

**MINUTES  
ANNUAL SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING  
TOWN OF BARNET  
MARCH 4, 2014**

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. Mr. McLam led the salute to the flag, announced that lunch would be served by the school cafeteria at noon, and explained the rules of order for the meeting.

**ARTICLE 1 To elect a Moderator.**

- Moderator stated that one-year term of Dennis McLam is expiring.
- Dennis McLam nominated by William Biddle.
- Dennis Kauppila moved that nominations cease. Seconded by Mona Marceau.
- 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 Louis Bushey is expiring. Moderator indicated that Mr. Bushey would prefer not to be re-elected to a three-year term, but would be willing to serve a two-year term.
- Robert Farlice-Rubio nominated by Alan Boye.
- Kathleen Larney-Young nominated by Louis Bushey.
- William Biddle moved that nominations cease. Seconded by Peter Everts.
- Robert Farlice-Rubio spoke: Mr. Farlice-Rubio referenced his employment at the Fairbanks Museum & Planetarium and other employment history in support of his interest in education. He indicated that he has three children in the Barnet School system, and would be honored to serve on the School Board.
- Kathleen Larney-Young spoke: Ms. Larney-Young indicated that she also has three children in the Barnet School system, and that she has worked in the educational field for many years. She indicated that she also would be honored to serve the Town on the School Board.
- A vote by paper ballot was had, as required by state statute for the office of School Director.
- While paper ballots were being tabulated by the Board of Civil Authority, the floor was granted to speakers wishing to make announcements:
  - o State Representative Leigh Larocque spoke regarding matters pertaining to the Vermont Legislature which are of significant interest or concern to Barnet voters. Among these were state education funding, and an emergency grant given to the Barnet School when the septic system failed in the fall of 2013.
  - o Shirley Warden spoke regarding two matters:
    - New state legislation will affect the Barnet Transfer Station & Recycling Center. This will require that waste disposed is charged according to weight; the Town will need to purchase a scale to facilitate this change. The act will also require that recycling be performed in a “zero-sort” manner.
    - The Planning Commission/Zoning Board (PC/ZB) is in the process of adopting an update of the Town Plan. This is the first step in a process for which the PC/ZB has acquired a grant, and which will involve drafting a new Town Plan and Zoning Ordinance/Zoning Bylaws to include a flood resiliency plan.
- The Moderator announced the tabulated results of the paper ballot vote: Robert Farlice-Rubio elected (Robert Farlice-Rubio: 101 votes; Kathleen Larney-Young: 48 votes; Louis Bushey: 1 vote; spoiled votes: 2).

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

- Moderator stated that two-year term of Lori Werdenschlag is expiring. Moderator indicated that Ms. Werdenschlag does not seek re-election.
- Kathleen Larney-Young nominated.
- Louis Bushey nominated by Caroline Demaio.
- Louis Bushey spoke: Mr. Bushey had originally planned not to seek re-election this year; however because of the changes to take place in the next year at the Supervisory Union, he believes it may be of benefit for him to remain to provide continuity on the Board.
- Kathleen Larney-Young declined nomination.
- Hearing no further nominations, Moderator announced that nominations would cease.
- Moderator instructed Town Clerk to cast one ballot for Louis Bushey.

**ARTICLE 3 Shall the voters of the Barnet School District authorize the Barnet School Directors to use a portion of the FY13 audited General Fund surplus in an amount necessary to eliminate the audited fund balance deficit in the Food Service Fund?**

- The School Board presented an informational slideshow regarding the school and the school district budget.
  - o Louis Bushey spoke regarding the following: the budget at a glance, potential cuts considered to level-fund the fiscal year 2015 budget, descriptions of functions listed in budget, major upward budgetary pressures, and high school tuition rates.
  - o Mary Houde spoke regarding the following: student populations for fiscal years 2011 through 2015, population trends, classroom configurations, and class size policy.
  - o Shellie Samuels spoke regarding the following: staffing levels kindergarten through eighth grade, eight-year staffing trend, and services provided by the supervisory union.
  - o David Warden spoke regarding the following: behavior/social improvement, winter wellness, grants awarded, and extended learning opportunities program.
  - o Lori Werdenschlag spoke regarding the following: curriculum work, literacy assessment data, retirees, and student census.
- Robert Roos spoke, noting that the presentation indicated that destructive incidents have experienced a percentage decrease, and asking if the School Board has data with regard to the actual numbers of incidents.
  - o Principal Shawn Gonyaw, who is not a Barnet voter, was allowed to speak by consent of the voters: On page 88 of the Town Report school behavior data for 2009 through 2013 is reported. This demonstrates that behavioral referrals have decreased from 2,405 in the 2009-2010 school year to 170 to date in the current (2013-2014) school year.
- John Cook spoke: It would have been helpful if the information reported in the presentation had been printed in the Town Report. The presentation indicates that there is an anticipated increase of six high school students in fiscal year 2015. The maximum high school tuition rate is approximately \$16,000. This translates to a maximum increase of \$96,000. Why does the budget indicate an increase of \$188,177?
  - o Louis Bushey responded: The \$188,177 includes special education at the high school level, whereas the \$16,000 per student tuition does not.
  - o James McFaul responded: The total high school tuition increase would also include the increase of rates for each student enrolled, not just the total tuition of the additional students enrolled.
- Mona Marceau spoke: The School Board should be applauded for their efforts with regard to this presentation, but it came too late. Voters need more time to review this information prior to Town Meeting. The School Board reported last year that the budget for tuitions is based on

a three-year rolling average. Why then does the six student increase in one year automatically cause an increase of tuition by six students?

- o Louis Bushey responded: The three-year rolling average to which Ms. Marceau refers pertains not to tuitioned high school students, but to the calculation for Equalized Students, which is one variable in the State's education funding formula. This calculation includes, but is not limited to, high school students.
- Louis Bushey spoke: This article does not specify a number for the surplus because the fiscal year 2013 audit has not been completed; the final surplus number has therefore not been determined.
- James Choate spoke: Why does the Food Service Fund have a deficit? The fund should be self-supporting.
  - o Louis Bushey responded: The Food Service Fund has had a deficit each of the five years Mr. Bushey has been a School Director. The voters have agreed to cover the deficit with property taxes, rather than attempting to make the program self-supporting by increasing meal prices, et cetera.
- Sarah Cook spoke: On page 92 of the Town Report the unaudited General Fund surplus is reported to be \$177,975. On page 94 of the Town Report the unaudited Food Service Fund deficit is reported to be \$6,802.
- Robert Roos moved the article as warned. Seconded by John Cook.
- Shirley Warden spoke: A number of speakers are speaking without the microphone, or without being recognized by the Moderator. The Moderator should not allow this.
- Sherry Tolle spoke: The School Board implied at the 2013 Town Meeting that the fiscal year 2013 budget was "bare bones." Why therefore was there a significant surplus at the end of the year?
  - o Shellie Samuels responded: This is in part due to reduced spending in some categories, and in part due to variances between the predicted student population and the actual student population.
  - o Lori Werdenschlag spoke: The budget is formed in October each year, and contains a prediction of the student population as it will be a year or more in the future. It is easy to understand how these predictions are sometimes inaccurate.
- John Cook spoke: The voters should note that the surplus represents approximately the same amount as voted in the "second vote" of the 2013 budget vote.
- Mona Marceau moved to amend the motion to add the phrase "not to exceed \$10,000," causing the amended motion to be as follows: "To authorize the Barnet School Directors to use a portion of the FY13 audited General Fund surplus in an amount not to exceed \$10,000, to eliminate the audited fund balance deficit in the Food Service Fund." Seconded by Richard Mallon.
- The amendment to the motion was passed by voice vote.
- The motion was passed by voice vote.

**ARTICLE 4 Shall the voters of the Barnet School District authorize the Barnet School Directors to transfer any remaining FY13 audited General Fund surplus to the Long Term Maintenance Fund?**

- John Cook moved the article as warned. Seconded.
- John Cook moved to amend the motion to the following: "To authorize the School Directors to transfer \$116,000 of the remaining FY13 audited General Fund surplus the FY15 budget to pay off the school bond." Seconded.
- Louis Bushey spoke: Mr. Bushey would support paying off the school bond, but we do not know if it is possible to do so according to the terms and conditions of the bond.
- Joyce Evans spoke: What is the current balance of the Long Term Maintenance Fund?
  - o David Warden responded: There is currently a zero dollar balance in this fund.

- Joyce Evans suggested that Mr. Cook's proposed amendment should be changed to affect a \$45,000 transfer to the Long Term Maintenance Fund, and the remaining portion of the surplus applied to the payoff of the school bond.
- Caroline Demaio spoke in opposition to both the proposed amendment on the table, and Ms. Evan's suggested change thereof: The School Board seems to be competent; the voters should trust them to determine the best use of the surplus.
- John Cook spoke: According to State statute, the School Directors cannot spend the surplus without authorization of the voters.
- Alan Boye spoke: Further clarification is needed regarding whether or not the School Directors would, according to the terms of the bond, be able to pay off the bond.
- Louis Bushey spoke: The School Directors are not familiar enough with the terms of the bond to answer without researching this matter. It is possible that there are early payment penalties.
- William Graves spoke: Mr. Graves would be in favor of applying the surplus to the school bond. The terms and conditions of the bond should not be relevant, since the transfer from the surplus (either for payment of the school bond or to transfer to Long Term Maintenance Fund) would occur in the same fiscal year as the bond payment (FY 2015), regardless whether the amendment passes, and regardless of whether the bond is paid early or not. The Selectboard has successfully used reserve funds to plan for future expenditures, and Mr. Graves would like to see the School Directors do so also. Mr. Graves moved to amend the motion to the following: "To authorize the School Directors to the transfer \$116,000 of the remaining FY13 audited General Fund surplus the FY15 budget to pay off the school bond, and thereafter to transfer any remaining FY13 audited General Fund surplus to the Long Term Maintenance Fund."
- Moderator stated that the motion currently on the table is to amend the original motion (as warned) to the motion as stated by Mr. Graves.
- The amendment to the motion passed by voice vote.
- The motion passed by voice vote.

**ARTICLE 5 Shall the School District vote to adopt a budget of \$4,927,127 for the school year ending June 30, 2015 including an appropriation of a sum of money for the support of schools with provisions for current expenses, capital improvements, a deficit, if any, and for other lawful purposes?**

- Dennis Kauppila moved the article as warned. Seconded by Richard Mallon.
- John Cook moved to amend the motion to decrease the proposed budget in the amount of the transfer from the surplus fund to the Food Service Fund as approved in Article 3 plus the amount of the payoff of the school bond as approved in Article 4. Seconded.
- Celina Wright asked if the deficit in the Food Service Fund and surplus in the General Fund are carried forward into the fiscal year 2015.
  - o Louis Bushey responded: These figures are not carried forward into the fiscal year 2015 budget. The voters should be cautious about reducing the budget on the basis of the bond payoff approved in Article 4, as it is not clear if the terms of the bond will allow this.
  - o Shellie Samuels responded: The School Directors cannot use the surplus without voter approval; for this reason the transfer from the surplus is not in the budget.
- James McFaul spoke: If the payment of the bond, as approved in Article 4, is applied would this automatically cause the budget to decrease? Also, it should be noted by the voters that the cost of special education is approaching the cost of direct instruction.
- Caroline Demaio spoke in opposition to the amendment: The School Directors are not certain the bond can be paid in advance; it is therefore short-sighted to reduce the budget on the basis of the transfer approved in Article 4.

- Jeremy Roberts spoke: Mr. Roberts is in favor of the proposed amendment. Will the budget experience a surplus if the School Directors hire less experienced teachers to replace those who are retiring this year?
  - o Shellie Samuels responded: This may not be the case. Less experienced teachers often have more expensive benefit packages, and also may require that the School District pay for the teacher obtaining a master's degree.
  - o Louis Bushey responded: There is also an agreement in place whereby after twenty years of experience at the school teachers are offered an early retirement package; this allows these retirees to continue to receive twenty-five percent of their wages while in retirement.
- Gail Warnaar spoke in opposition to the budget: The School Board is faced with a difficult job in crafting a budget of which the greatest percentage they have no control. Ms. Warnaar concurs with Ms. Demaio in suggesting that the voters trust the School Board to use the surplus wisely. The voters should not parse the budget to the degree of questioning "paper and pencils." Also, there has been some discussion of late regarding either eliminating the Supervisory Union or expanding it; would the School Board speak to this?
- Sherry Tolle spoke: How many Barnet children are either home-schooled or attend private schools?
  - o Lori Wedenschlag responded: It is difficult to obtain this information because the Barnet School must rely on responses from local private schools, who do not always respond to Barnet's requests for information.
- Sherry Tolle spoke: Ms. Tolle's count estimates that there are approximately thirty-four home-schooled and private-schooled students in Barnet.
  - o Shellie Samuels spoke: The Barnet School has a good idea of how many home-schooled students there are because many of them access school services.
- Louis Bushey responded to Ms. Warnaar's inquiry regarding the supervisory union: At the next School Board meeting the Board will consider options for consolidating the Caledonia Central Supervisory Union with the Caledonia-Essex Supervisory Union. The meeting occurring in Danville recently was not organized by any supervisory union or school board. There may be some financial savings to be realized with consolidation, but it would dilute Barnet's representation on the supervisory union board.
- William Graves spoke: Mr. Graves would disagree with Ms. Warnaar's comment regarding "paper and pencils," since the amendment on the table pertains to reducing debt, and not minutia of classroom operations. Also, savings resulting from consolidation would seem dubious considering the increase in the budget for financial services resulting from moving the bookkeeper position from the Barnet School to the Supervisory Union office.
  - o Shellie Samuels responded: The increase includes an annual audit, which was not included in the fiscal year 2014 budget, and includes Barnet costs that were previously unfairly assumed by the Supervisory Union.
- Alan Giese spoke in opposition to the motion: The transfer from the surplus should not be used to decrease the budget, since the School Board is not certain of the implications that may result. If a surplus happens to result from this, the voters can choose how to address this at Town Meeting next year.
- Michael Kennedy spoke: Does the School Board have a five-year maintenance plan for school and equipment?
  - o Louis Bushey responded: The School Board does not have a five-year plan, but budgets annually for maintenance that will be required.
  - o David Warden responded: Facilities Director Burleigh Huntoon brings to the attention of the Facilities Committee maintenance actions that will be required in the future.
- Byron Roosa spoke: It is a good idea to pay the debt early, but to reduce the budget in doing so would undermine the budget and the School Board's work.
- Marvin Bailey moved to call the question. Seconded.

- The amendment to the motion was defeated by voice vote.
- The original motion (as warned) passed by voice vote.

**ARTICLE 6 Shall the School District authorize the Barnet School Directors to borrow money to pay its lawful debts and expenses for the fiscal year which ends June 30, 2015 in an amount not to exceed 90% of the anticipated collection of taxes and receipts of other funds to be used for those purposes?**

- Alexandra Stanton move the article as warned. Seconded by Robert Roos.
- Gregory Jackmauh spoke: Page 97 of the Town Report indicates that there has been an annual budget increase of six percent. How long is this growth sustainable?
  - o Louis Bushey responded: This is not clear, but the School Board does not bring forward its budget lightly; the Board tries each year to have a zero percent increase.
- John Cook spoke: The School Board presents a summary budget in the Town Report. Mr. Cook would prefer a budget that is detailed in the manner of the Town budget.
  - o Sheri Colby-Schenck responded: Budgets are discussed in detail at School Board meetings. Mr. Cook should avail himself of these opportunities to learn more about the budget.
- The motion passed by voice vote.

**ARTICLE 7 To transact any other non-binding business that may legally come before the meeting.**

- Theodore Faris spoke: It was brought to Mr. Faris's attention that Leigh Larocque will be celebrating a significant birthday. Mr. Faris did not wish to reveal Mr. Larocque's age, but suggested that it would take four Barnet voters with their boots off to count so high. Mr. Faris presented a birthday cake to Mr. Larocque.
- Shellie Samuels spoke, expressing the School Board's appreciation to Lori Werdenschlag for her service to the School.
  - o A round of applause was given.
- Lori Werdenschlag spoke: The School Board was remiss in neglecting to thank James Schenck for his service when he left the Board last March.
  - o A round of applause was given.
- John Cook spoke: The Supervisory Union budget is growing and encompassing more functions, yet the Barnet voters have only the representation of three delegates from the Barnet School Board to vote on this budget. Supervisory unions should have more oversight; perhaps their budgets should be approved by the entire supervisory union in a manner similar to the waste district budget.
- Margaret Clayton spoke, thanking the School Board for their time and for listening to townspeople at School Board meetings.
- Steven Larocque spoke, thanking all town officials for their dedicated efforts.
- Meeting adjourned at 11:58 a.m.

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Dennis McLam, Moderator

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Shellie Samuels, School Director

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Attest: Benjamin Heisholt, Town Clerk