

**BROOKLINE SCHOOL BOARD
JANUARY 10, 2019
PUBLIC HEARING
MEETING MINUTES**

A Public Hearing was conducted by the Brookline School Board on Thursday, January 10, 2019 at 6:30 p.m. at the Captain Samuel Douglass Academy.

Matthew Maguire, Chairman, presided:

Members of the Board Present: Kenneth Haag, Vice Chairman
 Alison Marsano, Secretary
 Rebecca Howie
 Erin Sarris

Members of the Board Absent:

Also in Attendance: Andrew Corey, Superintendent
 Gina Bergskaug, Assistant Superintendent
 Kelly Seeley, Business Administrator
 Kristen Maher, Assistant Business Administrator
 Dennis Dobe, Principal, Captain Samuel Douglass Academy
 Daniel Molinari, Principal, Richard Maghakian Memorial School
 Linda Chomiak, Chair, Hollis Finance Committee
 Brian Rater, Hollis Finance Committee
 Steve Russo, Hollis Finance Committee

**BROOKLINE SCHOOL DISTRICT
FY20 BUDGET**

Superintendent Corey explained the purpose of the Public Hearing was to present and obtain public input on the Brookline School District proposed FY20 budget.

He provided a brief synopsis of the different Warrant Articles. Were every article approved, the total FY20 budget would be \$10,412,818, which represents an increase of \$733,542 or 7.58% over FY19.

A presentation was provided (can be viewed [here](#)) a copy of which was included with the [agenda](#).

A comparison was provided of the FY19 and FY20 costs associated with each of the articles.

In terms of revenue, the District has offered a parent paid second half of day for the kindergarten program. With the offering of a full-day program, the revenue generated from the parent paid portion would be lost (\$113,568).

Revenue generated from preschool would remain at \$40,147. Earnings and food service would see no change in revenue. Building aid will decrease by \$2,551 (5.43%). Aid for the first year of kindergarten (\$55,182) would be a decrease (100%) as it was intended for the first year only. State aid for kindergarten will be at \$1,100/student. With a projected enrollment of 65, revenue generated from the State would be \$71,500. Special education aid would see a reduction of \$3,878 (1.19%), grant revenue would be unchanged. Medicaid would see a reduction of \$2,025 (1.06%). The voted fund balance would have an increase of \$25,000 (20.00%). The amount of fund balance used to reduce taxes would be reduced by \$35,717 (50.51%). The category of Other captures revenue from a number of sources, and would be unchanged.

Total revenue for FY20 (\$768,083) represents a reduction of \$116,421 (13.16%) from FY19.

FY20 State Aid estimates were addressed. Adequacy Aid, which is the dollar amount the State assigns per student; estimated for FY20 is \$1,820,300, which represents an increase of \$133,839 (7.94%) over FY19. Much of that increase is related to growth in number of students. Retained tax, which is monies retained out of the State tax is estimated at \$561,940 or an increase of \$2,911 (0.52%). Local revenues are estimated to decrease by \$116,421 (13.16%). Total appropriation reductions for FY20 (\$3,150,323) represent an increase of \$20,329 (0.65%) over FY19.

Article 2

To see if the Brookline School District will vote to approve the cost items for the second year of a two-year collective bargaining agreement reached between the Brookline School Board and the Brookline Teachers Association for the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years, which calls for the following increase in professional staff salaries and benefits at the current staffing levels:

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Estimated Increase</u>
2019-20	\$143,563

*and further to raise and appropriate a sum of **\$143,563** for the second fiscal year (2019-20 school year), such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in professional staff salaries and benefits required by the new agreement over those that would be paid at current staffing levels.*

The second year of the two-year contract represents a decrease of \$10,532 from the previous year. A person on the salary table would receive a .75% table increase plus step movement based on experience. Those staff members who have been with the District for a number of years and have moved off-step, would receive a 2.25% increase.

Regarding health insurance, in year one of the contract the District paid 100% of the lowest cost plan. In year 2 caps apply to all plans. In year two the District went from contributing a percentage to contributing a set dollar amount.

Testimony in Favor

Roger Ogden, 13 Potanipo Hill Road

Requested clarification on “caps apply to all plans”.

Kelly Seeley, Business Administrator, explained the District’s cost for the premiums for the teachers are limited to a certain amount.

Thomas Humphreys, 4 Mead Drive

Asked for clarification, and was informed the two-year contract was not sanbornized. As a result, each year of the contract goes before the voters for approval.

He questioned what would occur if the article did not pass, and was told negotiations would re-open (would be for all aspects of the article). Superintendent Corey noted negotiations would begin after a discussion with the School Board. There is no guarantee a successor agreement would be reached if the article were voted down.

Mr. Humphreys questioned the possible ramifications, and was informed there would be the potential for teachers to get no increases, which could result in a work-to-rule situation where they would strictly abide by the language of the contract. Superintendent Corey stated it to have been good faith bargaining, but it is always understood it is the taxpayers that determine the outcome.

Dana Ketchen, 59 Russell Hill Road

Asked for clarification of the current health/dental plan; specifically cost sharing for employees, Superintendent Corey explained in year one of the contract the District paid 100% of certain plans. In year 2 a cap is instituted, which specifically states the amount the District will contribute to the health plans whether a single plan, two-person plan or family plan. The increase is driven by the insurance rates the District received. The Guaranteed Maximum Rate (GMR), which is the largest increase the District could receive, was provided prior to the budget season and came in at 8.1% across the SAU.

Ms. Ketchen remarked that is like the situation with her employer who passed the increased on to her. She stated the desire to identify areas where savings could be achieved. She noted the budget is a bottom line budget. Therefore, were the voters to approve a lesser total amount, it would fall upon the Board and Administration to determine where reductions would occur. Superintendent Corey stated that to be true. Were the article to pass, even if the bottom line of the budget were to be reduced, the article would be fully funded.

Ms. Ketchen stated an interest in seeing a comparison of cost of insurance per employee/plan from FY19 to FY20. Ms. Seeley stated the information could be provided. Superintendent Corey stated the information would be posted on the SAU website (copy attached).

Christopher Adams, 10 Sargent Road

Asked when the Board would take its position on the article for the second year of the contract, and was informed the Board would take positions on the articles following the Public Hearing.

He questioned when the contract language would be posted, and was informed what the voters will be asked to approve are costs associated with the second year of the two-year contract. Contract language can be found on the District's website.

He questioned the cost to the District for health insurance. Ms. Seeley stated the cost to the District is \$819/mo. for a single plan, \$1,480/mo. for a two-person, and \$1,842/mo. for a family plan. The District is currently paying 100% for the lowest cost plan. Asked what the cap would be in year two of the contract, Ms. Seeley stated the monthly cap, for all plans, which was negotiated prior to understanding the GMR, are \$868/single, \$1,569/two-person, and \$1,953/family.

Superintendent Corey stated the reasoning for the District paying 100% of the lowest cost plan was to encourage employees to move off some of the other plans. That strategy has been successful. Asked what percentage of the teachers are taking that lowest cost plan, and if there remain legacy (more expensive) plans. Ms. Seeley stated there remain two of those legacy plans. Currently the District is paying \$682/single, \$1,364/two-person, and \$1,842/family for the lowest cost plan.

Karl Dowling, 12 Townsend Hill Road

Questioned what would occur if the article were not approved. Superintendent Corey stated there would be zero change, e.g., no increases.

Mr. Dowling commented, in that instance, the District would continue to be required to pay 100% of the cost of the lowest cost plan.

Abe Hartman, 51 Mountain Road

Remarked, were the article not approved, the cap would not come into play. Superintendent Corey stated that to be correct. Everything would remain as it is currently.

Mr. Hartman suggested that could mean costs would increase. Superintendent Corey stated the goal, and something that has been successfully implemented in the other districts within the SAU, is to move to caps meaning that employees are picking up more of the share.

Mr. Hartman commented voters may believe voting against the article could result in cost savings where there is in fact the potential for some costs to increase. Superintendent Corey remarked he does not believe the total proposed increase of \$143,563 would be saved.

Dennis Comeau, Russell Hill Road

Commented if the contract was negotiated in good faith and is in place, in the minds of the employees of the school, they are already accepting a partial shift in costs. He believes there to be a feeling in the room that this is a pretty generous situation anyway compared to what is in the private sector. There is opportunity in the future to continue to do cost shifting and seek a better solution. He stated his support of allowing the agreement that was negotiated in good faith to proceed. People are planning on this. It is a negotiation that was concluded, and he does not believe it would be fair to the teachers to renege on that as a community even though he appreciates the need to conserve costs and continue to seek a more equitable balance.

Testimony in Opposition

Eric Pauer, 12 Westview Drive

Remarked this is one of the big cost drivers in the increase in the budget. A 7.6% increase is a lot for taxpayers to be taking in a large part of the budget. Most people aren't seeing 7.6% increases in their salaries. The fact that we are paying, even for the lowest cost plan, 100% of family coverage is really a Cadillac kind of benefit. He believes that must change over time. He applauds moving in the right direction with putting a cap in place, but \$1,953/mo. is a lot of money. The increase in salary is small. Step movements he has seen add 2-3% depending on where the individual is. Teachers on the table are still getting way above a cost of living increase. If you look at the front of the handout where it says teacher contract \$154,095 and then \$143,563; a change of -6.83% is a little deceptive because the \$154,095 got built into the budget because we passed it last year and \$143,563 is what we are asking to do this year. It is really a total increase of \$297,658.

Teacher salary is the biggest cost we have in the budget. This is why we are seeing these large increases. He stated the need to stop the growth; it will not be in one place, but this is one place where teachers can be asked to stay at the current pay and renegotiate what is paid for health insurance.

Mr. Pauer questioned if the rates for the NHRS are the same for FY20, and was told the rates will go up about 2.5%. Asked if the increase is built into the numbers, she stated they are built into the regular part of the budget.

Mr. Pauer remarked that compounds everything; you get 2.5% more on increases. That is how the budget gets so large. He stated a desire to see more of the health insurance costs borne by the employees.

Dana Ketchen, 59 Russell Hill Road

Agreed with the comments of Mr. Pauer. She noted with the tax increase the residents have experienced, the appetite for a 7%+ increase in a school budget isn't there. She commented it is almost egregious that the voters receive a budget with that type of an increase in a year where the taxpayers have already seen such increases. She stated she would also be supportive of reducing the total budget.

Peter Walker, 57 Pepperell Road

Stated his opposition noting, in the private sector, there aren't step increases, it is purely performance based.

Testimony in Favor

Jessica Hartman, 51 Mountain Road

Noted the differential in costs for the article from FY19 to FY20 represents a decrease from last year. Superintendent Corey stated there to be a decrease from last year's costs.

Ms. Hartman stated we agreed with teachers and they are working under a contract, which had not been the case for years. She believes this to be a sign of good faith.

Colleen Micavich, 29 Ironworks Lane

Stated her support for the article commenting it would be in very bad faith to go back on a teachers' contract in that way. She wishes to respect those who are struggling. There are tax increases, but she does not believe if there is a place to cut, this is the place to do it. Many moved to this Town purely for the education, and we can't start cutting back on teachers.

Abe Hartman, 51 Mountain Road

Questioned if information on the plans that are offered is available to the public. Superintendent Corey stated the information to be available to the public. Without understanding what is being offered, it is hard to understand whether it is a good deal.

He spoke of negotiating a contract being a difficult and lengthy process. However, there are ramifications both good and bad that can come from being without a contract.

Superintendent Corey remarked the long-range strategy was to encourage people to move to the lowest cost plan and then in year two include caps on those plans to start to rein in the overall healthcare costs.

Karl Dowling, 12 Townsend Hill Road

Spoke of examples provided, in the past, that identified tax impact, in real dollars, on an average house cost, and asked if that would be provided again.

Ms. Seeley stated that comparison would be provided at the time of the Deliberative Session. Superintendent Corey stated the reason being the Board could decide not to put an article forward, adjust an article, etc. Once it is known what the amounts will be, they can be costed out.

Eric Pauer, 12 Westview Drive

Reiterated the FY19 vs. FY20 chart is a bit deceptive; under teacher contract it shows the FY19 cost of \$154,095 and the FY20 cost of \$143,563. He noted the \$154,095 from FY19 gets built into the operating budget, and to that there is an increase in FY20 of \$143,563. The rate of increase went down from year to year, but there is still an increase in cost. Superintendent Corey stated it is an absolute increase, what is shown is simply a comparison from year to year. Mr. Pauer reiterated, it is going up, it is just not going up as fast. Asked if the \$154,095 is built into the default budget, he indicated it is.

Testimony in Opposition - None

Article 3

To see if the Brookline School District will vote to implement a Full-Day Kindergarten Program at Richard Maghakian Memorial School starting with the 2019-2020 school year, and to raise and appropriate the sum of \$140,085 (Gross Budget) for the purpose of funding the additional operating costs of the program. Estimated revenues of \$1,100 per full-day Kindergarten student is expected to offset the cost. It is anticipated that 65 students will be enrolled for total revenues of \$71,500. Defeat of this article will have no impact on continuing the Kindergarten program currently in place.

If this article passes, the General Fund Operating Budget will decrease by \$97,250 and the General Fund Revenues will also decrease by \$97,250, which represents the revenue sources related to the Kindergarten program currently in place that will not be available if Full-Day Kindergarten passes; the cost of operating Full-Day Kindergarten will be included in the operating budget in future years.

Additional cost of new full-day program: \$42,835

Expected State funding: \$71,500

Current funding: \$168,750

Revenue difference: \$97,250

Net effect to the taxpayer: \$140,085

Superintendent Corey spoke of the advantages of a full-day program; would strengthen early childhood intervention, deliver a balanced curriculum at a developmentally appropriate pace for all students, meet State mandated play-based expectations, provide a common experience with Hollis School District, and align with NH Early Learning Task Force goal of increasing full-day kindergarten in NH.

Currently in the State, there are 154 districts offering a full-day program (88.0%), 11 offering a half-day (6.3%) and 10 with the full-day option (5.7%).

Testimony in Favor - None

Testimony in Opposition

Mary Zore, 265 Route 13

Commented she comes from Wisconsin, which is the state where kindergarten began. She has strong childhood memories associated with the school systems making kindergarten mandatory. She can remember coming home as a fourth-grade student to her mother crying saying “They’re taking my children away from me.” That had a strong impression on her. Her mother had a deep understanding that in socialist countries/communist countries, one of the first things they do is get children at an early age because the State wants to have the power to educate those children. She stated her desire to make a strong statement; that parents have given away their parenting. Most of the values our children have today come from the school systems not from homes and families. That is a tragedy. The proposal makes the school system more and more of a daycare center.

Testimony in Favor

Dennis Comeau, Russell Hill Road

Commented he has a child in the kindergarten program. When discussing the revenue source that would be lost, that is him; he pays for a full-day program. He is happy to pay for the full-day program because of the quality of education and the foundation that is being laid; academic and social. He could not be more pleased with the school, teacher, and administration. He is not pleased with the current tax rate, it is a hardship on his family, and he respects others are feeling that as well, particularly those that don’t have students in the school. If this passes it will be after his child is out of kindergarten. He will continue to pay for the remainder of this year, and is happy to pay into the future for the children of other residents to have such a program. He spoke of the value of early education. He remarked if we are going to spend money, let’s spend it on something this important. It is good for our kids and good for the community.

Karl Dowling, 12 Townsend Hill Road

Asked for clarification the additional costs are associated with an additional employee. Superintendent Corey stated it to be a 0.5 position.

Mr. Darling questioned what the total expense would be for kindergarten. Superintendent Corey stated the new cost would be \$140,085 (all in). He explained further what is being shown is the cost of moving to a full-day program:

- Additional staffing costs consists of half a teacher; \$42,835 (other teachers already encompassed in the budget).
- Current revenue generated by the parent-paid portion equates to \$168,750. That would be lost if going to a full-day, taxpayer funded program.

The lost revenue plus the additional cost for the 0.5 position totals \$211,858.

When you subtract from that the expected revenue from the State; \$71,500 (\$1,100/student based on enrollment of 65), the result is \$140,085, which is the net effect to the taxpayer of a full-day, taxpayer paid program.

Mr. Dowling noted the State revenue is an estimate and questioned what the options are if the State does not come through, e.g., look to taxpayers. Superintendent Corey stated that to be a correct statement. He remarked regardless of which pocket it comes from (Town, State, or Federal Government), all monies come from taxpayers.

Dana Ketchen, 59 Russell Hill Road

Asked for clarification the net effect listed of \$140,085 is in addition to what is already being spent on kindergarten, Superintendent Corey stated that to be correct. She questioned if the amount includes benefit costs. Superintendent Corey stated, except for the proposed additional 0.5 position, employee salaries and benefit costs are already included in the budget. Asked if this is the first year this is being proposed to the Town of Brookline, Superintendent Corey stated it is.

Ms. Ketchen stated her belief the Police Chief has withdrawn a request for a full-time police officer and the Fire Chief has withdrawn a request for a fire truck that has been proposed for several years. She requested the Board withdraw this article.

Testimony

Peter Walker, 57 Pepperell Road

Stated his opposition to the article commenting on an additional burden with a full-day program. He remarked we need to put downward pressure on taxes in this Town, and this is a place to start.

Christopher Adams, 10 Sargent Road

Questioned if any new classrooms would be outfitted, and was informed there would not. He asked if any new equipment, e.g., textbooks, would be needed. Superintendent Corey stated the Administration intentionally came forward with a bare bones number to get the program off the ground.

Asked if an increase in costs would be seen next year, Superintendent Corey responded the piece that has been discussed at Board meetings is para-professionals to assist as classroom assistants. They were removed from the warrant article, but he believes the positions to be something the Board wishes to discuss in the future.

Mr. Adams asked if the 0.5 position was that of a teacher or para-professional, and was informed it is a teaching position. Asked how close, in terms of enrollment, the District is to needing to make that a 1.0 position, Superintendent Corey stated the 0.5 position would make an existing 0.5 teacher a full-time teacher. It would allow for the offering of four full-day sections in kindergarten. Mr. Adams noted that would result in the individual being able to acquire benefits. It was noted the cost of benefits is included in the \$42,835.

Asked about the number of para-professionals, Superintendent Corey stated the District has operated without para-professionals in kindergarten for several years. The discussion would take place, and positions may or may not appear in future budgets. He was uncertain of what that outcome would be.

Roger Ogden, 13 Potanipo Hill Road

Asked and was informed current class size is 16. Last year there were 19/class. It is dependent upon enrollment.

Asked about class size, Superintendent Corey stated the goal would be the approximate 65 students projected in

four sections. That would only require the additional 0.5 position.

Mr. Ogden noted the benefits listed in the slide for full-day kindergarten, and questioned if the current program is providing those same benefits. Addressing the slide titled Strengthen early childhood intervention – 9% vs 33%, Principal Molinari stated historical data (past 3-4 years) indicates 33% of students in the half-day program, once entering 1st grade and going into 3rd, have needed further intervention. The percentage for students who participated in the full-day program was 9. One out of every 10 students coming out of the full-day kindergarten program needed intervention/extra support when entering 1st grade and one out of every 3 students in the half-day program.

Asked if the half-day program delivers a balanced curriculum at a developmentally appropriate pace for all students, Principal Molinari responded a balanced curriculum is offered for kindergarten. Posted with the [agenda](#) for the November School Board meeting is a pretty lengthy presentation that was made providing details for each of the bulleted items.

He noted by offering a half-day program, the District has only enough time to offer students the core subject areas of English Language Arts (ELA), STEM and there is time for recess and snack. New Hampshire requires a minimum of a half-day program. Students in a full day program benefit from the same academic curriculum, but are offered additional opportunities; the chance to practice and partake in more cooperative play activities with their peers, unstructured/play time; really working on more of their executive function where they are trying to plan their ideas, be creative, be innovative. There is time for them to attend special classes such as P.E., music, art. It allows students to have a full day of school opportunity. In terms of academics, the District is providing a balanced program in the half-day. The differences with the full-day program come with the social/emotional learning piece.

Mr. Ogden stated his opposition to the article noting last year the tax increase for the Town of Brookline was an average of 12%. In the current economic climate and with taxes increasing at the current rate, he does not believe the taxpayers can afford this. It may be the right thing to do, but we need to begin making some very difficult choices.

Mr. Ogden stated uncertainty information could be provided that would identify the tax impact of the proposed budget on the average household. He does not believe anyone in Town anticipated the impact of last year would be 12%.

Ann Somers, 11 Potanipo Hill Road

Asked for additional information. Principal Molinari stated the entire first half of the day looks the same for both half-day and full-day students. The second half of the day starts at lunch and goes into specials.

Ms. Somers commented she is among those who are struggling to stay in Brookline. She is uncertain what the level is that is the appropriate amount for schooling that she should help support and how much of it is childcare that parents ought to pay for. It is expensive. She is bothered by the Keno aspect. She supports postponing the article.

She commented on the enrollment trend and the ten-year gross appropriations, which is steady for a while and suddenly is skyrocketing. Principal Molinari stated four years prior, the District was operating with three

classrooms of kindergarten and now there are four. Enrollment has been increasing. To date, there are 45 students already registered for kindergarten. The number is higher than it was this same time last year.

Roger Ogden, 13 Potanipo Hill Road

Suggested individuals look at the ten-year gross appropriations (trend from 2016 – 2020) and then look at enrollment numbers. Ten-year gross appropriations are going up at a steep level over the past four years.

Christopher Adams, 10 Sargent Road

Questioned if the District once had two sections of kindergarten; morning and afternoon, and at what point that changed. Ms. Sarris stated her recollection it was the year after the start of the full-day option. It had to do with logistics and the way the curriculum was set up so that if you did half day it had to be in the morning because all the students were getting that same curriculum in the morning. Principal Molinari stated he has data from 2012-2013.

Colleen Micavich, 29 Ironworks Lane

Stated support for the article commenting the statistics can tell us why we should; 9% of students needing intervention versus 33%. You will pay for it later anyway and could pay for it for a long time if students require other forms of intervention.

She spoke of the number of districts that provide full-day kindergarten. Although some can pay the cost, some cannot. That creates an inequity that is unfair. There is the need to balance the needs of those who cannot afford a parent-pay program knowing that full-day kindergarten is in general better for all students.

Ann Somers, 11 Potanipo Hill Road

Remarked in that regard, she wished to acknowledge those taxpayers who have no children in the school system and are footing the bills. For households with a single student, the taxes are not covering the cost of that one student.

Eric Pauer, 12 Westview Drive

Stated a concern with the prediction of 65 students. When you start paying for things, the demand will go up. The \$140,000 is a low estimate at best. He questioned if kindergarten is mandatory in Brookline. Superintendent Corey stated the District has to offer it. Parents do not have to send the child. Principal Molinari stated all schools in the State have to offer at least a half-day program. However, compulsory education begins at age 6, which would be 1st grade.

Mr. Pauer stated his opinion the current system is reasonable and allows parents to make the choice of paying for a full-day option. That should be maintained. He questioned if the District still has the Readiness Program. Principal Molinari stated it to have been phased out. Asked when that occurred, he noted in 2011 the District had the Extended Day Kindergarten (EDK) program. At that time, half the students that had attended the EDK program made 1-2 years' worth of growth. Ten percent of those students in the EDK program were identified as requiring special education services. It was the last year the program ran. Mr. Pauer stated his belief the current parent-pay option is reasonable to continue to ask.

He believes the proposal to be a nice thing to do as opposed to a must do. That is where he makes the decision on whether it should be supported or not. There is the option for people to do it. It should not be put on the back of the taxpayers.

Keno is funding this, but if Keno doesn't turn out to be a long-term option, the District will end up paying the cost.

He recommended the School Board not bring the article forward this year.

Vice Chairman Haag stated the desire to offer a few data points; not offering an opinion either way. He commented regarding gross appropriation and enrollment, over the last three years the 13% increase has been in enrollment and gross appropriations. They are tracking together. Regarding the enrollment projection of 65, those students would come whether they come half day or full day, they are still coming. Either way you look at it, that 65 number will happen.

Dana Ketchen, 59 Russell Hill Road

Remarked she has lived here for a long time and has been through a few cycles of people who have moved here to educate their children; they implement programs and when their children graduate from high school the for sale signs go up in their yards.

She thanked those who have done the work on the budget. She spoke of being prepared this year to strike at least the leveling of budgets. She feels the increases cannot be sustained. She spoke of the kindergarten program commenting on the sources of funding and that once it is in place there will be the need for additional staffing, there could be special education needs, etc., and once we are in it, we are in it. There are unintended consequences.

She has been around this process, has seen 1st year proposals get shot down and then reworked. She believes better proposals come from that struggle.

Vice Chairman Haag noted whether a half-day or full-day program, the District is legally responsible to cover the cost of special education needs.

Ms. Marsano noted the District is responsible for those costs from the age of 3 to 21.

Ms. Ketchen commented there are children that may stay at home as opposed to coming to public school where we would have to hire extra staff to educate them. She noted her support of addressing the needs of children. Ms. Marsano responded even with a child at home, if there is a need for special services, that cost is borne by the District whether taking place in the school or home setting.

Ms. Sarris spoke of having received input via email. Superintendent Corey stated comments can be relayed; however, the testimony of others cannot be read into the record. That is the piece of the public forum; attendance is required.

Ms. Sarris remarked she received commentary against all-day kindergarten understanding that there is a lot of concern this year about taxes and cost. There is also the developmental concern of pushing children into longer seat times earlier and earlier and despite the statistics that we see questioning the statistics around developmentally being able to stay at home and play more versus academic content. The overall hope is that if

we do go to all-day kindergarten that there is consideration for the need for play, unstructured time, and outdoor time.

Jill Aitken, 14 Potanipo Hill Road

Stated her support of the article commenting on the importance of noting students receive the same academic program whether half-day or full-day. A lot of the benefit of the full day is that they are having time to play and to apply some of the knowledge that they have gained during the academic portions and some of the knowledge they learn from interacting with their peers.

Regarding early intervention, statistics indicate a full day program would result in less intervention being required. There is a cost savings to be achieved there.

Dennis Comeau, Russell Hill Road

He is sympathetic to the situation residents are in with the tax increases and believes there to be very reasonable conversations to be had about costs and when enough is enough. He understands those who feel that unfairly they are carrying a burden for our kids. He thanked them for their contribution and commented he is looking forward to repaying that as someone who plans to stay in Town.

In Town we have this big problem with taxes, but nationally the unemployment rate is as about as low as it is likely to ever get. It is not like we are in some horrible recession where we must cut spending. He understands that isn't necessarily the case in the individual households.

He spoke of being pleased with being able to send his child to a full-day program, and feels bad that others cannot afford that option and that their children are not getting the same quality of education. That is not the society he would like to live in. If the alternative was that his child spends the other half of the day frolicking with them at home that would be ideal, but they both work, and he would be in daycare somewhere and not getting educational time.

Ann Somers, 11 Potanipo Hill Road

Commented if both parents work, they are more easily able to afford it than those who are living on retirement income.

There being no objection, the Board took a five-minute recess at 7:57 p.m.

The Board reconvened at 8:03 p.m.

Article 4

*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 **\$9,676,491**. Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be **\$9,773,540** 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.*

Superintendent Corey stated the budget has been reviewed critically as there are some non-negotiable items that are increasing. As a result, there have been reductions in personnel; a retiring computer teacher will not be replaced, and a retiring reading teacher will be replaced by a half-time reading teacher. The 1.5 reduction in staffing positions equates to a savings of \$157,764.

There are no new academic items. There are a number of pieces of technology that will be purchased through the Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP) grant. There will be a shift in the model to further integrate technology into the classroom rather than going to a separate computer class. The District will also continue to improve building maintenance needs. The five-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) has been followed to address/plan for maintenance needs.

Noted were major changes in the operating budget. Decreases include teacher wages (CSDA) by \$120,482, speech/language wages decreased by \$76,357 (move to contracted service), teacher wages (RMMS) by \$26,557. Major increases include contracted services - speech (special education) \$99,826, retirement benefit (per CBA) \$84,258, and contracted services - out-of-district (special education) \$72,669.

Kristen Maher, Assistant Business Administrator, stated the default budget is the amount of the same appropriations as contained in the operating budget authorized for the previous year (9,275,124), reduced, and increased, as the case may be, by debt service, contracts, and other obligations previously incurred or mandated by law (\$570,191), and reduced by one-time expenditures (\$71,775). The result is an FY20 default budget totaling \$9,773,540.

Items required by law or contracted increases/decreases include: wages/benefits (reduction of \$35,265), special education services (increase of \$312,162), health/dental/FICA/NHRS (increase of \$71,824), retirement benefit (increase of \$84,258), transportation rate – regular education (increase of \$71,673), transportation rate – special education (increase of \$69,248), and various other small amounts (decrease of \$3,709).

The default budget is \$97,049 higher than the amount of the proposed budget.

Testimony in Favor

Eric Pauer, 12 Westview Drive

The cost associated with the NHRS has increased by 2.5%. In addition, there is a retirement benefit (CBA) identified as \$84,258. He questioned why there are two separate items/amounts listed. Superintendent Corey explained the CBA includes language that provides for a staff member achieving a required number of years of service to receive, upon declaring retirement, a percentage of their salary. It is a one-time payment. Asked what the number of retirements is for the year, he indicated there to be 3.

Mr. Pauer questioned the transportation increase amounts, e.g., was the contract negotiated. Superintendent Corey stated a Request for Proposals was put out. For the first time in many years, two responses were received; Hollis Transportation and Butler Transportation out of Manchester, NH. At a special meeting conducted on January 3, 2019, the SAU 41 Governing Board awarded the contract to Hollis Transportation. The winning bidder, Hollis Transportation, came in at a price that was approx. \$350,000 less, across the SAU, than the other bidder.

Superintendent Corey spoke of the national issue of driver shortages. He noted both bids included hourly compensation for drivers as a means of trying to stay competitive in the marketplace. Another aspect that drives the increase is the amount of mileage that is put on the buses. For the Brookline District, the bus

terminal being in Hollis results in a mileage calculation included in the cost that is slightly larger than the increase seen in the Hollis School District.

Asked about the term of the contract and the percentage of increase being seen, Superintendent Corey stated the contract period to be three years (with an option for two additional) and the increase to be significant for year one (approx. 30% - regular education) with the last two years of the contract being in the range of a 2-3% increase. Asked about the increase percentage for special education transportation, Ms. Seeley stated that to be not just rate driven; service driven. There cannot be a true apples-to-apples comparison. The approx. amount is 33%.

Superintendent Corey commented what the District pays in comparison to other districts, is a very reasonable rate. Ms. Sarris remarked if you ask parents who have experienced some of the repercussions of the driver shortage, the District was previously paying for what it was getting, which is double routes, students arrive home 30-40 minutes later, etc.

Mr. Pauer stated the proposed budget will be debated and can be adjusted at the Deliberative Session on February 4, 2019.

Christopher Adams, 10 Sargent Road

Questioned the additional cost for mileage related to the transportation cost. Superintendent Corey clarified when comparing costs between the Brookline School District and the Hollis School District, the cost to the Brookline District is slightly higher as a result of being a further distance from the bus terminal.

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug noted it is the same mileage cost, it is simply that there are more miles to get to Brookline.

Mr. Adams questioned if that suggests the District is paying more of the contract cost based on mileage, etc. Superintendent Corey responded he would not say that is the case. The cost per bus is determined by driver, mileage, and fuel cost. Every route has the cost per bus. In comparing one town to the other, the fact that the two schools in Hollis are across the street from the bus barn they must travel less mileage to get to the pickup point.

Dana Ketchen, 59 Russell Hill Road

Questioned if there is a breakdown for maintenance cost (custodial and upkeep) for the schools in Brookline. Superintendent Corey stated there to be a single person on the days and two in the afternoon at each of the buildings. The day person does the lunch responsibility and anything that comes up during the day dealing with students, and the two custodians that come in the afternoon shift are primarily the cleaners in the building.

Ms. Ketchen spoke of having attended the Penny Sale at RMMS, and having concerns with the students' bathrooms. She sent an email regarding those concerns to Brooklineschools@sau41 without response.

Ms. Ketchen spoke of having been a custodian and a bus driver. She noted the drivers receive zero benefits.

Ms. Ketchen stated her belief there is the need for an outside party to monitor the cleanliness of things that are vital; particularly during cold and flu season.

Testimony in Opposition - None

Testimony in Favor - None

Testimony in Opposition - None

Article 5

*To see if the school district will vote to raise and appropriate a sum of up to **\$50,000** from the June 30 unassigned fund balance available for transfer on July 1, 2019 to be added to the previously established SPECIAL EDUCATION EXPENDABLE TRUST FUND. No amount to be raised from taxation.*

The current balance is \$125,000. It is anticipated \$58,000 will be utilized this year. A motion to utilize the funds will be addressed in the spring once the total costs are known. This is the direct result of unanticipated move-ins to the District and services that had to be provided. It is anticipated the FY19 ending balance will be \$67,000. The request is, through the unreserved fund balance, to transfer \$50,000 into the fund. If approved, the available balance going into FY20 would be \$117,000.

Superintendent Corey commented the most difficult thing the Board and Administration must do is try to project costs of those unknowns; 1 student walking into the District who may need a day or residential placement. He provided the example of costs; day placement at \$70,000 plus \$40,000 for transportation and residential costs could range between \$250,000 - \$400,000 depending on services required. The Board/Administration tries to project costs for a budget that is 16-18 months out. A single student could come into the District and change the entire outcome. In the absence of such a fund, monies needed to accommodate the needs would have to come from the regular education budget.

Testimony in Favor

Roger Ogden, 13 Potanipo Hill Road

Commented, in general, the unreserved fund balance is confusing. He questioned what would occur should the requested allocation be made and the District experience four (4) move-ins. He asked if there is an unreserved fund balance that could be used to cover some of those costs.

Superintendent Corey responded, shortly on the agenda, the discussion would move to that of the Contingency Fund. That fund is available for the School Board to direct in a way they see fit. Were four students to come in, he would have to look to the Contingency Fund, Special Education Trust Fund, and then to the actual operating budget, which could result in the District not purchasing items planned for.

Mr. Ogden reiterated his question of whether the District has an unassigned fund balance that could be used in emergency situations. Superintendent Corey responded the District has decided not to establish such a fund.

Mr. Ogden questioned if any amount in the unreserved fund balance is returned to the Town, and was told that is the case unless taxpayers vote to utilize some or all the unreserved fund balance to fund one or more of the warrant articles.

Eric Pauer, 12 Westview Drive

Noted the order in which the articles are presented determines the order in which they are funded, e.g., articles are funded in the order they appear until the unreserved fund balance is depleted.

He questioned if there is a cap on the balance this fund could reach. Superintendent Corey stated the District has not yet established a cap. There have been discussions around that. His thought process is for the fund to reach a balance of \$200,000 - \$250,000. Should there be the need for a residential placement or two students requiring regular placements, that balance would allow for most of the cost to be covered by the trust.

Asked how it would be handled if the first article requested an allocation of \$50,000 and the unreserved fund balance was at \$45,000. Superintendent Corey responded the language of the article is “up to \$50,000”. If approved, the entirety of the \$45,000 would be allocated to the first article, and the remaining articles would not be funded.

Roger Ogden, 13 Potanipo Hill Road

Questioned if the Warrant Article for the Contingency Fund were the first article presented and approved, could that be utilized for special education costs. Superintendent Corey responded it could. The Board would make that determination. He stated his belief the Contingency Fund was originally established to address the unforeseen circumstances. He provided the example of years prior when a difficult winter required all the roofs of the school buildings to be shoveled. That would be an expense he would look to the contingency fund to cover.

When necessary, he would first look in the operating budget, then to the Contingency Fund, and then to the Special Education Trust Fund.

Chairman Maguire remarked there is a difference in that one is a trust and the other a fund. Monies allocated to the Special Education Trust will carry over from year to year whereas monies allocated to the Contingency Fund would be returned to the Town’s general fund unless an allocation is approved the subsequent year.

Testimony in Opposition - None

Testimony in Favor - None

Testimony in Opposition - None

Article 6

*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 **\$50,000** to go into the fund. This sum to come from the unassigned fund balance (surplus) available for transfer on July 1, 2019.*

Superintendent Corey reiterated this article is one that must be approved on a yearly basis. If not approved, any monies in the fund are returned to the Town’s general fund/Taxpayers to offset taxes needed to be raised.

The fund was established two years ago, and in a year where the District had an increase in enrollment requiring the addition of a teacher. The fund was able to be looked to for that cost.

Testimony in Favor

Roger Ogden, 13 Potanipo Hill Road

Remarked, for all the other articles, the presentation included specific details. He questioned what was expended this year out of the fund. Superintendent Corey stated no monies were expended from that fund in the current year. The way the fund was established requires a Public Hearing be conducted, and a formal vote of the Board taken.

Mr. Ogden stated his belief the anticipation is \$50,000 will be returned to the taxpayers at year end. Superintendent Corey stated that to be the goal. The operating budget is running very tight because of the increases in special education costs. He is uncertain what the year end fund balance will be. The order the articles appear is very important.

Testimony in Opposition - None

Testimony in Favor - None

Testimony in Opposition - None

Article 7

*To see if the school district will vote to raise and appropriate a sum of up to **\$50,000** from the June 30 unassigned fund balance (surplus) available for transfer on July 1, 2019 to be added to the previously established SCHOOL FACILITIES MAINTENANCE FUND.*

The FY19 ending balance is \$91,912. The requested allocation is \$50,000. Proposed expenditures in FY20 total \$90,289. The anticipated fund balance at FY20 year end is \$51,623.

Proposed uses include CSDA wireless replacement (\$20,000), CSDA playground study (\$5,000), CSDA exterior doors (\$5,000), CSDA/RMMS safety cameras Grant – District share (\$17,789), CSDA/RMMS replacement servers (\$15,000), RMMS playground work – Phase 2 (\$10,000), RMMS gym bathroom flooring (\$9,000), and RMMS boiler replacement (\$8,500).

Testimony in Favor

Eric Pauer, 12 Westview Drive

Noted, as the last article put forth, if not approved/funded, given the current balance and proposed expenditures, there would remain approx. \$1,600 in the fund. Superintendent Corey remarked he would likely delay a few of the projects to ensure there were some funds to address unanticipated expenditures.

Testimony in Opposition - None

Testimony in Favor - None

Testimony in Opposition – None

Article 8

*Shall the voters of the Brookline School District adopt a school administrative unit budget of \$1,719,314 for the forthcoming fiscal year in which **\$302,679** is assigned to the school budget of this school district? This year's adjusted budget of \$1,691,711 with \$297,806 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.*

The Article is the budget for the SAU offices. The SAU is made up of the offices of the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendents, Business Office staff, Human Resources, and two Administrative Assistants (total of 13 individuals).

It is a pass or fail vote. In order to pass, the article needs to receive a majority vote of the voters from all three districts. Residents will each get two votes; taxpayer within one of the towns and taxpayer from the COOP. If the article fails to achieve that majority, the adjusted budget would come into play.

Testimony in Favor - None

Testimony in Opposition - None

Eric Pauer, 12 Westview Drive

Spoke of being out of town at the time of the Public Hearing on the SAU budget, and of concern with the increase (8.43%). He questioned the number of school districts in the State that have two Assistant Superintendents. Superintendent Corey was uncertain. The Director of Student Services position will be elevated and titled Assistant Superintendent. One of the reasons is because it is charged a different rate by the NHRS, which will result in a savings to the District (\$5,000). The change also allows the individual to cover more responsibilities than could be done as the Director of Student Services.

Mr. Pauer stated concern with additional six figure individuals at the SAU. The SAU, as a whole, is seeing student population decreasing while the SAU budget continues to increase. He is concerned with the percent of increase. The only power voters have is to vote for the adjusted budget. SAU 41 Governing Board members are the ones that vote for or against these additional positions, and they are just inherited at the district level.

Superintendent Corey remarked the Board made a conscious decision, based on a retirement at the end of this year, and offered that individual a contract to transition Student Services. A Student Service case regarding a special education child can result in hundreds of thousands of dollars in a lawsuit were a mistake to be made. The Board felt with some of the items going on across the SAU, this was a prudent measure. The largest driver in the increase is for a half time position for a single year as the SAU transitions to a new Assistant Superintendent of Student Services.

Mr. Pauer stated the hope the cost will be reduced in the FY21 budget with that individual moving on. He reiterated he is not pleased with an 8.43% increase.

Dana Ketchen, 59 Russell Hill Road

Questioned the cost of benefits for employees at the SAU and if contracted. Superintendent Corey used his position as an example. Regarding healthcare, he has an 80/20 split for a family plan. The other benefits are

the NHRS and those items that would be the same as teachers. Asked if they are contracted, he stated each employee has a separate and distinct contract.

Ms. Ketchen questioned if they are more negotiable than a long-term teacher contract. Superintendent Corey stated that to be correct. He used the example of his contract, which is directly negotiated with the SAU 41 Governing Board. The other employees technically work for him.

Ms. Ketchen stated her understanding the SAU budget is an either pass or fail vote. There is no ability to make any adjustments. Superintendent Corey stated that to be correct.

Ms. Ketchen spoke of her appreciation of the work done. She commented she has never seen a budget go down.

Testimony in Favor - None

Testimony in Opposition - None

Eric Pauer, 12 Westview Drive

Spoke of a Citizens' Petition Warrant Article for a Tax Cap, and questioned if that would be discussed. Superintendent Corey stated the Petition was provided to the Board this evening along with a response from legal counsel. A separate Public Hearing will be conducted, as required by State Statute. February 20th is the tentative date.

He informed the viewing audience, as it is a Citizens' Petition Warrant Article, it automatically goes to the Ballot. The only pieces open for discussion at the Deliberative Session are the percentage/dollar amount, which can be changed on the floor. Whatever is decided at the Deliberative Session is what would go onto the Ballot.

Mr. Pauer stated his understanding, if passed, the School Board would have to present a budget that stays within the cap. The voters, at the Deliberative Session can make a change subject to a 10% limitation.

Superintendent Corey stated that to be correct noting in some districts what has been seen are three budgets; tax cap budget, default budget, and school board's budget. He is consulting legal on that issue.

Roger Ogden, 13 Potanipo Hill Road

Referred to the slide titled Ten Year Gross Appropriations commenting on the steady level of growth from FY17 to FY20.

Eric Pauer, 12 Westview Drive

Stated the population is not going up.

Chairman Maguire responded if you compare the past three years, there was a 13% increase for both student population and gross appropriations.

Dana Ketchen, 59 Russell Hill Road

Questioned the cost per student for the proposed budget. Superintendent Corey stated cost per student is a year in arrears and is published by the State. The newest number the District will get would be for last year's budget. The District is below the State average. Asked for an idea, he stated the FY18 cost per student to be \$15,085.

Eric Pauer, 12 Westview Drive

Stated it to be important to understand that cost is based on the way the State calculates it. They do not include all costs. It is a number, but it is not the real number the taxpayers pay as they exclude costs such as transportation.

Roger Ogden, 13 Potanipo Hill Road

Questioned why State aid is going down. Superintendent Corey explained a few years back there was an adjustment to State Aid. To ensure towns received the same amount, the State established what was called stabilization grants. You had State Aid that went down, but you had stabilization grants so that the money that came to your town was the same. Two or three years ago, the State started to phase out the stabilization grants at a rate of 4-5% a year and doing away with it in X number of years. That is what is being seen. Population is increasing and less revenue is being seen from the State.

Mr. Ogden stated from 2017 to 2018 the increase in the District's tax effort was an increase of 6.5%. Then the State provided less funding (5.2%). The tax effort for the Brookline School District went up 11.2% last year.

Superintendent Corey spoke of discussions occurring across the State of whether there will be another potential lawsuit against the State around how they fund an adequate education.

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug commented percentages can sometimes be misleading. If the budget goes up by 6%, that is 6% of a finite dollar amount. If State aid is decreased by 5%, it is not 5% of the State's total number. It is not additive of 11%. We're seeing more than just the budget go up, but the percentages aren't based on the same dollar.

Mr. Ogden remarked the Brookline School District in 2017 was \$5.8 million (tax effort) and in 2018 it was \$6.5 million, and that is an 11.2% increase.

The Public Hearing was declared closed at 8:59 p.m.

Date _____

Signed _____