

**SPECIAL HOLLIS BROOKLINE COOPERATIVE SCHOOL BOARD
FEBRUARY 20, 2023
MEETING MINUTES**

A special meeting of the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School Board was conducted on Monday, February 20, 2023, at 6:01 p.m. at the Hollis Brookline Middle School Library, Hollis, NH.

Holly Deurloo Babcock, Chairman, presided:

Members of the Board Present: Tom Solon, Vice Chairman
Kate Stoll, Secretary
Krista Whalen

Members of the Board Absent: Tom Enright
Beth Janine Williams
Cindy VanCoughnett

Also in Attendance: Andrew Corey, Superintendent
Gina Bergskaug, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction
Darlene Mann, Chairman, COOP Budget Committee

AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS - None

PUBLIC INPUT

Chairman Deurloo Babcock noted public input would be accepted for the meeting of the School Board during which the Board would be discussing the organization of how the annual district meeting warrant would be presented.

At 6:30 p.m. the public hearing for the bond article will occur. At that point, public comment will be accepted on the issue of the bond. At the conclusion of that public hearing, a public hearing on petition warrant articles will be conducted.

The period for public input was opened at 6:02 p.m.

Chairman Deurloo Babcock noted no member(s) of the public were present to provide input and that the period for public comment would remain open until 6:33 p.m. At that time, should member(s) of the public be in attendance and wish to provide input, it would be permitted.

DISCUSSION

- Organization for the Annual Meeting

The purpose of the discussion was to determine who would make the presentations for the Annual Meeting and whether the Board wished to provide comment on the petition warrant articles.

Article 1 – Bond Proposal

Superintendent Corey

Vice Chairman Solon questioned the information that would be available during the presentation, e.g., comparative costs of propane versus oil, and was told usage information from the current year would be available. He requested information on cost per BTU be provided noting a concern that propane has, in the past, been one of the highest costs per BTU. He is uncertain if that landscape has changed. He suggested a question that will likely come up is the option for refinancing, e.g., would that require moving to a private bond versus the bond bank.

Superintendent Corey will present the article at the Annual Meeting.

Article 2 - HESSA Contract	Krista Whalen
Article 3 - COOP Budget	Darlene Mann, Chairman, Budget Committee
Article 4 - SAU 41 Budget	Chairman Deurloo Babcock
Article 5 - Maintenance Expendable Trust	Chairman Deurloo Babcock
Article 6 - Retain Unassigned Fund Balance	Chairman Deurloo Babcock
Article 7 - Special Education Expendable Trust	Chairman Deurloo Babcock
Article 8 - Contingency Fund	Chairman Deurloo Babcock

Petition Warrant Articles

Article 9 - Amend Articles of Agreement

Chairman Deurloo Babcock questioned if legal counsel would address the article based on concerns expressed. Superintendent Corey stated he would reach out to counsel noting the concern over the 2/3 super majority required. That is asking for a standard that is higher than the remainder of the Articles of Agreement (AoA) (majority or 3/5). It would add a new component to the AoA and, from a legal standpoint, there is the question of which is the driving force.

Vice Chairman Solon noted Article 8 of the AoA states it is a 50% majority.

Chairman Deurloo Babcock remarked, if the petition warrant article were to pass, it would be in conflict with another article that would not change.

Legal counsel will provide relevant legal information and Vice Chairman Solon will present a rebuttal to the article.

Asked if the article is binding or advisory, Superintendent Corey stated his belief, if passed, the language would be binding.

Article 10 - Tax Cap

Chairman Deurloo Babcock questioned if members of the Budget Committee planned on providing rebuttals to petition warrant articles and was told the Budget Committee would provide rebuttals to Articles 10 and 12.

Article 11 - Zero out Line Item "Fees School Board"

Vice Chairman Solon will provide rebuttal.

Article 12 - Rescind Retained Fund Balance

Budget Committee will provide rebuttal.

Article 13 - Tax Impact Notation

The Budget Committee may provide rebuttal. Asked, Budget Committee Chairman Mann noted supporting documents for the articles would be provided by the Board. Because there will be rebuttal to some of the petition warrant articles, there will be documents that go along with that, which have not yet been prepared. A bond is close to maturity. A chart identifying that timeline will be added to the presentation.

To provide an update on how the Board arrived at the point of the bond hearing, Superintendent Corey stated at the end of 2021, a notification was received from the Department of Education (DOE) informing of the potential for building aid returning to the State, and that it would be necessary to file a letter of intent shortly into 2022. That was done. Following that, notification was received that the package that goes along with filing would have to be completed. The decision was made to file. Coming out of COVID and with the transitions going on across the State, it was not anticipated many would put in for bonds. To that end, there were 17 proposals submitted of which 4 were from SAU 41.

That was followed up by the DOE performing onsite visits and review of the proposals. In the winter, notice was received that the SAU's 4 proposals were ranked 14-17. There were other priorities. A large piece of this will always fall on need base, e.g., free and reduced lunch statistics, which are not always favorable to this district.

When the process originally started at the COOP, there was a project for the middle school and the high school and what was submitted was at a cost of approximately \$8.5 million (each), with building aid providing 30% reimbursement. To get to that \$8.5 million, a process was undertaken with Banwell Architects, a company familiar with the buildings in the district. Work began by interviewing the Principals to identify the needs of each building. When they started at the high school, they were looking at the cafeteria, which has always been a concern, the need for four additional classrooms, and another look at the library as there is a usable classroom that is accessible only through there. The infrastructure around lighting and boilers was another aspect.

The same process was undertaken at the middle school. Once the representatives gathered all of their information, the district reached out to EEI, which is an energy consulting firm that worked with the SAU last year on the unit ventilators at the high school and currently working on the Brookline RMMS project with a multitude of space pieces.

Realizing state aid was very unlikely, the need to reprioritize became clear. That process set up the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) for the next several years as the needs were identified, the architects had drawn up plans, etc. We also knew, with the economy the way it is and the unknown factors, that approximately \$17 million was unlikely to pass the voters.

The Administration went back in reverse order and concluded that as much as we desperately need a new cafeteria, we have survived for 20 years. The cafeteria and the four classrooms were removed from the immediate plan. The next review was of the library commons at the high school. Although a door opening from the corridor to the classroom makes a great deal of sense, we have survived without it.

The next look was at the middle school and the plan to repurpose a lot of the library space for educational needs. From a code standpoint, you would no longer be allowed to have the corridor through the educational space. The minute we do something to the building we have to address code issues. The library, administrative offices, and front entrance were all looked at extensively and removed.

What remained were boilers, lights, and science labs. They went through the science labs. From a square footage point of view they do not meet code for 24 students. At some point, we need to do something to them (located in the back left hand corner of the building). It was felt a more comprehensive look at that space is required so that when looking to repurpose whether it is science rooms or to serve other purposes, that time is dedicated to produce the most well thought out plan for moving forward. They then began to look specifically around essential items that need to be addressed.

Superintendent Corey stated the desire to provide some clarification before heading into the bond hearing as many have asked him questions comparing the Hollis School District project to that of the COOP School District. While they are similar and a lot of the reasons that we did the projects in Hollis are also the driving force behind the COOP project, they are not the same.

The Hollis Primary School (HPS) has its primary heat source as heat source pumps. However, it has a backup heating system of a new boiler and propane. At the Hollis Upper Elementary School (HUES), heat source air pumps were not a viable option (cost prohibitive). What differs at HUES is the cafeteria, gym, and a multitude of corridors. Heat source air pumps make it difficult to get heat into corridors. When reviewing HUES, it was realized that the infrastructure (unit ventilators, blowers, etc.) was in very good shape. The decision was reached to go in the direction of a new state-of-the-art commercial boiler that is offset, so that they are not both running at the same time and buried propane tanks. The transition to propane was the result of studies done that indicated it to be the most efficient. It also resulted in economies of scale as there is buying power with the Town of Hollis for propane.

In terms of LED lighting, that was done at HPS and HUES. Were the bond to pass, that would be done at the middle and high schools. Those lighting changes will immediately show drastic savings. What is being looked at for the COOP is also moving to solar power. What we do now will automatically be hooked into the solar with the new panel. The question at the COOP that is different is uncertainty with whether it is best to install solar on the roofs as was done in Hollis, given there is a wealth of property in the COOP. It may be beneficial to go with a solar farm because of the magnitude of what will be needed for solar panels to address the needs to these two large buildings.

The control system is where the COOP is fortunate as it is relatively modern compared to what was the case at HPS.

Superintendent Corey commented he does not like to use HPS as an example as that building was constructed in the 1950s and heating pieces had to be removed as they were no longer useful. The HPS still had fuse boxes in use. A lot of the infrastructure at that building was changed over, at a large cost, and are not necessary at either of the COOP schools.

The desire was to provide some history. If the bond passes, what would typically be done is a construction committee would be formed. The Administration is confident with the dollar amounts arrived at for the bond. It is felt what is planned to be done will serve us for decades and at the same time allow the flexibility, if so desired, to make a move to solar.

The period for public input was declared closed at 6:33 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY MEMBER SOLON TO ADJOURN

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER STOLL

MOTION CARRIED

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The February 20, 2023 special meeting of the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School Board was adjourned at 6:33 p.m.

Date _____ Signed _____