

GILFORD BUDGET COMMITTEE MINUTES
School District Budget Public Hearing
January 12, 2016
7:00 PM
Gilford High School

Members Present: Chairman Kevin Leandro, Richard Grenier, David Horvath, Susan Greene, Karen Thurston, Robert Henderson, Harry Bean, Norman Silber.

Members Absent: Kevin Roy, Jeffrey Beane and Dr. Leslie Suranyi Jr.

The Budget Committee recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Leandro began the meeting by welcoming members of the public and thanking them for attending tonight's public hearing. He then asked the members of the Budget Committee to introduce themselves.

Mr. Leandro stated that the Budget Committee's FY2016 proposed School District budget is \$25,667,251 which is an increase of \$276,055 over last year's budget. The Budget committee began review of this budget back in December which included many long nights of discussion. The Budget Committee feels this is a very good budget. Chairman Leandro gave an overview for the public. Total estimated revenue is \$5,913,229; Total estimated state adequacy aid is \$4,599,008. The total amount to be raised by taxes is \$15,155,014 which is a .29 cent increase (per \$1000) from last year. Next, Mr. Leandro gave a summary of General Fund budget increases totaling \$522,647. He gave a summary of decreases for the General Fund budget totaling \$277,358 and thanked Mr. Isabelle for the heating oil savings. Last was review of the Budget Committees changes (over the School Board's recommendations) which equaled a total of \$115,508 in reductions to the General Fund.

Chairman Leandro discussed the total Default Budget, which (by law) is last year's budget plus or minus increases or decreases and minus onetime expenses. He explained to the public how the Budget Committee and School Board differ on onetime expenses in the default budget and discussed this in length at their 01/07/16 meeting. They felt that certain onetime expenditures should not have shown up in the default budget as it makes it artificially inflated. Extensive discussions took place regarding the default budget between the budget committee and the School Board Members. Norman Silber read into the record a memo dated 01/07/2016 from Scott Isabelle regarding Mr. Silber's Information request on one time expenditures. He followed this up with an article that appeared in the Union Leader on 12/28/2015 relative to default budgets. Richard Grenier asked what the point was of this lengthy conversation based on the fact the Budget Committee has no say on the default budget. Chairman Leandro stated it's to make the public aware so it doesn't happen in the future. Discussion ensued.

Chair Leandro allowed Mr. Fred Butler to speak. He stated this was a good point to bring up, thanked the budget committee and pointed out they still do not have a say and respectfully asked them to move onto the budget. Chairman Leandro stated the Budget Committee is respectfully asking Scott Isabelle to work on this in the future. David Horvath indicated the reason is so the public can make an informed choice on the budget versus the default budget; further, that a committee be formed to create new procedures for the next budget season.

Chairman Leandro finished by stating Norman Silber will follow up on the bill in the legislature (HB1221) as Mr. Grenier motioned for at the 01/07/16 meeting.

Chairman Leandro went back to review the estimated revenues, state adequacy aid. The total amount to be raised by taxes is \$15,195,820 which equated to an estimated impact on the tax rate of .31 cents per \$1,000. Chairman Leandro concluded by stating that the tax difference between the budget committee proposed budget and the default budget was \$40,806.00 Chairman Leandro then opened the public hearing for questions and comments.

Ms. Christine Bloom asked about the change in revenues by approx. \$19,000 from prior year. Scott Isabelle said that was due to reduction of monies from the Town of Gilmanton and the summer school salaries were reduced. Ms. Bloom asked (based on tonight's discussion) if the Budget Committee is looking to present a warrant article in the future for the budget committee to vote on the default budget. Norman Silber answered yes; he intends to draft a petition warrant article for next year's election irrespective of what happens with the proposed house bill (HB1221).

Mr. Tom Chase asked what the 1.5% cut in salaries was cut down from. Scott Isabelle answered 3%. Mr. Chase stated that the support staff is the lowest paid and this cut means they will get less than the cost of living (like in food services department). Chairman Leandro agrees, but because they lump them in with the rest, they should really be separated out (instead of just Non-union and Administrators). Mr. Chase's point is anything less than 3%, they are going backwards. It was Mr. Horvath's opinion that his taxes went up 15% and that was unsustainable for those raised to be given out every year as social security did not receive a raise at all.

Ms. Landow said if you start taking away from non-union, segregating non-union when it comes to wage increases etc., that if you keep that up, they will unionize and costs will really go up. In her opinion, it would be better to give the 3%; if you want longevity, which you need, to give these employees fair increases. Mr. Leandro said that in his opinion, when you unionize, you have to give up something and that he was not feeling threatened that would happen.

Jack Landow said the School Board could make it simple by giving the lower tier employees a higher % or go with a straight dollar amount (\$500 for example) for everyone. That may be a lot to the lower tier and not a lot for the higher tier, but it would work. Discussion ensued on how the Superintendent distributes to Administrators.

Ms. Rae Mello-Andrews said that 39% of support positions make under \$16 per hour.

Ms. Roselyn Roy asked the budget committee to focus on going over this year's budget as this is the budget public hearing and to stop with these issues; they can't change at this point and she respectfully requests the committee get back to the budget.

Sue Allen stated the Budget committee just looked at salaries and asked about considering years of service.

Ms. Landow asked the Budget Committee to put back the \$72,615 that was taken out of salaries and to double the merit increase by giving 3%. Norman Silber said the Budget Committee has met every Thursday since October. No one came to make that case and no one from the public showed saying don't cut wage increases.

Ms. Patty Madore said that she has not gone to any of the meetings; this is her first meeting and in her opinion, all she is hearing is Chairman Leandro's opinions and that he is not listening to the public and feels they are being attacked. She said that tonight is for the public to express their concerns. Chairman Leandro stated that no one was attacking anyone and that this is a hearing on the budget; he is listening to everyone and his job is to defend the work that the Budget Committee has done. Mr. Grenier felt with all due respect that the Chair has interrupted those trying to speak. Robert Henderson stated that he wants to hear from the public and that there will be vacancies in the budget committee in March and encouraged people to sign up as it is a good educational experience.

Ms. Sharon Farrah asked if they cut the staffing wages, etc. how it will affect the kids' education. Ms. Mello-Andrews echoed that by asking each member of the budget committee if they have kids in the school system. Chairman Leandro said that the Budget Committee did not cut anything for the kids. Superintendent Kent Hemingway explained to Ms. Farrah how a committee was formed 5 years ago to study enrollment, etc. and that this year's reduction in the Middle was a retirement, which caused a district wide position to be changed. Last year it was at the High School and they strive to do through attrition.

Mr. Jack Landow stated that you public versus private is dimensional and that they would need to look at the value of what they are getting and that the School is getting great value in the people that they have.

Mr. Chris McDonough encouraged parents in the audience that have kids in school to attend the School Board meetings on the first Monday of every month and welcomed them to come get involved and be part of the process.

Chairman Leandro announced that the Deliberative Sessions would be on Tuesday, February 2, 2016 at 7 pm for the School and on Thursday, February 4, 2016 at 7pm for the Town and closed the public hearing at 8:30 PM.

Chairman Leandro then called a Budget Committee Meeting to order at 8:30 PM.

Norman Silber made a motion to reconsider the issue of the Bond and to open the matter; seconded by David Horvath for discussion. Mr. Silber explained that he is asking for this motion to hear from the public as he felt there was a lack of transparency in the default budget after hearing from Mr. McDonough etc., he is in favor of not recommending. Superintendent Hemingway said this has been discussed/identified 5 years ago and that they have a responsibility to take care of the school. Things have been pieced together to get by based on economic times etc. but now it is time to do the work, they have solid numbers. Lengthy discussion ensued. Chairman Leandro called the vote for reconsideration; motion passed; (5-3)

Norman Silber made a motion for the Budget Committee to not recommend the Bond on the Warrant Article; seconded by Susan Greene for discussion. Extensive Discussion ensued, various members of the budget committee wondered what changed since the vote last Thursday. Mr. Horvath said reintroducing for reconsideration is not uncommon. Discussion ensued. Mr. Grenier asked for Chairman Leandro to call the vote. Chairman Leandro let conversation continue and Mr., Grenier again asked that he call the vote. Chairman Leandro called the question and motion failed; (8-2).

Ms. Gretchen Anteno, a member of the public asked the Budget Committee to sell her on wanting to become involved as a young Mother with two children. Discussion ensued.

Motion made by Robert Henderson to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 PM; seconded by Norman Silber and passed with all in favor; (8-0).

Respectfully submitted,

Angela A. Bovill
Executive Assistant

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