

**Town of Chester Budget Committee Public Hearing
November 14, 2022
Approved Minutes
7:00 PM**

Budget Committee members present:

Michael Weider, Chairman
Ephraim Dobbins, Vice Chair (joined at 7:02 p.m.)
Kathy Guilmette
Charlotte Lister
Sabrina Harris, Chester School Board Liaison

Budget Committee members absent:

Jack Cannon
Michelle Dupras
Ron McKinnon
Selectmen Liaison Steve D'Angelo, Board of Selectmen Liaison

Guests present:

Royal Richardson, Chester School Board Chairman
Chester PACT

I. Meeting to Order

Chairman Weider called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

II. Attendance

III. Announcements by the Chair – Welcome

IV. Public Comment

There were no members of the public present.

V. BOS Update – Steve D'Angelo

Selectman D'Angelo was not present at the meeting.

VI. School Board Update – Sabrina Harris/Royal Richardson

Ms. Harris reported the School Board has completed negotiations for the para-educator contract coming up for a vote in the next session. The two items the Board wanted to focus on in this negotiation were the wage scale and insurance.

They have moved from a ten-step wage scale to a seven-step wage scale. There were individuals that were off the wage scale, so part of the goal of the negotiation was to fit them onto the stepped wage scale and set a maximum pay rate.

It has been a longstanding issue that the School has not offered insurance to para-educators. They have come to an agreement that they will provide 80% of single coverage on the Orange plan. They also increased the buyout offer amount to be in line with the CBA agreement.

Mr. Richardson reported that last year, the School was notified by the IRS that they were non-ACA compliant, as the options they presented were not compliant with providing affordable healthcare. If nothing was done to remedy this situation, they would be penalized. This was part of the impetus going into the negotiations to look at an entry-level insurance option for an individual.

Ms. Harris said as part of the negotiations, there was conversation around retirement contributions. The New Hampshire Retirement System was proposed, but this is a very costly option. Instead, they negotiated an increase in the 403(b) contribution.

Ms. Harris reported that District Business Administrator Ms. Sheryl Rich submitted her resignation effective December 9, 2022. They are actively working to find a replacement.

Mr. Richardson reported that Pinkerton Academy is expecting an increase in tuition of 9 to 11% for general education. The School Board anticipated an increase of roughly half that amount, so they are actively reviewing the budget to determine how to offset this increase. They are also asking for information from the Academy to clarify the reasons for the increase.

Ms. Harris said the School has brought in an organization to help them understand future enrollment numbers to better project classroom sizes and understand what is driving the increases in enrollment.

Ms. Harris reported that transportation is an area of concern and they are negotiating those costs to try to avoid potential increases.

Mr. Richardson reported that the standardized test results were back to pre-COVID levels.

VII. Minutes

a. September 12, 2022

Ms. Guilmette moved to accept the minutes of September 12, 2022 as written. Ms. Lister seconded the motion. A vote was taken. The vote passed 5-0-0.

VIII. New Business

a. Financial Reports (School and Town)

Chair Weider sent the Committee members financial reports for the Town and minutes from the Board of Selectmen meetings to understand what the various departments are requesting.

b. Budget Calendar

Chair Weider said he will work on the budget calendar and distribute it before the next meeting.

c. Other Items

Chair Weider noted that two members of the Board have not attended two meetings. He has attempted to contact them, with no success. He will tell them if they cannot attend the next meeting, the Committee will look for new alternates.

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IX. Next Meeting Date – December 12, 2022

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X. Adjourn

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*A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. A vote was taken, all were in favor.
The motion passed unanimously.*

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Respectfully submitted,
Beth Hangel, Recording Secretary