

**MINUTES
ANNUAL SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING
TOWN OF BARNET
MARCH 6, 2012**

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. at the Barnet Elementary School gymnasium by Moderator Dennis McLam. The Barnet Elementary School band played the National Anthem. Moderator Dennis McLam led the salute to the flag.

ARTICLE 1. To elect a Moderator.

- Moderator stated that one-year term of Dennis McLam is expiring.
- Dennis McLam nominated by William Biddle.
- Mona Marceau made motion that nominations cease. Seconded.
- Moderator instructed Town Clerk to cast one ballot for Dennis McLam.

ARTICLE 2. To elect a School Director for a term of 3 years.

- Moderator stated that three-year term of Shellie Samuels is expiring.
- Shellie Samuels nominated by James McFaul.
- Hearing no further nominations, Moderator announced that nominations would cease.
- Moderator instructed Town Clerk to cast one ballot for Shellie Samuels.

To elect a School Director for a term of 2 years.

- Moderator stated that two-year term of Lori Werdenschlag is expiring.
- Lori Werdenschlag nominated by William Biddle.
- Mona Marceau made motion that nominations cease. Seconded.
- Moderator instructed Town Clerk to cast one ballot for Lori Werdenschlag.

ARTICLE 3. Shall the voters of the Barnet Town School District approve the borrowing of not more than \$60,000 for a period of 5 years for the purpose of replacing heating boilers at Barnet School at an annual estimated cost of \$14,000 to be raised by taxes?

- Shannon Larocque explained that one of the boilers at the school has failed, and the others are also more than twenty years old. The heating system piping is also substandard. Funding the replacement of boilers now is necessary to avoid risk of expense and school closure due to failure of the system in future winters. The School Board investigated wood pellet and wood chip boilers; these were found to be cost-prohibitive. An estimate for two oil burners and replacement of piping was quoted at \$57,000. A future conversion to an alternative fuel would require oil burner back-up; the proposed replacements would be compatible to serve in this function.
- Mona Marceau asked what kind of warranty, if any, the new boilers would have.
 - o Shannon Larocque responded: This would depend upon the manufacturer; thus far only one estimate has been obtained from one plumber using one particular manufacturer. The School Board plans to put the project out to bid to several plumbers.
- Mona Marceau asked if the School Board is confident that it can complete the project for not more than \$60,000.
 - o Shannon Larocque responded: Yes, the School Board is confident of this; hopefully through the bidding process, and a possible partnership with the Town of Barnet, which is replacing a boiler in a Town building, the project can be completed for less than the amount estimated.
- William Marshall asked if Efficiency Vermont grants are available for this project.

- o Shannon Larocque responded: At this time no grants appear to be available. The School Board hopes that grants for wood pellet or wood chip systems may be available in the future.
- Steven Adler asked why the School Board is requesting a total of \$70,000 (annual estimated cost of \$14,000 for five years) when the article states that not more than \$60,000 will be borrowed.
 - o Shannon Larocque responded: The estimated borrowed amount of \$60,000 does not include finance charges; the estimated annual cost of \$14,000 does include finance charges.
- Mona Marceau made motion to so move. Seconded.
- Passed by voice vote

ARTICLE 4. The total proposed budget of \$4,378,089 is the amount determined by the school board to be necessary to support the school district's educational program. State law requires that the vote on this budget be divided because (i) the school district's spending per equalized pupil last year was more than the statewide average and (ii) this year's proposed budget is greater than last year's budget adjusted for inflation.

(School Budget)

Part A. Shall the voters of the Barnet School District authorize the school board to expend \$4,267,556, which is a portion of the amount the school board has determined to be necessary?

- Mona Marceau made motion to so move. Seconded.
- John Cook asked how many students actually attend school at the Barnet Elementary School.
 - o The School Board consulted with Supervisory Union Superintendant Martha Tucker and Business Manager Janice Ouellette.
 - o Louis Bushey responded: For the school year beginning August 2012, 197 students are projected.
- Mona Marceau asked how many tuitioned high school students are projected.
 - o Louis Bushey responded: Currently there are seventy-eight tuitioned high school students; eighty-two are projected for the school year beginning August 2012.
- John Cook asked if any non-high school students are tuitioned, and what the tuition rates are for specific high schools.
 - o Shellie Samuels responded: No non-high school students are tuitioned. Ms. Samuels also listed tuition rates for various high schools.
- Shellie Samuels stated that 220 total students are projected to be at the Barnet Elementary in the school year beginning August 2012. The 197 quoted above does not include pre-school students.
- Rosemary Kinerson asked if some pre-school applicants are refused admission.
 - o Louis Bushey responded: Some three-year-olds were turned away this year because there was a space-shortage caused by a large number of four-year-olds.
- John Cook stated that, using the 220 students quoted by Ms. Samuels, the proposed budget has a per-pupil cost of \$13,900.
 - o Shellie Samuels responded: Such a per-pupil cost is difficult to determine because the School Board can only control the educational program for kindergarten through eighth grade, whereas the budget includes costs for high school tuitions. Also, the 220 students include pre-school students, who are included in the supervisory union's budget, not the school district's.
- Jeffrey Riley asked what the per-pupil cost is for pre-school and kindergarten.

- o Shellie Samuels responded: Pre-school costs include \$82,500 in salaries and benefits for the entire supervisory union. Barnet is responsible for forty percent of this total. Kindergarten per-pupil costs cannot be determined because these expenditures are not isolated from the whole of the school budget.
- Jeffrey Riley asked whether or not the Barnet School is included in the federal No Child Left Behind program.
 - o Shellie Samuels responded: The State of Vermont has applied for a waiver from No Child Left Behind; the School Board does not have authority over the school district's inclusion in the program.
- Mary Jean Thielen asked what the School Board's plan is for classroom teacher staffing, given the projected decrease in number of pupils in the next school year.
 - o Shannon Larocque responded: There will be an overall decrease of one classroom teacher.
- Mona Marceau asked how the School Board will decrease its number of classroom teachers if it plans to hire two new teachers, as stated previously.
 - o Principal Shawn Gonyaw responded with an explanation of the new three-tiered system of education the school plans to implement. Part of this implementation will be the transitioning of two current classroom teachers to Tier II instructors. In their new capacity they will work with students struggling to grasp basic concepts to increase proficiency in identified weaknesses. Only one of these two former classroom teachers will be replaced with a new classroom teacher.
- Some discussion and debate followed regarding the benefits of the three-tiered system.
- Robert Roos asked why the Waterford School's per-pupil cost is \$5,000 less than Barnet's.
 - o James Schenck responded: This is alarming; Barnet's per-pupil cost is, however, generally comparable with area schools. Part of Waterford's fiscal advantage may be that its teachers have less seniority than Barnet's.
- John Cook asked if the teacher contracted compensation listed on page ninety of the Town Report includes benefits.
 - o Shellie Samuels responded: No, these figures do not include benefits.
- John Cook asked if the increase in the overall budget can be largely attributed to the increase of nearly \$100,000 over last year's reported teacher contracted compensation.
 - o James Schenck responded: This is one cause, but crafting a budget is never as easy as targeting one number. The increase in contracted compensation is ultimately required to achieve to overall mission of the school.
- Joyce Evans spoke: Cutting costs in the category of salaries and benefits may be deemed necessary financially, but the students will be adversely affected. Also, there are many things in this category that the School Board does not have control over, including the cost of health insurance.
 - o John Cook responded: The School Board does have some control over health insurance costs in negotiations with the teachers' union. It is not fair to expect the taxpayer to pay for teachers' insurance plans that are much richer than the taxpayer is able to purchase for himself.
- Mona Marceau asked the School Board to explain why the school budget increased this year.
 - o Shannon Larocque responded: Over the past several years the budget has been level-funded. Staff cuts have been made to accomplish this, but it is not reasonable to further cut staff and remain on target with the school's mission. Several cuts in other categories have been made, but cuts other than salaries and benefits are not ultimately forcible in achieving level budget funding. A list of cuts made, and staffing cuts considered but rejected, were reviewed.
- James McFaul made motion to call the question. Seconded.
 - o Approved by voice vote to proceed to vote on the question.
- Main motion approved by voice vote.

Part B. If Part A. is approved by the voters, shall the voters of the Barnet School District also authorize the school board to expend \$110,533, which is the remainder of the amount the school board has determined to be necessary?

- Mary Mallon made motion to so move. Seconded.
- Richard Mallon requested that the School Board explain this article.
 - Louis Bushey responded: Through a complicated formula the State determines the maximum amount that the School Board may request with only one vote of the town. This maximum amount cannot include spending per equalized pupil greater than the previous year *and* be greater than the previous year's budget adjusted for inflation. The proposed budget this year is \$110,533 greater than this State-dictated single-vote maximum.
- Jeffrey Riley asked if the amount in "Part B." is earmarked for any particular purpose.
 - Shannon Larocque responded: These funds are not earmarked for any certain purpose, but are simply a part of the entire budget created by the School Board; the figure in "Part B." is arbitrary in the view of the School Board. This second vote is due in part to the School Board's effort to decrease the budget last year by applying \$70,000 in revenues from a reserve account transfer.
- Stephanie Giese made motion to amend the original motion to add \$5,000 to reinstate field trips to the Fairbanks Museum into the budget. Seconded.
 - Moderator Dennis McLam noted that the voters may add funds to the budget but cannot bind the School Board to use them on any particular expenditures.
- Brooke Jefferson asked how the School Board plans to ensure accountability for educational gaps with students who are struggling.
 - Shannon Larocque responded: The School Board is addressing this problem by integrating a three-tiered approach as described by Principal Gonyaw.
- David Willis asked if it is true that the homestead education tax rate will be higher than the non-residential education tax rate, and if so, if this is due to the increase in the school budget.
 - James Schenck responded: This is true; it may be in part due the increased school budget. The School Board does not have any control over the non-residential rate.
- Caroline Adams asked if the proposed budget of \$4,378,089 includes the \$110,533 requested in Part B.
 - Shellie Samuels responded: Yes, the \$4,378,089 is inclusive of both parts of Article 4.
- Caroline Adams asked if the Fairbanks Museum field trip budget cut is in any way related to the appropriation requested by Fairbanks Museum from the Town of Barnet in Article 10 of the Town Meeting Warning.
 - Shellie Samuels responded: The amount requested in the Town Meeting Warning is unrelated to the school field trips budget.
- Caroline Adams asked if all of the cuts discussed by the School Board are included in this budget request.
 - Shellie Samuels responded: All of the cuts discussed earlier in this meeting were implemented except for the cuts in salaries and benefits. These were unimplemented proposed reductions in staff.
- Caroline DeMaio made motion to call the question. Seconded.
 - Approved by voice vote to proceed to vote on the question.
- Ms. Giese's motion to amend the original motion to increase the amount requested by \$5,000 to reinstate field trips to Fairbanks Museum passed by voice vote.
- Amended motion, to approve expenditures of \$115,533, passed by voice vote.

ARTICLE 5. To see if the school district will authorize its Board of Directors to borrow money to pay its lawful debts and expenses for the fiscal year which ends June 30, 2013 in the amount not to exceed 90% of the anticipated collection of taxes and receipts of other funds to be used for those purposes?

- Mary Mallon made motion to so move. Seconded.
- Robert Roos asked if the purpose of this borrowing is to offset cash flow shortages during certain parts of the year, and if bids are requested to obtain a favorable rate.
 - o Shellie Samuels responded: Mr. Roos is correct regarding the purpose for this borrowing. Bids are always requested and competitive rates obtained.
- Motion to so move passed by voice vote.

ARTICLE 6. To transact any other non-binding business that may legally come before the meeting.

- Cathy McLam asked how many elementary school-aged children living in Barnet are either home-schooled or attend school somewhere other than Barnet School.
 - o Shellie Samuels responded: The School Board does not have this number readily available, but they will investigate this.
- Shellie Samuels spoke: The School Board thanks the voters for supporting the budget. The School Board publishes a newsletter in which the budget and several other matters discussed at this meeting are enlarged upon.
- Jeremy Roberts asked about the format of School Board meetings with regard to the inclusion of executive sessions at the start of the meetings.
 - o Lori Werdenschlag responded: School Board meetings begin at 6:00 p.m., with a short executive session of finite length occurring at the beginning of the meeting. This allows for the public session to begin at a later, more convenient, time for residents.
- John Cook spoke regarding the supervisory union's budget, urging Barnet's congressional delegation to correct the current situation in which the town does not have the opportunity for direct vote on the question.
 - o Shannon Larocque responded: Supervisory union meetings are public and welcome participation from Barnet residents.
- Shannon Larocque spoke: The current School Board contains some members who may be interested in stepping down to allow participation on the Board by other residents.
- Motion to adjourn made by Theodore Faris. Seconded.
 - o Passed by voice vote.
- Meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Dennis McLam, Moderator

Shellie Samuels, School Director

Attest: Benjamin Heisholt, Town Clerk