

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM. Present: School Board Members John Harmon, Joseph Saulnier, Tony Clements, and Dawn Leamer; Superintendent of Schools Terry Leatherman; Business Administrator Marjorie Whitmore; Iber Holmes Gove Middle School Principal Bob Bickford; Raymond High School Principal Sharon Wilson; Lamprey River Elementary School Principal Laura Yacek.

Proof of Posting: It was noted that the meeting was properly posted.

Pledge of Allegiance: All those in attendance stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Input: Public Input was opened at 6:01 PM. Mr. Harmon noted that public input would be open for 30 minutes. If anyone arrives within that timeframe and would like to speak, they will be allowed to do so. There was no public input forthcoming at this time.

2023-24 Budget: Mr. Harmon noted that the Board has received responses from administration to questions from the October 19th meeting. Ms. Bennett asked about whether the Board would be seeing the math manipulatives. Mr. Leatherman stated that they will be coming to an upcoming Board meeting as part of the Our Students/Our Schools presentation.

Mr. Saulnier stated that the Board usually has the default budget at this point to compare to the proposed budget. Mr. Harmon noted that the Board agreed to have the default budget for the November 2 meeting. Ms. Bennett asked for an explanation as to what the default budget is. Mr. Harmon stated that it is what we did the current year, with statutorily required and contractually required increases. If we eliminated a teacher in the budget going forward the default also has to reflect the elimination of that position. But if we add a teacher, the default budget does not reflect that change. The default budget also doesn't include one-time expenditures from the current year.

Ms. Bennett asked if we have any semblance of what the difference is between the proposed and the default budget. Mr. Harmon stated we don't have it at this point but he would think at this point it's very similar.

Mr. Harmon asked what the status is on setting the tax rate. Ms. Whitmore has reached out to the Department of Revenue Administration, but has not heard back yet.

Regarding the initiative to hire a full time School Resource Office (SRO), Mr. Leatherman stated we'd enter into an MOU with the Town for a retired police officer to be hired by the Police Department and that officer would be our full time SRO. The cost would be \$46,649. Ms. Leamer spoke in support of the initiative to hire a full-time SRO for the safety of students and staff. Mr. Saulnier stated that he sees both sides. Mr. Leatherman stated that more often the SRO will be dealing with fights, drugs, etc. Mr. Clements stated he doesn't feel like his children are not safe. While there could be that one incident, he doesn't feel that should dictate everything going forward. Ms. Bennett stated that it makes sense to her for the students to see an officer in the buildings and for that officer to know the security and access points. She feels that students would be more apt to approach a person of authority that they're comfortable with. Mr. Saulnier stated his fear is that the Town would take the current SRO out of their budget, and then if the District budget doesn't pass, we wouldn't have an SRO. Ms. Bennett asked what would be the reasons to not hire an SRO. Mr. Leatherman stated his hope is that the police force would be able to hire enough police officers and Officer Frotton would be able to come back full time as is. Mr. Clements stated in terms of being physically in the building, what is the difference if they're not here as a result of directing

traffic versus not here as a result of being at one of the other schools. Mr. Harmon asked if we were to allocate resources to do this, would we raise the taxes to do so and then transfer the money to the Town to pay? Ms. Whitmore confirmed yes, the Town would bill the District. Mr. Harmon stated he's not at the point where he thinks we should be hiring an SRO. They're here to provide safety but also goodwill from the police department, but he feels we should rely on the service from the Town right now. He's also concerned with the chances of hiring an SRO.

Mr. Saulnier suggested a separate warrant article for this topic. Mr. Harmon stated he prefers it to be in the operating budget because if the Board supports something it should be part of the budget.

MOTION: Dawn Leamer moved, seconded by Cindy Bennett, to include an SRO for 35 hours a week in the operating budget in the amount of \$46,649. Motion failed with Dawn Leamer and Cindy Bennett voting in the affirmative and Tony Clements, Joseph Saulnier, and John Harmon voting in opposition.

Regarding the initiative to move a part-time maintenance person to full-time with a \$2 per hour increase, after brief discussion it was the consensus of the Board to add this initiative to the budget.

Regarding the initiative of an increase of \$3 per hour for a full time maintenance position, after brief discussion it was the consensus of the Board to add this initiative to the budget.

Mr. Harmon asked if anybody had anything else to either add or subtract from the operating budget.

Mr. Harmon suggested removing the Foreign Language teaching position at the middle school. There was some discussion about the fact that the position has not been filled for a few years. Mr. Saulnier stated he wouldn't agree to remove it just for the reason that we can't hire someone, and perhaps there's something that can be done to make the position more attractive to applicants. Ms. Leamer suggested the option for students to take foreign languages on their own outside of school hours. Mr. Saulnier stated his concern that removing middle school Foreign Language would put Raymond at a disadvantage compared to other schools. He is also concerned that removing the position means removing it from the default budget as well. Ms. Leamer, Ms. Bennett, and Mr. Harmon all indicated they are in favor of removing the middle school Foreign Language teacher from the budget. Mr. Saulnier stated that he hopes if this position is eliminated that administration will look at a way for 8th grade students to take some other classes for high school.

Mr. Harmon stated he's disappointed that block 1 at the high school doesn't have any French or Spanish offered at that time. The Board was told that 8th grade students couldn't take these courses at the high school because they had too many students. He asked that administration look at the schedule and try to incorporate 8th grade students, keeping in mind that high school students would have first option for seats in those classes. Mr. Bickford asked for the Board to consider that when the middle school has to align with the high school block it extremely limits the middle school schedule.

Mr. Harmon suggested using \$150,000 as a budget number for the reading program. He noted that this cost is the highest anticipated cost for a K-3 program, and that that actual number may not be that much. Ms. Yacek stated that they are researching both the Ready Reading program and Into Reading. In both cases, the cost includes professional development. Ms. Bennett asked what happens after the 5 years is up that we initially pay for. At that time, the District would have to pay again after an evaluation of the program, though the costs may not

be as much as initial startup. Mr. Saulnier asked if this doesn't pass, is there a possibility of using ESSER funds. Mr. Leatherman stated they would need to look at where we are at the end of the year and how much is unencumbered due to not being able to fill positions. Ms. Leamer asked if either one of the programs have OG (Orton-Gillingham) or LIPS (Lindamood Phoneme Sequencing) built into it. Ms. Yacek stated that they're separate. Ms. Clements asked if we are aware of other districts using these programs. Ms. Yacek stated that some of the committee members have experience with it in their children's districts. It was the consensus of the Board to add in \$150,000 for a reading program at the elementary school.

Mr. Harmon suggested increasing the wage pool percentage from 3% to 6% in an effort to keep up with inflation. It was the general consensus of the Board to make this addition to the budget, with applicable changes to FICA and retirement budget numbers as necessary. Ms. Whitmore stated later in the meeting that this total addition would be \$82,531.

Mr. Harmon stated that he would like to consider having the virtual CADS option for high school students budgeted at \$160 per student. Ms. Wilson stated she is comfortable supporting that. Mr. Harmon suggested budgeting for 80 students at \$150 each. This option allows students to access Fusion360 from home on a Chromebook. It was the consensus of the Board to add this to the budget for \$12,800.

Mr. Harmon suggested the elimination of one first grade teaching position at LRES, to bring the total number of first grade teachers from 6 to 5. Doing so would still keep the number of students within policy class guidelines, from 14 to 17.8. Ms. Leamer stated that she believes the smaller class size makes for a better learning experience. Ms. Saulnier asked if the upcoming first grade class has a lot of needs, to which Ms. Yacek replied that the current kindergarten class is extremely challenging. She believes that kindergarten and grade 1 are grade levels where we want to keep the number low, and she's concerned about behavior as these students were not in school when COVID hit, so they are learning to socialize now. This proposed elimination of a teaching position was not moved forward.

Mr. Saulnier stated he was going to ask to discuss the Human Resources Assistant, but after reviewing the backup he can see that there is a need for that position. Mr. Leatherman stated that they will be reviewing ways to streamline the workflow.

Mr. Saulnier suggested budgeting the district portion of wagepool health insurance at 91.9%, instead of 92%, to match the district portion for union health insurance. It was the consensus of the Board to make that adjustment.

Mr. Saulnier suggested adding \$2,500 to the wrestling budget for entry fees for competitions. Mr. Leatherman stated he will discuss this with the Athletic Director to be certain they have an accurate number.

Ms. Whitmore stated that, due to what she thought was a vacancy that was actually a position moved to another line within special education staffing (resource line), the bottom line of the budget can be reduced by \$74,532.

Mr. Harmon stated that oil is budgeted at \$5.94, and that the forecast high is \$4.08. He suggested going with where we are today, which is \$5.19. He suggested adjusting the budget to reflect that amount, which would result in a reduction of \$35,485. This change was agreed upon by Ms. Bennett, Mr. Clements, and Mr. Harmon.

Mr. Harmon suggested a decrease in replacement salaries of \$250,000. He stated that each year the District has a positive variance on its salaries, including social security and retirement. The average positive variance of the 17-18 school year to the 19-20 school year was \$580,723. Mr. Saulnier stated that lately we've gotten employees higher on the pay scale, and that he would be willing to agree to a decrease of \$125,000 but not the full \$250,000. Ms. Bennett, Mr. Clements, and Ms. Leamer stated their support for the \$250,000 decrease.

Mr. Harmon asked to discuss increasing the nurse's salaries by \$5,000 in order to stay competitive. Mr. Leatherman noted that nurses are hard to come by and they have the opportunity to make more money in the private sector. Mr. Saulnier stated he supports this increase. It was noted that this \$5,000 would include social security and retirement, for a total of \$15,000. It was the consensus of the Board to support this increase.

Ms. Whitmore recapped the changes:

\$23,116	Increase maintenance position part time to full time
\$7,581	Increase maintenance full time wages
(\$83,322)	Eliminate MS World Language teacher and supplies
\$150,000	Reading Program
\$82,531	Wagepool increase
\$12,800	HS computer class Chromebook upgrades
\$5,025	Wagepool to increase by .1% for their benefits
\$2,500	Wrestling fees (may be adjusted)
\$74,532	Resource teacher adjustment
(\$35,485)	Decrease oil lines
(\$250,000)	Decrease replacement salaries
\$15,000	Nurse salaries, FICA, retirement
(\$6,000)	Phone bill savings (see below)

Mr. Leatherman stated that he's received notification that we've been overcharged this year for our telephone bill and moving forward, we can plan for a decrease of \$500 per month from the budgeted amount.

The new total 2023-24 budget amount is \$28,692,057 at this point.

It was noted that the budget will be added to the next agenda, with clarification on the wrestling cost, and at that point the Board will review the default budget as well. Revenue won't be known until after November 15th, so the Board will take action on December 7th with revenue estimates at that point.

Adjournment: MOTION: Joseph Saulnier moved, seconded by Tony Clements, to adjourn the meeting. Voted unanimously in the affirmative. Meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Heywood,
Raymond School Board Clerk