

Landaff School Board  
Landaff Town Hall  
Budget Hearing at 5:30 pm

DATE: February 12th, 2024

Present: Chair John Barth, Vice Chair Matthew Copithorne, Board Member Meg Hamilton, Head Teacher Molly Culver, Preschool Teacher Amanda O'Dell, Superintendent Kate Segal, Business Manager Toni Butterfield, Interim Clerk Rhiannon Copithorne

Public: Mary Beaudin, Dale Locke Jason Cartwright, Harry McGovern, Ben Peters, Dave Feron, Judy Boulet, Errol Peters, Mary Dodge, Brenda Dodge

**CHAIR JOHN BARTH CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 5:34 PM.**

John introduced the members of the board, the staff from the Blue School and the SAU staff.

John reviewed the budget in detail explaining that many items have increased due to inflation while a few have gone down.

There was a discussion about the SAU costs and shares. John stated that shares to the SAU have increased partly because the E-Board determined that more staff were needed at the SAU to fix issues found by auditors regarding accounting and processes. Mary B commented that the shares didn't go up but the SAU costs increased. Toni explained that the shares are based on enrolment and property evaluation. District shares went from 2.4% to 3.2% and the SAU costs also went up. Dale asked if enrolment is up or down. Molly confirmed that there are 15 students in K-4 and 14 preschoolers, they are down 3 students from last year.

Dale Locke questioned why Special Education is up 10%. Matthew responded that it is due to the level of care students need. Dale asked if this is state mandated? Matthew confirmed that it is. Dale responded so there is nothing we can do about this. Matthew confirmed that this is correct.

Dale asked about the reserves. Matthew confirmed that they expect to be \$190k under budget so are looking to put 60k into the tuition reserve, 10k to each of the technology, Special Education and Building reserves. John stated that one additional child coming into the district can skew everything, so we are trying to avoid any significant increases. Toni confirmed that the reserve balances as of 7/31 are 30k Tuition, 10k Technology, 94k Building, 162k Special Education.

John commented that everything is going up due to inflation. Also, with Special Education State mandates you will continue to see a decline in enrollment but will see an increase in costs. Toni stated that they had expected a 3% increase not 8% but still trying to keep budget low. Jason asked if homeschooling is a factor. Matthew stated that the data is all over the place. Kate asked how many moved in Landaff using the voucher. Molly confirmed there are 4.

Dave asked if there is a process, if there are only 3 kids in the Blue School. Errol responded that it would be recommended by the board and put to a vote in the town.

There was a discussion about the voucher system and the tuition agreement with Lisbon which is up in 2025. Ben suggested that someone ask for the best deal with Lisbon and look at what is best for the taxpayers. Errol recommended checking what other schools cost. Matthew confirmed that they

do check the prices of other schools. John also commented that the surrounding towns would love to have our students as much as Lisbon.

John stated that they will be increasing tuition for out of town preschool students. There are 10 preschoolers from out of town. Brenda asked why she is paying for these kids in preschool. John explained that early intervention at preschool level is less costly. Harry stated that any preschool child on an IEP must be in preschool. Judy asked if Lisbon Preschool hurt Blue School. Amanda said that it didn't as they still have preschoolers from Lisbon.

Mary D asked how many kids use the bus. Molly responded 18 in total, 7 daily from the Blue School.

Mary D asked where the lunches come from. John responded that Lisbon provides them and that they are paid for by parents or the state not from taxes.

There were some general comments about the other schools within SAU 35 and a discussion between members of the public regarding the quality of schools in the area.

Dave commented that with the Lisbon contract coming up for renewal, there needs to be transparency and communication with the town. John asked if Dave would like to be involved in the process. Dave felt that the board is more qualified. Mary B commented that previously the board would meet with the Lisbon board twice a year to address any issues and asked if they still do this. John confirmed that it did stop for a while but in the last 1 ½ year they have met twice each year, next year they will meet 4 times prior to negotiation.

Brenda asked where was a copy of the Warrant Articles? Toni provided everyone with a copy of them.

A discussion ensued about the change in timing of this meeting, an agreement was made to move it back to the 7:00 pm time for next year.

**MOTION MADE BY DALE LOCKE TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 6:40 PM, SECONDED BY JASON CARTWRIGHT. ALL IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.**

Next Meeting: March 11th, 2024 at 5:00 pm, Annual Meeting at 7:00 pm

Notice is hereby made that public comment shall be made without expectation of a response by any School Board member to matters raised by such commentary. The Board will not hear personal complaints about school personnel nor against any person connected with the school system. The expectation of all in attendance is to conduct themselves in a civil manner. The Board respects the right of the public to communicate its stance of matters of interest, but meetings are scheduled in advance to conduct business put forth on its publicly posted agenda only.