APPROVED

A week prior to this meeting, the Superintendent went to the High School in search of the culinary teacher. After looking all through the halls and in the Culinary classroom, he decided that he would catch up with her at the end of the day. Once he and the culinary teacher were able to touch base, he asked where she was when he was looking for her earlier. She explained that they had class in the gym earlier that day. The Superintendent, perplexed, asked why culinary class would be held in the gym. She went on to explain that the Anatomy class was learning about lobsters and had a dissection project to complete. The Anatomy class had purchased fresh lobsters for the dissection. Once the anatomy class had finished their dissection, the culinary class took the lobsters and had a lobster bake for the teachers and staff.

Supt. Feneberg then presented renderings of what the proposed Wing may look like. There will be a redone entry way that will make it clear where the entrance to the school is. Once inside, there would be a lobby space that would be big enough to be used for small gatherings. Further inside, there would be a restaurant area with an industrial kitchen. The Superintendent gave the idea that in the future this may allow for the public to come in for an inexpensive lunch, allowing the students to learn about managing a restaurant. This would allow them to see all the different aspects of running a business, such as a restaurant.

There is one portion of the project that would not be STEAM related that the Superintendent wanted to be upfront about. This project would allow for the current locker rooms to be renovated. The locker rooms currently in the school are not adequate for the standards of today. The current locker rooms date back to the 1970's when the school was constructed.

As a part of the project, there would be a number of maintenance enhancements, including replacing the roof and updating the electrical and HVAC systems, which also date back to the 1970's. The current systems are not energy efficient and these upgrades would certainly increase the efficiency of the school.

Supt. Feneberg then turned to the cost of the project. With the upgrades mentioned (new construction, roof replacement, facilities upgrades and repairs, Physical Education locker rooms, and the installation of a generator) the total cost of the project would be \$22,270,244.00.

Certain areas of the school would be built while school is still in session; however, other more frequently used areas would need to be completed during the summer. If the bond is approved at the March 2022 election, the projected start date would be July of 2023, with a projected completion date of September 2024.

The Superintendent then asked for any questions there may be.

Moderator Lick stated that a simple majority vote is needed to put this on the ballot for the town meetings. He then opened the meeting up for public comment.

Ms. Holly Buckley - Sutton - Ms. Buckley asked what the student population is in the lower grades. Supt. Feneberg answered that since 2015 the projection for the district enrollment has been extremely steady. The rest of the state has had declining enrollment; however, that has not been seen in this district. The Superintendent noted that there are about 1,750 students in the district with about 530 to 550 of those students being high school students. Ms. Buckley then followed up with the question of how many students are in each classroom. Mr. Feneberg stated that it depends on the class. Certain classes may have more than 25 while other classes may have as few as 8 students.

Mr. Joe Cardillo - New London - Mr. Cardillo thanked the MBC and the School Board for their work. He then went on to note that he believed that there is a bond that is scheduled to be retired at some point in the future.

APPROVED

Specifically, he pointed to the bond on the Middle School project. He then asked what was the bond on the Middle School project and what would the tax impact be? Mr. Feneberg answered the question. He stated that there are actually 2 bonds out there: the Honeywell Bond, which will be retired in 2025, and the Middle School Bond, which has a final payment date of August of 2026. There would be 4 years of overlap between the bonds. Once those bonds fall off, the district will be paying below what is currently being paid for the Middle School. Mr. LeBoeuf stated that the Middle School bond was \$24 million.

Mr. Bartholomew then stated that it would be ideal to wait 4 years; however, by and large, the members didn't think that was fiscally responsible with the current interest rates. If the interest was 4.5%, that would significantly increase the cost. The cost of the project would also likely increase. When the Middle School project didn't pass at first, the district actually ended up paying more for the project and getting less. Mr. LeBoeuf stated that for every half a percent the interest rate goes up an additional \$1.1 million would be added to the overall cost.

Supt. Feneberg expanded on the question of timing, stating that if we wait 4 years for this project, that is an entire generation of high school students. He stated that he didn't think it would be right for him to say that we should wait for 4 years for that bond. He stated that this is a project that he is fully behind.

Mr. Bob Wright - Sutton - Mr. Wright was interested in the relationship between the district's trust funds and the capital reserves. He stated that normally anything having to do with renovations would be placed in capital reserves. He then asked, why has the capital reserve funds not been used? Mr. Bartholomew answered that the district does have a new construction fund which currently has \$187,000 in it. He stated that the Board knew that that would not come remotely close to touching something like this. He also explained that there is a roof repair fund which has \$800,000 in it.

Mr. Wright reacted to Mr. Bartholomew's comments stating that he was "mildly horrified by that answer." Mr. Wright stated that there is \$187,000 for new construction yet there is a budget of \$47 million being discussed. Mr. Bartholomew then stated that when there is a surplus in the budget, when there is an overage, those funds go back to the towns as a credit on the next year's taxes, rather than into these reserve funds. Supt. Feneberg stated that some of this money is more commonly used for emergency repairs. For example, last year a new law went into effect putting the oil tanks in the school out of compliance.

Mr. Randall Hnizdor - Sutton - Mr. Hnizdor stated that for the last 40 years he's been a recipient of products from high schools. Mr. Hnizdor asked, how do we know that we have improved? He stated that he had looked at the statistics from the New Hampshire Department of Education and said that the district isn't doing that great. He stated that he was formerly in the military and is in the automotive industry. He stated that he has hired graduates of the High School in the past. He emphasized that he and businesses alike in the automotive and manufacturing industries cannot hire these students if they cannot do math, write and read comprehensively. He asked, how do we set up metrics to ensure that this money is well spent. He stated that in his world, he would vote no on this expenditure. He then asked what the district would do if the district would like the public to vote yes?

Mr. Feneberg answered the question. He countered with an invitation to come to the high school and have a conversation with the principal and the curriculum leader. If you just look at one metric, it is probably pretty average for most high schools, the Superintendent noted. He stated that most students graduating from the High School are successful in all post secondary education that they seek out. The core of that proposal is to address the very issue you bring up: to equip kids and encourage them to be active learners. He then stated that we look for ways to adjust, adapt, and improve for every student who comes through the door.

APPROVED

Mr. Bessette stated that when looking at the state assessment results, one needs to ask the question: how valid is that assessment when we are looking at our kid's performance? He added that the country is moving towards competency based assessment. He then asked, are the assessments that people are reporting at the state level reliable and accurate?

Ms. Sarah Anderson - Springfield - Ms. Anderson stated that she was not a numbers person, but that she wanted to speak. She stated that she has been a part of the district for many years and attended the high school herself. She stated that her children did not excel at math tests, and that she really appreciates the district's desire to include more hands-on learning. She also stated that her son and his girlfriend are recent graduates of the high school and both of them really enjoyed the robotics program. She stated that the group of students in the robotics program were really passionate and wanted to learn. She stated that she was amazed when she would go to these robotics tournaments and see what the Kearsarge students could accomplish with the limited space available. She said, just think about what could be done if they had more space. She went on to say that it was clear when she would attend the robotics competitions that Kearsarge does not have the same resources and capabilities as other districts in the state. She encouraged other members of the community to vote yes on Article 1.

Ms. Margaret Doody - Wilmot - Ms. Doody explained how much different it is when kids write about something they care about. She stated that when writing essays for English class, it was much easier for kids to write about something they were passionate about than for them to write an essay about what Mark Twain meant about something in Huckleberry Finn.

Mr. Bartholomew stated that he went to a college prep school in Buffalo, NY and stated that at times his wife tells him that he is dangerously over-educated. He asked, what did I learn that was of most value through all my education? It wasn't sitting there in English history class. He stated that what gave him the most benefit was the work that he did in the performing arts, participating in project management and set design. It showed him how to work together with people and how to advocate with superiors to get budget funding. He stated, that's what project based learning is all about and that's what businesses need. It's very valuable to the kids and it isn't being taught enough in colleges.

Ms. Schultz stated that she really appreciated the comments and the questions. She went on to say that unfortunately standardized testing measures very little in terms of academic performance. She stated that she believes standardized testing has really skewed the way people measure academic success. She also stated that many students will say they are on a college track because that is the only path that schools throughout the country are offering to them as an option. This project really hits the needs of not just learning, but it hits the needs of interest and exploration.

Ms. Christine Perkins - Warner - Ms. Perkins asked if there were federal funds available for engineering, specifically Esser funding. Have those funds been looked into yet? If we get funding from other sources, whether it be the state or federal government, how does that in return affect how we have to pay? Mr. LeBoeuf answered the question stating that any of that funding would reduce the amount of the bond. You still pay the \$1.6 million per year for the bond.

Supt. Feneberg stated that any other sources of income for the project from the community could be something to the effect of buying a table or buying a storage project. It would be offset in the general fund. The Superintendent then expanded on Esser funding and explained that these funds are specifically to mitigate the effect of COVID. He stated that we have taken advantage of three rounds of this funding. He then stated that these funds could be used for ventilation and air quality, mentioning looking into replacing the air conditioning system

APPROVED

at the Middle School. He stated that the district is taking advantage of every penny that it can get from federal funding.

Ms. Susan Knight - Sutton - Ms. Knight asked if project based learning is currently being implemented in the school or if this addition is needed to begin its implementation. Supt. Feneberg stated that the district has taken every opportunity to implement project based learning throughout the curriculum. He stated that the High School teachers look for project based learning opportunities consistently that can be implemented with the current tools and facilities at the disposal of the school. We are asking for a facility to further implement project based learning in the best way possible.

Ms. Knight asked a follow up question regarding what happens with surplus funds rather than putting them into capital reserve funds. Mr. Bartholomew answered the question stating that every year the district has a budget surplus. He stated that the district budgets for what it needs and if we can't spend the money then the money is saved.

Mr. Charles Langille - Principal, Kearsarge Regional High School - Mr. Langille stated that though he is not a resident of the district, he absolutely loves the community. He referenced the culinary program and stated that only 40% of the students who are interested in the program are able to participate. When students get into the culinary program they learn skills that will get them into a kitchen right out of high school if they wanted to. He also mentioned that there is currently a high school student who has made \$8,000 flipping small engines. He attested to how important it is for students to have project based learning as a part of the curriculum. Mr. Langille went on to explain that in order to get into some of the big name schools, such as MIT, you have to have a project that you can point to that you designed. This is what gives you an edge when applying to these schools. Project based learning helps to give them that edge.

Mr. Andrew Pinard - Bradford - Mr. Pinard stated that project based learning in Kearsarge goes back to way before 4 or 5 years ago. He explained that his daughter had graduated from the school and went on to get a degree in Marine Biology. He stated that his daughter was involved in project based learning while in high school and said that this is not a new idea. He also wanted to clarify that our students are not a product, they are each unique. He expressed that he believes that the district gives each student the tools needed to explore their interests and give them skills for future success. He also said that he supports the inclusion of the locker rooms in the STEAM project. He mentioned that the physical education aspect of education is very important and adds to the whole body experience of learning.

Mr. Charles Forsberg - Sutton - Mr. Forsberg expressed that he was disappointed when he went to the High School's website and wanted to learn about the school's programs, but couldn't find any information. He stated that he ended up going to the New Hampshire Department of Education's website for information. He said that he found that you need 20 credits to graduate from high school and said that each credit is between 135 and 150 hours. He referenced a significant document that he downloaded from the Department of Education's website which stated that every high school has to offer 45 credits. He stated that he didn't know how this was being implemented in the district. He mentioned the trade programs that are being taught at the Tech School in Concord and mentioned that that is something that we won't be able to compete with. He stated that 30 to 40 years ago, nothing was computer driven and explained that you can learn just about anything you want on the internet. He then asked if all of the space that is currently available at the high school is being adequately and properly utilized. He also asked if the same students were taking the same courses over and over again. He stated that he is not asking anything from the School Board, but said that these are things that the Board ought to be thinking about. He then stated that on-the-job training is important and that the school should be creating life-long learners. Lastly, he asked how the STEM programs at the middle school relate to the high school.

APPROVED

Mr. Bartholomew responded saying that the required courses are on the High School's website. He informed Mr. Forsberg that in order to find them he should search "Kearsarge Program of Studies."

Ms. Christine Downing - Principal, Sutton Central School - Ms. Downing stated that she is the curriculum developer for the High School and said that she would be happy to sit down with Mr. Forsberg about the curriculum. She stated that the district is required to have a clear outline of the curriculum being used. She expressed her support for the STEAM addition saying that she believed it would be something great for the district. She said that there are lots of STEM projects happening at the Middle School. She echoed Mr. Pinard's comment regarding project based learning, saying that this is not a new concept to the district. She said that there are lots of opportunities where the curriculum and instructional practices can utilize project based learning. She commended the board and the communities for this great district. She also acknowledged Steve Shepherd, the Elementary Curriculum Director. She closed by saying that this is an innovative district.

Mr. Randall Hnizdor - Sutton - Mr. Hnizdor arose to speak again. He stated that clearly the standardized test is somewhat of a sensitive subject. He stated that he would recommend that the district find a manufacturing facility and stated that the number one excuse at these large manufacturing facilities is that they need more space. He said that the district may find that they have a lot of unused space. He challenged the Board to tell the audience that the current space is being used effectively.

Mr. Bartholomew responded stating that this addition would only add 10% of additional space to the High School. He said that the STEAM Wing is an area that is meant to flow and provide all the needs that these classrooms have.

Mr. Joe Cadillo - New London - Mr. Cardillo arose to speak again. He expressed his appreciation for the work that has been done here. He stated that he has been coming to these meetings for 40 years and that his final child will be out of the District next year. The only thing they will remember from school, he said, is their athletic endeavors. He stated that he was a numbers guy and that he would like someone to explain what went through the conversations that this project came out of. When and where was there a conversation about upgrading to turf fields? What were those numbers? He asked for someone to speak to how much more that would have affected the bond and asked if there was a timeline for that.

Mr. Feneberg answered Mr. Cardillo's question stating that the Board has talked about the proposals. The Superintendent stated that it would be around \$1.5 million to replace a current field with turf. Mr. Feneberg also questioned whether a turf athletic field would be just a one time expense or would the District need to think and plan for the maintenance of the field. He stated that a turf field was not out of the planning, but not seen as something that the District wanted to include in the project. There is currently no time frame on this sort of a project, but it has come up and the discussions are ongoing.

Mr. Bob Wright - Sutton - Mr. Wright arose to speak again. He asked if he would be correct in his presumption that the 30% from the New Hampshire Department of Education, if this project were to wait 3 to 4 years to build, would not be available?

Mr. Bartholomew responded, saying that 30% is something that could be available, but we don't know for sure if it will be available. He stated that this is dependent on Concord. He said that as to whether this project is delayed or not is really just a guess. He explained that a lot of districts have had very needed projects not be built because they did not have the school building aid from the State. He noted that there is a backlog of building projects currently before the State.

APPROVED

Supt Feneberg stated that the District is taking every effort to apply for this aid from the State. He said that the District met the most recent deadline to register interest in getting building aid. He echoed Mr. Bartholomew stating that there is a lot of pent up need before the State that will need to be weighed by the people in Concord.

Mr. Charles Forsberg - Sutton - Mr. Forsberg arose to speak again. He stated that he wanted someone to find robotics tubing. He stated that he knows what it is and that he has his own definition; however, he wants to hear it from somebody else.

Mr. Bessette responded stating that the Robotics program is run as an extracurricular activity. Robotics is usually tied to some of the activities that we do in coordination with the New Hampshire First Program, a competitive series that is run throughout the state and nationally. He also stated that there is potential that bioengineering and biomechanical design programming may be added to the program.

Mr. Forsberg then stated that he would make a rather simple definition of it. He said that he was going to start with sensors, which is a huge subject, and then transducers, and then actuators, and then some kind of software that ties it all together. He asked how much learning is involved in this program as opposed to entertainment.

Moderator Lick moved to close deliberation on Article 1 and take up a vote to place Article 1 on the ballot.

A Motion was made and seconded to put Article 1 on the ballot.

The Motion carried by voice vote.

Mr. Bartholomew read Article 2.

Article 2 To see if the School District will vote to raise and appropriate the **Municipal Budget Committee's recommended amount of Forty-Seven Million, One Hundred Seventy-Two Thousand, Four Hundred Ninety-Two \$47,172,492.**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 **Forty-Seven Million, One Hundred Seventy-Two Thousand, Four Hundred Ninety-Two Dollars \$47,172,492.** 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 8-0) (MBC Recommends 8-0)

School Board Explanation: *The 2022-23 Operating Budget proposed by the Kearsarge Regional School Board and the Municipal Budget Committee of \$47,172,492 is an increase of approximately \$829,197 or 1.79% from the 2021-22 budget. The areas of increase within the school boards operating budget are a result of a variety of factors that are explained in the following paragraphs. In summary, the majority of the budget increases this*

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year falls into two categories: Wages and health benefits. Those two items account for \$945,922 or \$116,725 more than the \$829,197 increase.

Wages and Fringe - The requested budget for 2022-23 reflects a net increase of 2.8 teacher FTE's. Added were 1 FTE for an elementary teacher due to class size projections at Bradford. One (1) FTE for an elementary reading specialist at New London elementary school. Additional FTEs as follows: .1 FTE for secondary culinary, .4 FTE for secondary drama, .2 FTE for secondary art and .1 FTE for elementary math. In addition, 1.5 FTE custodians were added for the Middle school and our new PDC center. As a result, the wage line for employees requires an increase of approximately \$375,499 or 45.28% of the budget increase.

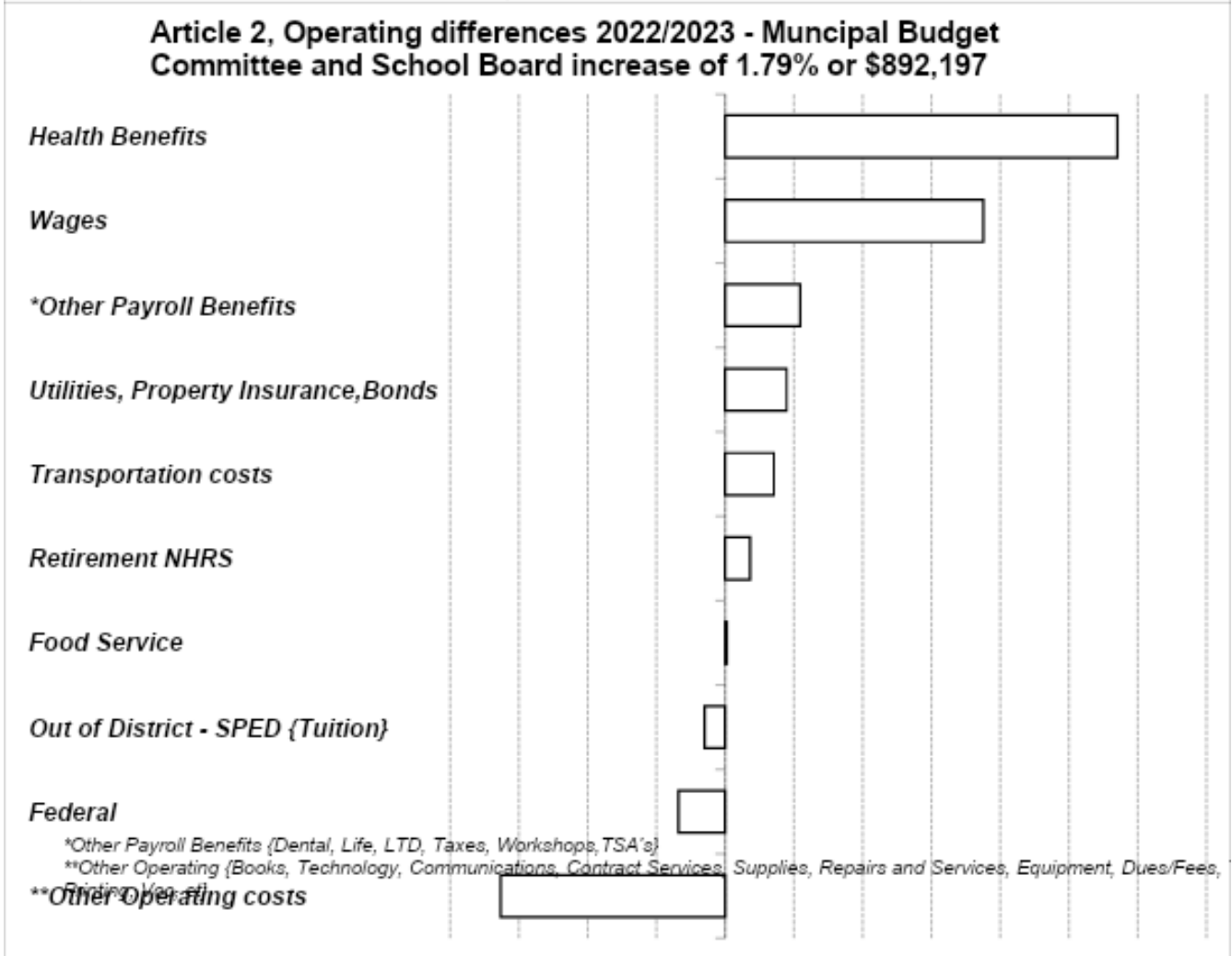
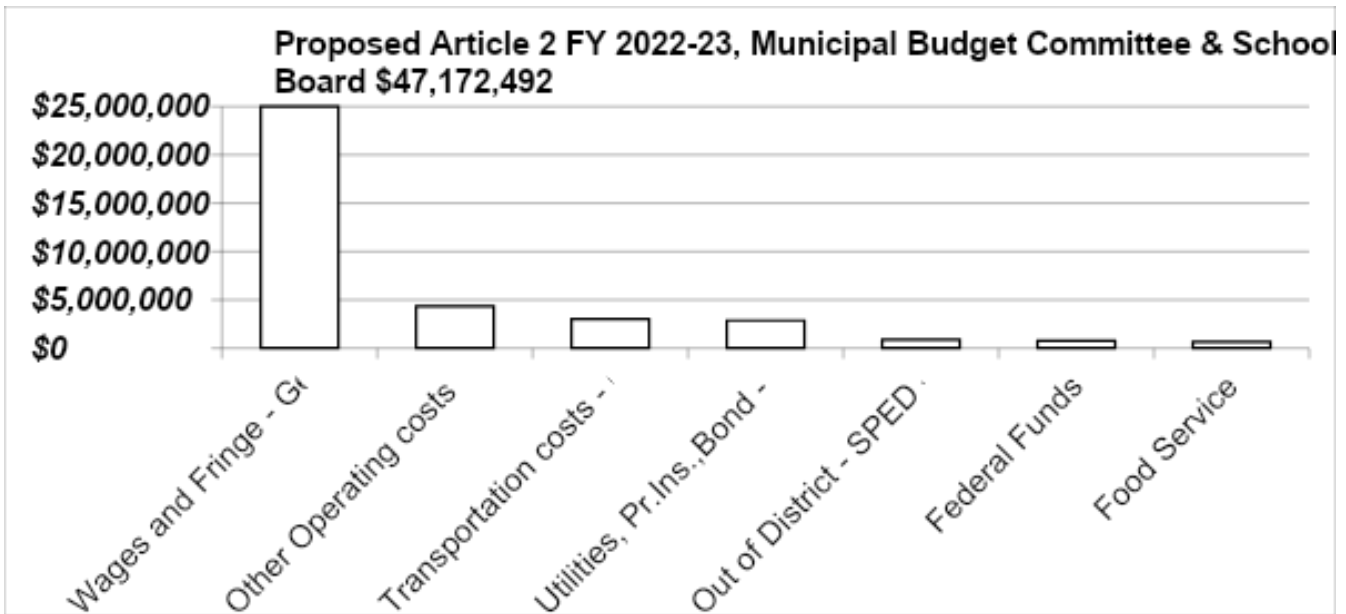
The actual increase in health benefit costs for (22-23) was a 10.1% increase from the current (21-22) health effective rates. Based on this increase, health benefits alone represent 68.80% of the total budget increase or \$570,423. Included under "Other payroll benefits" are dental, life, long term disability, workers compensation insurances, taxes, workshops, and tax sheltered annuities. The overall other payroll benefits increase represents 13.15% of the total budget increase or \$109,066. New Hampshire State Retirement increased 4.35% or \$36,069.

Out of District - Our out of district costs for 2022-23 school year are estimated to be a reduction of (-\$30,000) or (-3.62%) of the budget 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 21. Placements for out of district services can range from \$50,000 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 decrease of approximately (-39.38%) or (-\$326,575).

Other Expenses - Transportation represents an 8.54% or \$70,839 budget increase, and Utilities, Bonds, Property Insurance budget increased by approximately 10.78% or \$89,414. Food Service represents an increase in budget of .28% or \$2,329. Federal funds represent a decrease of (-8.18%) or (-\$67,867) of the decrease. Note, all federal dollars appropriated are offset by matching federal funds. The result has no effect on the local tax rate.

APPROVED



Moderator Lick opened the meeting to discussion on Article 2.

APPROVED

Mr. Andrew Pinard - Bradford - Mr. Pinard pointed out that we are all hearing reports of teachers leaving the industry. He stated that he did not believe that adequate staffing was enough to meet the educational needs of students. He asked, can we maintain and retain teachers?

Supt. Feneberg responded saying that the COVID crisis has had a very detrimental effect on the education system. He stated that this year the District has had a record number of teachers and staff who are not yet fully certified; 8 individuals are currently engaged in learning while they are teaching. The Superintendent noted that elementary applications are significantly down and said that there are only a handful of substitute teachers for the entire District. He stated that the teachers often cover for each other. He also explained that the District strives to create a safe environment for teachers and students so more people are not out due to the COVID pandemic. The District has been able to meet the needs of the schools and everybody has put their efforts together to cover classes and get the best education for our kids.

Mr. Bessette stated that this is obviously where the District needs to be thinking: are we able to attract and retain the teachers needed to do the job? He stated that if we are going to move forward through this crisis, the only way we will be able to do this would be for our communities to understand how to work with the District. He also mentioned that there currently is not the capacity in the 7 towns to find affordable housing for young teachers. There has to be some sort of coordinated support between those entities.

Ms. Sarah Anderson - Springfield - Ms. Anderson stated that her biggest concern is that the District won't be able to retain the current staff. She stated that she believes that Kearsarge has excellent teachers and staff. Ms. Anderson also mentioned that she had read about what the teachers in Chicago are currently going through and that they have gone on strike. She stated that she has seen first hand how educators go above and beyond. She asked, is there money in the budget if we were in a situation where we needed to offer our teachers and paraprofessionals more money?

Supt. Feneberg explained that Article 3 addresses that very issue and that the District has come up with a proposal to the communities to provide that. He stated that this article was for the teachers and that paraprofessionals will come up this summer for another agreement. The Superintendent stated that the District always provides added value through the benefit structure. People like to work here and they have a Board, a MBC, and communities who appreciate them. Through the course of the pandemic, the acknowledgement from the community has been phenomenal.

Mr. Charles Forsberg - Sutton - Mr. Forsberg stated that last year he raised a question regarding the school board presenting the annual budget and now he is reading on the first line of the article that the Municipal Budget Committee is presenting the budget. He asked how we change the Charter to see that this happened. He asked for the explanation from School District Counsel, Barbara Loughman

Counsel stated that she believes it is clear looking at the Warrant Article that both figures are in the Warrant Article and that there's no problem under the Charter.

Mr. Forsberg then asked if these had been different numbers if we would be seeing the same orders we see now.

Counsel stated that she was not going to speculate on that.

Mr. Forsberg then asked if the District believes in equal opportunity. He stated that when you have the ballot in your hand, you should be able to answer every question up and down the ballot regardless of what it is. He asked if the people believed that that was the case here in this District. He stated that, no, he did not believe that.

APPROVED

Moderator Lick moved to close deliberation on Article 2.

A Motion was made and seconded to put Article 2 on the ballot.

The Motion carried by voice vote.

Ms. Mastin read Article 3.

Article 3 To see if the School District will vote to approve the cost item included in the Collective Bargaining Agreement reached between the Kearsarge Regional School Board and Kearsarge Regional Educators Association which calls for the following increases in salaries and benefits:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Estimated Increase</i>
2022-23	\$432,569
2023-24	\$464,065
2024-25	\$449,928

And further to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$432,569** for the 2022-23 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. **(School Board Recommends 8-0) (Municipal Budget Committee Recommends 8-0)**

School Board Explanation: *The School Board and the Kearsarge Regional Educators' Association have reached an agreement on a three-year contract for 2022 – 2025. The proposed agreement continues to provide modest, but competitive salary increases and benefits for teachers and specialists covered under the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). The projected three-year total cost to the district for this contract remains in line with the previous two agreements, thus providing fiscal stability and predictable labor costs for the school district. The contract continues to lower the district's contribution cost to health insurance premiums from 94% to 92%. Additionally, it introduces two lower cost insurance plan options for educators, including an incentive plan for staff to switch to those lower cost options. The new CBA introduces two three-year pilot programs to address the ongoing shortage of substitute teachers and the difficulty hiring qualified educators in specialty areas (such as math, science, special education). Newly hired teachers will receive a paid, one-day, non-instructional teacher orientation session prior to the start of the school year.*

Moderator Lick opened the meeting to discussion on Article 3.

Charles Forsberg - Sutton - Mr. Forsburg asked if additional funding for people that the District would want to bring in, but can't find a place to live within the District, has been thought of. He asked that the Board think about that.

Moderator Lick moved to close deliberation on Article 3.

APPROVED

A Motion was made and seconded to put Article 3 on the ballot.

The Motion carried by voice vote.

Ms. Bates read Article 4.

Article 4 Shall the District adopt the revisions to RSA 198:4-b, II enacted in 2020, which allows the District to **authorize, indefinitely until rescinded** to retain up to 5% of the District's net assessment in any year, allows the expenditure of any amount retained after the School Board first holds a public hearing, and requires the School Board to include an annual reporting of the retained fund balance in its annual report to the District? (**School Board Recommends 8-0**) (**MBC Recommends 8-0**)

This article will not appear on the ballot and will be voted on at Deliberative Session.

School Board Explanation: *If approved, this article will allow the district to retain up to 5% of remaining funds on hand at the end of its fiscal year. Any expenditure of these funds will first need a public hearing held by the School Board and will also require it being posted in the district annual report.*

Moderator Lick opened the meeting to discussion on Article 4.

Mr. Andrew Pinard - Bradford - Mr. Pinard asked what the difference would be between emergency use and authorization that would need approval by the New Hampshire Department of Education and what is being proposed in the article. He then asked for an example of what projects this funding might be used for.

Supt. Feneberg stated that the current fund is 2.5%. This is essentially an update to the law that led to the 2.5%. The legislature found it prudent to allow the districts to retain 2.5% and the choice was made to increase that. In recent years, the District has been fortunate enough to have enough in the surplus when it has looked to use the 2.5%. He stated that this would authorize the School Board to go possibly up to 5%, the Board wouldn't have to spend all 5%, but this gives them a limit.

Mr. Bartholomew stated that this does not allow the Board to retain 5%, but would allow them to go up to 5%. He also stated that this is not cumulative.

Mr. Pinard followed up on his question asking if this is in addition to the 2.5% or replacing the 2.5%? Why is the MBC not included in the distribution of those funds?

Mr. Bartholomew replied saying that that is not required by the statute.

Mr. Charles Forsberg - Sutton - Mr. Forsberg noted that the District did vote a while back to retain 2.5%. He stated that that should be clarified: that the 5% is replacing the 2.5%, it is not 2.5% plus 5%.

Mr. Forsberg proposed a motion to add the involvement of the Municipal Budget Committee to the article.

APPROVED

Counsel to the School District stated that language regarding the MBC could be added in parenthesis after the article. She stated that this is not consistent with the statute.

Mr. Forsberg countered that the additional language regarding the MBC shall be present in the article.

Mr. Forsberg made a motion to amend the article. The motion was seconded. (Proposed Amendment attached)

Mr. Andrew Pinard - Bradford - Mr. Pinard arose to address the proposed amendment. He expressed that he believed that the current School Board has been very collaborative with the MBC. He questioned if this was an appropriate form of action. He stated that he would likely not support the amendment in the way that it's currently worded.

Mr. Bob Wright - Sutton - Mr. Wright arose to address the proposed amendment. He stated that he seconded the amendment because he believed it would be important for discussion. He stated that this is outside of the normal RSA wording. He asked can we be more protective of the public or is it not necessary? What are the advantages of this amendment? What are the legal ramifications?

Counsel to the School District stated that the language in the warrant article is the language that is recommended by the New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration. She stated that it wasn't entirely clear to her that there would necessarily be a problem with the amendment. She reiterated that to avoid the risk of this not being valid, the wording could be put in parenthesis after the article.

Moderator Lick called for a vote on the motion to amend Article 4.

The Motion was denied by voice vote.

Moderator Lick called for a vote to approve Article 4.

A Motion to approve Article 4 was made and seconded.

The Article passed by voice vote.

Mr. Cushing read Article 5.

Article 5 To see if the School District will vote to raise and appropriate up to **\$25,000** to be placed in the Special Education Expendable Trust Fund, established in 2008 within the provisions of RSA 198:20-c for the purpose of emergency funding of unforeseen Special Education costs incurred by the District, with such amount to be funded **from unassigned fund balance (surplus funds) remaining** on hand as of June 30, 2022.
(School Board Recommends 8-0) (MBC Recommends 8-0)

APPROVED

School Board Explanation: *In 2008, the voters established an expendable trust fund for the purpose of providing funds for unforeseen emergency circumstances in Special Education that may arise in a year after the budget has been adopted. If approved, this article will add up to \$25,000 to that fund from operating surplus remaining on hand as of June 30, 2022. (The balance of the fund as of July 31, 2021, is approximately \$336,035, the target amount to be raised is \$372,139).*

Moderator Lick opened the meeting to discussion on Article 5.

Ms. Liz Tentarelli - Newbury - Ms. Tentorelli asked how the allocation of funds in this article impacts the article that was just talked about?

Mr. Bartholomew answered the question stating that if there were funds needed for a large expenditure for Special Education that wasn't in the budget, then the School Board would have to make the choice of whether to use money in the trust or money from the surplus. He stated that he doesn't see in the statute a legal reason that the 5% talked about in Article 4 couldn't be used first. He stated that you try to redistribute the money you already have before dipping into surplus or these funds.

Mr. Charles Forsberg - Sutton - Mr. Forsberg asked if money has been spent out of this trust fund relative to Article 5 in the past year, or the past 2 or 3 years.

Supt. Feneberg stated that there has been no money spent out of these trust funds in the last 2 to 3 years.

Mr. Bartholomew stated that the fund was created to address a problem with Special Education Funding in a year where there was an increase in funding needed. At that time a special meeting was called to appropriate additional funds. He stated that when there is a need for an out-of-district placement for even one student, it can cost up to \$300,000. This would pretty much take up all of this trust fund.

Mr. Forsberg then asked, if you had a question of not having enough money surplussed, which fund would come first?

Moderator Lick called for a vote to approve Article 5.

A Motion to approve Article 5 was made and seconded.

The Article passed by voice vote.

Mr. Gregoire read Article 6.

Article 6 To see if the School District will vote to raise and appropriate up to **\$35,000** 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, 2022.

APPROVED

(School Board Recommends 8-0) (MBC Recommends 8-0)

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 \$35,000 toward that purpose from operating surplus funds remaining on hand as of June 30, 2022. The balance of the fund as of July 31, 2021, is approximately \$466,733, the target amount to be raised is \$500,236).*

Moderator Lick opened the meeting to discussion on Article 6.

Mr. Bob Wright - Sutton - Mr. Wright stated that this article goes back to Article 1. If we are doing a major renovation which means improvements, is any of this money being set aside on behalf of the STEAM project? If not, why not?

Mr. Feneberg stated that this is for unanticipated funds. For example, our oil tanks referenced earlier that needed double walls to be in compliance with the law that came into effect in January. We used this trust fund to pay for that expense, and this would be filling that trust fund back up.

Mr. Charles Forsberg - Sutton - You use the word “target,” is there a maximum amount that you feel you don’t have to ask the voters for more money if you reach that and it’s stable?

Mr. Bartholomew stated that at our last meeting, the question was taken up of what the target amount should be for the different District trust funds. A good example would be the prior article. We wanted an amount that we thought may cover an unexpected out-of-district placement. He said that the same applies to building and maintenance repairs. Mr. Bartholomew said that about \$500,000 was the decision, based on consultation with Administration, that we thought would be a comfortable number to have for unanticipated repairs. He stated that if this passes and there are sufficient funds in surplus to fund it, we will reach the goal and we would not come back and ask for more unless for some reason we want to increase that target or we expend money from it and need to replace it.

Ms. Susan Knight - Sutton - Ms Knight asked, are there actual funds for anticipated maintenance? Why are we not adding funds to that this year?

Mr. Bartholomew answered the question stating that the Board is evaluating whether or not to increase the goal. He stated that maintenance is put on the capital improvement plan and is included in the budget. He stated that trust funds are meant to ease the cost of major repairs to the tax-payers.

Ms. Knight followed up on her question stating that she would appreciate a better understanding of what funds are currently in place.

Mr. Bartholomew stated that a list of those funds can certainly be provided.

Ms Knight stated that some of these funds are only for unanticipated needs and only the roof fund is anticipated.

Mr. Bartholomew stated that that is true. He said that one example of this would be the funds for repaving. Instead of doing it all at once, which would be very expensive, repaving is done incrementally.

APPROVED

Mr. Charles Forsberg - Sutton - Mr. Forsberg asked if the voters have the right or opportunity to transfer these funds to the general fund. He asked if that is limited to the School Board's Authority?

Counsel to the District stated that once a fund is set up, it can only be spent on what the fund was set up for. She stated that the purpose of the fund could be changed by a two-thirds supermajority vote. She said a vote could also be made to discontinue the fund. Other than that, the District has to spend it on the purpose the fund was created for. To discontinue a fund, a Warrant Article would be needed.

Moderator Lick called for a vote to approve Article 6.

A Motion to approve Article 6 was made and seconded.

The Article passed by voice vote.

Article 7 To transact any other business that may legally come before the meeting.

No further business was proposed.

Moderator Lick asked for a motion to adjourn.

There was a Motion and a second to adjourn. The Motion carried by voice vote.

The Meeting was adjourned at 11:46 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas Hilton
School Board Note Taker