

**South Hampton School Board Deliberative Session  
Barnard School Gymnasium  
Tuesday, February 4, 2020**

The 2020 Deliberative Session was held in the Town of South Hampton, in the County of Rockingham, in the State of New Hampshire, on the 4th day of February 2020. Acting Moderator Sharon Somers called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Members of the school district were introduced: School Board members Jim Kime (chair), Sharon Gordon, and Rebecca Burdick; Emily Kime, School District Clerk; Barnard School Principal, Walter Huston; Superintendent, Dr. William Lupini; Executive Director of Student Services, Dr. Caroline Arakelian; and School District Attorney, Bob Casassa. Also in attendance were South Hampton Budget Committee members Dennis Blair, Will Hodge, and Dan Mahoney.

Lee Knapp made a motion to allow non-registered voters who are part of the SAU21 administration to speak during Deliberative Sessions. Emily Kime seconded the motion. With a show of hands, the motion passed.

The Moderator outlined the procedures under which she would run the meeting; she then introduced and read Article 01.

**Article 01: Operating Budget**

Shall the School District raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling \$2,536,312? Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$2,539,326, which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the School District or by law; or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only. (Majority vote required.)

Note: Warrant Article #1 (operating budget) does not include appropriations in any other warrant articles.

Rebecca Burdick moved to open Article 01 for discussion, seconded by Sharon Gordon. Jim Kime presented the items comprising the operating budget stating the proposed operating budget is an 8.28% increase over the current year's (2019-2020) operating budget. However, the 2020-2021 default budget is higher than the School Board recommended 2020-2021 budget.

The line items: special education, high school tuition, employment benefits, Seacoast Education Association CBA salaries (teacher's contract) are main drivers of the increase, however, these items are out of the School Board's control as they are required by law or contracted services and State/federally mandated. If these four main drivers were removed, the 2020-2021 budget would have an increase of \$6,307 or 0.27%.

Sharon Somers asked if there were any questions or comments. Pete DiStefano asked if the Amesbury High School tuition rate has changed over the years. Jim Kime said it mirrors the Amesbury budget increase. Dr. Lupini said it is also driven by the Department of Education.

With no further discussion, the Moderator stated the article will be placed on the official ballot as read. Lee Knapp made a motion to restrict reconsideration for Article 01. Becky Burdick seconded the motion. By a show of hands, the motion to restrict reconsideration was approved. The Moderator introduced and read Article 02.

**Article 02: Seacoast Educational Support Personnel Association**

To see if the School District will vote to approve the cost items included in the collective bargaining agreement reached between the South Hampton School Board and the Seacoast Educational Support Personnel Association which calls for the following increases in salaries and benefits at the proposed staffing levels:

Year	Estimated Salary Increase (including Salary Driven Benefits)	Estimated Health Insurance Increase	TOTAL Estimated Cost
2020-21	\$4,200	\$ 0	\$ 4,200
2021-22	\$3,398	\$ 3,813	\$ 7,202
2022-23	\$2,480	\$ 4,195	\$ 6,674
2023-24	\$2,410	\$ 5,720	\$ 8,130

and further to raise and appropriate the sum of \$4,200 for the 2020-21 school year, such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in salaries and benefits required by the new agreement over those that would be paid at proposed staffing levels in accordance with the current collective bargaining agreement. (Majority vote required.)  
The School Board and the Budget Committee recommend this article.

Note: In order for this article to be adopted, it must be approved by the voters of the school districts of Hampton Falls, North Hampton, Seabrook, South Hampton and the voters of the Winnacunnet Cooperative School District (which includes Hampton voters).

Rebecca Burdick made a motion to open Article 02 for discussion. Seconded by Sharon Gordon. Dr. Lupini presented the terms of the proposed contract stating the SAU has experienced a high turnover rate and been penalized by the IRS for not offering health insurance to SESPA personnel. Article 02 will be cost effective by avoiding IRS fines and retaining staff members. The CBA must pass in all five SAU21 Districts.

With no questions or further discussion, the Moderator stated the article will be placed on the official ballot as read. The Moderator introduced and read Article 03.

**Article 03: Tuition Stabilization Expendable Trust Fund**

To see if the School District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$10,000 to be added to the existing Tuition Stabilization Expendable Trust fund to supplement the funding of high school tuition costs? The School Board and the Budget Committee recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required.)

Rebecca Burdick motioned to open Article 03 for discussion. Seconded by Sharon Gordon. Jim Kime presented Article 03 stating the fund was established in 2016 for a bubble class, however, the trend appears to be that the student population is rising and the bubble type class is projected to be the new normal. Currently the Tuition Fund balance is \$41,451 with a target of \$36,000.

However, \$15,000 will be used in the 2020-2021 school year to offset the high school tuition expense. Looking to 2026-2027, the Town is projected to see an approximate \$100,000 increase in high school tuition costs due to the rising student population.

With no questions or further discussion, the Moderator stated the article will be placed on the official ballot as read. Rebecca Burdick made a motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 03. Sharon Gordon seconded the motion. With a show of hands the motion passed. The Moderator introduced and read Article 04.

#### **Article 04: Roof Expendable Trust Fund**

To see if the School District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$15,000 to be added to the existing Roof Expendable Trust fund for the purpose of repairing or replacing roofs on the South Hampton School District buildings? The School Board and the Budget Committee recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required.)

Rebecca Burdick motioned to open Article 04 for discussion. Seconded by Sharon Gordon. Jim Kime presented Article 04 stating the fund was started in 2016 for unanticipated roof problems. Currently the fund balance is \$44,781, with a target of \$100,000. There have been several temporary patch jobs over the years, however, the roof is deteriorating. A basketball game was canceled because of water pouring down from the ceiling. The Board is concerned if the problem isn't addressed, damage to the interior of the gym could be expensive. The Facilities Manager is collecting information regarding further patch jobs and roof replacement.

Lee Knapp stated he is in favor of taking care of the building so it runs efficiently and does not cause additional damage to the building. With no further questions or discussion, the Moderator stated the article will be placed on the official ballot as read. The Moderator introduced and read Article 05.

#### **Article 05: Special Education Expendable Trust**

To see if the School District will vote to raise and appropriate \$15,000 to be added to the existing Special Education Expendable Trust Fund, with up to \$15,000 to be funded from the June 30, 2020 unassigned fund balance available for transfer on July 1, 2020? No additional amount to be raised from taxation.

The School Board and the Budget Committee recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required.)

Rebecca Burdick motioned to open Article 05 for discussion. Seconded by Sharon Gordon. Jim Kime presented Article 05 stating the fund is for unanticipated costs for special needs students or testing that is not in the operating budget, for example if a new student moved to Town. Article 05 is funded by unexpended funds left at the end of current school year (2019-2020). Currently the fund balance is \$142,323.94. The SAU recommends the fund to have a balance of \$400,000.

With no questions or further discussion, the Moderator stated the article will be placed on the official ballot as read. The Moderator introduced and read Article 06.

#### **Article 06: Building Maintenance Expendable Trust**

To see if the School District will vote to raise and appropriate \$20,000 to be added to the existing Building Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund, with up to \$20,000 to be funded from the June

30, 2020 unassigned fund balance available for transfer on July 1, 2020? No additional amount to be raised from taxation.

The School Board and the Budget Committee recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required.)

Rebecca Burdick motioned to open Article 06 for discussion. Seconded by Sharon Gordon. Jim Kime presented Article 06 stating the fund is for unanticipated costs for building expenses. Currently the fund balance is \$35,386, with a target of \$150,000. Article 06 would be funded from unexpended funds from the 2019-2020 school year. Jim stated the building is starting to show its age. If the building maintenance and roof trusts were both used to repair the gym roof, there would only be approximately \$15,000 left in combined funds. Lee Knapp asked if a large surplus is expected at the end of the 2019-2020 school year. Dennis Blair said usually there is a \$40-60K surplus, however, last year it was much lower because of the high school tuition costs.

With no further questions or discussion, the Moderator stated the article will be placed on the official ballot as read. The Moderator introduced and read Article 07.

**Article 07: Discontinue Generator Expendable Trust**

To see if the School District will vote to discontinue the Generator Expendable Trust Fund created in 2014. Said funds, with accumulated interest to date of withdrawal, are to be transferred to the municipality's general fund.

The School Board and the Budget Committee recommend this appropriation. (Majority vote required.)

Rebecca Burdick motioned to open Article 07 for discussion. Seconded by Sharon Gordon. Jim Kime presented Article 07 stating this fund was created after the major ice storm several years ago. The intent of this fund was to purchase a generator to be used in the gym to set up an emergency shelter. The School Board does not intend to contribute to this fund in the future or intend to set up an emergency shelter. These funds must go back to the Town and cannot be used by the School. There is currently \$10,900 in fund.

With no questions or further discussion, the Moderator stated the article will be placed on the official ballot as read. The Moderator introduced and read Article 08.

**Article 08: Citizen's Petition – High School Tuition**

To see if the School District will vote to authorize the School Board to negotiate a tuition agreement with the Winnacunnet Cooperative School District to allow South Hampton students to attend Winnacunnet High School in Hampton, NH on such terms and conditions as the South Hampton School Board shall determine are in the best interest of the South Hampton School District. If the tuition rate is more than the tuition rate under the Amesbury agreement, the South Hampton School District will pay the full amount. In any event, the parents would be responsible for providing the student with transportation. CITIZEN'S PETITION by 25 or more registered voters of the Town of South Hampton.

The School Board and the Budget Committee do not recommend this article. (Majority voted required)

Pete Distefano, who led the Citizens Petition, said he wants to even the playing field with Amesbury High School (AHS) and would like students to have another opportunity for a higher level of education.

Jim Kime stated the School Board has been negotiating with the Winnacunnet School Board for a lower tuition rate. Closing the tuition gap between AHS and Winnacunnet High School (WHS) is a current South Hampton School Board goal they are pursuing. Without the Town's support, the Board does not feel it is appropriate for the Town to fund the annual \$6,800 per student additional expense to send students to WHS over AHS. The Board will take guidance from the Town vote. If passed the Citizens Petition would require tax payers to fund the estimated \$50,000 to \$100,000 increase in high school tuition per year. The School Board believes this would heavily burden the school budget and tax payers, which is why it is a Board goal to negotiate a reduced tuition rate with the Winnacunnet School Board.

Additionally, Jim stated there was a vote in 1993 in which the Town voted to only pay the AHS tuition rate with parents required to pay any additional costs for a public school of their choice.

Lee Knapp asked, hasn't the Town always had school choice? Rebecca said WHS had not been accepting students for several years and this year was the first that they have opened their doors back up to South Hampton students.

Pete Distefano asked if Whittier Technical High School accepts South Hampton students. Dr. Lupini stated they do not, but by law every school district needs to provide a technical school option, which is why the South Hampton School Board has negotiated with WHS to allow students to attend the Seacoast School of Technology (SST).

Ruban Melo asked if the Town pays the full tuition for the current students attending SST. Jim replied the Town is required to pay the full amount for the two years a student attends SST. The Board closed a loophole this past year. The resulting current structure is that the Town pays for the 2 years in SST and parents pay the difference in tuition rates between AHS and WHS (\$6,800) for the other 2 years. Jim stated the goal is to lower the yearly cost through negotiations with WHS board.

Stephanie Andruskevich said, in her opinion, it doesn't make sense that the Town cannot afford to send high school students to a high school within their own district. She went on to say the budget puts more emphasis on K-8 than high school. Additionally, the SPED budget is larger than the high school budget is that normal?

Dr. Lupini replied that WHS is not in the South Hampton district. SAU21 is very unique with the 5 different districts it contains. He also stated, the SPED costs are federally mandated, the School Board has no control over that dollar amount.

Dennis Blair said since the 1993 Town vote, if a parent wants to send their student to any other high school besides AHS, the South Hampton School Board is not responsible for negotiating tuition rate, it is a parent's responsibility. Dennis asked if the Board is going to negotiate these rates with all the different schools? Jim replied that the Board has heard from many families that

they would like the WHS option, therefore, thought it made sense to negotiate because there is a good chunk of students interested, which makes a better bargaining tool.

Christen Pataro asked if WHS/SST was the only option for a technical school? Jim answered yes. Christen asked if Whittier was more expensive than AHS? Jim replied yes.

Tom Andruskevich stated the approximate cost per student per year is \$19,000 at WHS and \$13,000 at AHS. Then asked, what is the cost per student at Barnard? Jim replied around \$22,000. Tom, suggested Barnard School become a regional school to cut costs. Dr. Lupini replied there are not public schools of choice; the concept does not exist in New Hampshire. Tom asked if you could redistrict? Dr. Lupini replied it is a community choice.

Dan Mahoney said South Hampton students have been going to AHS for as long as we can remember; before WHS existed. Amesbury and South Hampton are tied together through youth sports and many other activities. Barnard School students have excelled at AHS. AHS tuition rate is the best deal you will ever get. Families come to South Hampton because of the small community. Dan asked supporters of the Citizens Petition what do you want out of WHS. Tom replied AP programs, activities, and sports. Jim replied to Tom, if a parent values what Tom said, you have that opportunity now. The Board's goal is to lower tuition costs.

Becky said Barnard School is investing in the K-8 education in South Hampton to prepare our students for what they do after 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

With no further discussion, the Moderator stated the article will be placed on the official ballot as read. The moderator addressed the public stating all Articles are concluded. She opened the floor up for further business.

John Gamble asked Dennis what he thought of the budget. Dennis said taxes will increase 8%, which is the same amount as last year. In past years, the Town has seen a 4-6% increase and he hopes the Town returns to that level. Dennis stated he has not encountered an unreasonable budget yet, but both the Selectman and the School Board need to think about how much tax payers will tolerate. Yearly Dennis compares South Hampton tax rates to 14 surrounding communities. South Hampton is typically the 4<sup>th</sup> lowest in the grouping. He also stated other Towns are experiencing increases similar to South Hampton.

Without any further questions or discussion, Sharon Somers asked for a motion to recess the meeting at 8:24 PM to be continued at Town elections on March 10th. The motion was made by Rebecca Burdick, seconded by Sharon Gordon. The motion was approved by show of hands.

Respectfully Submitted,

Emily Kime  
School District Clerk