

**HOLLIS BROOKLINE COOPERATIVE SCHOOL BOARD
FEBRUARY 22, 2018
PUBLIC HEARING
MEETING MINUTES**

A Public Hearing was conducted by the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School Board on Thursday, February 22, 2018 at 6:30 p.m. at the Captain Samuel Douglass Academy, Brookline, NH.

Superintendent Andrew Corey Presided:

Members of the Board present: Melanie Levesque, Secretary

Members of the Board Absent: Elizabeth Brown, Chairman
Cindy VanCoughnett, Vice Chairman
Holly Deurloo Babcock
John Cross
Tom Solon
Krista Whalen

AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS - None

PUBLIC HEARING

Superintendent Corey reviewed the rules of the Public Hearing, and stated the purpose to be to gather public input on the following petition warrant article, which will appear on this year's ballot:

“Shall the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School District adopt the provisions of RSA 40:13 (known as SB 2) to allow official ballot voting on all issues before the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School District on the second Tuesday of March?”

It was explained SB2 (official ballot referenda) is a form of town meeting that has two sessions. The first session (deliberative session) is for explanation, discussion, debate and amendments to the proposed operating budget and warrant articles. The second session (voting session) allows the voters to cast an official ballot to pass/fail proposed articles.

Superintendent Corey opened the floor for public comment at 6:40 p.m.

Testimony in Favor

Peter Walker, 57 Pepperell Road, Brookline

Remarked on average, 97 people attend the annual meeting. There are multi-million-dollar items to be voted on and the polls are only open for 1 hour. Sixty-six to seventy-five percent of Brookline voters have supported SB2 for the COOP. Bedford and Amherst both have the SB2 form of government for their school districts. Since 1995, no Town or School District has rescinded SB2.

Testimony in Opposition

Maryanne Shanley, 7 Buttonwood Drive, Hollis

Although she understands the concerns around Annual Meeting voting, she believes there to be unintended consequences to SB2 voting. Not many individuals attend the Deliberative Session, and this does a disservice

to what we are voting on, as citizens may be uninformed. Citizens will not understand the ins and outs of the articles, the why, the reasoning behind, and simply view it as too much money and vote no.

Melanie Leveque, 2 McDaniels Drive, Brookline

In the past she has supported SB2. However, operating budgets, teacher contracts and bonds require discussion, and taxpayers need to attend the Annual Meeting. People don't engage, and it is our responsibility to ensure the Annual Meeting engages our citizens.

Districts and towns that want to move away from SB2 struggle to get the required 2/3 needed to change their form of governance. She feels that residents love their towns and come home in the evening to be home and thus they are not engaged. She is in favor of continuing with the Annual Meeting format and is opposed to SB2.

Testimony in Favor

Eric Pauer, 12 Westview Road, Brookline

Stated he was pleased with this year's Deliberative Session in Brookline. It is the job of the School Board to craft the warrant articles, and they continue under SB2. He believes having 30 days between the Deliberative Session and ballot voting allows residents time to gain a greater understanding of what they will vote on while allowing the Board to present their position. Both the Budget Committee and the School Board can communicate messages. By the time people arrive at Annual Meeting their minds are made up.

Brookline had over 400 voters participate, which was greater than the number at Deliberative Session. SB2 will allow for maximum participation and allows for absentee ballots for the military and citizens who maybe out of Town. More participants will lead to better results. Late nights, reconsideration and multiple sessions limit the participation of some individuals. He believes the ballot box allows for a secret ballot and stated that it takes 60% to adopt SB2 and 60% to rescind SB2. SB2 lowers the threshold for bond passage to 60% from the 2/3 majority required at Annual Meeting.

He believes that greater participation will yield better results. He has spoken to residents around Town who are in favor of SB2 and stated that it should be passed for the Cooperative District and the Town.

Testimony in Opposition

Brian Rader, 31 Mason Road, Brookline

The ballot only gives limited information and not costs related to taxes. Taxpayers need to understand why spending is going up and what impact that will have on taxes not only for year one but with regards to the on-going tax impact. You cannot have a true discussion with a ballot vote.

Brendan Denehy, 31 Mason Road, Brookline

With SB2, the discussion, which generally results in an informed decision, does not occur. He appreciates the flexibility of the Annual Meeting as voters can adjust the Warrant Articles. He remarked SB2 is not working for the Brookline School District and provided the example of a resident who wished to reorder Warrant Articles 4, 5, 6 which related to the unencumbered fund balance this year. Then citizen was unable to do that based on SB2. He feels SB2 limits the voters' ability to adjust to the citizens' wishes.

No further testimony was provided, and Superintendent Corey closed the public hearing at 6:47 p.m.

Date _____ Signed _____