

**JOINT MEETING
HOLLIS BROOKLINE COOPERATIVE SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET COMMITTEE
HOLLIS BROOKLINE COOPERATIVE SCHOOL BOARD
FEBRUARY 2, 2022
MEETING MINUTES**

A Joint Meeting of the Hollis Brookline Cooperative (COOP) School District Budget Committee and the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School Board was conducted on Wednesday, February 2, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. at the Hollis Brookline Middle School Library.

Darlene Mann, Chairman, Budget Committee, presided:

Members of the Budget Cmte. Present: Raul Blanche, Vice Chairman
David Blinn
Matthew Maguire
Brian Rater (participated electronically)
Anthony Stanizzi
Cindy VanCoughnett, School Bd. Rep.
Tom Whalen

Members of the Budget Cmte. Absent:

Members of the School Board Present: Holly Deurloo Babcock, Chairman
Tom Solon, Vice Chairman
Beth Janine Williams, Secretary
Kate Stoll
Cindy VanCoughnett
Krista Whalen

Members of the School Board Absent: Elizabeth Brown

Also in Attendance: Andrew Corey, Superintendent
Gina Bergskaug, Asst. Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction
Kelly Seeley, Business Administrator
Drew Mason, Moderator, Hollis School District

As Brian Rater was participating electronically, in accordance with the Right to Know Law, he was asked to state, for the record; where he was, why his attendance in person was not reasonably practical, who, if anyone, was with him, and whether or not he was able to hear the proceedings. He responded he was participating electronically from his home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical as he was recovering from an illness, no one was with him, and he could hear the proceedings. Those present at the meeting were able to hear Committee Member Rater and were reminded all votes would be taken by roll call.

AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS

Superintendent Corey noted two additional public hearings will be held on the petition warrant article concerning adoption of provisions of SB2. They are scheduled for Wednesday, February 16th as part of the COOP School Board meeting and Wednesday, February 23rd prior to the Brookline School Board meeting. The requirement is for hearings to be conducted in each of the two towns.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Lease - HVAC rooftop units with new HVAC/cooling units for the High School

Petition Warrant Article - “Shall we adopt the provisions of RSA 40:13 (known as SB 2) to allow official ballot voting on all issues before the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School District on the second Tuesday of March?”

Proposed FY23 Budget

MOTION BY COMMITTEE MEMBER BLINN TO RECESS UNTIL THE CONCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC HEARING

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER BLANCHE

A Viva Voce Roll Call was taken, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Anthony Stanizzi, David Blinn, Tom Whalen, Matthew Maguire, Raul Blanche, Darlene Mann,
Brian Rater, Cindy VanCoughnett

8

Nay:

0

MOTION CARRIED

The Committee recessed at 6:03 p.m.

MOTION BY BOARD MEMBER WILLIAMS TO RECESS UNTIL THE CONCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC HEARING

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER STOLL

MOTION CARRIED

6-0-0

The Board recessed at 6:04 p.m.

The Board reconvened at 6:15 p.m.

The Committee reconvened at 6:15 p.m.

Chairman Mann provided a presentation (can be found [here](#) beginning at tape counter 18:21).

Articles having financial impact include Article 1 – ventilation/energy upgrades lease (\$235,471), Article 2 – 2nd year of a multi-year agreement for support staff (HESSA) (\$88,523), Article 3 – school operating budget (\$25,278,502), Article 4 – SAU budget (\$1,070,947), Article 5 – Facilities Maintenance Trust (\$200,000), and Article 6 – Special Education Trust (\$25,000). The total, should all of these articles pass at Town Meeting, is \$26,898,443 or a 4.8% increase over the FY22 approved budget. A chart was displayed identifying the distribution of the budget.

Student enrollment is projected to be 1,166 in FY23, which is a 21 student decrease from the October 1st enrollment of 1,187. That enrollment is split between the Hollis Brookline Middle School (HBMS) (approx. 400) and the HBHS (approx. 800). For the two districts in the COOP, student distribution for FY23 through about FY25 is projected to be a 55-45% split, which is a deviation from FY17 – FY19 when the district was

split more evenly. The change has an impact on the apportionment formula that is predominantly driven by Average Daily Membership (ADM).

Important to note is that the budget approved at the Annual Meeting is not the amount of money that directly affects taxes. The number that is used to calculate the tax effort (amount to be raised through taxes), is a number less than the approved budget. What was seen in FY22 was a lower tax effort than was estimated due to significant budget underruns (COVID related) and shifts in programming changes that took place. Seen in FY22 was a significant reduction in the actual tax effort that had been anticipated.

That change in tax effort and reduction resulted in a lower COOP tax rate for the Town of Hollis. The estimate (for the tax bills received in November) was that the COOP portion would be \$7.58/\$1,000. The actual was \$6.50/\$1,000. That translated and contributed to a total tax rate change for the Town of Hollis of $-\$0.48/\$1,000$. The actual tax rate for Hollis in the most recent tax bills was an overall rate reduction in total across the K-6 district, the COOP portion for Hollis, and the Town of Hollis.

On the Brookline side, again the tax rate impact for the COOP was lower than estimated. Estimated was \$11.95/\$1,000 and actual was \$11.07/\$1,000. Brookline was affected slightly differently by the impact of returning unreserved fund balance and the loss of substantial funding related to very specific targeted disparity aid that they were no longer going to be receiving. Overall the total tax rate impact for the last bill was an increase of \$0.78/\$1,000.

A chart was displayed showing tax effort impact on tax rates dating back to FY18. Noted was that although the rates on the chart date back to FY18, nothing was adjusted for inflation.

Drivers of what is estimated to be the tax impact for this new budget include three significant components; the budget itself, revenue, and state aid in addition to impacts of the apportionment formula.

Revenue anticipated for FY23 (\$1,958,862) represents a reduction of \$1,566,379 from the FY22 revenue (\$3,525,241). This is due to the fact that we do not plan to return an unreserved fund balance at the magnitude that was returned at the end of the last school year, which for the COOP was approx. \$1.9 million.

State aid received is based primarily on enrollment levels. For FY23, the anticipation is that Hollis will receive \$89,828 less in state aid and Brookline approximately \$96,985 less than what was received in FY22.

Legislative changes, due to go into effect, result in a significant shift in the components of state aid. The Statewide Education Property Tax (SWEPT), which is driven by the values of each community, will see a significant reduction (estimated at \$434,245 for Hollis and \$187,410 for Brookline). That difference is made up through a higher than normal Adequacy Grant, which is driven predominantly by our student population. The numbers do not offset at a dollar-for-dollar level because estimates for FY23 show some reductions in what we are anticipating ADM to be for the end of this school year.

Of the \$2,982,978 change in tax effort seen going into FY23, about 60% of that is due to things not related to the budget. What is related is a proposed increase to the operating budget of \$1,229,785, a reduction in COOP revenue of \$1,566,379, and reduction in state aid \$186,814.

The total budget put forward (\$26,898,443) less the COOP revenue (\$1,958,862) results in an amount to be apportioned of \$24,939,581. That number is reduced by the amount of state aid anticipated \$5,166,722 results in a total tax effort of \$19,772,859.

The apportionment formula that splits the cost of the COOP between Hollis and Brookline is based most predominantly on ADM. Another small component is based on equalized value that yields a net apportionment amount. The net apportionment for Hollis is 55.9% and Brookline 44.1%. Once the State aid is applied (per town), it results in a local tax effort (Hollis 57.8% and Brookline 42.2%).

A chart was shown breaking down the budget explanation and apportions it between Hollis and Brookline. The resulting local tax rate for the \$11,405,426 for Hollis is estimated at \$7.97/\$1,000 and for the \$8,367,433 tax effort for Brookline it would be \$11.98/\$1,000. That is the piece of the local tax rate that gets added to the cost for the Hollis School District and Brookline School District and represents the local school tax rate on the tax bill.

There is another rate on the bill that directly impacts and affects school districts, which is the SWEPT. The estimated rate for the SWEPT calculation is \$0.70/\$1,000 for Hollis and \$0.66/\$1,000 for Brookline. The FY23 estimated total COOP tax rate for Hollis is \$8.67/\$1,000 and Brookline \$12.64/\$1,000. When looking at the COOP percentage of the total tax bill, the increase for FY23 over FY22 for Hollis is 5.4% and Brookline 2.2%.

Drew Mason, Moderator, Hollis School District, noted, if so desired, both the School Board and Budget Committee can include their recommendations on every Article on the Warrant.

There being no objection, the Board and Committee recessed until the conclusion of the Public Hearings.

The Board and Committee reconvened at 6:51 p.m.

DELIBERATIONS

Article 1

To see if the School District will vote to authorize the School Board to enter into a 15- year lease purchase agreement for **\$2,886,491** to finance the acquisition and installation of energy efficient cooling equipment at Hollis Brookline High School to replace aging equipment, bring comfort to staff and students and to improve energy efficiency; and to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$235,471** for payments due under the lease purchase agreement during the 2022-2023 fiscal year. This lease purchase agreement will contain an escape (non-appropriation) clause. (Majority vote required.)

**MOTION BY COMMITTEE MEMBER WHALEN TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 1, AS WRITTEN
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER BLINN**

ON THE QUESTION

Committee Vice Chair Blanche requested information be added to provide context for why this is the best approach, e.g., how the article came about, how the costs were identified, the reasoning behind a 15-year lease, phased approach, etc.

Superintendent Corey stated the SAU worked with a consultant who also works with an architectural firm. The impetus for the project was enrollment projections. When the committee and consultants came together what became clear was the aging ventilation systems. Ventilation systems have been a topic of much discussion because of COVID. The existing systems are in good shape but are approaching end of useful life.

Given the majority of the requested items fall in the category of equipment, the recommendation of bond council is to look towards a lease. The project is able to be phased in over time, and a lease provides more flexibility to earn interest on the funds while the project is being phased in (10 week periods to get work completed). Given current supply chain issues, there is the potential that we could open up next fall and not have a number of the units in place.

Lance Finamore, Facilities Director, has spearheaded this. He was able to allocate the time, conduct tours, and determine (unit by unit) what classrooms would be impacted in the first phase.

Superintendent Corey remarked it has always been his objective to try to balance the needs of all three districts in the SAU understanding the impact on taxpayers with large projects in both communities. At the same time this project is being proposed, there is a similar proposal for renovations to a Brookline building and a bond hearing coming up next week for approx. \$3 million for ventilation systems that need to be upgraded and things that need to be finished at the Hollis Primary School. That is the reason for the phased in approach.

The figure of \$2,886,491 was arrived at while looking to achieve the most for the cost, create a project that is manageable given the SAU Administration will have 3 projects occurring simultaneously, balance supply chain issues with project completion, and with an eye towards ensuring, if approved by the voters, the three projects would be coordinated to best utilize the human resources as well as contractual resources.

Phase II would include other areas of ventilation. It is being discussed based on enrollment projections. If enrollment projections are realized, the district would return to where it was some 10-15 years ago where there was a high school at 98-99% capacity for every classroom every period of the day, which is not desirable.

Phase II will be introduced in February. When it would be brought before the Legislative Body will be determined by the School Board.

Asked, Superintendent Corey stated, at the end of the lease term, the equipment is owned outright by the district.

Board Vice Chairman Solon suggested the language be corrected by inserting "heating and" before "cooling".

A Viva Voce Roll Call was taken, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Raul Blanche, Matthew Maguire, Tom Whalen, David Blinn, Anthony Stanizzi, Brian Rater,
Cindy VanCoughnett, Darlene Mann

8

Nay:

0

MOTION CARRIED

MOTION BY BOARD MEMBER WILLIAMS TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 1, AS PRESENTED

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER WHALEN

MOTION CARRIED

6-0-0

Article 2

To see if the school district will vote to approve the cost items for the second year of a three-year collective bargaining agreement reached between the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School Board and the Hollis Education Support Staff Association for the 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years, which calls for the following increases in support staff salaries and benefits at the current staffing levels:

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Estimated Increase</u>
2022-23	\$88,523

and further to raise and appropriate a sum of **\$88,523** for the second fiscal year (2022-23 school year), such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in support staff salaries and benefits required by the new agreement over those that would be paid at current staffing levels.

**MOTION BY COMMITTEE MEMBER BLINN TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 2, AS WRITTEN
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER WHALEN**

A Viva Voce Roll Call was taken, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Matthew Maguire, Tom Whalen, David Blinn, Anthony Stanizzi, Cindy VanCoughnett, Brian Rater,
Darlene Mann

7

Nay:

0

MOTION CARRIED

Member Blanche Abstained

**MOTION BY BOARD MEMBER WILLIAMS TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 2, AS PRESENTED
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER WHALEN**

MOTION CARRIED

6-0-0

Article 3

To see if the school district will vote to raise and appropriate a sum of **\$25,278,502** for the support of schools, for the payment of salaries for the school district officials and agents and for the payment of statutory obligations of the district. This appropriation does not include appropriations voted in other warrant articles.

**MOTION BY COMMITTEE MEMBER BLANCHE TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 3, AS WRITTEN
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER WHALEN**

ON THE QUESTION

Committee Vice Chair Blanche suggested the language in Article 3 that states “payment of salaries for the school district officials...” could be confused with costs that should be included in the SAU budget.

Committee Chair Mann stated her belief it is standard language and noted the school district is the COOP as opposed to the SAU.

Board Vice Chair Solon remarked although he understands the current thought of using the maintenance trust as a way to segregate and identify monies, it is his belief that all current maintenance expenditures should be in the budget. To put planned/required elements into the trust understates what the operating budget really will be for the next year and also puts those funds at a bit of a risk because the warrant article may not be approved. He would have preferred the \$200,000 for the three items planned for next year be included in the operating budget.

He also thinks this is a very conservative budget and perhaps more is necessary in a couple of areas; primarily staffing. He suspects as wages increase and with what is occurring in the current climate nationally, hiring costs may start to increase. We have contracts for our professional staff, but other areas may be subject to the need for higher wages.

A Viva Voce Roll Call was taken, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Raul Blanche, Matthew Maguire, Tom Whalen, David Blinn, Anthony Stanizzi, Cindy VanCoughnett,
Brian Rater, Darlene Mann

8

Nay:

0

MOTION CARRIED

**MOTION BY BOARD MEMBER WILLIAMS TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 3, AS PRESENTED
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER STOLL**

MOTION CARRIED

6-0-0

Article 4

Shall the District vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$1,070,947** as the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School District's portion of the SAU budget of \$2,107,176 for the forthcoming fiscal year? This year's adjusted budget of \$2,018,210 with \$1,025,645 assigned to the school budget of this school district will be adopted if the article does not receive a majority vote of all the school district voters voting in this school administrative unit.

**MOTION BY COMMITTEE MEMBER BLINN TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 4, AS WRITTEN
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER WHALEN**

A Viva Voce Roll Call was taken, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Raul Blanche, Matthew Maguire, Tom Whalen, David Blinn, Anthony Stanizzi, Cindy VanCoughnett,
Brian Rater, Darlene Mann

8

Nay:

0

MOTION CARRIED

**MOTION BY BOARD MEMBER WILLIAMS TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 4, AS PRESENTED
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER STOLL**

MOTION CARRIED

6-0-0

Article 5

To see if the school district will vote to raise and appropriate up to the sum of **\$200,000** to be added to the previously established School Building and Facilities Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund. The sum to come from the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School District's June 30, 2022 unassigned fund balance, available on July 1, 2022.

**MOTION BY COMMITTEE MEMBER BLINN TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 5, AS WRITTEN
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER WHALEN**

ON THE QUESTION

Board Vice Chair Solon commented the title of "trust" to most people is a savings mechanism for planned and future use.

Committee Chair Mann remarked in the case of this trust, in the event any of the proposed items come in under budget, we would be able to use the fund as a savings account and build the balance. Conversely, if any of the items cost greater than anticipated, some of the available balance in the trust could be utilized. There is a bit more latitude with the trust.

Board Vice Chair Solon questioned at what point funds get moved out of the trust. Kelly Seeley, Business Administrator, stated there to be two ways in which it has been handled; the items identified in the budget are the subject of a public hearing prior to any expenditure of funds. In an emergency situation, funds could be expended and a reimbursement from the trust requested during a public hearing.

Asked, she explained the \$200,000 would be transferred to the Maintenance Trust, and it would be expended from there. Board Vice Chair Solon questioned how funds not utilized could be placed back in the Maintenance Trust. It was explained, unless an emergency situation, before any monies are expended a public hearing is conducted. If the expenses are approved, the actual cost is paid out of the trust.

A Viva Voce Roll Call was taken, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Raul Blanche, Matthew Maguire, Tom Whalen, David Blinn, Anthony Stanizzi, Cindy VanCoughnett,
Brian Rater, Darlene Mann

8

Nay: 0

MOTION CARRIED

**MOTION BY BOARD MEMBER WILLIAMS TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 5, AS PRESENTED
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER VANCOUGHNETT**

MOTION CARRIED

5-1-0

Member Solon voted in opposition

Article 6

To see if the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School District will vote to raise and appropriate up to the sum of **\$25,000** to come from the June 30, 2022 unassigned fund balance available for transfer on July 1, 2022 to be added to the previously established Special Education Expendable Trust Fund. No amount to be raised from taxation.

**MOTION BY COMMITTEE MEMBER BLANCHE TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 6, AS WRITTEN
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER BLINN**

ON THE QUESTION

Asked what the current and desired balances are, Committee Chair Mann stated the current balance to be \$200,000 and the desired balance \$225,000.

A Viva Voce Roll Call was taken, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Raul Blanche, Matthew Maguire, Tom Whalen, David Blinn, Anthony Stanizzi, Cindy VanCoughnett,
Brian Rater, Darlene Mann

8

Nay:

0

MOTION CARRIED

**MOTION BY BOARD MEMBER WILLIAMS TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 6, AS PRESENTED
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER WHALEN
MOTION CARRIED**

6-0-0

Article 7 – Petition Warrant Article

Shall we adopt the provisions of RSA 40:13 (known as SB 2) to allow official ballot voting on all issues before the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School District on the second Tuesday of March?

**MOTION BY BOARD MEMBER WILLIAMS TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 7, AS PRESENTED
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER STOLL
MOTION FAILED**

0-6-0

Article 8 - Petition Warrant Article

Shall the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School District rescind authorization under RSA 198:4-b II so that the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School District returns 100% of year-end unassigned general funds to the taxpayers?

**MOTION BY COMMITTEE MEMBER WHALEN TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 8, AS WRITTEN
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER MAGUIRE**

ON THE QUESTION

Committee Chair Mann noted RSA 198:4-b II is the law which allows the school district to retain part of its fund balance. Typically, at year end, any unassigned fund balance lapses to the Town's general fund (to offset what has to be raised in taxes to support the following year's budget). Several years ago legislation was passed that would allow districts to retain up to 2.5% of their net assessment as retained funds. Once approved by the legislative body, it requires no further authorization but does require a vote of the school board every year to move funds to it.

The first year this article was brought forward it was worded to allow up to the 2.5% maximum. An amendment was made at district meeting that authorized a 1% maximum. That is what passed, and what we have been operating under for the past several years. Until this past year, the COOP never maxed out that 1%. Due to the available funds with COVID and the uncertainty of expenses coupled with the fact that much of the funds that we received through any kind of federal grants were significantly lower than other districts, the school board made the decision to maximize the amount in the retained fund balance (approx. \$180,000).

Passage of this article would rescind the authority to retain up to the 1% and require all retained funds to be returned. The district would not be permitted to retain any of the funds moving forward unless another article were put before the voters to authorize once again. State law has been amended and allows for retention of up to 5%.

Superintendent Corey noted, in prior years, there was an article to fund the Contingency Fund. When moving to the Retained Fund Balance, the district did away with the Contingency Fund.

Asked for additional clarification, Committee Chair Mann stated, were this article to pass, the district would need to return the \$180,000 that is currently retained (at the end of June 30th). Ms. Seeley noted there would remain access to those funds until June 30th.

Asked how this would impact budgeting and operations going forward, e.g., what action they would advocate should the article pass, Ms. Seeley stated there would not be a contingency of any kind in FY23. Perhaps the approach would be to reinstate the \$100,000 contingency through a motion on the floor.

Committee Chair Mann was uncertain that could occur. If the articles go in order, the budget article would have already been approved. She added, from a fiscal planning perspective, we are the district with the largest budget, the biggest schools, and the lowest amount of money held in any form of contingency. Both Hollis and Brookline have 2.5% maximums. Until this past year neither district maximized their use of the Retained Fund Balance. She believes it would be imprudent to not have some kind of retained fund balance. The towns are permitted to retain their unassigned fund balance (do not lapse). The school districts are the only ones whose funds lapse at year end.

Board Vice Chair Solon questioned if the Budget Committee would support putting contingency money back in the budget were this article to pass. Committee Chair Mann stated she personally would support that.

Committee Member Stanizzi questioned if, in the absence of having something to fall back on, in the event of a catastrophe in the school, and funding not available, could there be a situation where the school would have to be closed until funding was appropriated. Superintendent Corey provided the example of the elevator going at the HBHS. He cannot operate without an elevator. He would look to the budget for the necessary funding. The first thing he would likely do is recommend not expending any money from the Maintenance Trust. He would not do the planned projects. If the cost were in excess of the Maintenance Trust, he would look to the

budget. If something major, the district would probably end up in the red and have to appropriate funds in FY23 to make up that deficit before funding the operating budget.

Asked if the order of the articles could be changed, Board Chair Deurloo Babcock stated the Moderator has indicated they can. Board Vice Chair Solon suggested the article be moved to appear prior to the vote on the budget. Were it to pass, there would then be an opportunity for a motion to amend the budget.

Committee Member Whalen spoke of the opportunity to re-open an article prior to the close of the meeting, should that be necessary.

Committee Chair Mann was uncertain if an appropriation could be made to a contingency line. Board Vice Chair Solon noted the budget is a bottom line budget. For a year you could do it without a contingency fund.

Board Member Whalen remarked, for all of the reasons stated, she would not support the article. In addition, she noted the district has not been irresponsible with the contingency fund in the 10 years she has been on the Board. Two years ago the district returned \$980,000 and this past year \$1.9 million.

Committee Vice Chair Blanche stated he would not support the article. It takes flexibility away from managing the operating budget and he believes the Superintendent and his team do a great job of managing the budget year after year. He spoke of the \$14.4 million (across all districts in the SAU) that has been given back to the taxpayers over the past 10 years. He suggested examples be added to the presentation of times when funds have had to be encumbered to address unanticipated situations.

A Viva Voce Roll Call was taken, which resulted as follows:

Yea: 0

Nay: Raul Blanche, Matthew Maguire, Tom Whalen, David Blinn, Anthony Stanizzi, Cindy VanCoughnett,
Brian Rater, Darlene Mann

8

MOTION FAILED

MOTION BY BOARD MEMBER WILLIAMS TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 8

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER VANCOUGHNETT

MOTION FAILED

0-6-0

Article 9 - Petition Warrant Article

Shall the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School District direct the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School Board to adopt and implement a policy to ensure that each textbook or other assigned book used in the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School District as well as a copy of all professional training materials provided to teachers, administrators, and staff of the district paid with school district funds be made available to the public at the Hollis Social Library and at the Brookline Public Library in hardcopy or electronic form, organized by grade or teacher?

**MOTION BY BOARD MEMBER WILLIAMS TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 9
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER STOLL**

ON THE QUESTION

Board Vice Chair Solon commented on his belief there will be information coming forward in the near future from the libraries. He is guessing this is advisory only. He believes this to be an unnecessary expense and a smokescreen for trying to institute censorship. He is very much opposed to the principle and practicality of it.

Board Chair Deurloo Babcock remarked this would be an inordinate amount of work to put on the staff. We do not want raises in our budget but want more and more time from these people. She does not support it.

MOTION FAILED

0-6-0

Committee Member Whalen recommended the Budget Committee take a position on the article given the Significant financial impact that would be incurred should the article pass.

Committee Member Stanizzi commented on the burden that would be placed on the public library. Schools have their own libraries, which he assumes would have the same material found at the public library. Superintendent Corey believed that to be an accurate statement, He also believes everything that is in the school library can be found online. Asked if this would be redundant and add cost, Superintendent Corey stated his belief it is and would add cost. He could see requesting an additional position to do nothing but address this across the SAU. It asks for the information to be broken down by teacher and grade level. We would constantly be changing that based on staff changes alone. Given the material is available online, he is uncertain of the purpose of the article.

Committee Member Stanizzi commented it may be that the community does not understand what they are asking for is already available to the public. Superintendent Corey restated all of the curriculum is online and the library resource is just a card catalogue. Every book we have in the library is there.

Committee Vice Chair Blanche stated, as written, it is not clear what the budgetary impact is although it is assumed. On that technicality alone, he does not support the article as written. The language is ambiguous because it clearly suggests that this is a burden on the libraries rather than the school. The language should be made clear, and the budgetary impact identified. Perhaps the public is unaware there is already transparency and if information is desired it is available. He likes transparency, but the language needs to be technically correct.

Board Vice Chair Solon remarked there are organized efforts nationwide to remove and block the use of a lot of reading material. This is an effort to complicate the process and intimidate teachers from including content in their classes that might subject them to things like the lawsuits that are now possible due to recent New Hampshire legislation claiming that texts that people might allege talk about preferential treatment or benefits now become elements of a lawsuit. This is not transparency, this is an organized national effort to censor material in our schools, plain and simple. The class syllabi have reading lists. If you look at the arguments that have been made towards having this, it has been based on attempts to block the use of specific reading materials, to block the teaching of elements of the Civil War, the Civil Rights Movement, the Holocaust; specific texts relating to those as well as LGBTQ topics, certain religious content, any books that refer to certain religious activities. This is being used as a mechanism to facilitate the removal of that content from our schools.

Committee Vice Chair Blanche responded he does not necessarily agree with the evidence being provided. It is assumed that would be the end result were this to pass. He tends to give people the benefit of the doubt. He does not know who wrote or submitted the article, he is just trying to focus on what it says and what the end result would be.

Board Vice Chair Solon stated the evidence is out there. Committee Vice Chair Blanche responded nationwide that may be true, but not necessarily here.

Committee Member Stanizzi remarked he would never make an assertion that it is as broad as is suggested. He believes that to be more of an opinion. We give this information. He would say it is probably not that much more difficult to have everything electronically available at either library. If it is here electronically it could be at the library electronically. Whatever is visible is visible. People will do whatever they want to. If they choose to file lawsuits it is on them. We cannot be the monitor of those kind of activities. Transparency is everything. If it is not that difficult then why not? He cannot assume the intent of others.

Committee Member Rater stated his feeling it is too far into the policy realm for the Budget Committee to take a position on.

Committee Chair Mann requested a motion be made to determine the Committee's desire to take a position.

Committee Member Maguire noted the language calls out the implementation of a policy. Committee Chair Mann reiterated it is advisory in nature. Even if the article were to pass, it does not require the district to comply.

Committee Member Whalen remarked, as a Budget Committee, we do not experience what was explained earlier. Having attended a number of the School Board meetings he has witnessed these things have been brought up, and it is an attack on our schools. It absolutely is, and it cannot be sheltered by a very vague and poorly worded petition warrant article that makes no sense from an implementation standpoint. He suggested the Committee vote on it because of the financial impact but wished for the Committee to understand there is a lot behind this petition warrant article.

**MOTION BY COMMITTEE MEMBER BLINN TO TAKE A POSITION ON THE ARTICLE
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER WHALEN**

A Viva Voce Roll Call was taken, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Tom Whalen, David Blinn, Cindy VanCoughnett, Darlene Mann

4

Nay: Raul Blanche, Matthew Maguire, Anthony Stanizzi, Brian Rater

4

MOTION FAILED

Article 10 - Petition Warrant Article

Shall we adopt the provisions of RSA 32:5 V-b, requiring that the annual budget and all special warrant articles having a tax impact, as determined by the school board, shall contain a notation stating the estimated tax impact of the article? The determination of the estimated tax impact shall be subject to approval by the governing body.

**MOTION BY COMMITTEE MEMBER BLANCHE TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 10, AS WRITTEN
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER MAGUIRE**

ON THE QUESTION

Committee Chair Mann stated the article has come forward on and off over the past 4 or 5 years. Legal counsel has provided clarification. What this does is require a tax impact to be printed in the language of every article. In the past, the Budget Committee has not supported this because it is a context issue. Merely looking at a tax impact in the body of a warrant article without understanding the dynamics and what contributes to it just does not explain what the true impact is.

Any tax rate you have for the COOP needs to be added to your Brookline or Hollis school district estimated tax rate to produce a local tax rate that you could then compare to your tax bill. It is a very multi-step and layered process that in her mind adds a layer of confusion to an already complicated issue of understanding tax rate impacts combined with the fact that not every district has the requirement to post their tax impacts with their warrant and it would cause the person to take one additional step to pull up public hearing data, etc. to be able to combine those rates. From a context perspective, it feels like it would be more confusing than helpful. The clarification that Attorney O'Shaughnessy provided in prior meetings, when the question was asked if there was more clarification that could be added other than just the tax rate itself, was no.

Committee Vice Chair Blanche commented when you tie this in with SB2 then it basically tells the public you do not need to get the details, here is the number. If you are opposed to SB2 you should be opposed to this. If you want SB2 to pass, this is required action so that SB2 then can work as intended.

Board Vice Chair Solon questioned if what it would require is different than the kind of notations that have been included in the presentation and was told it is not. It would just be added as a sentence, e.g., the Hollis tax rate impact would be..." Asked if there is an automatic requirement to do so if SB2 passes, she stated there is not.

Committee Member Stanizzi remarked any one of the items would have such a minuscule impact when you start looking at costing out little pieces, it does not really give much value. He believes it would add more confusion.

Committee Vice Chair Blanche remarked when you go to vote you do not want to have to reference all of this other material to make a good decision.

Committee Member Rater stated he has both supported and opposed these articles in the past. He can see both sides of the issue. Being able to see the impact on the tax rate does give you some sense of what the scale of it is compared to everything else. He believes, from that perspective, it does provide some value.

A Viva Voce Roll Call was taken, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Brian Rater

1

Nay: Raul Blanche, Matthew Maguire, Tom Whalen, David Blinn, Anthony Stanizzi, Cindy VanCoughnett,
Darlene Mann

7

MOTION FAILED

**MOTION BY BOARD MEMBER WILLIAMS TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 10
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER VANCOUGHNETT
MOTION FAILED
0-6-0**

**MOTION BY BOARD MEMBER SOLON TO RE-NUMBER ARTICLE 8 TO ARTICLE 3 AND ALL
SUBSEQUENT NUMBERS ACCORDINGLY
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER VANCOUGHNETT**

ON THE QUESTION

Board Vice Chair Solon commented, in general, he is not in favor of having these articles early and if there is very little concern that there will be support for it, this may not be an appropriate move. His concern is should this pass, it could have a negative impact.

Committee Chair Mann stated concern with language in the RSA concerning contingency funds.

Superintendent Corey remarked he would not recommend it in the form of a contingency, he would recommend it in the bottom line of the budget. If we were to send back \$187,000, he would recommend adding \$187,000 to the operating budget for a one year stop-gap to give time to decide if the article should come forward again or to bring back the contingency article.

Committee Chair Mann noted the RSA language states, "A school district annually by an article separate from the budget and all other articles".

Board Chair Deurloo Babcock remarked if someone from the legislative body wants to add money to the budget, they can put a motion forward to do so. She is supportive of renumbering the articles.

Committee Member Whalen questioned the intent of the removal of the contingency fund if not to reduce the budget. What is the likelihood that the same legislative body would vote to add that same amount of money back into the budget unless they have a moral opposition to the word trust?

Board Chair Deurloo Babcock commented it may be that we could be overthinking it as well.

Board Member Whalen remarked she struggles putting it ahead of the business of the Board and Budget Committee.

Committee Member Stanizzi remarked his overall concern is keeping the schools running as smoothly as possible for everyone. He could see, in the absence of having this ability, that becoming difficult in the event of an emergency.

Board Chair Deurloo Babcock noted the article could still be moved during the Annual Meeting.

**MOTION FAILED
0-6-0**

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY BOARD MEMBER WILLIAMS TO ADJOURN

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER STOLL

MOTION CARRIED

6-0-0

MOTION BY COMMITTEE MEMBER BLANCHE TO ADJOURN

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER BLINN

A Viva Voce Roll Call was taken, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Raul Blanche, Matthew Maguire, Tom Whalen, David Blinn, Anthony Stanizzi, Cindy VanCoughnett,
Brian Rater, Darlene Mann

8

Nay:

0

MOTION CARRIED

The February 2, 2022 Joint meeting of the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School Board and the Hollis Brookline Cooperative District Budget Committee adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Date _____ Signed _____