

LITCHFIELD SCHOOL DISTRICT

Our mission is to provide rigorous and varied educational opportunities that challenge and engage all students to attain their highest level of intellectual, social, physical, and emotional growth. (2007)

**LITCHFIELD SCHOOL BOARD
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT NO. 27**

Litchfield, New Hampshire 03052

Approved Minutes for January 23, 2019

Held at Litchfield Town Hall

In Attendance: Brian Bourque, Chair
Christina Harrison, Vice Chair
Robert G. Meyers, III, Board Member
Elizabeth MacDonald, Board Member
Tara Hershberger, Board Member (*excused*)
Dr. Michael Jette, Ph.D., Superintendent
Cory Izbicki, Business Administrator
Michele E. Flynn, Administrative Assistant

I. PUBLIC SESSION

6:00 p.m.

A. Call to Order

Mr. Bourque called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

B. Pledge of Allegiance

C. Review & Revision of Agenda

There were no revisions to the agenda.

D. Summary of Non-Public Actions from January 9, 2019:

Mr. Meyers made a motion to approve the non-public minutes of December 19, 2018. Mrs. Harrison seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.

Mrs. Hershberger made a motion to accept the resignation of Katrina Reid, part time CHS Art teacher. Mrs. Harrison seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.

E. Presentations and Recognitions

- E³ Awards
 - Jill Pennington

Jill Pennington is a vocalist, actress, teacher, pianist, accompanist and choreographer who has been a music instructor at CHS (and currently LMS) for many years. She works with theatre groups around the State. She is the recent recipient of the NH Band Directors Association Band Director of the Year, former LEA President and current Vice President of the NH NEA. Jill has worked tirelessly to provide a quality music program in the district and has coordinated outstanding productions and performances in the music and theater departments.

- Cara Gannon

Cara Gannon has led the Athletic Boosters, chaired the Press Box Fundraising Committee and has been an active supporter of athletic programs at CHS. Her strong, determined and continued commitment to the students of our schools reflects her devotion to our district.

F. Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

G. Superintendent's Comments

- Sophomore and Senior Projects

Dr. Jette provided a list of Sophomore and Senior projects from CHS for the School Board to review. The list does not include descriptions of the projects, but was revised with wording to help explain the intent of the project. Mr. Lonergan will provide answers to questions regarding the projects at the February 6 meeting.

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Dr. Jette explained that the list of Sophomore Projects includes the contact person, project topics, approval by the clearinghouse and communication with parents. Senior Projects include the project topic, advisor, mentor and approval by clearinghouse.

Mr. Bourque indicated that the Board would like to see the timeline of the projects, such as when the project period begins and ends. He also mentioned that descriptions of the senior projects would be ideal. He commented once the Board gets more information we can have a discussion.

Dr. Jette informed the Board that he and Ms. Widman are talking a look at the projects program and adding more rigor to the rubric.

Mr. Meyers commented the instructions for the projects process is limited and last year there was a problem because they switched the method of submissions. He indicated the old submission method information is on the website.

Dr. Jette suggested the Board thoroughly review the project list and provide feedback for a discussion. He indicated that once he sees the senior project presentation it will help guide us toward what we want to do.

The Board moved New Business up in the agenda to accommodate Senator Donna Soucy's visit. The Superintendent's Comments will resume after the discussion with Senator Soucy.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Visit from Senator Donna Soucy

The School Board invited Senator Soucy to attend a meeting to discuss topics including education funding, the declining stabilization grant, building aid, SB 193, and the increasing burden of local taxation placed on Litchfield as a result of the loss of revenues due to the decisions made by the Legislature to down shift funding responsibilities to local school districts and municipalities.

Mr. Bourque commented that the Board previously discussed the funding trend and the burden placed on local towns/cities with State Representatives.

Senator Soucy indicated that she is serving her fourth term and is the Senate President. She served four terms on the Manchester School Board. She thanked the Litchfield School Board and praised them for their efforts and work. She commended CHS for the graduating class choices. The Senator agreed that it has made the situation more difficult with some of the funding issues being thrust upon the school district. She believes that this legislative session will bring some relief. The Senator explained the Governor's budget will be presented on February 14 and the Legislature is looking at that budget. She noted that the Legislature is looking at stabilization grants and building aid, as well as the state contribution to retirement costs.

With reference to retirement costs, the Senator explained that we have reached a peak in respect to those rates and she believes that a decrease is forthcoming. She indicated there is legislation to attempt to restore a portion of the State's contribution. She reported there is legislation that would switch the revenue from Keno for full day kindergarten to the education trust and Keno funds would be used for building aid as needs are continuing to increase. She mentioned security grants were awarded and some communities benefitted from that. Senator Soucy commented until we see the budget there is a willingness and desire to do something about retirement costs and general property relief.

Mr. Bourque commented that SB 193 is on hold, but there is another bill, HB 489, relative to manifest educational hardship. He explained that the district lost a manifest educational hardship case when the State Board of Education decided in favor of the petitioner. He was concerned this will become more widespread because other schools have courses Litchfield may not offer.

Senator Soucy commented that she opposed SB193 because of what happened in Manchester and the high school choices made by other towns that were sending their students to Manchester. She indicated that revenue went with those students and with four high schools, including a tech school, the cost to the district is still the same no matter

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the number of students. She expressed she does not believe that creates a better educational experience. She believes school districts are local and local people know what is best for their students.

Mr. Bourque commented that the Senator mentioned legislation relative to Keno and building aid. He asked if she anticipates building aid will increase as our elementary school is quite old.

Senator Soucy observed that there is not only need due to repairs, but also changes in class size. She noted that Berlin may be closing a school. She indicated there are projects that are shovel ready. The Senator explained that the State bonded building aid and is continuing to pay that off. She indicated that bond will provide more capacity to look at more major projects.

Dr. Jette commented there are moisture issues in our elementary school and it is beyond what we are able to continue to maintain. He indicated absent of much industry in Litchfield it falls into the homeowners' tax base. He noted it was helpful to hear about building aid.

Senator Soucy indicated the school funding debate is beginning to ramp up again. She commented the Legislature is learning there are districts with weighting factors, but the original formula was the best solution. She noted that it has been changed through the sessions with the stabilization grant and has become a battle of spreadsheets. The Senator believes that it has moved away from the idea of providing funding for an adequate education for every child.

Senator Soucy expressed her appreciation to the Board for inviting her to provide information and offered to return when the Legislation wraps up their session. She commended the Board for their work and dedication to the students of Litchfield.

- SNAP Fundraiser Request

Dr. Jette provided a fundraising proposal submitted by the CHS Director of Athletics for the School Board to review. The Athletic Director will provide answers to questions regarding the fundraiser at the February 6 meeting. He indicated that the SAU did some research into the fundraiser and organization. He mentioned that the research included a Terms of Use Agreement that, when reviewed, led us to question if this is the right fundraiser. He commented when the Athletic Director comes to the meeting it will be a good opportunity to discuss the fundraisers.

Mr. Bourque pointed out that one of the purposes of the SNAP fundraiser is for team dinners. He indicated typically the parents contribute for the dinners. He noted they generally raise funds for equipment and warm ups.

- 2019-2020 District Calendar Draft Discussion

Dr. Jette provided the 2019-2020 draft district calendar to the School Board for discussion. He indicated that the SAU has the Pinkerton and Alvirne calendars at this time. He noted that the Bow calendar is 180 days (no hours). He explained two calendars are being presented – one if the LEA Contract is approved and one if it is not approved. He indicated this is because language was negotiated into the contract relative to the start of school prior to Labor Day and if the contract is approved that is the calendar we will use.

- 2019-20 Calendar Draft (Contract Approved)
 - Proposed first day of school August 28, 2019
 - Teacher workshop days prior to August 28
 - Parent/Teacher Conferences November 12, 2019
 - Thanksgiving Week will go back to a three day break
 - Not scheduling late arrival days

- Days vs Hours Other Districts

Dr. Jette indicated we need to do the calculation for all three schools for the tentative last day of school. He explained switching to hours instead of days would consist of looking at the contract and getting feedback from the LEA. He noted teachers still have to work 180 days.

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Mr. Bourque referred to the calendar with contract language and expressed concern regarding the two shorter weeks in November.

Dr. Jette indicated that if the contract is approved, the first quarter will end October 31. He felt that parent/teacher conferences should be held as early as possible after the quarter closes.

Mrs. Harrison commented that people travel for Thanksgiving, which could have contributed to the decrease in attendance of parent/teacher conferences.

Mr. Meyers suggested using Google Classroom when there is a snow day.

Mr. Bourque agreed, indicating the teachers would have to be available for the students all day. He commented it is a good way to avoid a snow day and it would real assignments. He recommended to start using Google Classroom when there is a snow day.

- 2019-20 Calendar Draft (No Contract)
 - School will begin the day after Labor Day
 - Parent/Teacher conferences will be scheduled November 25
 - Retain the full week off for Thanksgiving Break
 - June 18, 2020 is the tentative 180th day

He commented it is still a work in progress. He indicated he would like to have a conversation with the LEA and get input from the community.

The School Board agreed.

- NHSBA Legislative Update Jan 2019 (FYI)

A Legislative update has been provided for the School Board regarding information on current legislation.

Dr. Jette commented that he was grateful to the State Representatives and Senator Soucy for agreeing to meet with the Board. He indicated that they appreciate hearing directly from their constituents.

Mr. Meyers asked if there is any update on the new safety measures in the schools.

Dr. Jette indicated that a meeting has been secured with both the police and fire departments to review what we learned from ALICE training. He mentioned that the Administrative Team was debriefed. He noted we need to understand all of this before we roll out the next steps and think about at what level we want student involvement.

Mrs. Harrison suggested sending an information pamphlet home to parents or holding a parent information night.

Dr. Jette indicated the staff has been trained and have the authority to do what is necessary for the students in that situation.

- Follow Up to School Board Inquiries
 - Ski Club Early Dismissal

Dr. Jette reported he had a conversation with Mr. Lecklider and dismissal of students in the ski club will occur when school is dismissed. He indicated that the bus for the ski club will be in the lead position so it does not get stuck behind the other buses on Charles Bancroft Highway.

- GMS Specials Assisting in Kindergarten

Dr. Jette reported he spoke with Mr. Thompson regarding teachers of specials assisting in Kindergarten. He indicated Mr. Thompson will look at the schedule and see if they have time to provide assistance, but it could be a different teacher each day.

- Frozen Pipe (Pre-K Portable)

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Dr. Jette reported that there was a frozen pipe in the PreK portable yesterday that resulted when the heat tape failed. He indicated the heat tape was replaced and the heat is working with no damage done to the pipe. He thanked the staff at GMS for pitching in to accommodate moving the PreK students inside the building.

o No School Delay January 22, 2019

Dr. Jette addressed the rationale for not having a 2 hour delay on January 22, 2019. He reported he communicated with Superintendents and district staff about the frigid temperatures on Tuesday morning for four hours on Monday night. He explained when the weather forecast was examined it was learned that the temperature would only rise about 3 or 4 degrees between 6:30 am and 9:00 am with high winds. Dr. Jette indicated there was no benefit to call a delay since the temperatures would not rise enough to make a difference. He noted some districts had delays due to icy sidewalks and snow plowing delays.

Mr. Bourque agreed with Dr. Jette's decision. He commented temperatures would not have been any better delaying for two hours. He indicated there are many moving parts when making the decision to delay or close school (i.e. speaking to the BA, road agent, bus company, other district superintendents).

H. Community Forum

There was no public input.

I. School Board Comments

Mrs. MacDonald commented she heard some reading tutors are doing recess duty at GMS. She asked how many monitors are needed at GMS. She indicated that a reading tutor is hired to be a reading tutor and not a recess monitor.

Mr. Izbicki indicated the number of monitors is based on the number of students in those groups. He noted extra help is needed with kindergarten students.

Mrs. MacDonald suggested that an administrator should be supervising at recess as that is where many things happen.

II. GENERAL BUSINESS

A. Public Minutes:

- January 9, 2019

Mrs. Harrison made a motion to approve the public minutes of January 9, 2019. Mrs. MacDonald seconded. The motion carried 4-0-0.

- Budget Transfers

Mr. Bourque made a motion to approve the Budget Transfers for November 2018 through January 2019. Mrs. MacDonald seconded. The motion carried 4-0-0.

III. REPORTS

A. Business Administrator's Report

- FY20 Budget Update

Mr. Izbicki provided an update regarding the FY20 Proposed budget.

- School Infrastructure Fund

Mr. Izbicki provided an update of all projects associated with the Public School Infrastructure program grants. He indicated that the LMS project was approved for \$100,000 and the CHS project was approved for \$62,560. The CHS project will be done over the summer and we will file for an extension for the funds for the LMS project. The GMS vestibule work is almost complete. Mr. Izbicki reported that a main entrance sign, for which the cost was included in the grant, will be installed according to the recommendations from Homeland Security.

- Full Day Kindergarten Modular Update

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Mr. Izbicki reported the kindergarten modular project is substantially completed and exterior lighting was installed in January.

- FY18 Audit Update

Mr. Izbicki reported he received the draft financial statements from the auditor and digital copies will be provided to the Board in the coming weeks. He indicated that he asked the Director in charge of our audit to provide a proposal to extend our engagement with them for another three years.

- FY19 Budget Status

Mr. Izbicki indicated the budget status report was included in the financial packet.

B. 2019 Warrant Articles

- Petitioned Article Action

A petitioned article submitted by a Litchfield citizen relative to a school district budget tax cap will be provided to the School Board. The School Board may or may not take action on a recommendation of the article.

Mr. Bourque made a motion not to recommend the Petitioned Warrant Article (Article 7). Mrs. MacDonald seconded.

Mr. Bourque indicated a tax cap is a limit on the percentage of increase of the budget. He noted the town tax cap is a fixed amount and not a percentage. He commented their revenues decrease, but the budget increased 33% the last three years. Mr. Bourque commented that if the school district budget has a cap, we could not increase above that cap. He noted if a child comes into the district with special needs we will have to reduce or eliminate budget items to accommodate the needs of that student. He encouraged board members to visit districts that have a tax cap and see what kind of schools they have.

Mrs. Harrison commented we are legally obligated to provide an adequate education and special needs services. She indicated that we have a lean budget and we return every penny that is not spent to offset the tax rate every year. She was concerned having a tax cap would lead to a budget deficit.

Dr. Jette commented the article is a “feeler article” and is only advisory.

Mrs. Harrison commented that she understands the desire to keep taxes from increasing significantly, but she believes the Board understand the need to bring forward a leaner budget and that a cap is not necessary. She indicated we are delivering on the responsibility to the taxpayers.

Mr. Bourque observed it is unfortunate many go after the school district because the budget is larger than the town and that is the way it is in any municipality. He commented that our budget increases are considerably less than the town budgets. He indicated that a tax cap on the district will negatively affect our schools and people will likely move out of the town.

The motion carried 4-0-0.

The vote tally will be recorded on the warrant as Not Recommended by the School Board by a vote of 0-4-0.

- Signatures

The 2019 Warrant was signed by the School Board.

C. FY20 Default Budget

The FY20 Default Budget was signed by the School Board.

V. MANIFEST

The manifest was circulated and signed by the School Board.

VI. PUBLIC INPUT

*Litchfield School Board Meeting 1-23-19
Approved February 6, 2019*

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A. Community Forum

There was no public input.

VII. NON-PUBLIC SESSION: RSA 91-A:3II (a-c)

[Minutes of Non-Public Session are written under separate cover.]

Upon a motion made by Mrs. Harrison, the School Board entered into non-public session at 7:48 p.m. under RSA 91-A:3II (a) The dismissal, promotion or compensation of any public employee or the disciplining of such employee, or the investigation of any charges against him, unless the employee affected (1) has a right to a meeting and (2) requests that the meeting be open, in which case the request shall be granted. (b) The hiring of any person as a public employee. (c) Matters, which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person, other than a member of the body or agency itself, unless such person requests an open meeting. Mr. Meyers seconded. The motion carried by roll call vote: Mr. Bourque, yes; Mrs. Harrison, yes; Mrs. MacDonald, yes; Mr. Meyers, yes.

VIII. RETURN TO PUBLIC SESSION

Upon a motion made by Mrs. Harrison, the School Board returned to public session at 8:14 p.m. Mr. Meyers seconded. The motion carried by roll call vote: Mr. Bourque, yes; Mrs. Harrison, yes; Mrs. MacDonald, yes; Mr. Meyers, yes.

IX. ADJOURN

Mrs. Harrison made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:14 p.m. Mr. Meyers seconded. The motion carried 4-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Michele E. Flynn
Administrative Assistant to the School Board