

DEERFIELD SCHOOL BOARD
DEERFIELD COMMUNITY SCHOOL – LIBRARY - 66 NORTH ROAD
DEERFIELD, NEW HAMPSHIRE
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2023 ~ 6:00 PM

Members/Participants: Kendra Cohen; Chair, Ellen O'Donnell, Zach Langlois, Nate Oxnard, Danielle Palmer
Supt. Patty Sherman, Principal Kristen Withee, Recording Secretary Trish Lafond

1. Call to Order – Ms. Cohen, Chair
Chair Cohen called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.
2. Pledge of Allegiance
Chair Cohen led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Minutes – November 1, 2023 , November 15, 2023 & November 29, 2023
A motion was made by Nate Oxnard, seconded by Ellen O'Donnell, to move the minutes of November 1, 2023 as written.

**3-0-1
MOTION CARRIED**

A motion was made by Nate Oxnard , seconded by Ellen O'Donnell, to move the minutes of November 15, 2023 as written.

**4-0-1
MOTION CARRIED**

A motion was made by Nate Oxnard , seconded by Ellen O'Donnell, to move the minutes of November 29, 2023 as written.

**ALL IN FAVOR
MOTION CARRIED**

4. Immediate Business
 - A. Public Comments
Chair Cohen asked that the first public comments not be about the high school agreements. She will allow comments from the public after the discussion of that topic.

Don Gorman stated he has lived in Deerfield for 42 years and served on the school board for 12 years. Last year his school tax rate was \$7.25 and this year it is \$15.66. Why has the amount doubled?

Ellen O'Donnell responded that she had researched the school tax rate for the past several years and last year's rate was \$14.50.

Mr. Gorman wanted to have a discussion about the tax rate and asked to be added to the agenda. He also asked why meetings start at 6 pm when people are still at work, they used to start at 7 pm. He doesn't understand why there is no dialogue or why there is a 3 minute limit for speakers. He does appreciate the board using proper procedure with motions and seconds.

Linda McNair-Perry asked for a tax rate discussion to be added to the agenda.

Kim Black stated the school still needs space. Things are going to have to be changed/cut. The board needs to get creative. Get rid of the modulars. Cut positions. She also hates the amount of time students are on computers. They need to learn to read and write. Cut the line for the technology subscriptions. In the end of the year surveys for student placement, she would like to see a bubble about teachers and why a parent thinks a certain teacher would benefit their child.

Stacy Marchionni stated she did not realize how much time students are on computers. She agrees with Ms. Black. We need to back to paper and pencils. Using manipulatives increases retention. Students shouldn't use computers until they are in grades 4/5. She suggested using 7th and 8th grade students to set up for the live feed of the school

board meetings. She also wants to see less technology subscriptions and agrees DCS needs more space. She stated it is disingenuous to blame the community for not passing budgets.

Nancy Shute said computers are supplemental to teaching. She retired as a teacher at DCS 4 years ago, but now is a substitute teacher. Plans left for her by teachers include very little computer work.

Greg Whitmore said the live stream must work. People cannot get on and want to. Taxes are on everyone's mind. When did a budget last get passed? He said to look at DCS for redundancy. Look at staff and where cuts can be made. People attending tonight want to talk about high school.

B. Agenda Review – Ms. Cohen

Add a facilities discussion concerning the fire alarm system as H.

Add nonpublic session under "a".

Add a tax rate discussion.

C. Review of Proposed H.S Agreements

Chair Cohen presented a slid show of information regarding the proposed high school agreements and the work leading up to them It will be posted the SAU and town websites. She went over the 2023 timeline. The final survey of this year's 8th graders showed 27 students wanting to attend Coe-Brown Northwood Academy (CBNA) and 20 students wanting to attend Concord High School (CHS). Current tuition proposals for 3 years are:

CBNA- \$19,717.00 per student

CHS- \$18,557.59 per student (CRTC included) Current CHS student's tuition will also increase to this amount.

These costs do not include transportation or special education services.

Chair Cohen thanked Ms. O'Donnell and Ms. Palmer for their many hours of hard work on negotiations. She then opened the floor to public comments.

Kim Black thanked the board for their work. The tuition numbers aren't crazy. What will the plan be for current CHS students who want to transfer to CHS? That is to be determined.

Greg Whitmore told the board that a warrant article with this information will pass.

Stacy Marchionni thanked the board. The board listened to the voters and negotiated well with CHS to get the CRTC included. She recommended the board act on these agreements without a warrant article as it's late in the game.

Bobby-Ann Dostie thanked the board. She said there should be a warrant article and not just acted on by the board. The costs presented are close to what is spent on students at DCS.

Nancy Shute said the board deserves more than thank you. The board was listening. Any cuts made will be at DCS. The community supported school choice without a tax increase. She is very concerned about what will happen at DCS.

Don Gorman thanked Ms. O'Donnell ND Ms. Palmer for their hard work. He feels the current proposals don't have a chance to pass. There are a lot of angry people in town. The only chance of them passing is to get the information out to all the members of the community.

A motion was made by Kendra Cohen, seconded by Ellen O'Donnell to move the 3 proposed high school agreements as outlined and written.

Nate Oxnard said the board last year was not trying to disadvantage students. They were trying to respect the voters desire for no increase in taxes. There will be a significant tax impact next year. The cost of school choice will be significant.

Zach Langlois said the cost of school choice should be by warrant article. It will be a significant tax impact next year. Voters need to weigh in with an affirmative vote. The board should not sign the 3-year agreements. It needs to be decided by the voters. Everyone's voice needs to be heard.

Supt. Sherman understands Zach's request for clarification. Are the proposals being approved to move on to the DOE or approved to act on?

Zach stated this year's 8th graders will be covered by the budget. Further years need to be by warrant article.

Nate asked are the tuitions in the current proposals based on 3 year agreements? Will they change if less than 3 years?

An amendment to the motion was made by Zach Langlois, no second, to place the 3 agreements on a warrant article.

Kendra Cohen said not approving the 3 agreements puts the tuitions in jeopardy.

Danielle Palmer feels the board needs to act tonight.

There was much more discussion about how the proposals should be approved.

Supt. Sherman believes Concord assumed the board would use their right to approve the 3-year agreement. If the agreement is less than 3 Concord can change the cost of tuition.

A motion was made by Kendra Cohen, seconded by Nate Oxnard, to amend the original motion to place the 3 agreements on the ballot as a warrant article for approval and the board not sign them tonight.

3-2

MOTION CARRIED

Supt. Sherman said the voters must approve the 3 schools as schools of record on the warrant article.

Kendra Cohen and Ellen O'Donnell to withdrew the original motion.

A motion was made by Ellen O'Donnell, seconded by Danielle Palmer to approve the 3 agreements.

3-2

MOTION CARRIED

Zach would like to put 2 warrant articles on the ballot.

Warrant 1-place the 3 agreements as written.

Warrant 2-back out of the agreements and stay with Concord High School.

A motion was made by Zach Langlois, seconded by Nate Oxnard to amend the motion to place 2 warrant articles on the ballot. One being the 3 agreements as written and the other being a contract with Concord High School in case the first article fails.

2-3

MOTION TO AMMEND FAILED

A motion was made by Ellen O'Donnell, seconded by Danielle Palmer, to approve the 3 agreements as written.

Zach wanted to wait to allow feedback. Ellen said they worked hard to get the 3-year agreements and not have longer agreements. Kendra promised to honor what the town wants.

VOTE ON THE MOTION

3-2

MOTION CARRIED

D. Consent Agenda (1 item)

A motion was made by Zach Langlois, seconded by Nate Oxnard, to approve a staff member request for a child rearing leave.

ALL IN FAVOR

MOTION CARRIED

E. Review of Correspondence

1 email from Janet Goodridge concerning the high school agreements.

A motion was made by Zach Langlois, seconded by Nate Oxnard, to add public comments.

**ALL IN FAVOR
MOTION CARRIED**

Marie Brinson thanked the board for their hard work and for looking out for out for the town taxes. She didn't vote for choice but people have been aware of increased taxes with school choice. She would like to be able to hear the meetings better.

Don Gorman said the board proposes but the public has the final say with their vote. Following proper procedures would be helpful. The chair needs to limit the discussion for an amendment to the amendment not the full issue. He said a serious look at staff reduction is in order in case this all blows up and doesn't work out.

Linda McNair-Perry appreciated the discussion, but she also got "lost in the weeds" of the discussion about amendments. People are upset because they don't understand the taxes and how they increased. School taxes only went up 7% and you put on a new roof. It is a misconception that the school tax is responsible for the increase.

F. FY 24-25 Budget

At the admin meeting on Friday, 12-1-23, Supt. Sherman and administration spent several hours reviewing the budget and administration expressed their concerns of living with a default budget year after year. They acknowledged they could move money around in a default budget, but it's hard to do until you know you have excess money in a line. Administration made a list of cuts they could make to bring the proposed budget under the default amount. They needed to cut \$76,000-\$77,000 and were able to find \$80,000.00. They went line by line and identified areas where they could use ESSER III grant funds that have to be spent by September 30th. They need the boards support before putting these changes into the budget. ESSER III funds will cover the large cut in the math line. Chair Cohen is concerned that the more we take out the less the needs will be met.

Supt. Sherman said the public commented about redundancy at DCS. To cut Integrated Arts staff or specialists would change the education at DCS. Students will not get the amount of education they need in these areas. The specialists are trying to prevent students from entering the special education population. One teacher in special areas cannot cover a K-8 school.

The board reviewed the updated budget numbers from Amber Wheeler.

Zach Langlois said the budget is up \$710,000.00 with high school choice next year.

A motion was made by Zach Langlois, seconded by Nate Oxnard, to move the proposed budget of \$18,777,106.00.

A motion was made by Nate Oxnard, seconded by Zach Langlois, to amend the amount to \$18,696,361.00 in line with administration's cuts.

4-1

MOTION CARRIED

A motion was made by Zach Langlois, seconded by Nate Oxnard, to move the amended budget of \$18,696,631.00.

4-1

MOTION CARRIED

Chair Cohen reminded the board that special education costs are legally mandated.

Supt. Sherman will break down subscription costs in the board drive and tell what they are for.

G. Draft Warrant Articles

Budget

Para Agreement

Special Meeting if Para Agreement fails.

\$150,000.00 to special education trust fund from fund balance.

\$150,000.00 to special education trust fund from taxation.

Chair Cohen asked if the board can enter into a long term Power Purchase agreement without a warrant article?

H. Facilities

Deficiencies were found in the sprinklers.

Extra detectors requested by DFD. They are not required by the State Fire Marshall.
Sound during fire drills needs to be increased.
R.B. Lewis is asking how to proceed.
Old and new fire systems are being run in tandem. By code, the old system must be removed.

A motion was made by Zach Langlois, seconded by Nate Oxnard, to have Supt. Sherman ask the State Fire Marshall to sign off on the new fire alarm system. Have installer and designer on site.

**ALL IN FAVOR
MOTION CARRIED**

Fire Chief Matt Fisher has not responded. He is asking for items outside of the plan approved by State Fire Marshall.

Tax rate Discussion-
Board of Selectmen had meeting 12-4-23.
Historically, fund balance off-sets tax rate. Those funds have dried up. Balance used to improve the school.
New tax rate will continue and increase next year.

5. Board Reports

Tabled to next meeting

- PTO Update
- Executive Board Report – Ms. Cohen less
- Principal's Report – Ms. Withee
- Curriculum Review Board – Ms. O'Donnell
- MBC Committee Update – Mr. Langlois

6. Policy – Ms. Sherman

Tabled to next meeting.

- ACN- Nursing Mothers Accommodations 3rd Reading
- DIA Fund Balances 1st Reading
- EHAB Data Governance 3rd Reading
- GBCD Background Investigation and Criminal History Records Check 3rd Reading
- JCA Change of Class of School Assignment Best Interests and Manifest Hardship 3rd Reading
- JKAA Use of Restraints and Seclusion 3rd Reading

7. Informational Items

Supt. Sherman informed the board there needs to be a public hearing on 12-20-23 at 6 pm.

8. Public Comments

Linda McNair-Perry said there is no such thing as a local ordinance for building code. Everything is at the State level.
Nancy Shute said the board needs to inform the public about decisions concerning budget increases and high school.
Marie Brinson seconded Nancy Shute. Get information out to the public.

A motion was made by Kendra Cohen, seconded by Nate Oxnard, to enter nonpublic session at 9:25 pm.

ROLL CALL

Kendra Cohen -YES Ellen O'Donnell-YES Zach Langlois-YES Nate Oxnard-YES Danielle Palmer -YES

9. Non-Public Session - NH RSA 91-A:3, II, a

During nonpublic session the board discussed compensation of employees.

A motion was made by Zach Langlois, seconded by Nate Oxnard, to exit nonpublic session at 9:30 pm.

ROLL CALL

Kendra Cohen -YES Ellen O'Donnell-YES Zach Langlois-YES Nate Oxnard-YES Danielle Palmer -YES

A motion was made by Nate Oxnard, seconded by Zach Langlois to ratify the Agreement with the Deerfield Paraprofessionals.

ALL IN FAVOR

MOTION CARRIED

10. Appointments/Resignations – Ms. Sherman

A motion was made by Zach Langlois, seconded by Ellen O'Donnell to approve staff resignations with regret.

ALL IN FAVOR

MOTION CARRIED

11. Adjournment

A motion was made by Nate Oxnard, seconded by Zach Langlois, to adjourn the meeting at 9:32 pm.

ALL IN FAVOR

MOTION CARRIED

Next Scheduled Deerfield School Board Meeting: December 20, 2023 ~ 6:00 P.M. Deerfield Community School