

Town Of Candia
Budget Committee Meeting
Approved Minutes
November 25th 2024
Henry Moore School Media Center

The Municipal Budget Committee meeting was called to order at seven o'clock on November 25th. The meeting is a joint session with the Candia School Board. The attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Attendees:

Susan Gill, Vice Chair
Brenda Coughlin
Katrina Niles
Joshua Reap
William Saffie
Ryan Young
Susan Young, (Selectman's Rep)
Stephanie Helmig, (School Board Rep)
Absent: Lynn Chivers, Chair

The chair reminded everyone to state their names before speaking to ensure clarity in the minutes.

The speaker requests a motion on the minutes from the previous meeting. A suggestion is made to review and approve the minutes at the next meeting since they were just received. All attendees in favor of the proposal.

The next agenda item is the approval of questions regarding the school budget. The speaker suggests walking through the questions together, acknowledging that many answers have already been sent out.

Question #1. Section 4 of our notebooks is missing, please provide.

Submitted Answer: Section 4 is for budget changes. Candia School Board has not made any changes to the budget to date.

No further discussion

Question #2a: How much do we pay per student for Moore School and high school bussing?

Submitted Answer: Bus Transportation is contractually priced for the school year. The budget of \$536,106.72 divided by total potential students that could ride the bus 402 (includes K-8 and High School) \$1,333.59 per student for the school year.

A question arises about why special education transportation costs are not included in the previous calculation. The response clarifies that special education transportation is accounted for in a different budget line. The speaker explains that special education students may require different transportation arrangements, which are not included in the regular busing costs. A request is made for a cost breakdown of transportation per student for special education, which the speaker agrees to provide, noting that costs can vary based on the number of students using the service. The speaker explains that the budget is estimated based on current costs and typical percentage increases, with a three-year contract in place for transportation services. The speaker confirms that they are in the last year of the current transportation contract and will be negotiating a new one soon.

A question arises about how state funding for transportation is accounted for in the budget. The speaker clarifies that state aid counts as revenue and does not directly offset costs in the budget. The speaker elaborates on how the fund balance is calculated at the end of the year, with leftover funds being returned to the town after paying outstanding bills. The conversation shifts to the timing of when the district receives information about state funding, which typically occurs in July or August.

A question is raised about how behavior issues with students who do not have an IEP or 504 plan are handled regarding transportation. The speaker explains that if a student's behavior prevents them from riding the bus, their bus privileges may be suspended, and parents would need to provide transportation.

Question #2b: What is the calculation of the per student costs for the Moore School?

Submitted Answer: NH DOE \$19,981.82

The discussion continues with a question about how the total cost of \$19,981.82 for the more school is calculated.

Question #3: How many employees at the SAU office?

Submitted Answer: 10

No further discussion

Question #4: What is driving the 10% increase in the SAU budget?

Submitted Answer: The 2025-26 SAU budget is up 2.27%, however the district assessment increased 10% due to the decrease in anticipated fund balance contribution. The combined percent applied by district is calculated based on valuation % and pupil %, the percentage by

school district is applied to the SAU15 total budget. Attached is the School Administrative Unit 15 Proposed Operating Budget Summary 2025-2026. Included with this response is the 2025-2026 SAU15 Proposed Operating Budget Summary. The increase year over year was caused by the 2024-2025 fund balance contribution was 3x the fund balance contribution previously. This year we are budgeting a fund balance contribution of \$37,000. This can be reviewed on page 2.

The speaker explains that while the SAU budget itself increased by 2.27%, the district assessment rose by 10% due to a decrease in anticipated fund balance contributions. The speaker provides a detailed breakdown of the SAU 15 proposed operating budget summary, highlighting the revenue and appropriations.

The speaker notes that the anticipated fund balance contribution for the upcoming year is significantly lower than in previous years, which is more in line with historical trends. The speaker concludes by discussing the fund balance from the previous year and how it will impact the current budget, emphasizing the importance of realistic budgeting based on past data.

Discussion begins regarding a data document sent to the budget committee via email. The document in question a fund balance of \$498,586 for 22-23. The speaker notes that this is an increase from the last year, which had a fund balance of \$128,478. A question is raised about the fund balance explanation, specifically directed to Bill Rearick. It is clarified that the fund balance represents leftover money at the end of the year, which includes reserves for encumbrances. The speaker seeks clarification on how much of the encumbrance funds were actually budgeted over the past five years, indicating that not all of the funds were spent unnecessarily.

The budget committee speaker appreciates the five-year look back provided and discusses the fund balance and reserve for encumbrances. An example from the 23-24 fiscal year is given, showing a total of \$565,597, with \$437,118 encumbered for work that was not completed. The speaker emphasizes the need to utilize the remaining funds effectively, as they do not need to be returned. The speaker indicates that the easiest way to present this information is to outline the board's authorizations for expenditures from the fund. A discussion is initiated regarding the understanding of encumbrances, questioning whether they were pre-planned or part of a wish list. There is a reference to a significant budget underrun from the previous year, with over \$1 million left over before encumbrances. The speaker requests clarification on the nature of these encumbrances and whether they were necessary or optional expenditures.

The conversation shifts to the need for information on five specific projects that were requested in the budget. There is a mention of safety hazards in the school, particularly concerning windows that needed replacement. The speaker expresses support for prioritizing student safety but questions why such expenses were not included in the budget from the start.

The discussion continues with a focus on the budget committee's inability to include certain items in the budget. The speaker emphasizes the importance of having a clear understanding of the budget and the rationale behind the decisions made. There is a request for a breakdown of the encumbrance budget over the past five years to better understand the financial decisions.

Question #5: What is the basis for the 9% increase for the principal and assistant?

Submitted Answer: The School Board values Principal Wing for all the work she does for our students, staff and parents. The Board made it a priority to make Ms. Wing's salary competitive. The same is true with Assistant Principal Franchini.

The speaker clarifies this increase is combined for both positions and includes cost-of-living adjustments.

A question arises regarding the analysis used to determine competitive salaries, with the speaker explaining that they provide the school board with data from neighboring districts to inform their decisions.

Question #6: Why is the extra 6th grade teacher needed?

Submitted Answer: Currently we have just one section of 6th grade with 22 students. The upcoming 6th grade has 31 students. To keep the upcoming 6th grade as one section is not in line with CSB Policy IJB: Class Size. In addition, with the increasing enrollment in the younger grades, the increasing complexity of student support needs in the classroom, and the importance of continuing with content area specialists in the middle school grades, an additional teacher is needed

The speaker explains that the current sixth-grade class has 22 students, while the upcoming class will have 31, which does not align with class size policies. The conversation touches on the New Hampshire recommendations for class sizes, with a maximum of 30 students mentioned. The importance of smaller class sizes for effective teaching is emphasized.

Question #7: Why did the substitute teacher salary line double?

Submitted Answer: The budget is more in-line with 3 years of actuals.

The speaker explains that the increase is intended to provide a more transparent budget.

Question #8: Are there multiple places we can get SPED transportation? Do we shop around?

Submitted Answer: The district is in the 3rd year of a three-year contract with Durham for locked in rates. They provide the majority of our transportation. Our contract allows us to use other vendors. Currently First Student is providing transportation for two routes that Durham did not have drivers for. The district has also used Precious Cargo and Safe Passage. We have quotes from multiple transportation companies and they are all similar or more expensive than our rate with Durham.

The speaker mentions that the district has explored multiple transportation vendors but found that Durham's rates are competitive.

Question #9: What is the breakdown of the software used in line 5650?

Submitted Answer:

Backupify \$2,500.00
Fortinet Firewall Subscription \$800.00
Google Security Domain Upgrade \$1,500.00
Incidents+ \$800.00
Kami \$987.00
Lightspeed Relay with Classroom Management \$3,750.00
Lightspeed MDM \$750.00
Parent Square \$2,700.00
Pickup Patrol \$480.00
PowerSchool SIS Maintenance and Support \$4,858.00
Schoolology (PowerSchool) \$3,819.80
Smart Notebook \$594.00
SmartPass \$1,132.20
Veeam \$340.00
VMWare \$3,360.00
Verkada Camera License \$4,941.00
SeeSaw (K-2) \$990.00
Vocabulary.com \$1,266.00
Telnet (Phone) Licensing \$1,500.00

A question is raised about the impact of COVID-19 on software expenses, with the speaker explaining that many new software tools were adopted during the pandemic.

Question #10: When we started using Chrome books, what happened to all the old computers? What do we do with the used Chrome books?

Submitted Answer: When Chromebooks are purchased they are assigned to students in the lower grades. These devices are student assigned and travel up with the student as they progress through their career at the Moore School. When the student graduates 8th grade, the device is continued to be used as a spare for as long as possible either until it breaks or no longer receives updates. When a device does break it is completely broken down to its base components so that the parts can be used to repair other Chromebooks throughout the fleet. We are able to keep maintenance costs to a minimum by utilizing all of the parts this way.

The speaker explains that Chromebooks are assigned to students in lower grades and travel with them through their education. When students graduate, the devices are repurposed as spares until they are no longer functional.

Question #11: What is food services transfer?

Submitted Answer: Over the past 3 years Candia continues to trend toward the foodservice revenue equaling the foodservice expense. In 2023-2024 the general expenses for foodservice were less than \$6,000 in tot. The budget of \$8,000 as seen in the general expenditure budget is a conservative number based on the past 3 years.

Question #12: We would like a spreadsheet showing the following information for the last five years – enrollments, approved budget, what was spent

Submitted Answer: Sent in a separate email.

The speaker emphasizes the need for clarity in the budget documentation. The discussion highlights the importance of having a clear and organized budget presentation, with a suggestion to compile the information into an Excel sheet for easier analysis. The need for a breakdown of budgeted versus actual spending is reiterated, with a focus on understanding the financial implications of past decisions.

The joint session with the School board is concluded.

The Budget Committee continues with a request for a motion to approve or modify the school budget.

The conversation concludes with a motion to delay voting on the budget until more information is gathered. The speaker expresses the need for clarity on encumbrances and overall budget understanding before making a decision, while acknowledging the efforts made by the school board and staff in preparing the budget information. A motion is proposed to schedule a vote on December 3rd, following the public hearing on the town budget.

Members discuss the implications of cutting the budget below the default, with one member emphasizing that such cuts could lead to staff reductions. It is noted that certain areas, such as special education and transportation, cannot be cut. There is a debate about the school budget's increasing costs and the declining student enrollment. Members express concern over the sustainability of the budget, with one member noting that the high school has seen a consistent increase in costs despite a decrease in enrollment. The discussion includes the impact of contracts and the necessity of budgeting for certain positions and services. The conversation touches on the challenges of maintaining educational quality with declining enrollment and rising costs. There is a call for a review of the budget to identify areas where cuts could be made without compromising essential services.

The discussion continues with a focus on the implications of the default budget and the necessity of understanding what is included in it. Members express the need for clarity on the assumptions behind the default budget and what mandatory costs are driving it. There is a consensus that the committee needs to be informed about the budget's structure to make informed decisions.

The conversation shifts to the impact of inflation on the budget and the community's ability to support it. Members discuss the challenges faced by taxpayers and the need for the budget to reflect the community's financial realities. There is a recognition that the town and school budgets cannot both increase significantly without causing strain on taxpayers.

The need for a breakdown of the default budget is emphasized, with a request for clarity on what is absolutely necessary within it. Members discuss the importance of understanding the contractual obligations and fixed costs that cannot be altered. The conversation highlights the complexities of budgeting in the context of fluctuating enrollment and rising operational costs. The discussion concludes with a focus on the necessity of addressing the budget's structure and the implications of contractual obligations. Members express the need for a comprehensive understanding of the default budget to ensure that decisions made are in the best interest of the community and the educational system.

Discussion centers around the need for salary adjustments for teachers and support staff due to a mass exodus caused by insufficient pay. The budget for these adjustments was accounted for in the previous year. There is a mention of a 9% figure related to the principal and assistant principal's salaries, indicating a focus on administrative compensation.

A request for a breakdown of the default budget is made, particularly regarding its composition, including salary versus operational costs. The need for answers to various questions raised during the meeting is acknowledged, and a commitment to follow up on these inquiries is made.

A question arises regarding the health insurance increases, which have exceeded 10% annually. It is suggested that this increase may be attributed to the number of participants rather than just the percentage increase in costs. The conversation touches on the complexities of budgeting for health insurance, especially with new teachers enrolling in family plans. The group discusses whether they shop around for health insurance, noting that they are part of a conglomerate that allows them to negotiate better rates. The importance of collective bargaining with other schools is emphasized to secure better deals.

The discussion shifts to the principal's salary increase request, with questions about whether it was included in the default budget or if it was a separate request. The principal's recent recognition as "Principal of the Year" is mentioned, highlighting her achievements and the importance of fair compensation. Concerns are raised about the sustainability of proposed budget increases, with a consensus that nearly 9% is not feasible. The group reflects on the need to find a sustainable percentage that can be agreed upon by all parties involved. The conversation touches on the competitive nature of hiring in the education sector, with a focus on ensuring that salaries are attractive enough to draw in qualified candidates. The impact of local economic conditions on hiring practices is acknowledged.

A member expresses concern about the potential impact of rising costs on young families, emphasizing the importance of keeping education affordable to ensure school enrollment remains stable. The need for family housing and its implications for the community is also discussed.

The meeting concludes with a motion to adjourn, with members expressing appreciation for the constructive discussion.

A motion is made by William Saffie to adjourn the meeting and Katrina Niles seconds. Everyone votes in favor.