

Merrimack School District Budget Committee  
Public Hearing  
Minutes  
February 9, 2016

Present: K. Bobbitt, B. Cummings, S. Heinrich, D. Illg (arrived late), C. Lang (via telephone, after meeting started), J. Guagliumi, J. Hanson, S. Jacoby, C. Ortega and School Board liaison D. Powell

Excused: L. Mooney and C. Mower

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

S. Heinrich opened the Public Hearing at 7:30 P.M. He asked members to introduce themselves. S. Heinrich said the purpose of the Hearing was for the Committee to take comments from the Public on monied warrant articles before it takes final action on its recommendations.

S. Heinrich said that Article 3 was a proposed three-year teachers contract. He said that the cost increase for Fiscal Year 2016-17 is \$750,714 and that the amounts needed to fund the contract for the following two years are in this article. He indicated if this article passes, the increases for those years go into the default budget. He said the Committee voted 10 – 0 – 1 to recommend this article. He asked Business Administrator M. Shevenell if he wanted to say anything. M. Shevenell declined.

S. Heinrich called for public comment on the article. There was none.

S. Heinrich called for Committee comment on this article.

K. Bobbitt asked if the entire contract was available for public review yet. M. Shevenell indicated it was not ready yet.

K. Bobbitt said the Committee only votes on the money and the School Board negotiates the contract terms. He asked for additional information about the contract. M. Shevenell replied that the increases listed in the warrant article include a yearly 3% salary increase plus the associated benefit (LTD, FICA, etc) increases and the contract maintains the “85:15” (District:Employee) health insurance contribution based on the cost of the HMO plan. He also said new contract allows the District to offer alternative health insurance plans. M. Shevenell noted that most of the other changes in the contract were housekeeping items or clarification of issues, but there is an increase of \$30,000 to the Staff Development Fund, which is included in the increase noted for the first year.

S. Heinrich said that Article 5 is a Special Warrant Article to deposit an amount up to \$75,000 from this year’s budget surplus into the School Repair Capital Trust Fund. He said the fund was established to be used for emergency repairs and had been used for repairs to the Special Services Building. He said the School Board would like to build this fund to \$150,000 over the next few years and will probably put a similar article on the warrant next year.

S. Heinrich called for public comment on the article. There was none.

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S. Heinrich called for Committee comment on this article. There was none.

S. Heinrich said that Article 7 was the operating budget. He explained the process the Committee had undertaken to arrive at the current bottom line of the budget: liaison team meetings, department head presentations and Committee work sessions. He said the Committee did not change the budget from that which was approved by the School Board and had voted to present a budget amount of \$72,283,299 at the Public Hearing. S. Heinrich said the Committee would take a final vote on the operating budget after the Hearing. He also said if the operating budget article fails, the School Board could decide to implement the default budget, which is \$71,466,384. He said the default budget is determined by a statutory formula and approved by the School Board. He indicated the operating budget is up slightly this year because \$2,084,750 in necessary capital projects is included in the budget. He indicated that the School Board had made some adjustments to the budget that was presented to it by Administration, which included removing paving at the high school and some of the funds for painting and new white boards.

S. Heinrich called for public comment on the article.

Kristen Carrillo (Greatstone Drive) told the Committee she was representing the Merrimack Road Runners Club. She asked the Committee to support the replacement track costs. She indicated a new track would provide several opportunities for Merrimack to host track meets, including the state Division 1 track meet. She said the track booster club uses such events to raise funds in support of the track team and that a school with a track team should have a track.

S. Heinrich called for Committee comment.

C. Lang asked for an estimate on the tax rate between the default and the proposed budget. M. Shevenell said it was about \$50 on a home valued at \$200,000.

K. Bobbitt said the track needs to be replaced and having a track is just as important as having athletic fields or facilities for any other sport.

C. Lang said she was pleased that the roof bid was going to fix the entire roof at the middle school. She asked for clarification about the length of the warranty. M. Shevenell said the District was originally getting a 30-year warranty, but the bid for the entire roof that was awarded had a 40-year warranty.

J. Guagliumi said the proposed budget costs an additional 21¢ per day and includes necessary capital projects. He encouraged everyone to get the word out to vote for the proposed budget, and noted that, for the first time in a while, the proposed budget is greater than the default budget.

S. Heinrich said that Merrimack known for taking care of its schools and that the capital items are in the budget because they need to be fixed.

S. Heinrich closed the Public Hearing at 8:10 P.M.