

**LITCHFIELD SCHOOL DISTRICT  
DELIBERATIVE SESSION  
October 1, 2019  
The State of New Hampshire**

**Time, Place:** The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Campbell High School Auditorium.

**Present:** Moderator, Mr. John G. Regan, presiding.

School Board members: Mr. Brian Bourque, Chair; Mrs. Christine Harrison, Vice Chair; Mrs. Elizabeth MacDonald, Mrs. Tara Hershberger.

Dr. Michael Jette, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Cory Izbicki, Business Administrator; Mrs. Michele Flynn, Administrative Assistant.

Budget Committee members: Members were not in attendance.

Ballot clerks: Mrs. Nancy Pinciario

Mr. Regan invited members to join him in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Regan introduced Mr. Phil Reed, Vice Moderator, and reviewed the Moderator's rules and protocol for the Deliberative Session according to state law.

Mr. Regan introduced Mr. Brian Bourque, School Board Chair. Mr. Bourque introduced School Board members.

Mr. Regan read the Moderator's rules and announced that elections will be held on October 29, 2019 from 7:00 am – 7:00 pm at CHS.

*Note: The order of business of the Deliberative Session is sometimes conducted out of the warrant articles' numeric sequence. Recording activity in chronological order would make the minutes difficult to follow; therefore, the articles will be listed, with action taken thereon, in the order in which they were listed on the warrant.*

As is customary, Mr. Regan asked voters if they were in favor of allowing non-voters and employees of the school district who were in attendance to comment during the meeting.

*The majority was in favor of allowing non-voters and/or employees of the district to comment during deliberative session by voice vote.*

Mr. Regan read Article 1.

**ARTICLE 1**

*Shall the Litchfield School District vote to approve the cost items included in the collective bargaining agreement reached between the Litchfield School District and the Litchfield Education Association, which calls for the following increases in salaries and benefits at the current staffing level:*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Estimated Increase</i>
<i>2019-2020</i>	<i>\$ 256,587</i>
<i>2020-2021</i>	<i>\$ 294,278</i>
<i>2021-2022</i>	<i>\$ 303,872</i>

*and further to raise and appropriate the sum of \$256,587 for fiscal year 2020, such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in salaries and benefits required by the new agreement over those that would be paid at current staffing levels.*

*This Article has an estimated tax impact of \$0.28. This article was recommended by the School Board by a vote of 5-0-0 and was not recommended by the Budget Committee because of a tied vote of 6-2-0.*

Dr. Jette spoke to the article. He presented the following information:

- The agreement has been renegotiated and is different than what was brought forth in March
- School Board spent much time reflecting factors related to the failed vote in March
- Established shared concern about impact on teachers, morale and students
- Negotiation teams met to see if common ground could be identified
- Entered into hard negotiations to achieve an agreement that will attract and retain quality staff
- The School Board took all input from voters, Budget Committee and the public under advisement to renegotiate the contract
- The cost of the agreement that failed in March was \$1.1M with a \$0.43 tax impact
- The new agreement is \$260,377 less than the agreement that failed in March with a tax impact of \$0.28.

**Contract Overview**

Annual Increase:

Year 1: \$256,581 Reduced by \$137,842 from the contract presented in March 2019

Year 2: \$294,278 Reduced by \$80,016 from the contract presented in March 2019

Year 3: \$303,872 Reduced by \$42,519 from the contract presented in March 2019

Total: \$854,737 Reduced by \$260,377 from the contract presented in March 2019

Dr. Jette indicated the same negotiating team met as in the prior agreement with the addition of Business Administrator, Cory Izbicki. He noted there were two goals: 1) to attract and retain excellent teachers, and 2) a change to a consumer driven health plan.

Dr. Jette commented that when a teacher leaves we lose more than a teacher – we lose the professional development we invested in that teacher, mentoring, college credit reimbursement, personal materials from classrooms that teachers bring in, knowledge of the curriculum/programs/materials, organizational knowledge, relationships with students/colleagues/parents/administration. He stressed these are losses we cannot make up.

What failed in previous agreement?

COLA's and restored steps for teachers behind in salary, longevity increase.

Key Areas Renegotiated:

- Maintain competitive salary scale
- Provide Cost of Living increases to all teachers
- Increase longevity payments for most experienced teachers

Dr. Jette indicated that with this agreement we want to ensure we hire new teachers competitively and retain quality teachers. He explained the salary step scale and how it increases with degrees and experience. He noted that a step is typically one year, but there are also six different lanes for degrees and credits earned and teachers do not receive a step increase unless they receive an adequate evaluation.

Dr. Jette presented the following information regarding the renegotiated agreement:

### Goal 1

To stay competitive this agreement will:

Increase starting salary in year 1 from \$39,303 to \$39,696

Increase starting salary in year 2 from \$39,696 to \$40,291

Increase starting salary in year 3 from \$40,291 to \$40,997

Year 1: Salary step with 1% COLA

Year 2: Salary step with 1.5% COLA

Year 3: Salary step with 1.75% COLA

Longevity:

- 15-19 Years of Experience (last 5 in Litchfield): increase stipend from \$1,500 to \$1,590
- 20+ Years of Experience: increase stipend from \$2,500 to \$2,590
- Failed offer added \$1,000 to the total longevity in each range

Total 3 year cost: \$55,224

### Goal 2

Health Insurance:

If the contract is approved by voters in October, the Green and Red health plans will remain until June 30, 2020, which will have no cost increase to the contract in Year 1.

#### Beginning Year 2:

- Currently most employees on Green Plan with no deductible
- Premiums: Employees pay 18%; District pays 82%
- Cost to District \$8,155 for Individual Plan
- Yellow (Choice) Plan \$1,000 Deductible (single plan)
- Premiums: Employees pay 11%; District pays 88%
- Cost to District \$8,152

#### Additional Benefits of Yellow Plan:

- Lower rates over time
- No Cadillac tax in 2022
- Control over healthcare dollars
- Incentives for healthy lifestyle choices
- School Care claims nearly 90% of districts/towns on the Yellow plan

Dr. Jette indicated that there will be a projected savings in insurance of \$511 in Year 1; \$2,184 in Year 2; \$19,162 in Year 3.

Dr. Jette indicated we are not at the 80/20 split in insurance, but are moving in the right direction. He noted this new plan gives employees a chance to get used to the new health insurance plan. He emphasized the district is trying to retain costs with new the contract.

Dr. Jette explained the differences in the new agreement.

#### New Contract Language:

- School Opening Date
- Defined Work Day – controls arrival and departure of employees
- Review of Co-Curriculars and Stipends – fair and equitable language
- More flexibility with 186 days in the work year.

Dr. Jette indicated the estimated tax impact is approximately \$0.28 per thousand. He asked voters to consider how much we invest in our teachers and remember teachers invest in Litchfield as well.

#### Special Election

Dr. Jette explained that on October 29, the election process will be a bit different:

- A paper ballot will be used
- Voters will check in with their ID prior to voting
- After voting, voters will hand the ballot to the Moderator who will put the ballot in the ballot box
- Voters will be required to check out with the ballot clerks when leaving the polls.

The Moderator opened the meeting to comments and questions from the public.

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### *Questions/Comments from the Public*

Jack Scheiner, 10 Whittemore Drive, asked why the article failed in March.

Dr. Jette commented that feedback revealed the contract was too costly for the voters and too costly for the tax impact. He indicated the Budget Committee felt there was not enough of a cost shift in the health insurance and the Budget Committee was deadlocked on recommendation of the article in March.

Mr. Scheiner indicated that he has heard the budget is too high and concern that in past years funds were not properly appropriated to the schools. He asked what happened to the money paid out each year? He noted that more people are upset with the budget than with the raises for the teachers. He expressed support for the teacher salaries.

Dr. Jette thanked Mr. Scheiner for the feedback. He indicated the School Board has an open and transparent budget process. He explained the School Board holds an open budget work session in October and the public is invited to attend. He noted this year that session is schedule for October 19.

Peter Aimes, 21 Moose Hollow Road, thanked everyone involved that worked on the teachers contract and the process. He asked what happens if the article fails.

Dr. Jette indicated if the agreement fails we will re-open negotiations with the LEA and try to get an agreement to bring forward in March 2020. He commented it is important that the public understands last year the district negotiated with the LEA and the LSSA (support staff), but were not able to reach an agreement with the LSSA. He explained we are now in negotiations with the LSSA to reach an agreement for March 2020. Dr. Jette indicated we could be presenting two contracts on the ballot in March 2020. He commented there is a morale impact as teachers have lost good colleagues, which has an impact on their ability to do the best they can each day. He noted the staff is riding through this and appreciative of the hard work that has been done, and they are positive that voters will support this article.

Dr. Jette indicated there have been multiple times that a contract has failed in the past. He asked the community to keep in mind that the support staff are the people that clean the schools, cook the meals, answer the phones, and help keep the schools running efficiently.

Dan Harrison, 95 Pinecrest Road, asked about the impact of the recent State budget.

Dr. Jette indicated they are still trying to sort their way through it. He commented that the Legislature passed the budget last week and we are looking at how much Litchfield will receive and how we will use the funds, specifically how we use this to invest in our schools and avoid a tax spike. He explained if we use the total funds for tax relief, taxes will go down, but in subsequent years when this money is not available and deferred maintenance is included in the budget it will result in a spike in the tax rate. Dr. Jette indicated that districts were advised by the State not to use the funds for tax relief for that reason as these funds are only available for this biennium.

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Robin Corbeil, 4 Nesmith Court, asked if there is any percentage of the funding that will go back to the taxpayers.

Dr. Jette indicated the School Board has to discuss it and make a decision.

Mrs. Corbeil commented she was given the impression at the last School Board meeting that the money has to go back to the taxpayers and now it is up to the School Board to decide. She asked if that will be decided for next year.

Dr. Jette indicated it is for the current year.

Mrs. Corbeil asked if the money can all be spent this year.

Dr. Jette indicated it will come in two installments – this year and next year.

Andrew Cutter, 6 Moose Hollow Road, asked about the special meeting process and the tax rate process.

Dr. Jette explained before we could file with the clerks we had to put the DRA on notice to file with the courts early in July. He indicated the tax rate in Litchfield will be on hold until October 29. He noted we will upload all the information into the DRA portal that evening and the tax rate setting should occur in approximately 4 or 5 days. The Town Clerk/Tax Collector will get the bills printed and mailed. Dr. Jette emphasized that the town and school are working together to ensure there is not a supplemental tax bill.

Sue Seabrook, James Way, asked for an explanation of the DRA.

Dr. Jette indicated the DRA is the Department of Revenue Administration and they set the tax rates by following a methodical process for accuracy.

Janine Anctil, Tanager Way, with regard to the teachers' contract, commented another important reason that should be supported are the steps of experience in the first 15 years of a teacher's career. She indicated that is how it is set up in public education everywhere. She commented steps lost in past years by teachers result in several years of less pay. She noted if this article fails those teachers will lose another step and be that much further behind. Mrs. Anctil commented many people will ask why not wait until March. She indicated it is because teachers that are waiting for this to play out will be looking for jobs in other districts in March.

Hearing no amendments or further discussion, Mr. Regan indicated that **Article 1 will appear on the ballot as written.**

The Moderator thanked all who attended and accepted a motion to adjourn at 8:05 p.m. The motion was seconded. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

A true record of the Litchfield School District Deliberative Session,

Prepared by:



Michele E. Flynn

Administrative Assistant to the Litchfield School Board

A true record of the

Litchfield School District Deliberative Session

Attest:



Lynn Baddeley

School District Clerk

Submitted: October 8, 2019