**Kearsarge Regional School District**

**THE STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE**

**ANNUAL DISTRICT MEETING - 1ST SESSION, JANUARY 4, 2020**

Fifty-second Annual School District Meeting

Kearsarge Regional School District

Kearsarge Regional High School

January 4, 2020

Attendees representing the Kearsarge Regional School District: Superintendent Mr. Winfried Feneberg, Assistant Superintendent Mr. Michael Bessette and Business Administrator Mr. Larry LeBoeuf. School Board Members attending included: Mr. Kenneth Bartholomew (Chair), Dr. Art Bobruff, Mr. Emilio Cancio-Bello (Vice Chair), Ms. Bebe Casey, Ms. Alison Mastin, Ms. Faith Minton and Mr. Andrew Pinard. Municipal Budget Committee members in attendance: Mr. Richard Anderson (Chair), Mr. Peter Anderson, Mr. David Bates, Mr. Jim Bibbo, Mr. Robert DeFelice, Mr. Brian Dumais, Mr. Luke Gorman, Mr. Robert Hemenway and Mr. Thomas Schamberg.

The Moderator, Mr. Brackett Scheffy, called the meeting to order at approximately 9:00am. Attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance led by Ms. Faith Minton.

Mr. Scheffy explained the procedures for this first session, the warrant discussion protocol and the vote on the March ballot. He noted, as in the past, the meeting will follow Roberts Rules of Order and there may be some flexibility within the rules. Mr. Scheffy explained procedures for amendments to articles. Amended articles will appear alongside the original warrant article. Proposed amendments must be submitted in writing prior to taking a vote and will appear separately on the warrant as written if passed. He explained the motions to close debate. Amendments require a two-thirds vote. He requested attendees use the microphones at the front of the auditorium to be heard. He asked attendees state their name and the town which they are from. Mr. Scheffy stated he would read the articles and members would read the explanations.

Mr. Bartholomew made a few announcements prior to reading of the warrant. Staff members retiring at the end of the school year are: Susan Berlenbach (37 years), Linda Cermak (42 years). A special thanks to both for their years of service. Additionally, Mr. Bartholomew announced that Board Member Faith Minton would be leaving. She was involved in the Communications Committee, the Wellness Committee and the Parent Partnership Group, On behalf of the Board and administration Mr. Bartholomew thanked her for her service.

Mr. Cancio-Bello recognized Board Member Mr. Andrew Pinard who had served on the Board for twelve years. He noted his countless hours on many committees as well as the Board Representative to the MBC. He stated Mr. Pinard had a personal commitment to the high school auditorium renovation which included hundreds of hours; he was involved in selecting everything from chairs and microphones, to the redesign of the stage. His expertise probably saved the district thousands of dollars. Mr. Cancio-Bello also stated he always offered a very insightful view at Board meetings. On half of the Board and administration Mr. Cancio-Bello thanked him for his years of service

Mr. Bartholomew also recognized Mr. Dick Wright, Board member, who was unable to attend this morning’s meeting due to a medical issue and wished him the best and stated he was in their thoughts.

Mr. Scheffy read Article 1.

***Article 1*** *To see if the School District will vote to raise and appropriate the* ***Municipal Budget Committee’s recommended amount of $45,069,217*** *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* ***$45,069,217.*** *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) (MBC Recommends 7-0)***

***School Board Explanation*:** The 2020-21 Operating Budget proposed by the Kearsarge Regional School Board of $45,069,217 is an increase of approximately $1,367,054 or 3.13% from the 2019-2020 budget. The areas of increase within the 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 year falls into three categories: wages, health benefit premiums and other payroll benefits. Those three items account for $1,509.475 of the increase. There was a decrease in other items.

**Wages and Fringe –** The requested budget for 2020-21 reflects a net increase of 3.72 teacher FTEs. Added was one FTI for an elementary nurse, 1.33 FTEs for elementary social workers and 1.39 FTE adjustments to elementary, math, drama, ELO, guidance and literary support staff. In addition, there is an added SAU staff member for facilities support as well as dollars for special education tutors assisting the NECC Program at KRHS. As a result, the wage line for employees requires an increase of approximately $777,044 or 56.84% of the budget increase. This includes contractual obligations for the KREA educators voted on and approved by the voters in previous budget ballots.

Health benefits alone represent 40.13% of the total budget increase or $548,575.

Included under “other payroll benefits” are dental, life, long-term disability, NHRS contributions, workers compensation insurances, taxes, workshops and tax sheltered annuities. The overall other payroll benefits increase represents 13.45% of the total budget increase or $183,856.

**Out of District** - Our out of district costs for 2020-21 school year are estimated to be a reduction of (-$195,000) or (-14.26%) of the budget decrease 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 (-2.06%) or (-$28,137).

**Other Expenses -** Transportation represents a 3.09% or $42,258 budget increase, and Utilities, Bonds, Property Insurance budget increased by approximately 3.99% or $54,587. Food Service represents a reduction of (-$22,130) or (-1.62%) of the budget decrease. Federal funds represents $6,000 or .44% of the increase. Note, all federal dollars appropriated are offset by matching federal funds. The result is no effect to the local tax rate.

As a team of dedicated educational leaders, our vision remains to create and maintain a nationally competitive school system with engaged and enthusiastic learners, innovative and dedicated staff, in a supportive, involved community. We continue to strive for high standards, honor differentiated learning, create positive climate and culture conditions, communicate with transparency, and conduct ourselves in a professional manner committed to being fiscally responsible stewards of our community resources.

Ms. Sarah Anderson of Springfield asked what the full title was for the NECC program and was told the New England Center for Children.

Martha Hunt, Sutton, raised concern about increase in the budget. She expressed her inclination to be less assured that the MBC and School Board recommendation was the same number. She asked for the rationale for the staffing increases as they account for the majority of the increase in the budget. Mr. Bartholomew explained the increases, specifically the increase due to the Collective Bargaining Agreement approved by voters. For the benefit of attendees, Mr. Bartholomew also explained the budget process.

Mr. Feneberg shared information about the 3.72 FTEs (Full-Time Equivalent) noting some are required due to special education obligations. He also gave members details about the reports from principals regarding mental health for our students. The School Board and MBC approached administration to add the social worker at the elementary level due to the complex needs in our schools. For the position of drama teacher, in an effort to nurture the Arts, specifically at the high school, it was determined that a dedicated part-time position would ensure the program’s growth to respond to students’ needs. The Superintendent also addressed the reading and math program positions.

Hearing no other questions, Mr. Scheffy closed discussion on Article 1.

***Article 2*** *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 the Para Educators at Kearsarge which calls for the following increases in salaries and benefits:*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Year*** | ***Estimated Increase*** |
| *2020-2021* | *279,009* |
| *2021-2022* | *86,622* |
| *2022-2023* | *84,636* |

*And further to raise and appropriate the sum of* ***$279,009*** *for the 2020-2021 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 7-0) (MBC Recommends 7-0)***

**Ms. Casey read the explanation.**

***School Board Explanation:*** The School Board and the Para Educators at Kearsarge (PEAK) have reached an agreement on a three-year contract for 2020-2023. The proposed agreement continues to provide competitive salary increases and benefits for para educators covered under the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). In particular, the contract contains the following significant components:

1. In recognition of varying intensities of student needs and increasing staff training requirements, the new CBA creates two groups of Para Educators: one comprises all instructional and special education paras; the other includes intensive needs paras and nurse assistants. Separate pay scales apply to those two groups.
2. The length of the work day was increased from 6.8 hours to 7.0 hours for intensive needs para educators
3. An unpaid lunch break replaces the previously paid lunch period
4. All PEAK members will be provided with two professional development and training days during the contract year in exchange for work time made up individually on 2-hour delayed opening days.
5. The district’s contribution to the health insurance plan increases for the two-person and family plans over the next three years from 70% to 80% (2-person) and from 65% to 75% (family).
6. The CBA no longer contains specific job descriptions.

**Sarah Anderson asked for explanation of the differences between special needs paras and intensive needs. Mr. Feneberg explained that some multi-handicapped students require more training. The district hires for the positions with the understanding that days are longer and there is a commitment for more training and dealing with more intensive needs. It is a different type of job description**

**She also asked about the policy to allow para educators to participate in IEP meetings at schools. She felt their input is critical for participation in meetings and the district should begin to invite and include paras in IEP meetings.**

**Celeste Cook from New London expresses concerns about an unpaid lunch. Mr. Feneberg explained the rationale to make sure paras can be with students the entire day. An unpaid lunch enables the district to add on fifteen minutes. Work time does not change; but the length day changed. There is no loss of income for those paras and it was a decision to ensure coverage for all students.**

**Hearing no further discussion, Mr. Scheffy closed discussion for Article 2.**

***Article 3* - *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, 2020.***

***(School Board Recommends 7-0) (MBC Recommends 7 -0)***

**Ms. Mastin read the explanation.**

***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, 2020. (The balance of the fund as of December 2019 is approximately $280,043, the target amount to be raised is**

**$372,139).**

Ms. Anderson questioned the need for the fund with a decrease in special education. Mr. Bartholomew explained. At the end of the school year the budget may have a deficit or surplus. If there was a deficit, as occurred several years ago, a special meeting would need to be called to appropriate additional funds. Establishment and use of trust funds allows the district to draw on in case of unforeseen and unanticipated expenses if necessary without the requirement of special meeting.

Margaret Dube asked about targeted amount of $372,139. Mr. Bartholomew stated it was originally a set number based on the average costs of move-ins. The number has become an odd number based on the percentages. Mr. Feneberg further explained the possible fluctuations such as a residential or day placement noting transportation can be very expensive.

Sue Russell, Newbury, added that her sister, who has a child with special education needs, moved to a small town mid-year and the district was not financially prepared. She felt the trust fund is an extremely valuable thing.

After no further discussion, Mr. Scheffy closed the discussion.

***Article 4*** *To see if the School District will vote to raise and appropriate up to* ***$50,000*** *to be placed in the School Buildings Maintenance 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, 2018.* ***(School Board Recommends 7-0) (MBC Recommends 7-0)***

Mr. Cancio-Bello read the explanation.

***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 $50,000 toward that purpose from operating surplus funds remaining on hand as of June 30, 2020. (The balance as of December 2019 of that expendable trust is approximately $445,784, the target amount to be raised is $500,236.

There were no questions or comments. The Moderator closed discussion.

**Article 5** To transact any other business that may legally come before the meeting.

The Moderator asked for a motion to adjourn.

***There was a motion and second to adjourn at 9:48am. The motion carried by voice vote.***

Respectfully submitted,

Leigh Ann Stone

School District Clerk, KRSD