

**GILFORD BUDGET COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**School District Budget Public Hearing**  
**January 13, 2009**  
**6:30 p.m.**  
**Gilford High School**

Members Present: Doug Lambert, Dick Hickok, Bill Phillips, J. Kevin Hayes, Sue Greene, Margo Weeks, Richard Young, Kevin Roy, Dale Dormody and John O'Brien

Members Absent: Skip Murphy, Terry Stewart

The Budget Committee recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Hickok began the meeting by welcoming members of the public and thanking them for attending tonight's public hearing. He asked each Budget Committee member to introduce themselves. Chairman Hickok further explained that the purpose of tonight's hearing is to receive public input on School District Budget items. Chairman Hickok advised members of the public what handouts have been prepared for tonight's meeting, including three (3) citizen petitions that have been received since the Budget Committee last met on January 8, 2009. The Budget Committee will take any necessary action on the petitions following the public hearing.

Chairman Hickok proceeded to run through the 2009-2010 School Budget Hearing Overview. He pointed out that unlike the Town budget, the School District does not accumulate an undesignated fund balance and any unspent portion is applied against the tax rate for the following year. A brief explanation followed on the summary of increases and decreases, as well as the default budget. Chairman Hickok then opened the public hearing for questions and comments.

Debra Zimmerman asked for an explanation of the relocation expenses of the SAU office. Assistant Superintendent Scott Isabelle stated that this covers three (3) possible options for the relocation of the SAU Office. Selectman Kevin Hayes further explained the problem that exists with the Town Hall floor/ceiling between the existing SAU office and the Department of Planning and Land Use. The file cabinets in the Department of Planning and Land Use need to be relocated to the lower level and the Town Clerk/Tax Collector's office needs additional space. The Planning Department files need to be easily accessible to staff since they are all active files.

School Board member Margo Weeks further explained that the School Board has looked at possible options over the past few years, since the Town does need the additional space. The money was placed in the budget because the SAU offices need to relocate.

Dick Campbell questioned the default budget being higher than the proposed 2009-2010 budget. He has researched the statute and feels that staff reductions should lower the amount of the default budget. Chairman Hickok stated that Budget Committee has discussed this matter and feels that they must be consistent from year to year in how they determine the amount of the default budget.

Assistant Superintendent Isabelle further explained that the School District has had discussions with the Department of Revenue regarding the default budget. He also stressed that the

School District has been advised to be consistent.

Linda Wright brought up the matter of the salary for the Family and Consumer Science Teacher still being funded in the 2009-2010 budget, since it has already been decided to not have a teacher in place for this position, due to her upcoming retirement. Superintendent Dr. DeMinico replied that these competencies will still need to be met in other areas of the curriculum and the amount has been left in the budget in the event the proposed plan does not work out. Extensive discussion ensued on how the curriculum for Family and Consumer Science will be integrated into existing subject areas. Linda Wright provided further information on what is actually covered in the existing Family and Consumer Science classes. Chairman Hickok replied that the Budget Committee relies on the School Board and SAU Office to assess educational needs of the District. The SB-2 method of voting will enable the voters of Gilford to make a determination on the citizen petition requiring the hiring of a certified Family and Consumer Science teacher for Gilford Middle School and High School, to replace the existing teacher who is retiring at the end of the 2008-2009 school year.

Sydney Leggett asked why, if the funds are in place, the recommendation is being made to eliminate the position. Why tamper with something that is not broken? Margo Weeks responded that when a natural opening occurs, it is the responsibility of Dr. DeMinico to assess and make best use of the District's funds. This is frequently done and often results in objectives being met in an alternative way. It provides an opportunity for the District to take reductions when it is possible. The program for Family and Consumer Science will continue.

Several parents made comments in support of the Family and Consumer Science program and expressed concern with integrating the curriculum onto already overburdened teachers and guidance counselors. Linda Wright pointed out that with the elimination of a teacher for this position, it also removes a department. Further discussion ensued on how the state mandated competencies will be integrated into existing subject areas, as well as the program being offered at the Huot Center. When asked how the budgeted \$60,000 will be spent on the Family and Consumer Science program, Margo Weeks stated that the School Board spends what it needs, budgets responsibly and give any remaining money back to the District to reduce taxes. Chairman Hickok further stated that the budget can't be overspent and since it is nearly impossible to have the budget come out exactly, it means money will be returned to the District.

Dr. DeMinico states that he must regularly look at alternatives available when there is staff turnover. Margo Weeks further stated that the School Board is comfortable with the budget they presented and it meets the District's educational needs.

Patti Madore questioned why there are three alternatives for the SAU office move. Assistant Superintendent Isabelle responded to this question and further stated that the figure of the highest costing alternative is in the budget. Patti Madore expressed concern with the state of the economy using the highest figure. Margo Weeks further clarified that the three options do exist and School Board has not yet made a decision on which option they will utilize. She reiterated that the District cannot overspend, but can return money. Further discussion ensued on the available options for the relocation of the SAU office. It was pointed out that if the School District pays rent to the Town for the use of the old library, it will have no effect on the tax rate. Carol Young-Podmore cautioned that it is important to have expenses properly delineated between the Town and School.

Extensive discussion ensued on the matter of eliminating the Assistant Principal position at Gilford Elementary School, as well as reducing one Guidance Counselor from 1.8 time to 1.4

time. Student/teacher ratios were discussed on length. Following a comment from a parent on math scores, Doug Lambert stated that the Budget Committee was informed that math improvement is being focused on. He further stated that he would rather pay teachers than administration. He spoke in favor of allowing the School Administration the leeway that they need to run the schools.

Dr. DeMinico further elaborated on proposed improvements in math staffing and programs. Mark Wright expressed concern with the concept of returning money to reduce the tax rate. He does not feel that this is in the best interests of the students. Maurice Rodrigue pointed out that many voters in the Town of Gilford do not have children in school. Carly Nichols responded that it is everyone's responsibility to educate the children of Gilford.

Gilford Elementary School Principal Sandy McGonagle stated that the student population in Gilford is declining, with Gilford Elementary taking the hardest hit. She explained how enrollment has declined significantly since 2003 and at this time, the staffing is the same as it was when there were over 200 more students in the school. She also provided an extensive explanation of how the responsibilities of the Assistant Principal will be handled by other staff.

Following a comment from the public on reducing staff in the SAU Office, Margo Weeks responded that the SAU Office employs excellent staff members who manage the School District and resources available to them. Debra Zimmerman provided statistics on the salaries of Superintendents in other districts. She expressed concern with the salaries in Gilford. Margo Weeks pointed out that the District's Business Administrator, Scott Isabelle, is also an Assistant Superintendent who assumes the duties of the Superintendent in his absence. She further stated that the School Board also regularly looks at the salaries in other districts and although Dr. Deminico and Scott Isabelle are higher paid, they are well qualified for the money they are paid.

Assistant Superintendent Isabelle advised the public that the SAU Office is responsible for payment to numerous vendors, bi-weekly payroll to 200+ employees, human resources functions including HIPPA and FMLA, and conducting contract negotiations.

School Board member Paul Blandford stated that he would like to respond to concerns regarding Dr. DeMinico's salary, since he was a Board member when he was hired. The position was originally advertised at a pay range of \$85,000 - \$100,000 and there were no applicants. The Board decided to re-advertise the position at a pay range of \$95,000 - \$110,000 and received two (2) candidates. Dr. DeMinico was deemed to be an excellent candidate and hired at the higher end of the pay range.

Doug Lambert stated that the Budget Committee worked hard on the 2009-2010 School District Budget. He stated it is appropriate for the SAU office to take a business approach with the existing School Board. They are tackling the math issues and reducing staff when people retire. He likes what he sees.

Sydney Leggett and Patti Madore urged support for the Assistant Principal and Guidance Counselor positions at Gilford Elementary School. Dr. DeMinico responded that births in Gilford show a declining trend based on a span of years.

Pam Hayes pointed out the loss of parent volunteers in classrooms and the changes in family structure. The Guidance Department is very important in providing support to these younger children. Mark Wright pointed out that with increasing abuse, alcoholism, divorce and financial

issues, it is vital to have support available at school.

The public hearing was closed at 8:34 p. m. At 8:38 p.m. the Budget Committee meeting convened. The Committee is only required to make a recommendation on Citizen Petition #1, which deals with raising the sum of \$131,256 for the salary and benefits of a full-time Assistant Principal and 4/5 Guidance Counselor at Gilford Elementary School.

Kevin Hayes moved to not support Citizen Petition #1. John O'Brien seconded. Motion carried by a vote of 10-0.

Assistant Superintendent Isabelle provided Committee members with State budget forms for signature.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandra J. Bailey  
Administrative Secretary