

NOVEMBER 6, 2023

APPROVED

Attendance: Tom Seymour, Chairman, Wendy Rosa, Secretary, Frank Razzaboni Selectman Officio, Charles Estes School Board Officio, Betty Hanks, Joann Irving, Joan Machado, Bruce Blazon all members of the Budget committee.

Also in attendance were Dr. Brian Connelly, Principal/Superintendent of Jennie D. Blake Elementary School along with Carol Asher-Snow, School Board member.

Sean Bresnahan public attendee

Absent: Paula McDonough unexcused

**Full names are typed out initially then will be displayed by initials throughout the rest of the body of these minutes. (Ex. Wendy Rosa -WR)

Chairman, Tom Seymour opened the meeting with an announcement: "Madelyn Manos resigned this morning for personal reasons but in that same vein we have another one joining us tonight, Frank Simeone. One question, are you sure? Wendy Rosa asked, Can you tell us a little about yourself?"

Frank Simeone: Yes, My wife and I, I married Jane Brown of Cass Mill Rd near Borough Rd. which has been in the family since 1949. I was a practicing Attorney in Upper State NY for 45 yrs. I did litigation and Emergency Service Law, Police Fire and Ambulance. I resigned two Octobers ago. I feel like I have lived here a while, my children basically grew up around here, I have a daughter and a son. My son lives in Littleton and my daughter in NYC.

WR: Did you have concerns with the town or just wanted to get to know the town?

FS: Yes, it had been suggested to me by Steve Rosen that I run for this committee and Don Moyer recommended I serve on this Board as it is a great way to get to know the town.

-Frank Simeone was then approved by vote consensus to join the Budget Committee and Frank Razzaboni, Selectman Officio, swore him in. Signatures of Committee members were taken on the swearing in of Frank Simeone. Introductions were formally exchanged around the table and the welcoming was commenced.

Tom then moved the Committee to the subject at hand; The SAU Year End report and reminded us that we will listen in totality to the presentation and then bring forth our questions.

Dr. Brian Connelly, School Principal and Superintendent, noted they had an event coming up this Wednesday night featuring a non-fictional, historical account of the life of Jennie D. Blake which was written by students from the school and would be showcased that night! Much enthusiasm and approval was acknowledged over this and then the Chair of the School Board began the presentation of the SAU Year End report.

-Charles Estes began by reminding us that last year we did an end of year review of the expenditures and it proved to be good practice. He went on stating that the Fiscal end of year June, 2023 being discussed tonight and the current budget year 2024 may get confusing but we will try to keep it clear as we go.

-CE stated that We can go line by line but the big take away this evening is the last column on pg 5 budget balance underrun of 58,974. He informed the Committee that 129,088.09 approx. would be going back to the town with only 2300 left to be encumbered! The bulk of this money can be found on Page 1 1/3 of the way down; budget bal. 164,548

-Dr. Connelly: stated that some High School students were lost to location discrepancy, others to VLACS study and another to High Set which is a test out of High School, this students purpose was to join the military. So the budgeted monies for these students is part of what was added back. He also stated that they did gain one middle school student.

-Charles Estes: 2023 is the last year of Food Service Salary which is being transferred to vended service but that will not show up as a transfer so much as an expense, he notes that it comes pretty close.

-Recap: 129K going back to the town after all the expenses only 2300 left to be encumbered, custodial salary is usually a carry over and isn't in these final numbers.
School Board Ready For Questions:

-Joann Irving: So you got 125K for

-Charlie: No, He states that the 125,694 in state aid is for the current year of 2024 not 2023.

-JI: So this money is at the end of the budget

-Charlie: So the 125K is not part of the 129K going back to the town.

-Dr. Connelly further explained: Orig. budget 405K the State gave 409K in Aid.

-JI: How did that happen:?

-Dr. Connelly: Estimated Aid had gone up due to the States Projection Aid for this and next year. The 125K is on top of 450K State Aid

-JI: So that 129 is what you had left over from revenues not tax free?

-Charlie: To answer your question 58,974 leftover added to the revenues that were left and subtract out the encumbrances and that is the 129K

-JI: What is the margin of budget that is carried for the school

-Dr. C.: None, we have none

-Charlie: We have a very thin margin we have to find the balance so that we don't go over or too under

-Dr. C.: What percentage do we hold, I had reached out to Mark Manganello, we have the tightest budget of any district he has ever seen in terms of fund balance reserve

-Betty: Is that Good?

-Dr. C: Yes, but it is dangerous, if we continue to be responsible we will try to avoid being caught (without funds).

-Carol Asher Snow: We have to budget for expenses but in order to have that money when we need it.

-Dr. C.: An example would be an extra student coming in..

-Carol: Thanks to Dr. C and Business Administrator (Michael Lamani)

-Dr.C: and the Board and Business Administration, we can't do it without the Board.

-JI: Where is Mr. Lamani in this report

-Dr. C: pg4 approx.3rd line down "other professional services" IT and Mr. Lamani

-JI: Is the lady who was going to be Business Administrator left?

-Dr. C: Yes, one has but there is another one who is aspiring to take on more of Michael's role.

-JI: Teachers: 3% raises yrly...

-Dr. C. Joann our teachers are 7th from the bottom statewide in pay

-JI; 5 teachers how does that work when you are reporting? Do you report under?
-Dr. C: No, I can't do that, the yearly 3% raises do not raise the bar for our teachers because other districts we are compared to, also raise yearly leaving us in the same category.

-JI: contending for what our teachers actually make, we want to see those numbers as a Budget Committee

-Carol: Unless it has changed that is part of the reporting

-JI: Last year we could not see names

-Carol: No we can't mention names but we can mention numbers

-WR: What's happening with food service?

-Dr. C: Steve had to leave, he didn't want to so "I" inherited the position so we had to reach out to surrounding school districts for food services. They bring it, clean it up and leave. So we have to pay for exactly what is ordered whether it is eaten or not.

-Charlie: there is approval needed for vended services. We were initially turned down but with more negotiations we were able to get the service we got. So far the meal numbers are up and the kids seem to be fairly satisfied. Newfound seems happy.

-Dr. C: So we just give them numbers and they do the rest and get the food and milk over here. 58% participation rate

-Frank Razzaboni: What happens with what is left over

-Dr. C noted that he makes sure that the extra is taken care of through various programs and relationships with the parents and their needs. Also, he is proud to report that one of his students from leadership made the actual phone calls to the Produce Services after having done the research and inventory on what was needed, he called and placed the order for provision to these students and families.

When questioned about the possibility of leaving his position for an opening in Bristol, Dr. Connelly stated that though Bristol would be his only other consideration he has no plans to leave Hill. He states that his heart and soul is here with Jennie D. Blake. He has invested so much to get it where he feels it has grown positively and he wants to be sure it continues in that direction. He has no desire to leave and he calls Hill his second home.

-JI then asked about the replacement of the main doors. Dr. C said it was and it was done with a grant. Dr. C went on to say that he has applied for three more grants inclusive of:

1. Video Access Control for the Main Office
2. A new PA system
3. Synchronized Clock systems throughout the school

-JI followed with inquiry about the school nurse situation to which Dr. C. noted that continues to be a challenged due to mainly to pay offer. He states that presently a retired nurse dedicates four hours per day for the school as she is aware that there is no one else for them. There were advertising suggestions to which Dr. C states they have all been tried extensively. Word of mouth as well. He notes that it is a great position for a retired nurse who wants to make a little money and have part-time hours. Joan Machado supposed it would also be a good position for a nurse who is a mother due to the complimentary hours of work the position holds for a mom and school aged kids. That began to wrap up the SAU Year End Session with the School Board. Charles Estes then gave us a preview of upcoming topics for the later meeting on the current year's budget with the School Board.

-CE: 1. Increase in Adequacy Aid

2. Two-part increase in Teachers' Salaries to be metered out over the 2024 and 2025 budget years

3. Level Funding Talks

-Frank Razzaboni noted that after 2025 the Adequacy Aid Funding will continue at a rate of 2% year over year.

-Dr. C. concurred and said that 40% approx. of our students qualify for free or reduced meals. Due to that we are deemed "special needs" and thereby receive more funding.

-JI: Will there be tuition for Pre-K Dr. C. replied, No. They would need 10k per to be serious and we are not ready for that so the Board has decided not to ask for tuition from Pre-Kindergarten.

**The School Board was then dismissed.

Chairman, /Tom Seymour led the Committee into discussions concerning the Water Commissioners statements recently received by the Committee via email. Some of the contention in the email addressed by Water Commissioner, Charles Estes, was concern for disingenuous reporting. He states that the Selectman Ex-Officio of the Budget Committee (2023) misrepresented the totals and 6,151 needed to be accounted for. Noting that no monies for the Water Works should come from taxation and Did Water Works have insurance, if so why wasn't it applied to the needs of the 2023 year? The Water Commissioner also stated that they do not need to report to the Budget Committee as their function is not part of our purview.

-Chairman, Tom Seymour pointed out that it is part of our purview and read from RSA 32:16. Others noted that it is advantageous for us to hear the line-by-line items not so that we can influence them specifically but so that we can have an overall understanding as we advocate for the town the monies that are being spent and how used for public interest.

-CE then requested that for them to come to a meeting with the Budget Committee they need formal notification in letter form and the calendar notification is not such and would not be considered an invitation nor would it be honored. He also notes that there is a conflict of interest in the said calendar in regard to their readiness as well.

-Bruce Blazon made a motion to formally invite the Water Works Committee to meet with the Budget Committee on January 22, 2024. It was seconded and unanimously voted in favor of formal invite to the satisfaction of the Water Commissioner.

Other discussion topics came up in regard to the discrepancies Mr. Estes and his team are concerned about which Chairman tabled for the upcoming meeting.

-FR then motioned for the meeting to adjourn, seconded by Betty Hanks and unanimously voted to do so.

~Wendy Fuller-Rosa