

**South Hampton School Board Deliberative Session
Barnard School Gymnasium
Tuesday, February 6, 2024**

The 2024 Deliberative Session was held in the Town of South Hampton, in the County of Rockingham, in the State of New Hampshire, on the 6th day of February 2024. Moderator Kim Molin called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

Members of the school district were introduced: School Board members Jim Kime (chair), Lauren Jurta, and Rebecca Burdick; Emily Kime, School District Clerk; Kim Molin, School District Moderator; Michelle Witt, Barnard School Principal; Meredith Nadeau, Superintendent; David Hobbs, Assistant Superintendent; and Sharon Somers, School District Legal Counsel. Also, in attendance were South Hampton Budget Committee members James Van Bokkelen (Selectman Rep), Dennis Blair (chair), Todd Dyer, Will Hodge.

The Moderator outlined the procedures under which she would run the meeting; she then introduced and read Article 01.

Article 01: Operating Budget

Shall the School District raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling \$3,061,373? Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$3,023,044 which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the School District or by law; or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only. (Majority vote required.)

NOTE: Warrant Article #1 (operating budget) does not include appropriations in any other warrant articles.

The School Board and the Budget Committee recommend this article.

Jim Kime moved to open Article 01 for discussion, seconded by Lauren Jurta. Jim Kime and Michelle Witt presented the items comprising the operating budget.

Michelle stated when developing the proposed budget, the following goals, that support Barnard School's mission and vision, were identified:

- To emphasize the development of the whole child through academic and SEL programming and supports.
- To continue to develop competency-based teaching and grading practices.
- To provide a culture of community.
- To implement a multi-tiered system of academic and social-emotional support for students.

Michelle stated the proposed budget was established with the following priorities:

- Continued implementation of a new math program.
- On-going professional development.

- Maintaining the safety and cleanliness of facilities.
- Continued implementation of a robust academic and social emotional curriculum, which includes a multi-tiered system of supports for all students.
- Continued investment in technology to improve operational efficiency and to provide students with optimal access to learning resources.

Michelle discussed the benefits social and emotional learning (SEL) which include, short and long-term academic achievement, future career/world readiness, health well-being and safe schools, and financial savings.

Michelle highlighted Barnard School's impressive and improving state assessment scores in Math, English, and Science and compared them to state and district averages. She stated this budget will help students to continue to thrive.

Jim stated when developing the 2024-25 budget, the School Board and administration were conscious of keeping the operating budget increases at a minimum; this is reflected in 3.07% increase over the current year's (2023-2024) operating budget.

Jim stated enrollment has continued to be strong and steady at Barnard School with 84 students and remained steady at the high school level.

Jim reviewed the following significant budget drivers:

- Cost escalation across multiple accounts due to price inflation; including supplies, books, equipment, software, repair/maintenance, technology hardware, contracted services, furniture, etc.
- Increased special education and general education transportation costs.
- Significant increase in health insurance premium costs, based on 23.7% guaranteed maximum rate.
- Continuation of technology plan and replacement cycle with Chromebooks, classroom interactive projectors, gymnasium sound system, and server.
- Investment in sealcoating and striping the parking lot/pavement to repair and better maintain paving.
- Addition of seven surveillance cameras to complete Homeland Security audit recommendations.
- Employee benefits – Health care premiums.

Jim noted that there is a proposed budget increase to the student activity fund. The school has seen high participation rates and interest in the various sports and clubs offered. Dennis Blair asked how these clubs attribute to SEL. Michelle replied the majority of students are involved in the many school-offered programs and that they love participating. Confidence is gained as well as a sense of community.

Jim stated the following items saw significant budget reductions:

- Reduction in number of expected high school tuition students.
- Under-budgeting high school tuition through use of expendable trust fund if necessary.

- Slight under-budgeting technology equipment through use of expendable trust fund, with the intent to close the trust the following budget year.
- Curriculum and professional development costs reverting to normal levels after implementation of new math program.
- General reductions of departmental requests on discretionary accounts.

Jim noted the new bus contract is not in the default budget.

Martha Anderson asked if the bus contract is usually a 5-year contract? Jim answered yes and added that inflation rates and fuel costs are main drivers of the increase and that this is not specific to South Hampton. James Van Bokkelen wondered if there is savings if the school is less picky on the age of school buses.

Pete DiStefano thanked the administration for all the work done on the budget. He is concerned for fixed income and multigenerational families in Town that can't afford the tax increases. He is worried that the proposed sound system is a luxury rather than a need. Pete is all for safety measures and wants a strong public school system, but there is only so much money in town, so is it possible to plan out for the sound system rather than it hitting all at once.

Will Hodge asked if there was a specific number in the tech budget for the sound system? Jim replied, \$12,000. Will asked if that is an area that could be reduced? Jim replied he understands the comments and that it could be considered a discretionary use, but with all the plans and activities the school has that the School Board feels the sound system is warranted and beneficial. It is not an ongoing investment, but a one-year cost.

Lauren Jurta added that at many school functions the current sound system has failed putting a stop to full community events and that she believes it is a great investment.

Will asked if there were multiple estimates/bids for the sound system? Meredith replied there were 3 bids, this was the lowest, but the SAU has used this vendor before, and she feels confident with them.

The Moderator asked if there were any questions or comments.

With no further discussion, the Moderator stated Article 01 will be placed on the official ballot as read. Rebecca Burdick made a motion to restrict reconsideration for Article 01. Lauren Jurta seconded the motion. By a show of hands, the motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 01 was approved. The Moderator introduced and read Article 02.

Article 02: Seacoast Educational Support Personnel Association Collective Bargaining Agreement

To see if the School District will vote to approve the cost items included in the collective bargaining agreement reached between the South Hampton School Board and the Seacoast Educational Support Personnel Association for the following increases and reductions in salaries and benefits at the current staffing levels:

Year	Estimated Salary Increase	Estimated Benefits Increase	TOTAL Estimated Costs
2024-25	\$17,849	\$ 1,558	\$19,407
2025-26	\$17,260	\$ 1,442	\$18,702
2026-27	\$ 8,481	\$14,650	\$23,131
2027-28	\$ 8,038	\$13,863	\$21,901

and further to raise and appropriate the sum of \$19,407 for the 2024-25 school year, such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in salaries and benefits required by the new agreement over those that would be paid at current staffing levels in accordance with the current collective bargaining agreement. (Majority vote required.)

The School Board and the Budget Committee recommend this article.

NOTE: In order for this article to be adopted, it must be approved by the voters of the school districts of Hampton Falls, North Hampton, Seabrook, South Hampton, and the voters of the Winnacunnet Cooperative School District (which includes Hampton voters).

Jim Kime made a motion to open Article 02 for discussion. Seconded by Lauren Jurta. Jim Kime presented the terms of the proposed agreement stating he strongly suggests voters support this article. He indicated the agreed upon 4-year contract is fair and benefits both the Seacoast Educational Support Personnel Association and the school district and will help with retention rates. The CBA must pass in all five SAU21 Districts. He added, the main issue is these employees are paid at on hourly basis and their pay hasn't been updated and wasn't competitive with other opportunities. These employees are critical to the function of the school.

With no questions or further discussion, the Moderator stated the Article 02 will be placed on the official ballot as read. Rebecca Burdick made a motion to restrict reconsideration for Article 02. Lauren Jurta seconded the motion. By a show of hands, the motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 02 was approved. The Moderator introduced and read Article 03.

Article 03: Roof Expendable Trust

To see if the School District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$25,000 to be added to the existing Roof Expendable Trust fund for the purpose of repairing or replacing roofs on the South Hampton School District Buildings.

The School Board and the Budget Committee recommend this article. (Majority vote required.)

Jim Kime motioned to open Article 03 for discussion. Seconded by Lauren Jurta. Jim presented Article 03 stating the School District has worked with a roofing consultant to develop a plan to replace the roof on the "new" section of the main building in the summer of 2025. The goal is to raise money to add to the roof expendable trust over the next couple years to help fund the roof project so that the roof replacement does not result in a one-year large burden on taxpayers.

The target of the Roof Expendable Trust is \$100,000 with a current balance of approximately \$35,000. Once this roof is complete, it is expected that will be the last roof expense for a long time.

With no questions or further discussion, the Moderator stated the Article 03 will be placed on the official ballot as read. Rebecca Burdick made a motion to restrict reconsideration for Article 03.

Lauren Jurta seconded the motion. By a show of hands, the motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 03 was approved. The Moderator introduced and read Article 04.

Article 04: Building Maintenance Expendable Trust

To see if the School District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$25,000 to be added to the existing Building Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund, for the purpose of building repairs to the South Hampton School District Buildings.

The School Board and the Budget Committee recommend this article. (Majority vote required.)

Jim Kime motioned to open Article 04 for discussion. Seconded by Lauren Jurta. Jim Kime presented Article 04 stated this fund has been used over time as the school is going through a replacement cycle of key equipment. The fund currently has a balance of \$75,457 with a target of \$150,000. The next big project is the boiler, which is over 20 years old, will need to be replaced in the next 5 years or so, which is the last major item for the whole facility.

Jim noted if the roof goes this fund could be used. Historically this trust is funded from unreserved fund balance, however this year it is a direct cost taxation.

Without any questions or comments, the Moderator stated Article 04 will be placed on the official ballot as read. Rebecca Burdick made a motion to restrict reconsideration for Article 04. Lauren Jurta seconded the motion. By a show of hands, the motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 04 was approved. The Moderator introduced and read Article 05.

Article 05: Special Education Expendable Trust

To see if the School District will vote to raise and appropriate \$20,000 to be added to the existing Special Education Expendable Trust Fund, with up to \$20,000 to be funded from the June 30, 2024, unassigned fund balance available for transfer on July 1, 2024. No additional amount to be raised from taxation.

The School Board and the Budget Committee recommend this article. (Majority vote required.)

Jim Kime motioned to open Article 05 for discussion. Seconded by Lauren Jurta. Jim Kime presented Article 05 stating the fund currently has a balance of \$160,956 with a target of \$400,000. This fund would offset unexpected costs if a special needs student moved into Town. Funding comes from potential year-end fund balance and is not raised via additional taxation.

James Van Bokkelen urged attendees to tell our congressman the state should fund ADA because they never do.

Without any further questions or comments, the Moderator stated Article 05 will be placed on the official ballot as read. Rebecca Burdick made a motion to restrict reconsideration for Article 05. Lauren Jurta seconded the motion. By a show of hands, the motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 05 was approved.

Kim Molin asked if there was any other business to conduct.

Meredith thanked school board chair Jim Kime for his wealth of knowledge over the past 6 years as a school board member. She noted that he served as SAU joint board chairman during Covid, which was particularly difficult, and she is very grateful for his service. Jim said thank you and that he is proud of what they have accomplished.

James Van Bokkelen said that this is not what he envisioned when the school adopted the SB2 format 25 years ago and that the school should consider going back to SB1.

The Moderator asked if there were any further questions or discussions. Without any Kim Molin asked for a motion to recess the meeting at 7:54 PM to be continued at Town Elections on March 12th from 11AM-8PM. The motion was made by James Van Bokkelen, seconded by Rebecca Burdick. The motion was approved by show of hands.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Emily Kime".

Emily Kime
School District Clerk