

**TOWN OF CHESTERFIELD
BUDGET COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 20, 2024**

Present: George Goulet, Chairman; Alex Winn, Vice-Chair; Ege Cordell, School Board Representative, Greg Pratt, Burt Riendeau, Gregg Denzler, Judy Idelkope, Selectboard Representative; and Peter Browne

Absent: Rob Hodgkins, Spofford Fire District Representative, Sandra Jaskolski, Rick Cooper, Chesterfield Fire & Rescue Precinct Representative, Bob Sutherland, and Dan Cotter

Chairman Goulet called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM.

New Business – School Budget

This meeting was devoted to the Chesterfield School 2024-2025 Budget with subject experts Robert Malay, SAU 29 Superintendent of Schools, Sharyn D'Eon, Chesterfield School Principal, Scott Lazzaro, SAU 29 Business Administrator for Towns, Ege Cordell, Chesterfield School Board Representative, and Alex Wood, Chesterfield School Buildings and Grounds Manager.

Ege reviewed the Chesterfield School Board's 2024-25 Budget Overview Level 3 starting with the summary page and proceeding through the detail. In summary, the Chesterfield School Budget is up 1.2% or \$113,183 over last year's budget.

Pratt asked why the Special Education totals don't match the Public Hearing Handout. They do; the Public Hearing handout includes "Bi-lingual", which is a separate line on the Level 3.

Bi-lingual - increase of 23% to \$49,808 due to several students with English as a second language that have moved into town.

Social Worker – increase of 116.3% to \$102,390. Established as a FT position with benefits to attract candidates. Could not find candidates as a part-time position. Offset by eliminating the Assistant Principal position and shifting some responsibilities of other positions to Social Worker. The Social Worker currently monitors the needs of approximately 40-50 students which requires 40+ hours/week.

Speech and Psych wages are governed by SAU 29 contracts

Staff Consultation - up 170% to \$140,250. To address the increased need for reading consultation. This is a uniquely talented resource.

SAU 29 – up 2.8% to \$523,462. This is cost-justified based on the multitude of services provided to Chesterfield School. Based on a complex formula which includes property assessment and student population data among other variables.

Transfer/other – Accounting adjustments for other school revenues, federal funding placeholder, and warrant articles.

Catastrophic Aid – down \$40,908 to \$0. SPED reimbursement based on state formula, which varies and is unknown at this time.

Much discussion about identifying our Pre-Kindergarten population and especially those with special needs before registration. PK special needs are initially determined by the child's doctor. Most have to do with speech.

Chesterfield School has SPED responsibilities for charter school kids.

Library – Both the school and town have libraries. Goulet asked if there is collaboration between the school and town. Yes, there is frequent conversation between the school Media Specialist and the Chesterfield Library Director.

Much discussion about tractor equipment and attachments for \$8,000. Some services have been provided by local volunteers. Wood is taking on some of those responsibilities. Winn suggested this should have been requested as a separate warrant article for transparency. This inspired a discussion about future rules for warrant articles. We agreed to leave in the budget as-is for this year.

Our playground is aging out, and new playgrounds are extremely expensive due to new state regulations about accessibility. Scott to investigate creation of a new warrant article for a new playground starting next year.

Owl – a \$3,000 video/audio conferencing device that is made for meetings with multiple attendees. There is a bill before the legislature that all public elected bodies broadcast their meetings.

Article 5 – Lazzaro explained that it enables retention of a surplus of up to 5% of the local property tax, which for last year would have been $\$7,275,834 \times 5\% = \$363,792$. The school would have 12 months to expend this retention; after 12 months it goes back to the town. The School Board is the expending agent, and they would be required to hold a Public Meeting to expend any funds. The purpose is to smooth the impact surpluses have on our property tax rates.

Optimal Student Population for our Campus – In light of declining projected enrollments in Keene, Chesterfield, and Westmoreland, Goulet asked what the optimal student population is for our campus in terms of efficiently providing optimal educational services. This calculation has not been done. However very small class sizes are considered less effective. D'Eon and the Westmoreland School principal stay in contact about this and other issues.

The next meeting is Public Hearing on Saturday, January 27th, 2024. Winn moved to adjourn the meeting at 12:46 PM. The motion was seconded by Pratt and passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

George Goulet
Chair, Budget Committee