

Municipal Budget Committee Hearing met after School Deliberative Session, Saturday, February 5, 2022, in the Hudson Community Center, 12 Lions Avenue., Hudson, NH.

A. Call to Order Chairman Weissgarber called the meeting at 1:42 PM.

B. Pledge of Allegiance Chairman Weissgarber led the Pledge of Allegiance

C. Attendance Chairman Mr. Richard Weissgarber, Vice-Chairman Mr. William Cole, School Board Liaison Vice-Chair Ms. Diana LaMothe, Mr. Normand Martin, alternate clerk Mr. Ted Trost, Ms. Kathy Leary, Mr. Shawn Murray, Ms. Grace Hopkins, Mr. Robert Clegg, Selectman Liaison alternate Bob Guessferd, and clerk Alejandro Urrutia.

D. Public Input

Hudson Resident, Ms. Fabiana Ficket, thanked the committee for meeting right after the deliberative session. She said that she hoped that the committee would consider some of the things heard from the town residents in attendance and recommend an Article about the Operating Fund and support article 8 adding a playground to Dr. H.O. Smith Elementary School.

Not seeing anyone else speak, chairman Weissgarber closed public input at 1:45 PM.

E. Acceptance of minutes

Mr. Murray moved to accept the minutes from the 1/5/2022 Budget meeting and the Budget Committee Hearing of Thursday, January 13, 2022. Mr. Trost seconded the motion and passed unanimously.

F. Reports from liaisons

a. Select Board. Mr. Guessferd indicated there was nothing to report at that time.

b. School Board Vice-Chair Diana LaMothe announced that the regularly scheduled meeting of the school board is Monday, February 7, and she said that the school board always encourages public input at their meetings. She also commented that the turnout at the deliberative session was great, and always participation from the public at the regular meetings is appreciated.

G Re-voting on Warrant articles.

Chairman Weissgarber explained that it would be up to the budget committee members to make a motion to review an article and make sure that the committee understands what was discussed and amended throughout the day and will have a roll call vote for each move is made on.

Mr. Murray made a motion not to recommend warrant article, one the operating budget. Mr. Martin seconded the motion. The motion was not recommended warrant article one as amended back by the voters acting as a legislative body that put back the \$650,000 into the operating budget during the deliberative session. Then there was a motion to remove 200k, which failed, so the move made by Murray and seconded by Mr. Martin was to not recommend the warrant article with the amount of \$62,245,033.

Mr. Murray spoke about his motion by saying that the committee went thru a 62 million-dollar budget for a significant amount of time. Mr. Murray referred to a comment from the public during the deliberative session that said the budget Committee just took a random number and

made a cut. Mr. Murray explained that the committee reviewing the school district's budget is a whole process. It was not going by line-by-line as a matter of fact, to the school district accolades a couple of years ago agreed as a budget committee because of the immense amount of budget lines, and then complication the budget that came up with a system of more less getting up a summary of some of the major areas and they even went as far as being around 5000 or above. It has been mentioned that there have been unexpended fund balances. Mr. Murray said that he is not against unexpended fund balances help his issue with unexpended fund balances is they come up the year with less of last-minute projects when if the school board could come up with the Warrant article like they did today and use some of the unexpended fund balance then they are doing more transparent expenses n, and he said that he supports that because it is understandable that in \$62,000,000 budget there are unexpended funds. But, Mr. Murray thinks that the school put effort into their budget process, and he supported the 650,000 because he is confident that they would I through and look at the budget that funding is there. The only other clarification I want to make the public is those suggested cuts from the budget committee; there are suggestions it is not on the budget committee tray to reduce the budget. Is this simply because the school runs their organization, and unfortunately, I'm not surprised if we use positions to justify what the cuts would do. In this case, the budget committee does not recommend any positions or programs, so the school board's decision is theirs, and that is their own. There is money in that budget to operate the school district, and Mr. Murray encouraged voters not to support this warrant article. Mr. Murray ended his comments by saying that the budget committee is the representative budget committee five represent the taxpayers. He recommended the voter do not support warrant article 1.

Mr. Martin explained the reason why he does not support the operating budget. He said that he was the member who made the motion to cut the \$650,000 his original move to cut was done by spending at home 40 hours, and he went line by line of documents which you can find on the school district website.

Vice-Chair Ms. LaMothe responded to the comments. There was an implication that the school board makes last-minute decisions about how to use the end of year fund balance; she said that is not true; two years ago they started having discussions in January, so January 2020, before the pandemic hit us, the board was getting feedback about needs that were coming up. They had a discussion starting in January regarding possible uses for the June 30 fund balance. In 2021, we were in the middle of a pandemic; the school district had such a low fund balance they had to freeze the budget, which was very concerning. We had a .3% fund balance. As she explained earlier, it's essential to have a 1 or 2 % fund balance.

Regarding the motion previously made to cut the budget by \$668,984. As she stated before, she appreciated the time that was put into that. The SAU responded to a detailed list; many of the items that made up that \$668,000 were actually grant-funded. We weren't going to cut out grant-funded expenditures; there is no reason for the school not to spend the money that was authorized to be covered by the grant. When I asked for the reasoning behind the \$650,000 proposed reduction, the response I received was that it was because the school estimated an end-of-year fund balance for this fiscal year of \$750,000; he decided to go with \$650,000. The person making the motion did not understand why we needed to have a fund balance, consistently returning money and not using money that was allocated. Hence, why the school has a fund balance is not understood, and that is why the motion for \$650,000 was made. I believe I explained today, as was also explained by our business administrator, there is the reasoning behind the fund balance.

Mr. Weissgarber asked for a roll call, Mr. Trost clarified that a **yes vote was not recommending the Warrant article 1 (Operating Budget)**

The roll call was as follows:

Mr. Clegg yes, Mr.Cole yes, Mr. Guessferd no, Ms. Hopkins no, Ms.LaMothe no, Ms.Leary no, Mr.Martin yes, Mr.Murray yes, Mr. Trost yes, Mr.Urrutia no, MrWeissgarber yes. The motion of **do not recommend warrant Article 1 from the budget committee passes(6-5 -0)**

Chairman Weissgarber indicated that there were seven more articles, and he asked for a motion or discussion for any of those articles.

Mr. Trost motioned to recommend Warrant article 5 Partial Roof Replacement at Nottingham West Elementary School. Mr. Urrutia seconded the motion.

Mr. Clegg no, Mr.Cole no, Mr. Guessferd yes, Ms. Hopkins yes, Ms.LaMothe yes, Ms.Leary yes, Mr.Martin no, Mr.Murray no, Mr. Trost no, Mr.Urrutia yes, Mr. Weissgarber no. The motion to **recommend warrant Article 5 fails (6-5 -0)**

Mr. Trost motioned to recommend Warrant article 8 Add Playground to Dr. HO. Smith Elementary School. Mr. Martin seconded the motion. Mr. Martin indicated that article 8 is more favorable to the voters with the amendment made. Mr. Trost said that with the recommendations made by the budget committee is most likely that it will pass, and the students will have the playground they need.

Mr. Clegg yes, Mr.Cole yes, Mr. Guessferd yes, Ms. Hopkins yes, Ms.LaMothe yes, Ms.Leary yes, Mr.Martin yes, Mr.Murray yes, Mr. Trost yes, Mr.Urrutia yes, Mr. Weissgarber yes. The motion to **recommend warrant Article passed unanimously. (11-0-0)**

H Comments

Mr. Clegg reiterates his objection to the Liaison's vote in the budget committee.

Mr. Guessferd referred to the good discussion that happened during the deliberative session; he would like to see more people coming out to the deliberative session. The people who spoke were respectful for the most part, with some concerns; a couple of things were addressed, changing things that the way there were previously, agreed or not with the ideas expressed, the process worked. He encouraged the people to get out to vote on March 8.

Mr. Urrutia thanked the moderator for a good job done during the deliberations.

Ms. Leary thanked the people who participated and the wonderful TV crew.

Mr. Murray said, "When you put it in perspective and then you look at the potential 61-62 million-dollar school budget and next week we're going to talk about another 35 million dollar budget it over 90 million dollars and an easy test if you go back and watch all the budget committee meetings we have someone on this committee always says we need your public input throughout this whole budget process okay throughout the whole process the committee heard from two persons". If the taxpayer does not provide the committee with the input of over 90-plus million dollars, it leaves a lot up to the committee to make these decisions. Anyone to come up

talk about the budget be better informed and directly impact the money taxpayers pay. The committee has three vacancies put in to run again, and this is an additional person that put in for that three-year a new person and is the one-year budget committee position. Mr. Murray appreciated the amount of work the school district put in and the committee's amount of cooperation from them. The committee asked them a lot this year, probably more than ever, and the same goes on the town. Mr. Murray ends by saying, "I respect and appreciate everything the district and the town employee staff leadership does for this time and as well to my colleagues. Thank you."

Ms. LaMothe said if anybody has questions or needs a better understanding of what is going on in the school district, email the school board or the business administration for clarification, and there is information on HCTV. She does not recommend going to Facebook but asking the school board directly. Ms. LaMothe said that she appreciates the input received this year, and she expects to see the same next week and highlighted that without the moderator and HCTV, this cannot be done.

Vice-chairman Cole gave thanks to the HCTV crew and neighbors and friends. He saw a difference in this deliberative session with excellent discussions compared to videos from previous sessions. He remembered when the meetings had lengthy discussions when they would be about 2 hours Short of breaking for dinner. He thought maybe the meeting would be long like it happened years ago, but that wasn't the case. Mr. Cole liked to thank all his colleagues on the budget committee, and he said, "we haven't always agreed on every issue which is good that's healthy that is the work being in the benefit of the people of the town of Hudson guarantee that's our only interest up here thank you."

Chairman Weissgarber reiterated what was said by Selectman Guessferd, there was a great turnout for presidential elections but invited the people to take 20 minutes to vote for the local polls to vote for the warrant articles.

He finished by saying, "I think that I know that the town vote to me is probably the most impactful thing that you can do as far as your power of the vote and having an impact on you as an individual being a resident of the town of Hudson."

J Motion to adjourn by Mr. Martin second by Ms. Leary passed unanimously.