

Warrant Article Review

S. Heinrich asked M. Shevenell to present the proposed warrant articles to the Committee.

Article 2: Authority to accept non-money gifts

M. Shevenell told the Committee that this article was not a “monied” article, so the Committee would not be voting on it.

Article 3: Support Staff contract

M. Shevenell told the Committee that this article covers a new contract with the Merrimack Educational Support Staff Association contract. He said the contract covers about 309 employees who work as custodians, para-professionals, administrative assistants and food service workers. He said the contract is a three-year contract that has a 3% salary increase and a 1% health insurance increase in each of the three years. He told the Committee that the District now pays 91% of the health insurance cost and by fiscal year 20-21, the District cost will be reduced to 88% plus the contract also allows the District to offer a new lower cost site of service plan. He indicated that, except for custodians, most of the employees covered only work “while school is in session” and the new contract includes a provision to increase the administrative assistant work year to 195 days. He said another new provision provides \$25,000 in life insurance for these employees. He said the article was recommended 5-0-0 by the School Board.

Discussion included the following:

- Starting wages
 - Para-professional (school year employee) \$16,000
 - Food service worker (part time, school year employee) \$6,000 - \$8,000
 - Custodian (full year employee) \$22,000 - \$23,000
- Cost of health insurance often exceed salary costs.
- The 3% raise
 - Is not merit based
 - Is not a flat 3% per employee, but the total amount of the raises will average 3%.

Article 4: Special Meeting

M. Shevenell told the Committee that Article 4 is an article that gives the School Board the option to hold another District meeting to present a new contract if Article 3 fails. He explained the process and said that since this article was also a “non-monied” article and the Committee would not be voting on it.

Article 5: School District Repair Capital Reserve Fund (C.R.F.)

M. Shevenell told the Committee that this article asks to replenish School District Repair C.R.F. with up to \$150,000 in surplus funds from the current operating budget. He said the \$225,000 from the fund had been used to pay for the bat remediation project and there is only \$5,000 left in the fund. He told the Committee if the article passes and there is less than \$150,000 in surplus, then the fund would only be funded to the amount of the surplus. He also told the

Committee that prior uses of the fund had been to fix the road to the lower field at the high school. He said the article was recommended 5-0-0 by the School Board.

There were no Committee questions or comments.

Article 6: Pavement Reconstruction at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School.

M. Shevenell told the Committee that this article is for pavement reconstruction in the circle at the front of Thorntons Ferry Elementary School. He said this project is in the Capital Improvement Plan for the upcoming budget year. He said the article was recommended 5-0-0 by the School Board.

Discussion included the following:

- For paving projects, the Districts partners with the Town to get a good bid price.
- The re-paving process involves crushing and then leveling current pavement after which 2” of new pavement is put down.
- The project was not part of the operating budget because the School Board wanted to keep the operating budget lean and give the decision to the voters.
- If the article fails and there is a major problem, the District can attempt to resolve the problem with cold patches.

Article 7: Purchase Brentwood School

M. Shevenell told the Committee this article asks for funds to purchase the Brentwood School property which abuts the District. He explained that the building on the property is 10,000 square feet which is the size the District is looking for as a new SAU/Special Service office. He said the District has a draft Purchase and Sale agreement with SERESC for this amount which is contingent upon passage of this article. He said this is not a turn-key idea; the property is not in move-in condition: the roof and some siding need to be replaced, the HVAC needs to be upgraded, some ADA renovations are needed and the space needs to be reconfigured. He indicated the intent is to develop a plan for renovations which would be proposed at another time. He also said there are other options for usage if renovations to make it the SAU/Special Service offices are not a good idea. He said the article was recommended 5-0-0 by the School Board.

Discussion included the following:

- Renovation would take about a year.
- The current SAU and Special Services buildings would be leveled. Additional parking and a new traffic pattern for the area would be developed.
- Building a new building is significantly more expensive than the cost of renovating an existing building. However, the renovation cost per square foot is greater than the new construction cost per square foot.
- The cost to renovate Brentwood would also be less than the cost to add an addition to the high school for the SAU/Special Service offices.
- If the District does not buy the property, another buyer will. Even if not used for a new SAU/Special Service building, there may be some benefit to having the District own the property instead of some other buyer.
- If another buyer buys the property, the land may go back on the tax rolls.

- Office space does not have to be built to “school construction” standards.
- The amount requested in the warrant article was negotiated down from the original asking price.
- At this time, there appear to be no mold, asbestos or bats, though the property will be fully inspected.
- The District is looking for 10,000 square feet of space to house current SAU office and Special Service staff and to provide conference/testing and meeting room spaces.
- The building was built in the early 1970s.

At this time, S. Heinrich asked Rich Hendricks, Chair of the School District Planning and Building Committee to offer comments to the Committee. S. Heinrich indicated that he was also a member of the Committee.

R. Hendricks told the Committee that a lot of people in town want the District to use an existing building for new SAU offices rather than build a new one. He said the District does not have any space within any of the schools to use for SAU offices. He indicated advantages to purchasing the Brentwood property are its location next to the high school and its size of 10,000 square feet. He said the Planning and Building Committee has been working for over 10 years to get new SAU office space but the project keeps getting put off. He also said the current offices do not really provide safe working conditions. R. Hendricks said he personally supports the warrant article and the Planning and Building Committee would be meeting next week to discuss the proposal.

M. Shevenell said that the District would need to bring in professionals to determine what renovations were needed and at what cost. He said it is better to own the property before requesting bids for such work.

Article 8 – Full-day Kindergarten.

M. Shevenell told the Committee this article asked the voters to approve the addition of full day kindergarten to the District. He said the article was recommended 5-0-0 by the School Board.

Discussion included the following:

- Keno funds will provide \$1,100 per student but this money would not be paid to the District until the second year of the program.
- The annual cost that will be added to the budget is \$808,901 and that amount will probably go up due to contractual salary increases.
- Students are not required to attend kindergarten and cannot be required to attend the full day if the District offers a full day program.
- Studies indicate that full day kindergarten does have a positive educational, social and emotional effect on children.
- The Kindergarten task force has posted information on its research and study results on the School District website.
- People considering whether to move into town have contacted Administration to see if, and if not, when Merrimack will have full kindergarten.
- M. Shevenell will provide information about the cost per student for half day kindergarten versus full day kindergarten.

Minutes, 2-6-18, continued

- Of 182 towns in New Hampshire, 150 have full day kindergarten.
- Keno has been more successful than expected.
- The tax impact of this warrant article is approximately 27¢ per \$1,000 of valuation

At 8:15 PM, S. Heinrich called for a 10 minute recess.

At 8:25 PM, S. Heinrich called the meeting back to order.

Work Session on Operating Budget

S Heinrich explained the procedure he would be using to call for budget adjustments. He indicated the Committee would take a vote on what amount to recommend to the Public Hearing and that after the Public Hearing next week, the Committee take a final vote on what to recommend to the warrant.

S. Heinrich asked if any member had any adjustments of \$50,000 or more to propose. No one did.

S. Heinrich asked if any member had any adjustments of \$10,000 or more to propose. No one did.

S. Heinrich asked if any member had any adjustments of \$5,000 or more to propose.

H. Gage made a MOTION to add \$6,000 to professional development account 1002213458241 to send the school resource officers (S.R.O.s) to ALICE training and the National Safety Conference for School Resource Officers. Second: S. Jacoby.

H. Gage spoke to her motion by telling the Committee that having resource officers in the school was a collaborative effort between the town and the school. She suggested that the District should provide training specific to school needs and functions of resource officers. She further explained ALICE meant Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, and Evacuate.

Discussion included the following:

- There are currently two Resource Officers: one at the high school and one at the middle school.
- While the officers get police training from the town, this training would be specific to school needs and resource officer functions.
- The current S.R.O.s had provided the information about these particular trainings.
- Police Chief Roy is in full support of the District providing these training opportunities for the S.R.O.s.
- ALICE is a certification training program. The expectation is that the S.R.O.s would come back and train other school staff.
- The motion includes a small “cushion” for any incidental costs for the original training or additional costs for cross-training that might arise.
- Professional Development for S.R.O.s would be a new item in the budget.
- If the motion passes, the Committee would be adding to the bottom line and the School Board could decide not to use the funding for S.R.O. training.

Minutes, 2-6-18, continued

- M. Shevenell suggested that a better budget line to propose was Administrative Improvement account 100241045824000. He said there is currently \$144,000 proposed in that line.
- There is currently a total of approximately \$300,000 in the budget for professional development but all of it is contractually obligated.

A roll call vote was held to add \$6,000 to the bottom line for the purpose of S.R.O. professional development. MOTION PASSED: 10 – 0 – 1 with N. Schoenfeld abstaining.

S. Heinrich asked if any member had any other adjustments to propose. No one did.

S. Heinrich made a MOTION to recommend an operating budget of \$74,817,416 to the Public Hearing. Second: D. Illg.

A roll call vote was held. MOTION PASSED: 10 – 0 – 1 with N. Schoenfeld abstaining.

S. Heinrich asked whether the members wanted to vote its recommendations on the warrant articles now or before the Public Hearing.

C. Lang asked to wait. No one objected.

S. Heinrich asked if the Administrators had any comments. They didn't.

S. Heinrich reminded the members that the next meeting would include the Public Hearing on the warrant articles and the operating budget. He said the Committee would make any other adjustments to the operating budget, vote on minutes, review any petitioned warrant articles and vote on its warrant article recommendations at 7 PM, adjourn to hold the Public Hearing at 7:30 PM, and then resume to take final actions. S. Heinrich told the Committee that after the Public Hearing, no new purposes can be added to the budget.

Public Participation

There was no public participation

At this time, C. Lang left the meeting.

K. Bobbitt made a MOTION to adjourn. Second: S. Jacoby. MOTION PASSED.

S. Heinrich adjourned the meeting at 8:54 PM.