

**Monadnock Regional School District  
School Board/Budget Committee Joint Meeting  
November 13, 2021  
Monadnock Regional Middle/High School**

**School Board Member:** Scott Peters, Colleen Toomey, Lisa Steadman, Winston Wright, Betty Tatro, Brian Bohannon, Cheryl McDaniel-Thomas and Michelle Connor.  
**Absent:** Kristen Noonan, Eric Stanley, Dan LeClair, Karen Wheeler and Nick Mosher

**Budget Committee Members:** Doug Bersaw, Wayne Lechluder, Adam Hopkins, Dan Coffman, Richard HKS Thackston, Wendy Martel and Meghan Foley. **Absent:** Ed Sheldon, Phyllis Peterson, Wayne LaCoste and Unassigned seats from Roxbury and Gilsum.

**Administration Present:** L. Witte, Superintendent, J. Rathbun, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, C. Woods, Director of Student Services and J. Morin, Business Administrator.

**1. Administration's Proposed Budget Presentation 2022/23:** L. Witte presented the Board and the Budget Committee a packet regarding the proposed budget. She explained there is not a lot to share. There are no new programs being proposed. There are no budget items for 2022/23. She explained the preliminary budget proposals are as follows: a reduction in one teacher at Troy for -\$88,136, an addition of one Special Education Teacher at the MRMHS in the amount of \$88,136, Cost-Sharing Change with MESSA (from 81% to 80%) for a -\$21,070, Health Insurance GMR (8.4%) in the amount of \$384,714, Contractual Lane Changes in the amount of \$40,145.00 and Transportation (3%) in the amount of \$41,258 for a total of \$445,047 and the administration's proposed budget increases in the amount of \$416,603. L. Witte explained the cost per pupil for the State has increased 12.90% over the past 5 years and Monadnock has only increased 2.53% over the past 5 years.

**2. Adequacy Summary:** L. Witte explained the amount for adequacy is figured out a year and half earlier. Due to the Free and Reduced numbers during COVID the amount the district received was increased. The district was not informed about the increase until just recently. The Board voted to give the additional \$800,000.00 back to the taxpayers.

**3. Proposed Articles:** The Budget Committee asked about dissolving the Health

Expendable Trust. J. Morin explained she was asked to recap the district's Expendable Trusts. The Trust was created around the MDEA pool. There is \$63,346.93 in the Trust. L. Steadman explained the Trust was created by the request of N. Moriarty. At the time the Health Trust was created due to the ups and downs in the insurance. The initial amount was \$10,000 created in 2011 and another \$56,000 was deposited and there has never been a withdrawal from the account. A. Hopkins suggested thinking about lowering the GMR by that amount. L. Steadman said the funds can be transferred to another Trust. B. Bohannon suggested lowering the amount of health insurance instead of somewhere else. J. Morin explained the Board would have to have a Public Hearing and decide where to spend the funds. L. Witte explained the GMR history is in the budget books. The rate has been a little all over the place. J. Morin explained the GMR will never go over the amount the district was told by the Health Trust but it could go down. S. Peters explained we have the GMR so we really do not need the surplus. He said the Board has 3 or 4 more meetings to discuss this. R. HKS Thackston would recommend setting aside the \$63,346.93 to offset the Health Insurance. A. Hopkins explained a motion is not necessary at this time. S. Peters said the Board will discuss this. D. Coffman commented that the \$63,346.93 does not do anything in a 33-million-dollar budget. He asked the full amount of the insurance line. J. Morin explained the insurance amounts are in a lot of lines within the budget. D. Coffman commented he would expect the amount to be in the millions. J. Morin agreed. **C. McDaniel-Thomas arrives.** D. Coffman commented that the 8.4% is the most we have seen and he would expect it to be about 7.5% but he would guess 6.5%. You may want to reduce the insurance line but it is small in comparison to the budget amount. He does not care what the Board does about the \$63,346.93. Let the Board help the administration to get rid of the fund, great. L. Steadman explained to dissolve the expendable fund you need a warrant article. S. Peters explained the Board discussed a warrant article to put the funds in another expendable fund. This is the first draft of the warrant articles. This will be brought up at the next Board meeting. R. HKS Thackston would recommend the funds going back to the taxpayers.

**4. FTE:** L. Witte explained the district sends the numbers for all of our staff to the State. It includes all of the instructional staff but not sure about the other staff. L. Witte explained we are in need of a Special Education Teacher, School Psychologist, Social Worker, Interpreters and she has lost track of the number of paras. The new hires come and go. The Reading Specialist is in the pipeline. There are still quite a few vacancies. D. Coffman asked the number of vacancies in the budget. C. Woods explained we are using contracted services or telehealth but we still have vacancies. J. Morin explained the amount of dollars the administration estimates is what they think the vacancy will cost if a new person were to come in. S. Peters explained the vacancy number could change tomorrow. D. Coffman suggested giving the administration a bigger checkbook

or the ability for incentives to gain talented people to fill the vacancies. We have to do something to be more competitive but we cannot only increase wages that is not good for the voters. S. Peters explained the voters will vote on the MDEA contract in March. D. Bersaw commented we are not voting on the MESSA contract and those are the staff we are missing. L. Witte explained this is happening everywhere with lack of paras and support staff. We are also short in special education. J. Hoden asked if the reason for lack of staff was because of wages. S. Peters said within the Specialists it is not the wages but lack of staff. It was commented that the MESSA wages are low and people at Dunkin Donuts get paid more. It was also commented that MESSA employees have low wages but very good benefits. W. Martel said to open the contract with MESSA to increase the rates. R. HKS Thackston commented we cannot hire for \$24.00 an hour if we wanted to because there is a contract. It was commented that this conversation is not going anywhere. S. Peters said this is not tied to this year's budget. The Negotiating Team is in negotiations with MDEA currently. L. Steadman commented she works for a non-profit and there are two options either a higher amount without benefits or a lower amount with benefits. B. Tatro commented that because of the COVID conditions there are things you cannot put in a contract. B. Bohannon said we are in a labor market; we need a strategy. It is the employee's choice. It is worth the conversation on what the Budget Committee may support. This is a conversation for the future. Be more creative. S. Peters mentioned that after the vote in March the Board asked the Budget Committee for creative ideas. It is too late for this cycle. R. HKS Thackston asked about being creative and would it be more money. We cannot compare with McDonalds. W. Lechluder committed the Budget Committee will set the Default and Operating Budget numbers. We gave the Board a list of objectives for 3 years. D. Coffman commented this is not a new conversation. You need to dust off the whiteboard. L. Steadman explained the list is in the forefront of negotiations. W. Lechluder commented on next year negotiations with MESSA and a 22-million-dollar bond.

W. Lechluder asked about the proposed \$325,000.00 article. S. Peters explained the articles are still under construction. The Board has not voted on any of the articles. The article includes the removal of the portables, repair to a roof and a fire panel at Gilsum. We have not received bids yet. The numbers are estimates from Barker Associates. W. Lechluder would suggest pulling out the fire panel. It is a health and safety issue. The \$500,000 article is still being worked on. There is a lot of grant funding for ventilation and heating. This would include the 700 and/or 800 wings. It would include air quality not air conditioning. S. Peters commented there are separate projects in the CIP backlog for air conditioning. M. Foley asked the last time the 700 or 800 wings had been worked on. Some members thought after 1963 but before the 1990s. D. Coffman also said to pull out the health and safety. J. Hoden would encourage transparency. S. Peters asked how many articles should be on the ballot. W. Wright suggested adding

the removal of the modulares to the proposed budget. J. Morin explained we are not only tearing down the portables but what is left needs to be usable. D. Bersaw suggested a detailed article on the ballot to explain to the voters. L. Steadman explained that is the job of the CRC prior to the warrant. DRA has to approve the language in the warrant article. D. Coffman said if the list is short put it on the warrant article. W. Lechlinder would like to wait a year to remove the portables with a surplus possibly. L. Steadman said that W. Wright's idea is interesting but has trouble with not being transparent. S. Peters said we do not have a line in the budget for small projects.

**5. Enrollment:** M. Foley was curious looking at Troy and Emerson's enrollment. L. Witte explained people are moving. J. Rathbun explained a large group in Troy and Emerson were homeschooled. There were maybe 120 students that left and 50 came back. Every day the number changes. It affects adequacy. L. Witte also explained that Troy does not have Preschool this year because of the drop in numbers. L. Steadman commented that the mask mandate also affected the number of children attending school.

**6. Other:** D. Coffman said that he appreciates the 1% increase from the Board and administration but is frustrated with the deficiency in learning. The last two years the development of learning and delivery of education has suffered. It is not in this book to get us out of this. Be very aggressive on the delivery of education. The kids are not getting what they need. He would urge the administration to change the number and give the kids more. This is not on the agenda anywhere. S. Peters said the educational reports are seasonal. This Tuesday we will be discussing the data. We receive reports 3-4 times a year. W. Martel commented we are focusing on the teachers but having support staff that is just as important for the environment of the teachers. D. Coffman would agree but we need to take care of the majority. L. Steadman commented that the grant funds are used to help the students. L. Witte explained the allocated grant funds are on the website regarding how they were spent. J. Rathbun explained it is hard to fund a one-year position. People do not want a one-year job. The grant funds are used for staff coaching and professional development. J. Hoden would like to add funds to pay for better coaches. S. Peters explained we had that conversation a few years ago. Funds were in the budget and it failed. J. Hoden said some coaches are \$1000 below average. S. Peters asked if the Budget Committee is supporting the stipend spreadsheet that had been proposed. J. Hoden would like more discussion on this issue. W. Lechlinder commented that teachers are coaches to supplement their pay. Some coaches give the funds back to the district. W. Wright commented not only on the coaches but the advisors as well. S. Peters said the spreadsheet also includes leadership roles, extra-curricular and the fine arts. We do not need to treat it as a sports conversation.

**7. School Board Adjourn Meeting: MOTION:** C. Toomey **MOVED** to adjourn the meeting at 11:34 AM.**SECOND:** M. Connor **VOTE:** 8.672/0/0/4.328. **Motion passes.**

**8. Budget Committee Adjourn Meeting: Motion to adjourn: MOTION:** D. Coffman **MOVED** to adjourn the meeting at 11:34 AM. **SECOND:** R. HKS Thackston **VOTE:** Unanimous for those present. **Motion passes.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Laura L. Aivaliotis**  
**MRSD Recording Secretary**