

Merrimack School District  
Budget Committee  
Public Hearing

Minutes  
February 14, 2012

Present: R. Barnes, T. Beard, R. Buckley, B. Cummings, C. Guagliumi, S. Heinrich, G. Krupp,  
A. Schneider, R. Swonger and School Board liaison Alternate C. Ortega

Excused: C. Barbera, M. Beck, and J. Burk

Also present: Superintendent M. Chiafery, Assistant Superintendent Dr. M. McLaughlin, and  
School Business Administrator M. Shevenell

A. Schneider opened the Public Comment Hearing at 7:30 PM. He welcomed those present. He said he would give an overview of the operating budget and the monied warrant articles before inviting members of the public to speak. He mentioned that the School District had provided handouts, which showed details of the proposed budget and warrant articles.

**Warrant Article 3: Support Staff Contract**

A. Schneider told the audience that the School District is proposing a three-year support staff contract, which provides an average annual salary increase of 2.75% over the life of the contract, and that this increase is offset by decreases in costs for health insurance due to changes in the plans. He said these changes would result in a net decrease to the operating budget of \$188,000 in the first year. He indicated the Budget Committee vote to recommend this article was 10 – 0 – 1.

**Warrant Article 5: Reeds Ferry Parking Lots**

A. Schneider told the audience that this article raises \$110,000 for paving the parking lots at Reeds Ferry School: \$65,000 of which would come from the Paving Capital Reserve Fund and \$45,000 of which would have to be raised from taxes. He noted that the current parking lots do not have sufficient parking for staff and there are traffic issues at the beginning and ending of the school day. He said this article results in maximum improvement for minimal expense. He indicated the Budget Committee vote to recommend this article was 10 – 1 – 0.

**Warrant Article 6: Operating Budget**

A. Schneider explained that this warrant article includes both the operating budget and a default budget, should the article fail. He said the default budget is the current budget adjusted for contractual and other obligations and is \$170,000 higher than the proposed budget. In addition, he said that should Article 3 pass, the operating budget would be decreased even further. He indicated that the Budget Committee had unanimously voted to bring the budget, as currently proposed, to the public hearing. He noted that the operating budget includes work on the Masticola Elementary School roof and continued work on asbestos abatement at the high school. He said that the School Board had made some cuts to the budget proposed by the Administration such as carpeting in the Reeds Ferry library, parking lot striping at the high school and bookbinding. He said that some equipment for Special Services has been deferred and

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that the budget included eliminating 8 staff positions due to a decline in enrollment. He said other items of note include a guaranteed maximum health insurance increase of 6% and that the bond for the 1996 additions will be paid off during the current budget. He said that the budget included a proposed 10% increase for transportation costs to pay for the new transportation contracts that the Committee would be hearing more about after the Public Hearing.

A Schneider opened the hearing to comments from the public.

Ramash N. Patel (Dahl Road) told the Committee that he supported the budget and congratulated the district and staff for a job well done. He suggested the district investigate an American Bar Association Civics education program for possible use in the District.

Representative Joe Thomas (Sandpiper Lane) commended the Committee for not increasing the budget. He said he appreciated the District's efforts to keep spending and budgets under control.

Tim Tenhave (Amherst Road) told the Committee he had sponsored a petitioned warrant article to eliminate the Committee and explained his reasons for doing so.

A. Schneider closed the Public Hearing at 8:15 P.M.