

Budget Committee Minutes of December 18, 2023

Attendance: Tom Seymour, Chairman, Wendy Rosa, Secretary, Frank Razzaboni, Ex-Officio Selectman, Charles Estes, Ex- Officio School Board, Frank Simeone, Betty Hanks, Joann Irving and Joan Machado

SAU 103 Representative: Charles Estes and Carol Asher-Snow Absent: Dr. Brian Connelly (excused)

Meeting was called to order at approx. 6:30pm per Chairman Tom Seymour

Charles Estes presenting for the SAU 103 Budget: Part 1 of Two-Part Presentation

CE began by stating that the tax rate has been reduced from the original 15.45% to 13.97%; \$132,750 would be going back to the town.

Adequacy Aid funding has helped to offset taxes. Hill is viewed as a special needs community based on the numbers of children utilizing the reduced and free lunch program. CE went on to explain that the board does its best to level fund the budget and the expectation is that they will have appropriations to give back next year as well. As a comparison, Conval ruled for more money per student so Hill should receive more next year. The Conval decision should take effect in the budget year for 2026.

** SWEPT software and DOR (Dept. Of Revenue) are factors in data collection and the data points are different. **

Q&A

Joan Machado asked how many special needs do we have?

CE stated that it depends on what the cases are. Preschool and Kindergarten need less money because service providers do multiple things in the school. (already on board with existing staff) There are 12 preschoolers, and the school takes care of special needs from ages 3 to 22yrs.

Joann Irving made an observation that the teacher's salary per year is low and asked why?

CE answered that it was just an average. He went on to say that quality teachers who love being here are not here for the money.

Frank Razzaboni asked about the Food Service changes

CE notes 56K w/benefits including retirement and wages vs 69K with two workers and the principal not in the lunchroom. (Dr. Connelly had been filling the vacancy providing prep and distribution service in addition to his other duties as Principal and Superintendent.

CE said the free and reduced lunch program serves 50-52 daily with 18-20 for breakfast.

Bruce Blazon noted that on pg 4 of the handed-out packet there is a category of Other Purchased Services, and he wonders what those are?

CE states they are for Tuition for Middle School, IT and High School. The student count estimate is 41 at High School and 18 at middle School.

Granular Details, Part II of Budget Review; Presentation continued by Charles Estes

This is the year to review the tuition agreement with Newfound. We were proposed to join their SAU and our teachers would be in collective bargaining and tuition would be at the actual cost which the Board deems too high for taxpayers to come up with.

CE explained that our letter of intent is a thirteen-year agreement with annual renewal stability of students starting at JDB and ending at Newfound. Therefore, we got a voting seat on the Board, and we keep our Adequacy Aid here! It does not go to Newfound. July 1, 2025 will start the new 13yr renewal yearly contract with Newfound.

CE made a request that the Budget Committee peruse the large packet and put questions to Tom or send them over to the school board for preparation for the second presentation scheduled January 8th.

Joann Irving asked about repairs? Were doors done? Roof? Noted that the boiler is on hold due to roof repairs. However, mini splits have been installed. CE notes there was a hack in the Newfound system that caused them to have to re-do their computer services. There is 8k in the 2025 budget to save electronics, computers, etc.

Bruce Blazon asked about an outside audit of the facility and CE replied he did not know. He followed by saying that the school wants to transfer ownership of the building (presently owned by the Town of Hill) and will look into building assessment. This concluded the SAU 103 Budget Presentation, First Round.

The meeting was then moved to discuss old business per Chairman Tom Seymour who notes the reformatting of the Fire Department Budget. There was an issue brought forward in an earlier email to the Committee regarding Capital Reserves for the Parks and Recreation Department. Chairman Seymour addressed the issue citing that the date of that reserve was 2019 and that Town Warrant Article 6 was passed. The Reserve was granted for years 2020-2022. There was no discussion on it in the following years.

Charles Estes had concerns that the selectmen had mismanaged the money. He states that if the money was not used for what it was appropriated for it should have been returned to the town.. The Chairman defended the position citing clear guidelines and several steps including oversight committees are part of the approval process in regard to each departments receipt and use of the funds in their capital reserves. CE relented from his earlier position as the rules and regulations steps explained were satisfactory to all members present.

Copy of Budget Committee Duties made available

Minutes for December 11, 2023 meeting were not entered on time and therefore could not be copied for this meetings approval, they will be reviewed Jan. 8, 2024.

Hill Water Works agreed to January 22, 2024 meeting with Budget Committee per Charles Estes, Water Commissioner

Shaun Bresnahan sent a follow up of Selectmen's Budget for review. Revenues desired to be included.

The second presentation by SAU 103 JDB will be held January 8, 2024

The meeting was then in motion for adjournment, seconded and unanimously commenced.