

**Auburn Budget Committee Meeting
December 14, 2023
Media Center
Auburn Village School
Approved Minutes
6:00 PM**

Members Present: Chairman Peter Miles, Dan Carpenter, Vice-Chair David Wesche, Kevin Downing, Joanne Linxweiler, School Board Representative Alan Villeneuve, and Selectman Representative Keith Leclair

Others Present: School Board Chair Alan Villeneuve, Vice-Chair Janice Baker, Superintendent William Rearick, Principal Lori Collins, Business Administrator Corey Izbicki, Meghan Largy, Director of Curriculum Instruction, Scott Dube, Maintenance Director, Tracy Griffenhagen, Student Services, Selectmen Michael Rolfe, Finance & Budget Administrator Mimi Friolet, and Nancy Hoijer, Recording Secretary

I. Call to Order

Chairman Miles called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

II. Introductions

Chairman Miles introduced the members who were present.

III. Approval of Minutes

- November 30, 2023

Mr. Carpenter recommended tabling the approval of last meeting's minutes.

Mr. Villeneuve motioned to table approval of the November 30, 2023 meeting minutes. Mr. Wesche seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

IV. School Budget proposal

Superintendent Rearick presented the proposed School Budget in the amount of \$17,773,354.40 which he noted was a 7.5% increase over the default budget which is a 6.4% increase. He noted there were no new positions and \$16,525 was reduced from the amount submitted representing the amount he was going to budget toward replacement windows on the first floor (project \$80,000).

Superintendent Rearick noted drivers of the budget are last year's new teacher contract which had salary increase. There were stipends and two voluntary professional development days. Pinkerton has increased their tuition rate by 5.84%. Health insurance increased 3.5% and

dental insurance increased 4.5%. He noted an unexpected number of SPED students coming in with paraprofessionals at Pinkerton, SPED tuition at Pinkerton, and private schools. He noted the new school psych wages higher than the replaced person. He reviewed enrollment numbers with 51 more students than 2020-21 and Pinkerton enrollment down from 290 to 254.

Principal Collins reported there has been an 18-month strategic plan detailing who students are and where they want to go. She noted there have been policy changes and salary scale. She noted a difference in ½ time world language position. Mr. Villeneuve asked Principal Collins about transportation and she noted busing had a rough first month but has improved drastically. There is a new app that allows parents to track buses and so they are not getting as many phone calls as they used to.

Mr. Villeneuve asked Superintendent Rearick to report on the teacher contract and Superintendent Rearick reported the first year, which is this year, had a 1% increase and the second and third years have a 5% increase.

Mrs. Linxweiler asked if paraprofessionals were unionizing, when that would take effect and if it would affect the line. Mr. Villeneuve indicated there was no contract yet and there would be no effect on the line. He reported that they met a week ago and the Board will meet again in January. The School Board would have to approve the contract. They are carrying 2% into the budget.

Mr. Miles asked about the math coordinator. Principal Collins explained that Jen Burdis oversees the title 1 specialist, works with Grades 1-4 and Middle School. She supports the math teachers and models lessons. She organizes the state assessments and has a big role in the strategic plan. Mr. Leclair asked how test scores have been since the addition of the math coordinator. Principal Collins noted her first year was last year. In spring there was an increase in Grades 3-5 and ELA was up in all grades. Science scores, where she focused a lot of effort, increased 20%. Ms. Largy noted most schools this size typically have two.

Mr. Leclair asked if a lot more staff were asking for health benefits and Superintendent Rearick indicated there are changes in coverage elections.

Mr. Leclair asked how many funds there were and their balances. Mr. Izbicki indicated there were two funds: building and SPED. The building fund has a balance of \$922,000 as of June 30th and the SPED fund has a balance of \$159,947.

Superintendent Rearick reported there was no reduction in staff at Pinkerton despite the decrease in enrollment. Mr. Leclair asked about the contract and Mr. Villeneuve indicated it is negotiated after five years. Ms. Griffenhagen reviewed the cost of SPED programs at Pinkerton.

Mr. Miles asked about preschool. Superintendent Rearick noted they have to provide instruction and services to students as young as three years under federal law and will have nine next year. This year there are six. There are two elementary students placed out of district. Mr. Villeneuve noted they are considering a preschool program at AVS and that typically 50% are regular students. Ms. Griffenhagen noted space is a big consideration.

Superintendent Rearick indicated license fees increased

Superintendent Rearick reviewed the ESY (Extended School Year) lines. She noted regular and SPED programs are combined. There were 21 students in Kindergarten and First Grade, 17 in 2nd and 3rd Grades, 27 in 4th and 5th Grades and 11 in Middle School.

Superintendent Rearick reviewed the ELL (English not primary language) lines. Ms. Griffenhagen indicated there were eight students enrolled.

Principal Collins reported there were approximately 5-6 students enrolled at Pinkerton in advanced math which is done online.

Superintendent Rearick reviewed the budget lines for summer school. He noted they previously received the \$9,700 REAP grant for rural schools but are not receiving it since they passed the maximum of 600 students.

Superintendent Rearick reviewed the ESSR funds used from government funds for COVID which have now run out. Principal Collins noted they used ESSR to fund the nursing assistant staff because they have only one nurse with 660 students.

Mr. Villeneuve noted increased in Psych, Speech, and Therapy were driven by salary.

Principal Collins noted that the media staff and para teach grades K-5 in the media center. A book is read and discussed to determine comprehension and the students choose a book.

Mr. Leclair asked about the split from other sending schools and Superintendent Rearick reported that Hooksett also just had a town wide reevaluation.

Superintendent Rearick noted that the increase in principal and assistant principals (2) is not the same increase and there is one coverage election change.

Superintendent Rearick noted in the maintenance line that there is health insurance budgeted in anticipation that they will fill a position.

Mr. Dube reported Eastern locked rates at 1.75/gal up to 22 gallons estimating \$46,194.23 with a 1.91 average per gallon. Electric expenditures were \$147,849 last year. Mr. Villeneuve noted the contract lapsed and they paid market rate before it was noticed.

Mr. Leclair asked the kwh and Mr. Dube indicated he did not have that information. Superintendent Rearick indicated he could get it tomorrow.

Mr. Leclair asked about the IT para position and Superintendent Rearick indicated it was the IT assistant.

Mr. Leclair asked about the wage pool and Mr. Villeneuve indicated there was 2% for uncertified staff in the building who are not in contracts and to reward staff who do a great job.

Mr. Villeneuve motioned to approve line 1100 of the proposed budget in the amount of \$4,892,385.40. Mrs. Linxweiler seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

Mr. Wesche motioned to approve line 1105 (Reg Ed High School) of the proposed budget in the amount of \$3,652,992. Mr. Downing seconded the motion. A vote was taken, Mr. Leclair voted nay. The motion passed 6-1-0.

Mrs. Linxweiler motioned to approve line 1200 (SPED) of the proposed budget in the amount of \$3,235,759.35. Mr. Carpenter seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

Mr. Leclair motioned to approve line 1230 (ESY) of the proposed budget in the amount of \$60,810.55. Mr. Wesche seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

Mr. Downing motioned to approve line 1260 (ELL) of the proposed budget in the amount of \$38,419.51. Mr. Wesche seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

Mr. Downing motioned to approve line 1270 (Adv Learner) of the proposed budget in the amount of \$9,600. Mr. Carpenter seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

Mrs. Linxweiler motioned to approve line 1410 (Co-curricular) of the proposed budget in the amount of \$33,288.44. Mr. Wesche seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

Mr. Leclair motioned to approve line 1420 (Athletics) of the proposed budget in the amount of \$42,421.49. Mrs. Linxweiler seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

Mr Downing motioned to approve line 1430 (Summer School) of the proposed budget in the amount of \$26,930.90. Mrs. Linxweiler seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

Mr. Wesche motioned to approve line 2120 (Guidance) of the proposed budget in the amount of \$223,680.67. Mr. Carpenter seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

Mr. Leclair motioned to approve line 2130 (Nurse) of the proposed budget in the amount of \$155,960.57. Mr. Carpenter seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

Mr. Wesche motioned to approve line 2140 (Psych) of the proposed budget in the amount of \$141,824.51. Mr. Downing seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

Mrs. Linxweiler motioned to approve line 2150 (Speech Svcs) of the proposed budget in the amount of \$269,256.70. Mr. Wesche seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

Mr. Wesche motioned to approve line 2160 (Therapy Svcs) of the proposed budget in the amount of \$89,613.88. Mr. Downing seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

Mr. Leclair motioned to approve line 2210 (Staff Development) of the proposed budget in the amount of \$72,568.74. Mrs. Linxweiler seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

Mrs. Linxweiler motioned to approve line 2220 (Media) of the proposed budget in the amount of \$192,493.12. Mr. Wesche seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

Mr. Leclair motioned to approve line 5590 (SAU Svcs) of the proposed budget in the amount of \$389,399. Mr. Wesche seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

Mr. Leclair motioned to approve line 2410 (Princ Svcs) of the proposed budget in the amount of \$691,783.31. Mr. Downing seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

Mr. Leclair motioned to approve all of section 2600 (Maintenance) but line 5622 (\$125,000). Mr. Wesche seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

Mr. Leclair motioned to approve line 2700 (Transportation) of the proposed budget in the amount of \$1,256,198.35. Mr. Wesche seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

Mr. Leclair motioned to approve line 2840 (IT) of the proposed budget in the amount of \$277,086.60. Mrs. Linxweiler seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

Mr. Leclair motioned to approve line 5114 (Wage Pool) of the proposed budget in the amount of \$20,000. Mr. Wesche seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

Mr. Leclair motioned to approve lines 5910 (Principal of Debt) in the amount of \$785,000 and 5830 (Debt Service Interest) in the amount of \$393,095, of the proposed budget. Mr. Wesche seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

V. Town Update

a. Elderly Exemption

Mr. Leclair reported that Herb Tardiff had come before the Selectmen representing the seniors and asked that they make changes to the elderly exemption through warrant article. Last year the exemption was increased. Mr. Tardiff asked that the income and asset limits be increased to get more assistance to a larger number of seniors. Town Administrator Sterndale had prepared and provided a handout showing different options and compared with other towns. Mr. Leclair noted he was concerned that those who were already receiving the exemption would lose between \$300 and \$400.

Mr. Downing agreed it was a shot in the dark as to how many additional seniors would become eligible under the proposed changes but agreed they should try to match surrounding towns.

Mr. Leclair reported the Selectmen were leaning toward Option A. He estimated a .03 cent/thousand tax impact.

b. Library

Mr. Leclair reported the library trustees came in after hearing that the Selectmen didn't think the expansion was ready to move forward to warrant article next year. They proposed creating a new fund and funding \$200,000. \$50,000 would be to help with hiring a capital campaign manager to help with fundraising. Town Administrator Sterndale had noted he thought \$50,000 might be low. Mr. Leclair indicated he was not comfortable using tax dollars to hire someone for that. He noted the Selectmen suggested creating a \$100,000 fund through taxation to get a feel of the temperature of whether people were willing to spend money on this. There is an existing fund that supports maintenance and construction of town buildings, but they want something specific. He recommends a sunset provision so that the funds would go back to the fund balance if not used. He noted the library would be working with Parks & Recreation. He suggested monthly meetings with the Selectmen and Parks & Recreation an hour before their regular Selectmen's meetings.

Mr. Villeneuve stated that he likes the project but isn't sure the library should move the project forward without a great deal of assistance from the Selectmen and to have a plan to show people and a lot of community outreach. They have not been publicizing the project to anyone outside those already involved with the library. Mr. Downing agreed. Mrs. Linxweiler agreed it should be a town effort and they need guidance.

Mr. Carpenter indicated that he felt \$100,000 won't cut it because the price will be jumping higher than we can put into it.

Mr. Downing indicated the need to have a solid vision working with Parks & Recreation and agreed there needed to be marketing to sell it and not rush and wait to have a real

plan. Mr. Carpenter agreed there needed to be community outreach. Mr. Leclair noted the marketing piece was brought up at the Selectmen's meeting.

Mr. Wesche indicated it definitely needs a sunset provision and it would be good to get the town to vote on it. He noted it has to have a community center included with Parks & Recreation.

Mr. Rolfe noted this is a year where everyone's taxes shot up and the Selectmen and Budget Committee are working hard to pull things back and here we are asking for money.

Mr. Leclair asked about the fund, how much and where it should come from. The majority of the board, felt the funds should come from taxation.

VI. Adjourn

Chair Miles moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:42 PM, seconded by Mr. Wesche A vote was taken; all were in agreement, the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy J. Hoijer,
Recording Secretary

Note: Any person with a disability who wishes to attend this public meeting and needs to be provided a reasonable accommodation in order to participate, please call the Town Hall (603) 483-5052, or contact the Committee Secretary so that arrangements can be made.