



Town of Hopkinton

Budget Committee

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**BUDGET COMMITTEE
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, January 24, 2024
Approved 2/7/2024**

CALL TO ORDER:

Budget Committee Chair Jonathan Cohen called this meeting of the Hopkinton Budget Committee to order at 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, January 10, 2024, in the large meeting room in the Hopkinton Town Hall. Those gathered recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Budget Committee

Members Present: Jonathan Cohen, Christa Scura, Debbie Norris, Mark Zankel (arriving late), Rich Houston, Steve Reddy, Rob Nadeau, Ken Traum, Don Houston, and Victoria Bram

Staff Present: Neal Cass-Town Administrator

APPROVAL OF PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

Mr. Traum moved to approve the public meeting minutes of January 10, 2024. Mr. Nadeau seconded the motion.

All members voted yes. Motion passed 9-0.

Mr. Reddy moved to approve the public meeting minutes of December 6, 2023. Mr. Traum seconded the motion.

All members present voted yes. Motion passed 9-0.

HOPKINTON SCHOOL DISTRICT

Mr. Nadeau presented answers to the questions from the last meeting:

- He presented a new staffing budget changes slide showing the following:

1-year Assistant Business Administrator for 2024-2025 year

ABA Salary/Benefits	\$ 134,104
HMS Classroom Teacher	(100,000)

Reductions

Maple Street School Classroom Teacher	(73,750)
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Increases due to ESSER ending

Wellness	7,117
HMS Intervention	28,256

Increased due to loss of State funded money

Title I	60,687
IDEA	<u>28,820</u>

Net Result

\$85,234

- There is an under/over on the fuel for the buses of \$3.29 and \$4.25. If the price per gallon is under \$3.29 there is a reduction in cost and if over \$4.25 there is a fuel surcharge. It was noted that the bus company did not charge extra when the price was high, even though they could have according to the contract.
- Medicaid reimbursement for Special Education does not apply to transportation and much of the increase in the coming for Special Education is related to transportation.
- The School Board has not yet finalized the use of the Technology Trust, but the clear sense of the Board at this point is that it will be used for emergencies, not operating costs.
- The estimated changes in electricity rates for the coming year have been calculated into the budgeted amounts.
- The proposed budget assumes current staffing with no retirements. Notice of retirement happens in mid-March so these won't be known until after the budget is completed. This timing will be a topic for discussion in the next contract negotiations.

Responding to questions from Budget Committee members, Mr. Nadeau gave the following information:

- Any potential reimbursement by Medicaid for the Special Education increases in the budget are not known at this time.
- The “Budget Bulletin” will be available shortly and will be in hard copy.
- The proposed HESS contract includes the District paying 100% of the cost of dental insurance which matches the current HEA contract. Currently the District pays only a portion of this cost.

TOWN BUDGET UPDATE AND DISCUSSION

Mr. Traum said that in response to Mr. Zankel's question at the last meeting, there have been many town projects that have been funded partially or completely by donated funds including Kimball Cabins, Slusser Center, dog park, playground at Houston Park, and the skatepark.

In response to a question from Mr. Reddy, Mr. Traum said that the Select Board has taken no action on changing the price for the bags for the Pay-by-Bag program.

CONTOOCOOK VILLAGE PRECINCT FINANCIAL UPDATE & BUDGET

Mr. D. Houston said that there is nothing new to report.

HOPKINTON VILLAGE PRECINCT BUDGET

Ms. Bram said that the Precinct Commissioners approved the budget that was presented at the last Budget Committee meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Rita Blanchard asked why the Assistant Business Administrator (ABA) has been added for an entire year. Mr. Nadeau said that the School Board thought going through a complete year cycle, especially with the budget and human resources, would be in the best interest of the District.

Loren Clement asked if the ABA position would have been added if a teacher hadn't been eliminated. Mr. Nadeau said there is no answer for that because it is a “what if” that didn't happen.

Mr. Clement stated that his opinion is that if the School District has money, it will spend it.

DISCUSSION AND VOTE ON BUDGETS TO SEND TO PUBLIC HEARING

Mr. Reddy moved to present the **Contoocook Village Precinct** budget and Warrant Articles as presented to the Budget Committee, to the Public Hearing. Ms. Scura seconded the motion.

VOTE: All Budget Committee member present voted yes.

Motion passed 9-0

Mr. Reddy moved to present the **Hopkinton Village Precinct** budget and Warrant Articles as presented to the Budget Committee, to the Public Hearing. Mr. Traum seconded the motion.

VOTE: All Budget Committee member present voted yes.

Motion passed 9-0

Responding to a question from Mr. D. Houston, Mr. Nadeua said that the School Board has not officially voted on the use of fund balance, but the consensus is that \$150,000 from Fund Balance will be used to offset the Operating Budget and \$200,000 from Fund Balance will be used to offset the CIP Warrant Article.

Mr. Nadeau moved to present the **Hopkinton School District** budget and Warrant Articles as presented to the Budget Committee, to the Public Hearing. Ms. Norris seconded the motion.

VOTE: All Budget Committee member present voted yes.

Motion passed 9-0

Mr. Nadeau was reminded of one additional question and said he will bring back an answer as to whether the pellet boiler is saving money.

Mr. Traum moved to present the **Town of Hopkinton** budget and Warrant Articles as presented to the Budget Committee, to the Public Hearing. Ms. Scura seconded the motion.

VOTE: All Budget Committee member present voted yes.

Motion passed 9-0

Mr. Zankel arrived at the meeting.

OTHER

Ms. Bram said that she has a couple of items to note for the preparation of the next budgets:

- The Town has various items coming up including the Transfer Station Lagoon cleanup and the Wastewater sludge removal with potential high costs. She encouraged sharing as much information as possible as soon as it is available.
- The School District is now basing staffing on class size instead of level staffing, and the ABA position is only for one year, and the Curriculum Director and Facilities Director have

been added. Is this the end of adding SAU positions? Mr. Nadeau responded “yes”, there are no forecasted staff changes after the one-year ABA position is eliminated.

Ms. Scura asked about the decrease in the Special Education budget after round 1 of the budgeting process. Mr. Nadeau said that there were additional outside placements in the original budget, but it was determined that these placements are not likely to occur. Ms. Scura noted that the change between budget round 1 and 2 was not a negotiated change, but a change due to new information.

Mr. Zankel asked about the record of budgeting Special Education costs accurately. Mr. Nadeau said that the projections for students already in District are very accurate, but the unknown is students moving into the District. He noted that spending freezes in the past have often been due to higher than budgeted Special Education costs.

There being no further business, the meeting was declared adjourned at 6:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Neal Cass
Town Administrator