

DEERFIELD SCHOOL BOARD
DEERFIELD COMMUNITY SCHOOL –LIBRARY - 66 NORTH ROAD
DEERFIELD, NEW HAMPSHIRE
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2023 ~ 6:00 PM

Members/Participants: Kendra Cohen; Chair, Ellen O'Donnell, Zach Langlois, Nate Oxnard,
Supt. Patty Sherman, Principal Kristen Withee, Recording Secretary Trish Lafond

1. Call to Order – Ms. Cohen, Chair

Chair Cohen called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Cohen led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Public Comments

Leah McHugh asked how much longer summer school will continue due to the loss of grant money? Looking at the curriculum spending in the budget reminded her about the Technology Trust Fund. Is there a way money can be set aside for teachers who need materials for curriculum that is a back up and can be carried over?

Greg Whitmore asked what is holding up the high school decision. We (Deerfield) has the negotiating power. We have 2 options that are willing to take our students. Parents are ready to call Coe-Brown to see what it will take to get their kids in and will pay themselves. He asked why DCS is buying curriculum. Teachers are HQT and have masters degrees. We should trust them to create their own curriculum. He asked if the board considered moving administrative offices to the modulars?

Bobby-Ann Dostie asked about the new lunch account system. She used to be able to see what her kids were purchasing but no longer can. Her child told her some food/milk is expired. If the board is going to increase the price then the quality of food needs to be better.

Linda McNair-Perry informed the board that the increase in the tax rate is due to the increase in the town tax not the school tax. She wanted to clarify what she has seen on Facebook.

4. Agenda Review- Ms Cohen, Chair

Chair Cohen added a solar discussion before the FY23-24 update.

Solar Update- Chris Koufos

An RFP was posted for the board's viewing.

He is working with Clean Energy N.H. and they have given him guidance on the RFP.

He is hoping to get the RFP posted next week after it is approved by Amber Wheeler.

He has a list of contractors to reach out to.

Chris explained the difference between Power Purchase and Turn Key Project. Power Purchase we would work with an outside investor who would provide funding up front and be first to get paid through credits and refunds for a set time and then we would buy the panels/system at a predetermined price. Turn Key Project would require us to buy the panels/system ourselves upfront and pay the cost.

Chris would get the maximum array of panels on the roof.

Zach Langlois was designated to work with Chris on the the solar project.

5. Immediate Business

A. FY 24 Update

We are still really early in the school year. The budget is \$-213,000.00 for the current year. There is enough in the Special Education Trust Fund to cover this if needed. This does not take into account the retainage. Spending is being watched very closely. There is a soft freeze on the budget at this time.

B. FY 25 Budget

Supt. Sherman gave budget amounts as of right now.

Ms. Wheeler has updated numbers. She does not have high school tuitions yet or the number of students that will attend which schools. We know the cost of Coe-Brown will be higher and the cost of CHS will go up. The place holder number for tuition in the budget is based on all 8th graders going to Coe-Brown. These numbers need to be real very soon.

Zach Langlois said we need to plan for the worst case scenario for increased high school tuition.

Nate Oxnard stated that changes can be made at the deliberative session if tuition numbers change.

Supt. Sherman said a decision does not have to be made tonight. She hopes CHS will will give their final cost soon and whether or not CRTC will be included.

Chair Cohen is creating a presentation for the public that breaks down the budget and shows what categories make up the budget and the increases. She said they need to look at special education costs for the different high schools. She is concerned about special education transportation costs. Special education costs alone are up \$700,000.00. She wondered about creating a transportation trust fund. Zach Langlois is concerned that there are lines where the amounts are not sufficient. He does see anywhere that costs can be cut. He is concerned that to have major change that the only thing to cut are staff positions or program cuts. He does NOT want to cut positions.

There was much discussion about how to cut the budget but no decisions were made.

Supt. Sherman said they can't do anything until they know which students are going to which schools.

December 12, 2023 the budget goes to the MBC.

The proposed budget is \$18,251,511.00, an increase of \$1,504,900.00.

The proposed default budget is \$18,174,791.00, an increase of \$1,428,180.00.

Chair Cohen opened the floor to questions from MBC members that were present.

No one had questions.

C. Draft Warrant Articles

I. Operating budget.

II. Para Agreement.

III. Special meeting if Article I fails.

The board discussed other potential warrant articles including:

Keep the paving fund going for repairs and maintenance

Special Education trust fund

Facilities Repair and Improvement trust fund-solar HVAC

Purchase of modulars-stop paying more by leasing

Should a tuition trust fund be created

Supt. Sherman informed the board that the Technology trust fund has \$21,000.00.

The board will keep open the last Wednesday in November in case they need to meet.

6. Public Comments

Nancy Shute thanked Linda McNair-Perry for clarifying that the school is not the driving force behind the increased tax rate. She said it is important to say where the increases in the budget are and why. She reminded the board that in the past, high schoolers were not offered transportation. Parents used to pay. She does not support this, but we do not have to transport students who live in a 2 mile radius.

Bobby-Ann Dostie said warrant articles get more information out and get passed more often. It is the best way to get the town to approve solar. She asked what is meant by a tuition trust? Is it for elementary students too?

Leah McHugh touched on the technology subscriptions. Who is using them, what is being used. She said the live feed is frustrating and people feel like they are not being heard. She supports the technology trust fund.

Mrs. With stated the meeting was recorded and audio worked. Tim Griffin is being contacted to work with school on A/V.

Erroll Rhodes said there is a facility with working equipment that the board should think about using. The community is frustrated about not hearing/seeing meetings.

A motion was made by Kendra Cohen to enter nonpublic session at 7:27 pm.

ROLL CALL-

Kendra Cohen-YES Ellen O'Donnell-YES Zach Langlois-YES Nate Oxnard-YES

ALL IN FAVOR

MOTION CARRIED

7. Non-Public Session-NH RSA 91-A:3, II,-a & k

A motion was made by Zach Langlois, seconded by Nate Oxnard, to allow Danielle Palmer to participate remotely.

ROLL CALL-

Kendra Cohen-YES Ellen O'Donnell-YES Zach Langlois-YES Nate Oxnard-YES

ALL IN FAVOR

MOTION CARRIED

During nonpublic session the board discussed compensation of employees. They also discussed high school tuition negotiations.

A motion was made by Zach Langlois, seconded by Danielle Palmer to exit nonpublic session at 8:24 pm.

ROLL CALL-

Kendra Cohen-YES Ellen O'Donnell-YES Zach Langlois-YES Nate Oxnard-YES

Danielle Palmer-YES

ALL IN FAVOR

MOTION CARRIED

8. Adjournment

A motion was made by Zach Langlois, seconded by Danielle Palmer to adjourn the meeting at 8:24 pm.

ROLL CALL-

Kendra Cohen-YES Ellen O'Donnell-YES Zach Langlois-YES Nate Oxnard-YES

Danielle Palmer-YES

ALL IN FAVOR

MOTION CARRIED

Next Scheduled Deerfield School Board Meeting: December 6, 2023 ~ 6:00 P.M. Deerfield Community School

Approved