

Middleton Budget Committee
June 15, 2020

Board Members:

Roxanne Tufts-Keegan, Chair
Laura Parker, Vice Chair
Bonnie Gagnon
Scott Ferguson
Tracy Donovan-Laviolette
Janet Kalar, SLVD Representative
Joe Varga, Selectman Representative

Absent:

Mary Knapp, School Board Representative

Meeting:

Meeting called to order at 6:32 pm
Sitting in place as school board representative is Krystal Beaulieu.

Pledge of allegiance.

Approval of meeting minutes from 5/5/2020.

Roxanne Tufts-Keegan stated that Tracy Donovan-Laviolette did not vote at the 5/5/2020 (conference call) Budget Committee meeting and went to the town hall the next day to be sworn in by the Middleton Town Clerk.

Scott Ferguson made a motion to accept the minutes from the 5/5/2020 meeting. Bonnie Gagnon seconded. The budget committee voted and the motion passed (7-0-1).

Town Budget:

The town should be at approximately 40.28% of the yearly budget. The town is currently at approximately 33.78%.

Line 4130-10 exc Office Telephone

This line stands at 75.52%. The town is in the process of switching over phone service. This line will be separated out as Internet and phone services. Switching from First Light to Consolidated.

Line 4140-30 clk Supervisors

This line will be short on funds and go over budget. There was a missed election for the 2020 year that was not counted.

Line 4152-12 asse. Assessing Clerk

This line currently stands at 49.39%. This line is high due to waiting for reimbursement from the government stipend. The town had to pay upfront and then will receive revenue to offset. Money is coming through the CARES Act. There was discussion as to whether or not certain positions and pay would qualify to be covered under the stipulations. If the money should not be reimbursed the town would be out that amount. More clarification is needed. The highway department two paid weeks off will not be covered under the CARES Act. The town payed 10% of all town employees hourly weekly rate before the federal government stipend went into effect. The state stipend ends on June 30, 2020.

Line 4194-40 gov. Repairs/OTH

This line stands at 62.21%. Portions of septic replacement and septic pumping are on this line. The septic system will benefit the highway department, the old town hall and the fire department. Each department was to split the septic cost one third. Due to upfront costs the majority of the money has been taken out of the fire department addition fund. Money will adjust as the project moves forward. There was discussion on funds given to the town from the state in two separate increments. The second amount was being saved to help out with septic system costs. The budget looks as though that money was not built into the current budget for the septic system, what line was that money entered into if at all? The board discussed if the septic that benefits three buildings can be taken out of the specific fire department addition building fund.

Line 4210-55 pol. Vehicle Maint/Repairs

This line stands at 70.56%. There were questions if the ACO vehicle repairs were taken out of this line. It is believed that a police vehicle and ACO vehicle were repaired at the same time and on the same invoice. If that is the case can they be separated out to their proper lines?

Line 4210-75 pol. Misc.

This line is being used to track covid stipends for the police department.

Line 4210-35 pol. Cell Phone Stipends

This line stands at 61.67%. There was discussion as to why this line was high. The town voted on the budget committee's budget put to the residents in March. The budget committee had lowered this line to give town departments across the board the same cell phone stipends according to positions. The selectman decided not to change the previous cell phone stipends at this time. This line is expected to go over budget.

Line 4240-06 Code Mileage

This line stands at 59.16%. There has been an increase in building permits and inspections in town.

Line 4311-04 hwy. Overtime

This line stands at 103.93%, over budget not even halfway through the year. There was a water leak near the dam in early spring. The highway department was called out for that. There were questions raised if that money to respond will be reimbursed by the water company as there is no town water and the town of Middleton is not responsible. There was discussion that the highway overtime line increases every year and seems to always go over. What can be done to change this practice and stay within the budget amount voted on by the townspeople?

Line 4311-26 hwy. On-Call-Pay

This line stands at 60.85%. Who works all the storms? Director/Foreman also, every storm?

Line 4414-01 AC Salary

This line stands at 83.88%. Why is this line so high? Are the cases that the ACO is responding to Middleton only cases? There was a court case earlier this year, which required paperwork and court time. Are townspeople requesting ACO help through the proper contact procedures?

School Budget

The question of how many teachers did not sign contracts was raised? There were three. Art, second grade and special education. None of the teachers left due to monetary reasons, rather personal reasons.

Bonnie Gagnon sent a list of questions to Kathy O'Blenes (GWRSD Business Administrator) after the last school board meeting conference call on Tuesday June 9, 2020, where she had called in. She read the questions and answers allowed, the board then discussed.

Bonnie Gagnon's question:

Did the teachers get raises this year after it was voted "no" at last year's deliberative session? On the 6/9/2020 google meet school board meeting, Krystal Beaulieu stated "yes" the school board decided to go with raises over other things they decided not to fund.

Kathy O'Blenes response:

The budget committee has the authority over the bottom line of the school budgets number. The cuts that the budget committee made to particular lines are not the lines that the school board must follow. The school board felt very strongly that it was important to give the Middleton Elementary School staff the raises that were in line with GWRSD. If not it could cause the staff to seek alternative employment which would be a loss to the students at the elementary school, or it could cause the staff to unionize.

There was much discussion on bottom line budgets. Townspeople vote with intent at the school deliberative session and the town meeting believing that those budgets are set or that every possible measure will be taken by elected boards to stay within those line budget amounts. In actuality the law says both the school and town budgets are bottom line budgets and the school board and selectman can choose to stay within those line item amounts or stay within the bottom line amounts as they vote throughout their fiscal year.

There were discussions that no teachers have left due to salary issues, all have been personal or movement from part time to full time positions. Middleton school staff are not unionized and under no contract with specific pay increases. Board members stated Middleton is a small town with the tax burden on residents and noted the vast difference in comparing Middleton to a community like Wolfeboro, with regards to pay scale being kept in line with another community.

Bonnie Gagnon's question:

What is the total amount of the raises given to the teachers/staff, this year? (Dollar amount please)

Kathy O'Blenes response:

Please see attached sheet.

The total raises given for the 2019-2020 school year were \$37,629.94. At the deliberative session for the 2019-2020 school budget, no raises were voted on by the Middleton residents. There were discussions on what was cut out of the budget to offset giving raises on a line with no increase. It was stated that there were surpluses in other lines and nothing was cut from the budget. Comments regarding returning the

money back to taxpayers and the school board creating a more streamlined budget with less cushion in lines was discussed.

Bonnie Gagnon's question:

Where is the money from the raises coming from, what lines were cut? We would like to know all the lines that were cut.

Kathy O'Blenes response:

There were no lines that were cut, the direction was communicated that raises would happen and I would watch the bottom line. All non-instructional lines that could hold off on spending would. Nothing instructional was cut from the students.

The board discussed again on why other budget lines were budgeted with overages if they were not needed or saved for salary increases that were not budgeted in the first place.

Bonnie Gagnon's question:

The school budget 2019-2020 was cut approximately \$400,000.00 this year and a spending freeze was put on the budget, what exactly did this effect?

Kahty O'Blenes response:

I am only aware of a few non-instructional items that were not completed due to the freeze; they had to do with the building and were considered non-essential. There were no instructional items denied, purchases for instruction continued.

It was asked when the budget freeze started? March sometime, before the pandemic started.

Bonnie Gagnon's question:

Due to the Covid 19 and school being closed some expenses were not as high as expected, yet it was stated during tonight's meeting (6/9/2020 School Board Meeting) that there will only be approximately \$70,000.00 - \$80,000.00 left in the fund balance and that we could have been in trouble had the school not been closed. How can the budget be cut this close and it be ok to give raises that the town voted "no" on?

Kathy O'Blenes response:

That amount &70,000.00 - \$80,000.00, is the cost savings for going to remote learning and those expenses that were not as high.

The board discussed who was still being paid through to the end of the school budget? Were bus drivers, paras, custodians, maintenance, food service, office staff and the nurse contract all being paid during remote learning? Discussions on the possible other savings to the school budget such as electricity, supplies and paper. There was discussion if any of the salaries would be covered under the CARES Act or federally funded Covid - 19 paid time off? Krystal Beaulieu will look into this.

Bonnie Gagnon's question:

I know it was voted no tonight (6/9/2020 School Board Meeting) not to accept an out of town student into our school, but is this something they will consider in the future? If so, at what price point? Will there be a max number?

Kathy O'Blenes response:

If a family requests to tuition their child at Middleton, the superintendent would consider it based on class size. Only if there was enough space for that student in that specific grade would she recommend it to the school board. She would not accept a tuition student if it requires an additional teacher or support staff employee, as this would not be financially feasible.

The student in question was requesting to join the first grade class which is at a 24/25 student count. The board discussed if students were specifically looking at tuitioning to Middleton due to special education needs or in this particular case trauma school needs, if that is looked at with concern to services that would be over and above the average student budget wise. What decisions would be made if that grade should then become over capacity with Middleton students after a tuition student has been accepted?

Bonnie Gagnon's question:

If an extra teacher is needed who would fund that? If the student count went over would the out of town student be cut?

Kathy O'Blenes response:

The district wouldn't accept a student if the class size was close to requiring an additional teacher.

Bonnie Gagnon's question:

Who comes up with the tuition rate?

Kathy O'Blenes response:

The tuition amount is set by the cost per pupil. This number is derived by a formula created by the NH Department of Education. It is based on actual expenditures in the operating budget from the previous year. It is found in the DOE-25, which is a state report that is completed every year by the SAU office, specifically myself, the Business Administrator.

Joe Varga made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Scott Ferguson seconded. The board voted, motion passed. (8-0-0)
Meeting adjourned at 8:12 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Tracy Donovan-Laviolette