

7:02 Meeting commenced

Introductions

School Board Report: Tom Candon

Tom Candon started by thanking all for their continued support. The school board will be wrapping up the budget by Tuesday of next week. Tom shared slides with detailed budget information: this slideshow is available through BoardDocs and will be posted on the SAU 70 website. Enrollment is projected to go up slightly (see slides for breakdown). All grades will have 3 teachers, except for 2nd and Pre-K. Tom shared a slide that highlights any significant changes to the budget (slide is part of the slideshow available on BoardDocs/SAU 70 website). There is a plan to add a second PreK classroom for a total of 36 kids. Tom offered that if anyone had further questions to ask, he was available. Tom shared a slide that included estimated tax rate calculations: ie, it shows the estimated amount of taxes based on different home values expected for next year according to the proposed budget.

Stephanie Hamilton asked about negotiations for salary: the budget is already voted on before salaries are negotiated and she asked what happens. Tom said NH has already concluded negotiations, but it does happen for VT.

Additional details from Tom: The negotiations with the Hanover Education Association and Hanover Support Staff are completed with the collective bargaining agreements with both associations on the Dresden ballot as separate warrant articles to be approved by the voters. In NH, collective bargaining agreements have to be voted on separately from the budget and have to be resolved in time to make it on the ballot. In VT, collective bargaining agreements are rolled into the overall budget and not voted on separately. The negotiations do not have to be completed by the time the ballot goes to print for the upcoming fiscal year's budget. However, whatever is agreed to between the School Board and the teachers and support staff associations will have to be covered by savings identified elsewhere in the budget that is passed. The FY23 budget proposal includes step and track increases and health insurance increases, but no other salary increases (reference slide 12 in the budget presentation).

Bob Pape asked a question: he had heard about rebalancing of state payments and wondered how that would affect Norwich. Tom said it was called "the weighting study". It's a new way of looking at how the state disburses its funds based on different things, like poverty rates, ESL, etc. that would affect rates of funding. Based on what was proposed- it would have a significant impact on Norwich. What the final report suggested was one of two options: basing it upon revisions to weights proposed in the original study, and another option which looks at a cost-equity model and is still being investigated. The example given in the report itself- if implemented as proposed would have a significant impact on Norwich's tax rate: the examples given, based upon our FY20 budget estimate an increase of \$.27 on the tax rate using the cost equity model and \$.32 using the weighting model. There is still much to be considered in this restructuring as this is from a final report of the Task Force on Implementation of Pupil

Weighting Factors. Now the legislature needs to consider next steps. One of the recommendations of the task force was that the implementation be phased in such that towns experiencing high increases would not be affected all in one year.

Tom does not think it will affect the FY23 budget because the school boards across the State will already have approved their budgets. He said we do need to consider the likelihood of changes the following fiscal year. Tom mentioned that at January 5th board meeting they discussed the weighting system and shared further documents relating to this- they are available for more information and can be found at the links below:

The Task Force's website:

<https://ljfo.vermont.gov/committees-and-studies/task-force-on-the-implementation-of-the-pupil-weighting-factors>

The Task Force's report:

https://ljfo.vermont.gov/assets/Uploads/e11b031427/Final-Report-Weighting-Study-Task-Force-12_17_21.pdf

He expressed that the way funds are disbursed had not been changed for quite some time and that it did need to be looked at as it is clear that a more equitable system needs to be considered.

Tom offered up questions and encouraged all to attend next week's budget sessions and Town Meeting day on February 28.

Principal Report- Shawn Gonyaw

- 1) Mr. Gonyaw expressed thanks to the PTO for the donations this year. Teachers have been joyful about receiving things this year. Also wanted to express thanks, especially to Christina, for the funding for the swing set. We have almost reached our goal for fully funding the front swing set.
- 2) A little update about food service: Greg Bagnato and Shawn Gonyaw met with two different food organizations: they are looking at upgrading a bit. Right now it comes in brown bags from the high school and sometimes it gets cold- there is room for improvement. The plan for next year will be for the food to be finished on site: so it will come over in larger quantities and then food can be served on site. More will come as this plan takes shape.
- 3) The two elementary schools have decided to adopt a math program for next year: called Illustrative Math. It's exciting that we are doing this with the Ray School so that kids will have a similar mathematical experience. This will be a consistent program throughout school.
- 4) Mr. Gonyaw encouraged all to look at Board Docs. Greg Bagnato and Shawn Gonyaw gave a report last night to the school board. The test results were amazing: the test results were better than they have been in the past 6 years. Track My Progress showed great work as well. The climate survey also showed great results. You can go on Board Docs to see more.

- 5) Covid update: surveillance testing was done on Tuesday of this week. They tested almost 90% of the school. Three positive cases came back- one each in 3rd, 5th, 6th grade. Because kids have done a great job getting vaccinated they did not have to shut down or quarantine these classes. They will do rapid testing to make sure kids can come to school.
- 6) Shawn Gonyaw and Greg Bagnato had such a fun day today: today was the school wide celebration. It has been difficult to find ways to celebrate as a whole school due to Covid restrictions. The celebration they came up with was that Mr. Gonyaw and Mr. Bagnato would serve hot chocolate/cider and cookies and go from class to class. Mr. Gonyaw really enjoyed going to each class and the kids loved it. Now they will start again to fill up the aquarium!

Lily Trajman asked: she hasn't received any information about being close contacts for her 3rd and 5th grade students and was wondering if more information was coming? Mr. Gonyaw answered that per the state guidance, once kids are fully vaccinated then they are no longer considered a close contact. Families who did not have vaccine info on hand with the school were alerted and received take home test kits.

Christina Aquila said thank you for the cookie, and expressed that her daughter had a great day and enjoyed the celebration.

Nicole asked: if kids are vaccinated, then they don't have to do the test to stay program, but, are they allowed to take a test? She understands there are limited test kits available.

Mr. Gonyaw: Covid task force met today. There are limited tests available, and they are currently going to use the tests received for kids who are unvaccinated. If parents want to seek out rapid tests on their own then they could.

Stephanie Hamilton asked: is there a way to share the report outside of BoardDocs because the test results were very interesting? Mr. Gonyaw said he could put it in CrossWords.

Stephanie Hamilton asked about how much is left to fund the playground: Mr. Gonyaw will check with Jessica and e-mail her so that she knows.

Nicole asked: did test scores come home in the mail? She doesn't remember getting them. Mr. Gonyaw believes they did. He will check with Mr. Bagnato and make a note to resend Nicole Torres hers because she should have them.

Shawn reiterated that he is always available for questions or concerns via e-mail or phone.

Treasurer's Report – Christina Aquila

PDF attached with Christina's slideshow.

Jenny Barba doing a great job with Business Partners: additional \$950 since November. Jenny is still following up with 4 outstanding donations. Current total is \$1800, the goal was \$2000.

Membership drive: Jessica Eakin: net income down is because of PayPal, directory fees, etc. We may want to adjust expectations for next year.

Lucy Rojansky is running spirit wear and we expanded offerings to include magnets and stickers. The current budget shows a loss of \$99, but the income from the two spirit wear stores has not cleared yet.

Tea Towels- Ashley Clapp- they got out to everyone before Christmas, yay! We landed exactly where we thought we would, around \$700.

Fall Grants: all been spent, in the process of being finalized. Current balance is showing \$16,000. The balance once all is cleared is \$11,000.

Spirit Wear Holiday Sale: Lucy Rojansky

(Lucy was unable to attend the meeting but sent an update to Stephanie, who is gave the update). Lucy is thinking about just doing one spirit wear store, rather than two. The magnets and stickers were a good idea. If anyone wants to give her any feedback, please send them her way. Lucy has noticed there are a lot of "fees" associated with things.

Norwich Recreation Report - Brie Swenson

Brie doesn't have a lot of rec updates: after school is on hold and basketball is ready to go. Rebecca Reed thanked Brie for the ice skating rink and then asked what time do the lights turn on/off. Brie said that the high school kids play hockey around 7/8 and the lights are on a timer. The lights should be on, and only off if the rink is unskatable.

Sledding Party/Winter Community Celebration: More Info Coming

Stephanie Hamilton: skating party was going to be planned for the end of January, tentatively scheduled for January 22. The town is not comfortable having it this year because of Covid restrictions, so Stephanie and Brie are working together to plan an alternate event. It is still in the works, they are still coming up with a community winter event. The gift making event (postponed from Christmas) could be hosted in the Rec possibly- they just need to co-host with Rec- more details to come.

Lily Trajman remarked: She would love to partner with Norwich Women's Club next year on the gift-making festival.

The Mud Stomp- more to come. We are trying to work that out and just need a venue, etc.

Fundraising for MCS Swing Set

Christina Aquila is putting together a winter raffle to fundraise for the swing set. Christina shared: We have some extra MCS maple syrup and the gift basket will include that along with more locally donated items. There will be 1 grand prize winner, 5 second prizes, etc. The plan for right now: hoping to get details figured out this week- plan for now is \$10 for one ticket, 3 for \$25. Don't have to be present to win. The drawing will be held at the winter event (skating/sledding/etc). Look for more information to come next week!

Discussions: Room Reps for Special Teachers

Stephanie asked what people think about having room reps for special teachers (ie, collecting for holiday gifts, etc). Christina asked if anyone collected for holiday gifts for specials teachers this year: Stephanie Hamilton and Rebecca Reed didn't think anyone did it this year. Principal Gonyaw was enthusiastic about the idea and thought it would be great for specials teachers to be able to connect to parents.

Rebecca said that without parents in the school, room rep position has changed. She has received many questions from parent room reps this year and thinks that it is because parents are new and would welcome help in knowing what they are supposed to be doing. She is thinking that she'd like to have something together next summer even before school starts to help new parents. Christina suggested just having all room reps give a percentage of money for holiday gifts for specials teachers.

Lily Trajman also mentioned that we need a calendar of what room reps do, what the expectations are- and a calendar would be a useful way to get that information to people.

Meeting concluded at 8:02 pm

Next meeting is Feb 3

7pm Zoom

Attendance:

Leah Fosco

Christina Aquila

Thomas Candon

Meghan Kelliher

Shawn Gonyaw

Rebecca Reed

Bob Pape

Lily Trajman

Nicole Torres

Stephanie Hamilton

Grace Lyell

Brie Swenson

Brian Murphy

