

BROOKLINE SCHOOL BOARD
PUBLIC HEARING
JANUARY 13, 2021
MEETING MINUTES

A Public Hearing was conducted by the Brookline School Board on Wednesday, January 13, 2021 at 6:15 p.m.

Kenneth Haag, Chairman, presided:

School Board Members Participating: Erin Sarris, Vice Chairman
Karen Jew, Secretary
Rebecca Howie
Alison Marsano

Members of the Board Absent:

Also Participating: Andrew Corey, Superintendent
Gina Bergskaug, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction
Bob Thompson, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services
Kelly Seeley, Business Administrator
Daniel Molinari, Principal, Richard Maghakian Memorial School
Patricia Bouley, Principal, Captain Samuel Douglass Academy
Brian Rater, Chair, Brookline Finance Committee
Matthew Mailloux, Secretary, Brookline Finance Committee
Dennis Comeau, Brookline Finance Committee

BROOKLINE SCHOOL DISTRICT
FY22 BUDGET

Due to the COVID-19/Coronavirus crisis, and in accordance with Governor Sununu's [Emergency Order #12](#) pursuant to [Executive Order 2020-04](#), this Board and Committee are authorized to meet electronically.

As stated on the agenda, the meeting was aired live via Zoom. Telephone access was available for members of the public wishing to provide comment; 1-929-205-6099 US (Meeting ID: 985 5861 3716/Passcode 078704).

Each member of the Board and Committee was asked to state, for the record, where they were, why their attendance in person was not reasonably practical, who, if anyone, was with them, and whether or not they were able to hear the proceedings.

Kenneth Haag

Stated he was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, he was alone in the room he was in, and could hear the proceedings.

Erin Sarris

Stated she was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, she was alone in the room she was in, and could hear the proceedings.

Karen Jew

Stated she was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, she was alone in the room she was in, and could hear the proceedings.

Rebecca Howie

Stated she was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, she was alone in the room she was in, and could hear the proceedings.

Alison Marsano

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Brian Rater

Stated he was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, he was alone in the room he was in, and could hear the proceedings.

Dennis Comeau

Stated he was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, he was alone in the room he was in, and could hear the proceedings.

Matthew Mailloux

Stated he was participating electronically from Concord, NH, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, he was alone in the room he was in, and could hear the proceedings.

A presentation was provided (can be viewed [here](#); beginning at tape counter 30:24) a copy of which was included with the [agenda](#).

Displayed was a chart depicting historical and forecasted enrollment numbers. Currently the District has 572 students and is projecting 601. Projections are provided by the New England School Development Council (NESDEC). The historic high was in 2010/2011 (659). NESDEC projections see the District heading towards that figure again in FY23 through FY26. That uptick is also being seen in the other 2 districts. Growth in the community has always gone hand in hand with the economy. In FY09, the Cost Per Pupil (CPP) in Brookline was \$11,432 (State average \$12,096) and in FY20, \$15,040 (State average \$17,189).

Superintendent Corey remarked one of the reasons the district has had success in this area is due to the budget process. The process begins with the Principals conducting a needs assessment, and meeting with members of the SAU Administration to discuss what is believed to be needed for the coming school year. The culmination of that work is presented to the Superintendent for review/revisions. Each of the Principals present their budgets and discussion is had with two objectives in mind; what is needed to move the district forward and how does the budget fit into the overall budgets within the SAU; most particularly the COOP School District understanding it is the same taxpayer paying the costs of both. The draft budget is presented to the School Board and Finance Committee for discussion/revisions. From there the tax effort determination and the final

budget and revenue estimates are reviewed (January). The tax effort percentage is compared to the tax cap percentage and adjusted as needed. That brings the process to this point.

A slide was shown identifying how the total tax effort is determined; total of the warrant (operating budget and warrant articles) minus local revenue, State aid grant, retained State tax, FY21 State grant. The FY22 operating budget of \$10,025,776 and warrant articles totaling \$501,236 result in a total warrant of \$10,527,012. The proposed FY22 Tax Cap would result in an operating budget of \$9,867,097 and warrant articles totaling \$501,236 for a total warrant of \$10,368,333. Remaining constant are local revenue (796,000), State aid grant (\$2,134,564), and retained State tax (625,035). What is not shown is the State grant. It is believed the Legislature is continuing its work in that regard; however, there is not much clarity on that issue. The differential between the FY21 total tax effort (\$6,308,087) and the total tax effort of the originally proposed budget (\$6,971,413) is 10.5%. To comply with the Tax Cap, a reduction of \$158,679 is needed to achieve a total tax effort of \$6,812,734 or 8.0%.

An overview of the Warrant showed a comparison between the originally proposed budget and the Tax Cap budget: Article 2 – Operating Budget; \$10,025,776 (original proposal) / \$9,867,097 (Tax Cap), Article 3 – Maintenance Trust (\$75,000), Article 4 – Special Education Trust (\$25,000), Article 5 – Contingency (\$40,000), and Article 6 – SAU budget (\$361,236) are the same amounts in both the original proposal and the Tax Cap budget. The total of the originally proposed FY22 budget is \$10,527,012 or an increase of \$415,792 (4.1%). The total of the Tax Cap budget is \$10,368,333 or an increase of \$257,113 (2.5%).

The items cut from the originally proposed budget to achieve the Tax Cap budget are the position of Tech Integrator at RMMS (\$114,189 all in cost), the MTSS Paras (\$43,640) and a movement of the cost of projectors to be covered by the Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP) Grant (\$850).

During the budget process, discussions came up around the intent to leave the position of Tech Integrator in the budget for one more year before considering migrating that to a new position. What has been observed from March 13, 2020 until this point, is a large increase in the staff's proficiency with technology. This move to Zoom, and remote learning has forced everyone to pick up new skills and integrate it much more into the classrooms.

When looking at making cuts, the desire is to identify what would have the least impact on the students. The Multi-Tiered System Support (MTSS) Paras were intended to address concern with student performance during remote learning (seen on a national level). The original intent was to add 2 paras (one for each building) to support students who may be struggling in math or falling behind in reading. The FY21 budget included a Para for this support position; however, due to the experience of the last year, those funds were used to add a classroom teacher, which was seen as the best way to utilize those funds for the one year. The FY22 budget will still allow for 1 MTSS Para next year (once moving out of the remote situation). The purchase cost of projectors were moved to the REAP Grant, which is intended to be utilized for technology.

It is unknown if additional revenue will be received from the State. There is the possibility, based on teacher retirements, turnover, etc., that the required budget could be slightly lower than expected. Should that occur, the additional funds could be looked to as a means of offsetting the cuts.

Slides were shown depicting the difference between the FY21 and FY22 local revenue (\$1,002,641 in FY21 and \$796,000 in FY22; a reduction of \$206,641 or 21%) and the FY21 and FY22 State Aid estimates (\$3,210,223 in FY21 and \$2,759,599 in FY22; a reduction of \$450,624 or 14%).

The total tax effort (\$6,971,413) with the original proposal results in a school district tax rate of 10.24% and State tax rate of 0.93% for a total Brookline School District tax rate of 11.17%. The total tax effort (\$6,812,734) under the Tax Cap results in a school district tax rate of 10.00% and State tax rate of 0.93% for a total tax rate of 10.94% (assumes 1.5% increase in Brookline tax base).

Noted was the FY21 State Grant (Stabilization Grant) goes away (\$591,264). That grant funding is lost across the board; there will also be an impact in the COOP School District.

Article 1

Election of Officers. To elect all necessary School District officers for the ensuing terms by official ballot vote on March 9, 2021, Captain Samuel Douglass Academy, 7:00 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.:

- To choose a Moderator for the ensuing year.
- To choose a Clerk for the ensuing year.
- To choose a Treasurer for the ensuing year.
- To choose one (1) member of the School Board for the ensuing three (3) years.

Article 2

To see if the Brookline School District will vote to 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 **\$9,867,097**. Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be **\$9,857,075**, 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 to pass.

Estimated Net Tax Impact - \$10.41/\$1,000

Charts were displayed identifying cost differentials related to new item requests, major changes in the operating budget from FY21 to FY22, and a default budget summary.

The default budget would show increases in wages/benefits (\$48,911), special education services/transportation (\$275,234) and retirement benefits (\$67,805), and reductions in health/dental/FICA/NHRS (\$1,957), regular education transportation (\$22,077), transfers (\$10,000) and various other small amounts (totaling \$2,100).

Testimony in Favor

Peter D'Agostino, 9 Louis Drive

Spoke of the changes to the original proposal that resulted in the 8%, and questioned if it is being impacted by the loss of the one-time State aid the District had last year, e.g., had we never had that aid, would we have not bumped up against the tax cap limit? Superintendent Corey responded the loss of that revenue is exactly why the budget is bumping up against the tax cap.

Mr. D'Agostino commented this is the exact situation he raised when the tax cap was being considered; a situation where the Administration is essentially forced to put forward what he would suggest is a false budget. During the discussion of the tax cap, he has questioned what would occur should the Administration come to

the taxpayers stating the budget was maxed out at the tax cap, there is a need to hire a teacher, but because of all our other contractual obligations, the budget will not support it. It would be up to the taxpayers, at the Deliberative Session, to determine what was needed to support the teacher. The Administration would have to provide information on the associated costs. He would prefer the Administration be able to put forth everything that is needed, allow the taxpayers to make adjustments, and be informed of what the impacts would be. He noted it was understood that the stabilization grant funds would not be available for this year.

He strongly encouraged the Board to conduct an in-person meeting citing the need for the ability to make adjustments at a Deliberative Session. There is no way of knowing what will occur over the coming months.

Mr. D'Agostino questioned if there could be insight on the status of the Stabilization grant prior to the Deliberative Session.

Superintendent Corey stated an in-person Deliberative Session is the only way the budget could be adjusted. Regarding State aid, he believes there is work being done; however, he is uncertain what the result will be. He does not necessarily foresee it being concluded in time for the Deliberative Session, but at the same time, if the State were to reimburse the District, the Board could mandate that he take any adjustment that the voters provided and encumber that not allowing for it to be expended so that it is returned at year-end. The difference between the originally proposed budget and the tax cap budget is the \$158,679.

Mr. D'Agostino stated concern the MTSS position that is proposed to be cut as a mechanism to meet the tax cap is a position that could become more important as we move forward.

He remarked this presentation is likely the highest level of tax transparency he has seen in the last few years, showing the foregoing of the reductions associated with each article. He suggested it may be helpful for the Deliberative Session to also show the 2019 tax rate as the 2020 tax rate is not real. When you look at the \$10.74 that is almost exactly where we were in 2020 before receiving the State aid.

Drew Kellner, Selectman, Town of Brookline

Stated his belief Mr. D'Agostino was speaking against the proposed budget as it is arguably a disaster that was our own making. There are not many districts having a tax cap and the SB2 system. Throw that in the middle of a pandemic, and we have lost all the flexibility we had previously. Webb Scales spoke against this on the floor when the tax cap was put in. The attorney answered the question basically stating the Board would have to put forward a budget and the Superintendent may be put in the position of having to present an alternate needs budget, which is exactly where we are today, except we would have to host a in-person Deliberative Session to make that adjustment. He feels badly that Moderator Webb will be dragged into this when just on Monday night the Select Board voted to defer the in-person meeting until March 24th with the expectation that it would be deferred further.

He believes the only way to proceed is to have an in-person session. He would like to see it kept as brief as possible; open the meeting, adjust the operating budget amount to what the needs number is, which was within the tax cap if you eliminate the stabilization grant amount, and then quickly go through the other articles without a great deal of discussion (level funded), and adjourn.

Peter Webb, Esq., Moderator, Brookline School District

Questioned why it is believed an in-person meeting is required to override the tax cap. He questioned if legal counsel has weighed in on this. At a virtual first meeting, the original cap governed budget could be presented, public input received, and then in the second virtual hearing the Board could make amendments to the budget. He is not convinced the Board does not have the freedom, going through the alternative meeting system, which the Legislature has provided for this one year, to do what the public would do in overriding the cap.

Superintendent Corey stated the virtual meeting does not allow the Board to ensure that the people making motions to change the budget are registered voters. We also would have no mechanism to tally the votes to ensure only registered voters in Brookline were voting on the change. The School Board, even in the virtual realm does not have the ability to change the number; only the taxpayers do. There would be the need for an in-person meeting. That has been confirmed with legal counsel.

Mr. Mason responded if that is the opinion of legal counsel, he will go with that, but he believes they are airing on the side of prudence contrary to safety. We have the additional issue of how to create a responsible in-person meeting. The Board could have a virtual meeting, present the budget, and then as HB 1129 provides, take input from the voters. In the second virtual hearing, the Board could make amendments as it sees fit. He agrees that the disenfranchisement of the voters is less if having an in-person meeting. He does not want to participate in an irresponsible public event.

Peter D'Agostino, 9 Louis Drive

Questioned if there is the ability for taxpayers to enter an in-person Deliberative Session meeting at the time of a vote.

Superintendent Corey stated the District always does and could continue to live stream the Deliberative Session. Motions would need to be made from the floor, seconded, and moved to a vote. The Moderator could establish a time during which residents could come in, vote on the item, and leave. We could look at some of the safest ways to administer an in-person meeting. Ultimately, the Board will decide whether it is in-person or virtual.

Peter Webb, Esq.

Remarked the SB2 system, which was undoubtedly crafted by legislators with severe trust issues, ties the hands in many ways of our ability to work this system because our ability to choose dates is so confined that we do not have the luxury that our Selectmen do of moving this out for a while. A good lawyer will air on the side of prudence, but this unquantifiable public health risk cannot be ignored. Superintendent Corey stated he is happy to go back to counsel and address it once again.

Testimony in Opposition

Eric Pauer, 12 Westview Road, Brookline

Last year we passed a sanbornized teacher's contract that gave teachers that are on-step about a 3.8% raise. Again, they will get a 3.8% raise this year and 5.1% on top of that in the following year. He questioned if those programmed increases are part of the operating budget and if they were considered.

Superintendent Corey stated when contracts are sanbornized the increased cost goes into the budget (default and operating).

Mr. Pauer noted pages 11 and 18 have two different numbers listed for the tax effort. Superintendent Corey explained that is a result of the surplus that is turned back as part of FY21. Kelly Seeley, Business Administrator, stated FY20 fund balance moves forward into FY21 as revenue. Per State RSA, we are able to remove that in the calculation.

Mr. Pauer questioned the total cost of the Tech Integrator position removed from the budget, and was told the amount cited is the total inclusive of salary, health, dental and retirement benefits, FICA, etc. Mr. Pauer remarked, even under the tax cap, we will see a 13.1% tax increase. Without the tax cap it would be 15.6%. That is a little disconcerting to see double-digit percentage increases. Inflation by CPIU has only been 1.5%. He noted the tax cap as well as SB2 required a super majority vote. There was an overwhelming number of residents that supported the tax cap because they really do want to balance taxes against education. He is opposed to the proposed budget as he does not like to see a double-digit percent increase.

Peter D'Agostino, 9 Louis Drive

Remarked he is uncertain if he is opposed but wished to gain clarification on the comments regarding a 13% increase. He questioned what the increase would have been had the District not received \$560,000 from the stabilization grant last year. He believes the 13% to be a bit misleading, which is why he suggested looking to the prior year when considering percentage increases.

Superintendent Corey stated the budget that was proposed last month was a 4.1% increase. The vast majority of that was mandated special education costs of approximately \$350,000. When adding \$350,000 worth of mandated costs and the loss of \$560,000 in aid, there is a million-dollar difference before the budget process even begins.

Peter D'Agostino, 9 Louis Drive

Remarked the real increase, if not for the one-time State aid, is 4% (of which a majority is mandated). Superintendent Corey stated that to be correct.

Webb Scales, 49 Dupaw Gould Road

Asked for clarification that monies from the Unreserved Fund Balance (UFB) come into the following year's budget as revenue. Would that revenue not serve to reduce the tax effort?

Ms. Seeley responded when you compare it one year to the other it does not. The RSA allows you to take that out and your tax effort will actually go up because the tax effort is mostly the expense.

Webb Scales, 49 Dupaw Gould Road

Commented we were nailed once because of a one-time State aid grant, and if we carry forward a UFB, it seems it would reduce the tax effort for that year and result in a larger increase the following year if not having a UFB to carry forward. Ms. Seeley reiterated the RSA requires the District to take the fund balance out of the calculation.

Testimony in Favor

Webb Scales, 49 Dupaw Gould Road

Stated he would appreciate if the Board could again present the items that we cannot include because of the tax cap during the Deliberative Session, in whatever format that occurs.

Testimony in Opposition - None

Article 3

To see if the school district will vote to raise and appropriate a sum of up to **\$75,000** to be added to the previously established SCHOOL FACILITIES MAINTENANCE EXPENDABLE TRUST FUND, this sum to come from the June 30 unassigned fund balance (surplus) available for transfer on July 1, 2021. No amount to be raised from taxation.

Estimated Net Tax Impact

- No rate increase in FY22. The Unassigned Fund Balance is the sum of unspent taxes and revenues. Expending \$75,000, that could potentially be returned as revenue, **equates to foregoing a *potential* rate reduction: \$0.72/\$1,000**

Noted was the anticipated FY22 ending balance would be \$72,099.

Testimony in Favor - None

Testimony in Opposition

Eric Pauer, 12 Westview Road, Brookline

Remarked given the FY21 ending balance (\$50,000), planned appropriation (\$75,000), and proposed use (\$52,901), the anticipated FY22 ending balance is \$72,099. He suggested the appropriation be reduced to the amount of proposed use, and that the trust balance not increase by the end of FY22.

Ms. Seeley noted the anticipated FY22 ending balance would return the fund to the balance it had been held at for several years.

Testimony in Favor

Webb Scales, 49 Dupaw Gould Road

Stated his general support noting the importance of being able to address maintenance issues. He questioned if the phrase “no amount to be raised from taxation” could be stricken believing it to be misleading. He is appreciative of the added language around “foregoing a potential rate reduction”, which he believes to be pretty much the same thing as raising taxes.

Superintendent Corey stated his belief the language was recommended by legal counsel. However, it will be revisited with counsel.

Testimony in Opposition - None

Article 4

To see if the school district will vote to raise and appropriate a sum of up to **\$25,000** to be added to the previously established SPECIAL EDUCATION EXPENDABLE TRUST FUND, this sum to come from the June 30 unassigned fund balance (surplus) available for transfer on July 1, 2021. No amount to be raised from taxation.

Estimated Net Tax Impact

- No rate increase in FY22. The Unassigned Fund Balance is the sum of unspent taxes and revenues. Expending \$25,000, that could potentially be returned as revenue, **equates to foregoing a *potential* rate reduction: \$0.02/\$1,000**

The anticipated FY22 ending balance is \$225,000. There are concerns regarding the potential for unanticipated uses of the fund. It may be accessed this year.

Testimony in Favor - None

Testimony in Opposition

Eric Pauer, 12 Westview Road, Brookline

Questioned why the balance of \$225,000 was selected. Superintendent Corey responded that figure was determined based on the cost of an unanticipated out-of-district placement along with transportation. The cost can range from \$200,000 - \$400,000 for a single student required to go out of district. There is difficulty when planning a budget 18 months in advance. Should a student requiring those services move into the district over the summer, we would be legally mandated to fund those costs.

Testimony in Favor - None

Testimony in Opposition - None

Article 5

To see if the school district will vote to establish a contingency fund for the current year for unanticipated expenses that may arise and further to raise and appropriate a sum of up to **\$40,000** to go into said fund. This sum to come from the unassigned fund balance (surplus) available for transfer on July 1, 2021.

Estimated Net Tax Impact

- No rate increase in FY22. The Unassigned Fund Balance is the sum of unspent taxes and revenues. Expending \$40,000, that could potentially be returned as revenue, **equates to foregoing a *potential* rate reduction: \$0.39/\$1,000**

Testimony in Favor – None

Testimony in Opposition

Eric Pauer, 12 Westview Road, Brookline

Questioned if there is a balance in the fund or if it lapses to the general fund at year end. He also asked if there was a balance last year. Superintendent Corey stated the fund lapses each year. If the voters do not approve an allocation, the fund would not exist. Last year \$40,000 was approved.

Testimony in Favor

Webb Scales, 49 Dupaw Gould Road

Questioned if the funds were expended during the current year, and was told, at this time, none of the funds have been encumbered. Projected is a surplus of about \$25,000 - \$30,000. Should something change before year-end, there may be the need to look to the Contingency Fund.

Testimony in Opposition

Matthew Mailloux, Secretary, Brookline Finance Committee

Stated he would be voting against this article. Federal assistance recently passed by Congress will inject \$154 million into the State through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund. Those dollars will be distributed by the New Hampshire Department of Education. He is confident those amounts will far exceed any costs associated with COVID-19 that the District may incur. He does not anticipate the need to dip into the Contingency Fund given the new revenue stream.

Superintendent Corey clarified the funding being discussed will be administered via the Title I formula. When that funding came out in the first half of this year, the Brookline School District received approximately \$20,000. There are districts in New Hampshire whose Title I recipients will get \$5-7 million. We do not have that many students in our district that qualify. As a result, the resources that we will receive will not be what many may think. This is completely different than when the Governor decided to provide \$200/student. That worked very well for Brookline. The Title I formula is not something that works in our favor at all. As an SAU, we received less than \$50,000 for the Brookline, Hollis, and COOP School Districts based on the Title I formula for the monies distributed in the first half of the year. Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug stated the total was around \$30,000.

Finance Committee Member Mailloux

Responded this new funding that was passed at the end of 2020 is far greater than what was provided in the original CARES Act. He asked if the Superintendent Could confirm it would be a substantial increase compared to what was received through the CARES Act. Superintendent Corey stated his belief the total dollars represent an increase, and the district will see some increase, but it will not be an exorbitant number. There remain a lot of steps between when the Federal Government passes something and when it shows up in the district.

Eric Pauer, 12 Westview Road, Brookline

Noted the Warrant includes Articles 7, 8, and 9, which were not addressed in the presentation. Article 9 addresses retaining up to 2% of the unreserved fund balance. He asked if the \$40,000 would be considered part of the 2% should Article 9 pass.

Superintendent Corey stated the articles would be covered as part of the public hearing. There is no dollar impact, which is why the information was not incorporated into the slide presentation. Presently, the COOP School District has both a Contingency Fund and the ability to retain a percentage of the UFB. Should Article 9 pass, he anticipates that over time the District could consider eliminating the Contingency Fund. Right now, we are constructing a budget not knowing if the voters will support that article. We are trying to bring in a safety net for the FY22 budget.

Eric Pauer, 12 Westview Road, Brookline

Questioned, if Article 9 passes, how the 2% would be calculated. Ms. Seeley stated she could have the exact calculation ready for future discussions. However, the Board can set that number at any amount from 0-2%. The Hollis School District and the COOP School District both have a percentage, and the amount they use is less than the percentage the voters approved.

Article 6

Shall the voters of the Brookline School District adopt a school administrative unit budget of \$1,953,257 for the forthcoming fiscal year in which **\$361,236** is assigned to the school budget of this school district? This year's adjusted budget of \$1,918,864 with \$354,875 assigned to the school budget of this school district will be adopted if the article does not receive a majority vote of all the school district voters voting in this school administrative unit.

Estimated Net Tax Impact - \$3.48/\$1,000

Budget drivers: salaries (\$67,839); Assistant Superintendents @ 3% increase, all other staff 2% increase, and \$16,000 Board approved salary adjustments, benefit costs (New Hampshire Retirement System teacher rate increase from 17.8% to 21.02% and employee rate from 11.17% to 14.06%, health insurance Guaranteed Maximum Rate (GMR) of increase at 10.9% or (\$18,826) and associated taxes corresponding to higher salaries (\$8,349).

Testimony in Favor

Peter D'Agostino, 9 Louis Drive

Volunteered to assist in finding an alternative venue to conduct the Deliberative Session.

Testimony in Opposition

Webb Scales, 49 Dupaw Gould Road

Stated there to be no point in debating the article as there is nothing that this body can do to change it.

Eric Pauer, 12 Westview Road, Brookline

Attended the SAU41 Governing Board meeting/Public Hearing where the opportunity existed for public input. He believes the budget is unsustainable. The amount of money being expended is great. Fifteen years ago, we were spending about \$308/student and, with the proposed budget, over \$800/student just for SAU costs. He would rather spend money on teachers than administrators. We must find a way to control this.

The SAU budget, as a whole, went up 7.9%, which is 5 times the rate of inflation. Worse than that, the Brookline share is 9.5%. He questioned if that is because of the apportionment formula of the SAU budget, and was informed that it is.

Testimony in Favor - None

Testimony in Opposition - None

Article 7

Shall the school district accept the provisions of RSA 198:20-b providing that any school district at an annual meeting may adopt an article authorizing indefinitely, until specific rescission of such authority, the school board to apply for, accept and expend, without further action by the school district, unanticipated money from a state, federal or other governmental unit or a private source which becomes available during the fiscal year?

Testimony in Favor - None

Testimony in Opposition

Webb Scales, 49 Dupaw Gould Road

Asked if this article would remove the yearly article around receipt of Catastrophic Aid and was told it would. Superintendent Corey stated approval of the article would allow a much broader ability to accept funds. This came about as the Administration had to look to the boards for separate authorization for acceptance of the COVID funds. Mr. Scales stated agreement with doing away with the yearly article as he does not believe anyone would vote against it.

Peter D'Agostino, 9 Louis Drive

Questioned if the warrant article would be impacted by the adoption of a budget committee. He is already concerned with a budget committee setting a budget without the input of the School Board, which is charged with representing the voters and students.

Superintendent Corey responded he does not see how a budget committee would impact this either way.

Testimony in Favor - None

Testimony in Opposition – None

Article 8 (Contingent Article)

If Article 7 passes, this article is unnecessary: to see if the school district voters will authorize the Brookline School District to access future year state and federal special education aid funds in the event that special education costs exceed budget limitations.

Testimony in Favor

Webb Scales, 49 Dupaw Gould Road

We should do this.

Testimony in Opposition - None

Testimony in Favor - None

Testimony in Opposition - None

Article 9

To see if the school district will vote to authorize, indefinitely until rescinded, to retain any unused portion of the year-end unassigned general funds, from the preceding fiscal year in subsequent fiscal years, provided that the amount of year-end unassigned general funds does not exceed, in any fiscal year, 2.0 percent (can be up to 5.0%) of the current fiscal year's net assessment under RSA 198:5.

Testimony in Favor - None

Testimony in Opposition

Eric Pauer, 12 Westview Road, Brookline

Questioned if it is 2% a year or a 2% total. Ms. Seeley stated it is not an accumulated balance, it is a one-year deal just like the other contingency fund. It goes back to the taxpayers if not used.

Mr. Pauer questioned if having a circumstance where the budget was reduced and this amount was at 2% of a larger amount, if some amount would have to be returned to the taxpayers to stay within the 2%.

Ms. Seeley stated the funds do not carry over from year to year. At the end of each year, if not utilized, the funds are automatically returned to the tax base. Each year the school board approves an amount (up to the 2%) to be retained.

Mr. Pauer questioned if a vote of both the School Board and Budget Committee are required to expend.

Ms. Seeley noted the legislature changed the total amount that can be retained to 5%. Previously a retained fund balance required approval by the Budget Committee, School Board, and DOE to expend. Current legislation only requires a public hearing to expend.

Webb Scales, 49 Dupaw Gould Road

Remarked that requires public notice of what the Board determines it will retain. Ms. Seeley stated it can only be funded if there are funds remaining from the previous year. Expenditures require a public hearing.

Mr. Scales noted the UFB is money that was not expended from the previous year's budget. Anything above 2% would be returned to the tax base. He questioned what happens to the 2%, e.g., does it come into the new budget as revenue?

Ms. Seeley stated her belief the School Board would vote to retain some of the UFB in the following year. If the number stays the same for five years, it would essentially be given back and taken at the same time.

Mr. Scales remarked were it not for the ability to retain up to 2%, those funds would be returned to the tax base.

Eric Pauer, 12 Westview Road, Brookline

Questioned the order in which available funding is allocated to the articles. Superintendent Corey stated the articles are funded based on the order in which they appear on the Warrant. The Board can take the issue of renumbering the articles under consideration.

Mr. Pauer suggested Article 9 be moved up on the warrant as it is more of a general-purpose contingency fund.

Testimony in Favor - None

Testimony in Opposition - None

Article 10

To transact any other business which may legally come before said meeting?

Testimony in Favor - None

Testimony in Opposition – None

Testimony in Favor - None

Testimony in Opposition - None

The Public Hearing was declared closed at 8:08 p.m.

Date _____

Signed _____