



## SCHOOL BOARD MINUTES WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2006

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Present: Board members Ginny Burley, Chair; Allen Gilbert, Clerk; Mark Berry, Sue Chickering, Tom Williams, and; student representatives Andy Huckins-Noss and Alanna Webb (who was introduced and welcomed, this being her first board meeting); Principal Keith Gerritt, WCSU Superintendent Robbe Brook, and WCSU Business Manager Lori Bibeau.

- 1.0. The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by Chair, Ginny Burley.
  - 1.1. All guests were welcomed - Sally DeCicco, Kate McCann, and Lynn Root
  - 1.2. Agenda Revisions – None.
  - 1.3. Public Comments and Correspondence – None.
- 2.0. **Tom Williams moved and Mark Berry seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the December 6, 2006 school board meeting. Allen Gilbert suggested several revisions, which will be given in writing to Lesley Fitch for incorporating into the final version of the minutes.**
- 3.0. Reports to the Board
  - 3.1. Finance Report – Ginny Burley said bulk of committee’s discussion will be covered in the budget discussion later in the meeting. No action taken on idea of any athletic fund balance being used to help pay for construction of new tennis courts.
  - 3.2. Curriculum Report – No report; committee has not met.
  - 3.3. VSBA Report – No report.
  - 3.4. Student representatives’ report - Students are wondering what is going on with Kate Wilson following the last board meeting; Andrew Huckins-Noss said he’s been asked questions, including questions from teachers. Board members noted this was a personnel issue and therefore confidential. Other issues raised concerned TA issue and PLAs (planned late arrivals). It was noted that Steve Barrows’ advanced expo class is working with freshmen students on a series of vignettes; the connection between students is seen as very positive.
  - 3.5. Administrative Report – Keith Gerritt congratulated the schools’ music students on excellent holiday concerts, and noted the acceptance of students for All New England Music competition – Alex Post, Cassie Burley, and Jenna Cameron, instrumentalists; Rachael Sanquintetti, Cory Huddleston, Vanessa Sylvia, Gray Ricker, and Marshall Cote, vocalists. Keith also mentioned the unified bowling tournament that took place recently, and the “Literary Café” which was a big success and received extensive local and statewide news coverage.
- 4.0. Discussion Agenda
  - 4.1. Budget discussion – Keith Gerritt noted that unanticipated staff horizontal pay movements (column increases) are adding \$23,000 to the salary line item; unanticipated health care option changes are adding another \$16,500. Cuts made by Keith Gerritt, on the other hand, add up to \$147,784; these include cuts of \$31,000 to co-curricular and athletics, and \$73,000 from 1.5 staff positions. This brings the net change to \$107,724, making the Draft 2 budget total \$12,052,406. This represents an increase of 5.98% (rather than the Draft 1 budget increase of 6.92%) over last year’s budget. In terms of per-pupil spending (which is the number that determines the tax rate increase attributable to school expenses), the Draft 2 budget is a 6.95% increase. The board at its last meeting had expressed a desire to shoot for a 5.54% per pupil spending increase. This is the size of the increase for the state block grant, which is based on an index that tracks the increase in the cost of government goods and services. Bringing the per-pupil increase down to 5.54% from 6.95% would require an additional \$138,000 in cuts. To cut to 4.1%, (which is the Consumer Price Index figure being used by the federal government for Social Security payment increases), an additional \$279,095 would need to be cut. Keith Gerritt said that even with the Draft 2 budget presented tonight, there have been cuts in current staff levels. More cuts mean more staff cuts, which means program cuts. Asked what portion of the budget is not “fixed” by the cost of wages, benefits, and bond costs, Lori Bibeau estimated the figure is about \$2.7 million. Lori Bibeau noted that about 3.8% of the 5.98% increase in the Draft 2 budget is due to salaries and benefits. Board discussion on the budget continued. By consensus, it was framed in terms of per-pupil expenditures, since this drives the tax rate. Lori Bibeau led the board through a discussion of tax impacts in the various towns of both elementary and high school budgets, as well as Common Level of Appraisal adjustments. Ginny Burley asked for board members’ opinions on how to proceed. Allen Gilbert expressed the view that it’s important to bring in reasonable budgets so townspeople continue to support the school; otherwise, you begin to lose community support and budgets are defeated. He said he would like to aim for a 4.1% per-pupil increase, mirroring the CPI increase; he acknowledged this would mean substantial cuts. But he said the board needs to remember that next year, if cuts aren’t made now, budgeting will be even more difficult since pupil enrollment swings are averaged over two years. This means that even if there is level enrollment next year, there would still be less per-pupil revenue from the state Education Fund. He wondered how the challenge of budget cuts could be made in collaboration with staff. Could we ask all departments to take the same percentage cut, and they then figure out how to reach the targeted level? Could departments be asked to begin now to think of ways to save money in this year’s budget, and then if they develop a positive fund balance at year’s end, they would get to keep that money and apply it to next year’s budget?



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Ginny Burley noted that neighboring schools are considering substantial cuts. Board members agreed that everything is up for grabs. Sue Chickering would like to look everywhere except personnel for cuts. Williams said he’s not sure how you can make substantial cuts without looking at personnel. Keith Gerritt said if we’re talking about more cuts, we’re talking about programs or personnel. Sue Chickering advocated shooting for a 5.5% per-pupil increase. Tom Williams advocated for looking at a range between 4.1% and the 5.98% of the administration’s most recent Draft 2 budget.

By consensus, the board decided to ask the administration to prepare two budget proposals to be presented at a *Special Meeting* on January 10 – one with a 5.5% target (the amount the state block grant is going up) and one with a 4.1% target (the CPI increase). Administrators will also look to see what current-year fund balances may be possible at year’s end, to help cushion next year’s cuts.

**5.0. Action Agenda**

**5.1. Finance Actions**

**5.1.1. Mark Berry moved and Chickering seconded a motion to set the budget information meeting for Monday, March 5 at 6 p.m. at U-32.**

**Approval was unanimous.**

**5.1.2. Mark Berry moved and Sue Chickering seconded a motion to create a new checking account for an eBay project students are undertaking. Clerk Allen Gilbert will sign the necessary certificate.**

**Approval was unanimous.**

**5.2. Tom Williams moved and Mark Berry seconded a motion to approve the list of winter athletics volunteers.**

**Approval was unanimous.**

5.3. Resignations – None.

**6.0. Sue Chickering moved and Mark Berry second a motion to approve the board orders as follows:**

<b>December 11, 2006</b>	<b>\$720.00</b>	<b>Athletic Officials</b>
<b>December 18, 2006</b>	<b>\$890.00</b>	<b>Athletic Officials</b>
<b>December 20, 2006</b>	<b>\$139,347.29</b>	<b>General</b>

**Approval was unanimous.**

7.0. Anticipated Executive Session – None.

8.0. Ideas for Future Agenda – Program reviews will be coming up, perhaps as early as March. Ginny Burley mentioned the possibility of superintendent collaboration with Montpelier, now that Montpelier Superintendent John Everitt is leaving to take a position in South Burlington.

9.0. Board Comments – None.

10.0. By consensus, the meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

*Allen Gilbert, Board Clerk*