

*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**

**December 5, 2007**

**BUDGET WORK SESSION**

**(approved as amended 12-19-07)**

Present:

Mr. Dennis Miller, Chair  
Mrs. Cindy Couture, Vice Chair  
Mr. Ralph Boehm, Board Member  
Mrs. Pat Jewett, Board Member  
Mrs. Dot Beauregard, Board Member  
Dr. Elaine Cutler, Interim Superintendent  
Mr. Steve Martin, Business Administrator  
Mr. Dan Cecil, Harriman Associates  
Mrs. Michele E. Flynn, Secretary

**1) Public Session – Call to Order -Pledge of Allegiance – 6:30 p.m.**

Mr. Miller called the meeting to order at 6:40 p.m.

**2) Review and Revision of Agenda**

Revisions to the agenda included: Item 1, Revised Floor Plans & Costs, under GMS Discussion was moved before Item 5, Recommended Action; the addition of an item under Business Affairs – Board Vote on FY09 Operating Budget.

**3) Presentations to the Board**

>>CHS Music Department European Tour

Mr. Phil Martin and Ms. Jill Deleault came before the Board to seek support for the CHS Music Department's first overseas trip to Italy & Germany from April 24 to May 3, 2009. Mr. Martin indicated that this trip would be more of a cultural experience with opportunities to participate in performances.

Mr. Boehm queried about student interest. Mr. Martin commented that they preferred not to take any reservations until the trip had been approved by the Board. Ms. Deleault mentioned that the students have already started fundraising in anticipation of approval of the trip. There is not a definite number, but there is a lot of interest in the trip. Mr. Martin indicated that if the Board approves the trip, packets will be prepared the next day and distributed to students who express interest. Deposits will be accepted and student participation will be evaluated in February 2008.

Mr. Boehm asked if a payment plan would be prepared for students who wish to go on the trip. Mr. Martin indicated that a payment plan would be arranged for the students and fundraising money will be applied when the final payments approach. Ms. Deleault noted that the payment plan will be well organized and payments will be tracked.

***Mrs. Beauregard made a motion to approve the CHS Music Department trip to Europe scheduled for April 24 to May 3, 2009. Mr. Boehm seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.***

>>CHS Ski Club Policy Revision Proposal

Mr. Joe Stapleton, the coordinator for the CHS Ski Program, came before the Board to discuss a revision to the District travel policy. He explained that on Friday evenings CHS students enrolled in the Ski Program travel to a local ski area for recreation. The past practice allowed parents to come to the mountain and ski with their students, if they chose, and allowed the students to leave with their parents. He added that the travel policy states that if students are bused on a school sponsored field trip, they are to return with on the bus. Mr. Stapleton is asking for a revision to the policy.

Mr. Miller explained that the travel policy addresses travel for chaperones and parent chaperones who transport themselves on field trips or overnight trips.

Mrs. Couture observed that the policy is not meant for after school club activities and that, in this case, the Ski Club outings would not be considered field trips. Mr. Boehm pointed out that prior arrangements should be made if the students' parents would like to transport their children home from the outing. Mr. Stapleton concurred stating that prior arrangements are required and the parent(s)' signature is required for the student(s)' release.

Dr. Cutler inquired what would happen with the student if the parent has not arrived when the bus is ready to leave. Mr. Stapleton responded that the student will travel back to the school on the bus.

Mrs. Couture suggested that there is a need for a policy for after school activities that involve transportation. Mr. Schlichter indicated that the policy was written because of longer domestic trips as parents wanted to go on the trip independently and meet the students at the destination and transport them home. Mr. Stapleton assured the Board and the Superintendent that no students are left on the mountain without parental supervision. Dr. Cutler confirmed that the direction from the Board is that if there is prior arrangements by the parents, the student(s) would be allowed to leave the outing with the parents.

#### **4) School Board Comments**

Mr. Boehm queried about the storage building. Mr. Martin indicated that the committee is working on the storage problem. He asked them to survey each school about storage needs and prepare a plan. When the storage inventory is completed our architect will sketch plans for a storage building and prepare a project cost. Mr. Martin added that he will return to the Board with plans and a project cost and seek the Board's direction on the location of the storage building. Mrs. Beauregard, a representative on the committee, confirmed that they have been working on the storage issue.

Mrs. Couture informed the Board that Andy Towne, a CHS student, was honored as an Eagle Scout the Saturday after Thanksgiving.

Mr. Miller welcomed Jared Davis and Michael Clark, Student Representatives to the Board and asked if they had any comments.

Mr. Davis reported that in November the Student Council participated in Make a Difference Week, collecting 12,000 items; members of the Student Council participated in a Leadership Conference to build skills; they held officer elections; and attended a Regional Student Council Conference where cards were made for U.S. military troops overseas. He informed the Board that there will be a tree lighting ceremony at CHS on December 21 at 9:00 a.m. in the auditorium. Mr. Miller thanked the Student Representatives for their comments.

Mrs. Jewett reported that she attended the CHS parent forum where thirteen parents were in attendance. She commended CHS Principal Bob Manseau and Assistant Principal Laurie Rothhaus for their work.

Mr. Miller welcomed Dr. Cutler indicating that this is her first official meeting as Interim Superintendent and is looking forward to working with her. Dr. Cutler thanked Mr. Miller commenting that she was happy to be in Litchfield and working with a great staff.

#### **4A) GMS Discussion**

##### **1) Revised Floor Plans & Costs**

Mr. Martin reported that he and Jon Boyd of Harriman met with Ed Murdough of NH DOE regarding the proposed new elementary school plans and project cost, as well as the criteria for high performing schools. He indicated that Mr. Murdough consented to the square footage and cost of the proposed new elementary building, but would not approve the plans without the inclusion of public Kindergarten space. Mr. Martin noted that the Board allowed Mr. Cecil of Harriman to add Kindergarten space to the proposed plans on November 16.

Mr. Boehm wanted to clarification that the cost of the addition of Kindergarten space to the proposed elementary school project would not be included in the bond. Mr. Martin concurred.

Mr. Cecil presented revised floor plans and a revised project cost for the new proposed elementary school, which includes Kindergarten classroom space. He also noted that the Board queried the construction of the exterior walls of the proposed building. He indicated that the Building Committee was looking to reduce the cost of the project and decided that the construction of the building would be metal studs and drywall on the interior, but high use areas will have concrete block. The hallways will consist of a four foot high concrete block veneer with impact resistant drywall above. Mr. Cecil explained that concrete block veneer is layered with insulation, is good quality, and is more cost effective than solid concrete block. This type of construction is used nationally, including Kennebunk, Maine Elementary School and Exeter, NH. He added that the exterior of the building will be a combination of brick veneer and commercial grade vinyl siding. Mr. Cecil also reported that the Building Committee did a fine job by using space creatively in the floor plan by overlapping rooms in core spaces.

Mrs. Beauregard asked if the interior classroom walls would be concrete block. Mr. Cecil indicated that the classrooms would be constructed of high impact resistant drywall with insulation and sound resistance. Mrs. Beauregard wanted clarification that this is not a steel building, but a steel framed building. Mr. Cecil clarified that the building would have insulation in between the drywall and exterior with a vapor barrier for higher efficiency.

Mr. Cecil reviewed the revised floor plans with Kindergarten space included. He explained that one PreK/K room was deleted from the plans and four Kindergarten classrooms were drawn into the cutout in the plans. The structure is designed for expansion at build out or according to enrollment needs. Mr. Cecil noted that there was a question of the floor plans containing enough restrooms on the second floor and indicated that there are enough restrooms according to code. However, if the Board requires more restroom fixtures can be accommodated at no additional cost.

Mrs. Couture commented that wording on the floor plans referring to "core" and "build out" areas should be worded so that the public can understand that those areas can be enlarged for future growth.

Mr. Cecil reviewed the project cost of the proposed new elementary school. He explained the calculations for the total cost of the project, which is \$20,692,550, less 30% building aid (\$6,147,765), for a subtotal of \$14,544,785; with four additional Kindergarten classrooms and site development/equipment totaling \$1,510,790, less 75% direct reimbursement, the total project cost is \$14,922,483. The actual cost to town for the kindergarten addition is \$377,697 (\$1,510,790 less 75% or \$1,133,093 = \$377,697). Mr. Cecil also included a revised space allocation workbook along with the revised floor plans and project cost of the proposed new elementary school.

There was a discussion regarding an additional 3% in building aid for high performing school that could additionally reduce the cost of the project. Mr. Cecil explained that if you meet the criteria for the additional building aid for high performing schools it would add approximately \$400,000 to the project cost, but when the 3% is applied to the total project cost, it would potentially reduce the cost by \$660,000 in reimbursement. He added that, if eligible for the additional 3% in building aid, the Town would have to fund the energy efficient electives for the first year before the state reimburses the 3% building aid.

Mr. Boehm observed that it seems there is not much of a guarantee that the criteria for high performing schools will be met and that the risk involved is a concern. Mr. Cecil indicated that it is the Board's decision to go forward with the eligibility for high performing schools.

A discussion followed with a conclusion that the Board agreed not to go forward with the eligibility for the high performing schools.

- 5) **Recommended Action**
  - a) **Business Affairs**
    - 1) Board Vote on FY09 Operating Budget

Mr. Martin distributed the Level 2 Board reductions to the FY09 Budget. He reported that when calculating the Default Budget, two IEP driven positions were omitted. Mr. Martin distributed a revised Executive Summary for the FY09 Budget and a revised Special Education budget detail that included the two omitted positions and a \$29,000 increase in the cost of vocational transportation. He reported that the FY09 District Operating Budget total is \$19,003,648 and asked for Board approval of the budget.

**Mr. Boehm made a motion to approve the FY09 Operating Budget in the amount of \$19,003,648. Mrs. Couture seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.**

2) Revenue Budget

Mr. Martin distributed the Revenue Budget to the Board. There was a brief discussion and Mr. Martin asked the Board for approval.

**Mrs. Beauregard made a motion to approve the recommended Revenue Budget for FY09. Mrs. Jewett seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.**

Mr. Martin distributed a school tax rate analysis depicting a projection for the fund balance for 2008. He explained that the net impact could be \$1.59 on the 2008 tax rate due to the significant year end fund balance that reduced the 2007 tax rate. Over two years the projected tax rate increase is \$.30. In conclusion, over a two year period Litchfield has averaged a 2.43% increase on the tax rate.

3) Preliminary Default Budget

Mr. Martin distributed the preliminary Default Budget calculations. Mr. Miller clarified that salaries calculated in the Default Budget consist of whatever is in the teachers' contract, plus schedule steps increases, and 1% range placements. Mr. Martin reviewed each line item and concluded that the Default Budget total is \$18,627,604.

**Mr. Boehm made a motion to approve the preliminary Default Budget in the amount of \$18,627,604. Mrs. Couture seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.**

4) Building & Grounds Salary Range Decision

Mr. Martin asked the Board to approve the addition of a statement previously approved by the Board for administrative salary ranges indicating that the Site Facility Managers and Building & Grounds Coordinator will move up 1% in placement within their pay range upon satisfactory annual evaluation.

**Mrs. Couture made a motion to accept the statement to the Building & Grounds Coordinator's and Site Facility Managers' salary ranges. Mrs. Beauregard seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.**

6) Community Input

Al Raccio, 16 Bear Run Drive, suggested that in looking at green enhancements for the proposed new elementary building, Mr. Cecil research pre-wiring at the core level and, as you go through the project and reach the 50% point, if core infrastructures are in place, the execution of sensors may be viable to mitigate the time needed to make assessments for qualification without driving costs up and forcing you to make a commitment. It may be a way to minimize the gamble with State approval. Mr. Cecil felt it was an interesting idea and agreed to look into it. Dr. Cutler asked to have the information for the next meeting on December 12.

Al Raccio expressed concern regarding incidents across the District schools in the past week. He explained that he met with the CHS Principal and Assistant Principal regarding the events with findings of gun cartridges and notes culminating with the event at CHS on Friday, November 30. Mr. Raccio complimented the school administration and town departments for their management of the event, but asked if there is a plan in place to elaborate on communication to the public and what action the Board will take facing these issues.

Mr. Miller responded noting that the Board has not yet met on the incident that occurred last week and that it will be discussed in non-public session. He did not foresee that the Board would impose any direction on the administration.

Mr. Raccio offered his services and will follow up with communication to the Principal to provide additional services for communicate to the public. He offered to provide any support (as an applicant) on committees to be established. Mr. Miller thanked Mr. Raccio for his offer and asked that he contact Dr. Cutler with regard to that matter.

Carlos Fuentes of Litchfield expressed concern over the incident that occurred on Friday at CHS and asked if there is a plan that will be implemented for communication of the status of that event. Dr. Cutler indicated that a parent

forum was held at CHS tonight. She also mentioned that included in the FY09 budget is the purchase of a communication system for emergencies called Alert Now that allows administrators to compose a message that is sent out as notification to parents. She indicated that the incident at CHS was communicated on the District website and through the media. Dr. Cutler confirmed that safety is the District's primary concern and that at this time there is no system to communicate emergencies to parents any quicker.

Principal Manseau indicated that there were three separate incidents at CHS: one live round of .22 caliber bullet and 2 other shell casings were found, a letter went home notifying parents, followed by discussions with students in advisories. Shortly thereafter, a student brought a note found in a bathroom to our attention with political rhetoric and no reference to CHS. The police were called to investigate and identified the author of the note. When the individual was confronted, the individual admitted to writing the note. After conversations with the student, the parents were called in for a meeting to discuss the student's state of mind. It was decided that the student be kept out of school until the determination is made that the student is stable. Friday morning WMUR called about the letter sent home to parents. WMUR spoke with Dr. Cutler and Chief O'Brien on Friday morning. Mr. Manseau was presented with a threatening note found in a classroom. The level of threat was immediately assessed and options evaluated. A lock down was instituted at 11:50 a.m. An investigation was immediately instituted, students were interviewed. Once the investigation concluded and the school was taken out of lock down at 12:52 p.m. The individual who wrote the note has been identified and is being dealt with. Mr. Manseau indicated that the public may have assumed all the events were linked, but in fact were not related.

Sue Seabrook of Litchfield commented that CHS needs a distinctive evacuation plan and students need safe place to go in case of an emergency. Dr. Cutler indicated that work will commence on a better plan for evacuation as well as communication with parents. She expressed appreciation with the community support and input. She added that the alert system is not costly and the District is ready to take immediate action if the Board agrees. Dr. Cutler noted that the Alert Now system will be on the agenda for the next Board meeting on December 12.

Mrs. Sue Rafferty, 33 Century Lane, commented that she did not notice any announcement on the District website. Dr. Cutler confirmed that there was an announcement on the website as well as the CHS website.

Mrs. Rafferty expressed concern that there was no notification of the parent forum. Mr. Manseau indicated that it was announced on the local cable channel. Dr. Cutler confirmed that notification needs to be more immediate and direct.

Mr. Richard Rafferty, 33 Century Lane, expressed concern about the proposed new school, discipline policies, atmosphere of CHS, mutual respect, communication with staff, respect for the public, and the incidents that occurred at CHS.

Mr. Miller thanked Mr. Rafferty for his comments and expressed appreciation for his thoughts. He encouraged the public to attend more meetings.

Mr. Rafferty expressed concern with the grading system, noting that semester grades are not adequate and should be quarterly. Mr. Raccio agreed with Mr. Rafferty indicating that the grading system was a hinderance for financial aid for college and out of pocket expense. He urged the Board to consider quarterly grading. Mr. Raccio commented that he feels the staff of CHS, from the opening to the present, has been the best caliber of people the Town could afford to provide and that the District has done a commendable job.

Mr. Manseau agreed that we need to go back to quarterly grading in relation to competencies.

Mrs. Rafferty asked if the senior trip to Disney World has been cancelled. Mr. Manseau confirmed that it had been cancelled as there was very low student interest in the trip and the deadline for reservations with the airlines is tomorrow. He met with the senior class officers to devise a plan for a less costly senior trip.

Mrs. Rafferty expressed concern that the spirit of the senior class is poor and felt that we should help make it memorable for them.

7) **Old Business**

1) **Policies:**

a) Prevention of Drug & Alcohol Use by Students (JICH)

Dr. Cutler indicated that the policy has been discussed at many meetings and edited per the Board requests. She asked for approval as a first reading.

***Mrs. Couture made a motion to approve the policy for a 1<sup>st</sup> Reading. Mrs. Jewett seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.***

b) Administering Medication to Students (JLCD/JLCD-R)

Dr. Cutler indicated that, per Board request, the authorization to administer medication forms from all three schools has been made more consistent as well as the authorization for over-the-counter medications. Mrs. Seabrook clarified that the elementary school is mandated to have an over-the-counter authorization that must be signed by a physician or nurse practitioner as well as a parent. Dr. Cutler assured that there would be a separate over-the-counter authorization form for GMS.

***Mrs. Couture made a motion to approve the policy and procedures for a 1<sup>st</sup> Reading. Mrs. Jewett seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.***

c) Administrative Procedure to Accompany Student Conduct, Discipline, Due Process, & Pupil Safety & Violence Prevention Policies (JICD-R)

Dr. Cutler reviewed the packet prepared for the Board that included the advice from the District's attorney not to adopt such detailed procedures and use a more simplified, recommended procedure, which was also included in the packet. Also included in the packet was the attorney's edited version of the existing draft procedures [with strikethroughs and comments] and the revised procedures that reflected what the document would look like after applying the attorney's edits. A copy of Ed. 317 was included as well. Dr. Cutler suggested that handbooks can be consistent by using Ed. 317 as a guideline.

A discussion followed regarding discretion in the discipline of students who violate the procedures in relation to the circumstances. Dr. Cutler indicated that if a student brings something to school that they shouldn't and brings it to the administrator's attention, there will be no consequences and the parents will be called to retrieve the item. If it is discovered that a student has brought something to school that they shouldn't (even if the student didn't realize it was on his/her person) and the student does not turn it in, then the practice is a one day suspension.

John Oberti of Litchfield agreed that if a student discovers they brought in an inappropriate item and turns it in there are no repercussions, but disagrees with the one day suspension. He felt that if the student has no history of problems, there should not be a judgment.

Mr. Rafferty expressed concerns with the principals' interpretation of what a dangerous weapon is in relation to certain items. He indicated that the Safe School Zone policy does not state certain items as weapons. He expressed his disagreement with decisions that were made by the high school administration in such a case. Mr. Rafferty referred to an incident involving his son, which the Board Chair and Superintendent advised was not appropriate to discuss in public session. A lengthy dissertation by Mr. Rafferty ensued. He concluded that the policy and procedures should be researched more thoroughly and revised.

Board members and Principals agreed that the past practice for the discipline of a student in a situation involving a weapon is within the Principals' discretion to decide. Dr. Cutler suggested that the policy and procedure will be reconsidered and the attorneys will be consulted. We will bring the procedures back to the Board on January 2, 2008.

Mr. Rafferty expressed more concerns over a recent incident involving student discipline. More discussion followed.

The live broadcast of the previous portion of the meeting was interrupted several times to preserve student confidentiality.

**8) GMS Discussion**

2) School Board Response to Budget Committee

The Board's response, combined with the Building Committee's response, to the Budget Committee was presented.

*Mr. Boehm made a motion to approve the Board's response to the Budget Committee as presented. Mrs. Jewett seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.*

3) Community Awareness for Building Project

This item was deferred to the December 12 meeting.

4) Kindergarten Update

Dr. Cutler reported that she has received nothing from the State to delineate whether Litchfield has to offer Kindergarten next year. Unofficially, the NH DOE is planning on granting a one year extension, but it has not gone before the legislature.

Mr. Boehm suggested surveying the other districts that do not have public Kindergarten to determine what they are planning. A lengthy discussion followed. Mrs. Couture suggested circulating a Kindergarten interest survey at the time when first grade enrollments take place. Dr. Cutler asked Mrs. Couture for her help with the survey.

Mr. Martin asked for the Board's consensus on the type of bond once the bottom line number for the proposed new school is determined. The Board's consensus was a Capital Appreciation Bond. They directed Mr. Martin to gather data for both a 15 and a 20 year bond.

**9) Information/Correspondence**

Dr. Cutler referred to information included in the Board packets that was requested by Board members. The information is for information only and not discussion.

**10) Non-Public Session: RSA 91-A:3II (a-c)**

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

*Mrs. Jewett made a motion to go into non-public session at 11:02 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. Mrs. Couture seconded. The motion carried by roll call vote: Mr. Miller, yes; Mrs. Couture, yes; Mrs. Beauregard, yes; Mr. Boehm, yes; Mrs. Jewett, yes.*

**11) Return to Public Session**

*Mrs. Couture made a motion to return to public session at 11:29 p.m. Mrs. Jewett seconded. The motion carried by roll call vote: Mr. Miller, yes; Mrs. Couture, yes; Mrs. Beauregard, yes; Mr. Boehm, yes; Mrs. Jewett, yes.*

**12) Adjourn**

*Mrs. Beauregard made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:30 p.m. Mr. Boehm seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.*

**13) Upcoming Meetings**

*>Litchfield School Board: December 12, 19(if needed), 2007 - CHS Media Room – 6:30 PM*

Respectfully submitted,

Michele E. Flynn  
Board Secretary