

**Town of Chester
Budget Committee Meeting
Monday, January 20, 2020
Municipal Complex
Approved Minutes**

I. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Weider called the meeting to order at 7:09 pm and led with the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Attendance

Committee Members Present:

Mike Weider, Chairperson
Rhonda Lamphere, Vice-Chair
Ephraim Dobbins
Kathy Guilmette
Brennan Holmes, School Board Liaison
Stephen Landau, BOS Liaison

Others Present:

Jonathan Eckerman, Chester School Board
Jane Fowler, Chester resident
Darrell Lockwood, SAU 82 Superintendent
Sheryl Rich, SAU 82 Business Administrator
Royal Richardson, School Board Chair
Valerie Weider, Chester School Board
Penny Williams, Tri-Town Times

Other Members of the Public Unknown to this Recording Secretary

III. Member Comments

Selectman Landau asked the Committee if they had reviewed the Budget and whether they identified anything that was missing.

Chair Weider noted that he had just received the warrants.

Selectman Landau explained that the warrant articles are numbered incorrectly.

IV. Welcome and Announcements by the Chair

V. Public Comment

There was no Public Comment.

VI. BOS Update – Liaison Steph Landau

Selectman Landau said that there are two petition warrant articles: one to change Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples' Day, and one to change the Town to an SB2 Town. He explained that at Town meeting there must be a written ballot with a 3/5th Town vote for the SB2 to pass. Selectman Landau said that this may not have enough signatures yet to be a petition warrant article.

VII. School Board Update – Liaison Brennan Holmes

Chester School Board (CSB) Chair Richardson came before the Committee to update them on the House Bill 1691. He said that the CSB will be testifying at the Public Hearing in favor of House Bill 1691. CSB Chair Richardson explained that HB 1691 has been introduced to correct the funding for Kindergarten; they were shorted about \$49,000 after the removal of Kenogarten revenue as a funding mechanism.

CSB Chair Richardson said that if this should pass it will mean approximately an \$80,000 swing back to the Town. He thinks will possibly come after this year and will go into the unreserved fund.

CSB Chair Richardson thanked the Representatives and Senators for taking action on this issue.

VIII. Other Committee Updates – None

IX. Minutes –

- a. December 9th, 2019
- b. January 6th, 2020
- c. January 13th, 2020

Chair Weider requested that the Committee members review the last three sets of minutes so that the can be addressed at the next meeting and get any corrections that they see to Town Administrator Doda (not present).

X. Old Business –

None Discussed.

XI. New Business

a. School Budget Direction

Chair Weider invited the CSB members to join the Committee at the meeting table.

Chair Richardson, Ms. Weider, and Mr. Eckerman joined the Committee at the meeting table to discuss and review the Committee's questions on the Chester School Budget from last week's meeting.

Chair Weider reviewed the reductions and direction for the School Budget which were discussed at the last meeting:

- Enrichment
- Ball field irrigation
- Busing from after school from Pinkerton

Chair Weider said that they should take the buffer machine out of the budget and purchase it outright.

Chair Weider explained that the School Budget is a bottom line budget and they can take out or leave in whatever they choose, but the Budget Committee had asked for the CSB to reduce the budget by \$100,000.

The Committee and the CSB had much discussion about the Pinkerton after-school bus.

Vice Chair Lamphere said that although she understands that the budget is a bottom line budget, she does not want the after-school bus to stay in the budget.

The Committee and the CSB had much discussion about how and which stipend positions are funded.

Ms. Rich reviewed with the Committee the stipend positions that are being funded.

CSB Chair Richardson explained that this budget is for the next school year; the programs that they have listed are programs that they hope to have next year and they funded them in the budget because they intend to run the programs next year.

CSB Chair Richardson said that if the Budget Committee wants to ask the CSB to reduce the budget by a certain amount of money they need to ask and then the CSB will review the budget to see what they can reduce.

The Committee and the CSB continued discussing specific line items of the School Budget.

CSB Chair Richardson asked for clarification from the Committee if they are looking for an overall reduction of the budget of \$100,000 or removal of specific line items.

The Committee said that they are looking for a reduction in the budget of \$100,000.

Superintendent Lockwood came before the Committee to speak at 7:58 pm.

Superintendent Lockwood said that the school tax rate between Local and State went down 21.5% last year; he said that he is concerned by the words and implications of what was said earlier and that the Public listening will hear that the increase is because of the school. Superintendent Lockwood said that

the increase in the evaluations and the Town increase of 3.5% added up to be the increase in the tax rate.

Chair Weider clarified that kindergarten may not have impacted the tax rate the first year, but that every year after, kindergarten will have an impact by increasing the tax rate.

Selectman Landau advised that everyone had to work together to bring down the costs to the taxpayer; he noted that the School Budget and the Town Budget are put together and that the taxpayer pays one tax bill, not a School tax bill and a Town tax bill.

Superintendent Lockwood said that if the CSB agrees to cut out \$100,000 that the Budget Committee is requesting, and they get the additional \$83,000 as discussed earlier, and the Budget and the CESPA are approved, then the Budget will cost \$0.12 per thousand and CESPA will cost \$0.04 per thousand.

The Committee and CSB Chair discussed keeping the boiler replacement in the CIP.

Chair Weider said that the boiler replacement should be kept in the CIP.

The CSB and the Public departed the meeting at 8:04 pm.

The Committee discussed the CESPA contract.

The Committee discussed PACT costs, and who should pay the costs for the program.

The Committee discussed the CIP and the costs of the Highway Department and road work.

The Committee had an initial review of the drafts of warrant articles.

The Committee discussed which member will be composing the Budget Committee summary report.

Mr. Dobbins suggested that the Committee use absolute dollar amounts rather than using percentages when discussing budgets.

Vice Chair Lamphere agreed.

The CSB returned to the join the Budget Committee at the meeting table at 9:00 pm.

CSB Chair Richardson said that the School Board has reviewed the School Budget and have reduced it by \$100,000; this reduction puts the total School Budget at \$12,792,364, which equals \$0.12 per thousand and the CESPA contract is \$0.04 per thousand.

The CSB departed at 9:11 pm.

IX. Member Comments -None

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178 X. Public Comments - None

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180 XI. Next Meeting Date(s): Monday, January 27th, 2020 (also Public Hearing School District's
181 Proposed Budget and Warrant Articles)

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183 XII. Adjourn

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185 *Vice Chair Lamphere moved to adjourn the meeting; Mr. Holmes seconded the motion. The vote*
186 *was unanimous in the affirmative; motion carried.*

187 The meeting adjourned at 9:11 pm.

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189 Respectfully submitted,

190 C. Molly Qualters,

191 Recording Secretary