

**Approved
Candia Budget Committee
Meeting Minutes
November 21, 2011**

Members Present: Lynn Chivers, Carla Penfield, Todd Allen, Kim Byrd, Judith Szot, Matt Broadhead, Christine Watson, Ingrid Byrd, School Representative, and Cheryl Eastman, Secretary.

Members Absent: Carleton Robie, Selectmen's Representative

The meeting was called to order at 7:04. Lynn led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Budget Committee met with members of the SAU, Moore School Administration, and the School Board to discuss the proposed school budget. Members present were: Bob St. Cyr, Principal, Moore School, Marge Polak, Assistant Superintendent, Karen Lessard, SAU Business Administrator, Dr. Littlefield, Superintendent, Deb Leblond, School Board, Kim Royer, School Board, Nicole LaFlamme, School Board, Michelle Levallee, Moore School Assistant Principal.

Full Time Kindergarten. Lynn Chivers asked what prompted the decision to include full time Kindergarten in the proposed budget and why not bring the question to the voters. Kim Royer of the School Board stated that the School Board had talked about the benefits of having full time kindergarten. Principal St. Cyr stated that currently there are two 2 ½ hour sessions each day. The students have a packed schedule. Full day Kindergarten will prepare them much better for entering first grade. They have a reading program called the Imagine reading system. The program requires at least 90 minutes of reading instruction per day. The school would like to be able to offer that program and other subjects as well. They do a 20 minute special that could be music, art, or physical education. The kids also go to the library. Since the schedule is so packed, a full day would be a great benefit for the students. Nicole Laflamme added that there are several studies that show the lifelong benefits of full time Kindergarten vs. part time. Many studies say that investing in full time Kindergarten will benefit the overall community in many ways. The School Board would like to develop the program. The Board has been elected to provide the best education to the students of the community of Candia and that's why we are putting it forth. It is a very important and a fiscally responsible recommendation. Lynn Chivers asked why it was not presented as a warrant article. Kim Royer responded that it is already a part of the school, it's already built in. It's not like we are looking at a new building. It is currently part of the program, we need to increase it so our kids can benefit from it, the best that they can. Judith Szot commented that the Kindergarten was a warrant article to adopt it. It was passed as a half day program, so now you are changing what the people voted for. The people approved a half day for Kindergarten and now you are doubling it. If the people approved a building, you wouldn't go and build twice that because you felt it was better for the community. Judith Szot also said that she taught Kindergarten for 12 years and found that Kindergarteners can't do a whole day. Kids that came in the afternoon had a harder time with academics because they were exhausted after playing all morning. She went on to say that there are lots of studies regarding early education. Some say starting as early as age 3, but I don't believe that a full day Kindergarten is a benefit to our kids. Kim Royer stated that they looked at more than just academics. They looked at the whole picture – socialization, how to be around other kids, how to play... There will be reading, writing, and math, but there will also be a whole gamut of other things, like movement, socialization, learning about themselves, their bodies, each other, and rest times. There was a discussion regarding homeowners and taxes and whether having a full time

Kindergarten would draw people to Candia and help the property values or not. Judith Szot is concerned about why we are proposing programs that will raise our taxes at a time when people are struggling – and nothing looks to improve for a long time. A School Board member replied because it is for the good of the kids. Kim Byrd asked if full time Kindergarten will be mandatory. He was told that Kindergarten attendance is not mandatory – parents would have a choice of a ½ day or full day program. Dr. Littlefield clarified that it is mandatory that Kindergarten be offered from the town, but not mandatory that parents send their children. Kim Byrd feels that since the projected Kindergarten enrollment is down by 23%, this is a bad time to increase to a full day program.

Health insurance. Lynn Chivers stated that Karen Lessard had provided the Budget Committee with new numbers for the health insurance. Lynn Chivers stated that the town's health insurance rates went down due to losing an older employee and hiring a younger one. She questioned if that would be the same for the school with older teachers retiring and being replaced by potentially younger ones? Dr. Littlefield said that the town is part of a small health insurance pool and the SAU is part of a large pool, so the average ages would not be a factor in the school's case.

Instructional supplies. Lynn Chivers questioned the increase. Kim Royer stated that the Board had concerns because people are struggling and parents would get an extensive list of supplies to bring to school. We want the kids to be able to have what they need to come in and learn. Deb Leblond said that some parents can afford the huge list and some cannot. Is it fair that the kids don't have what they need because their parents can't afford it? One teacher had purchased everything for all her students and the school board decided this year to have every class do that. It has been included in the budget. This year children had very minimal lists sent home- maybe one or two items. But now the school supplies are very low because this hadn't been budgeted for in this year's budget, so now we need to plan for it. Judith Szot questioned the number of binders and folders per student. She also questioned if the prices quoted are catalog list prices, and wouldn't the school actually get a discount on them? The School Board explained that each student needs folders and binders for each subject they have and that could be a minimum of 5 per student. Judith Szot said the overall supply budget has increased over 100% at a time when people don't have jobs, or are underemployed. She agreed that the School Board is doing their job, but the job of the Budget Committee is to look out for the tax payers. Matt asked if there was a plan in place to reuse and recycle the binders and folders. The school board thought it was a great idea and it hadn't been thought of because this is the first year doing it like this. The School Board and Principals will look into that idea. Todd Allen asked about the wholesale prices vs. the catalog prices listed in budget. Principal St. Cyr said they have quoted catalog prices because they are the only prices published for review. When they actually buy the items, they shop around and try to get the best deal they can.

Public High School. Lynn Chivers reported that the Budget Committee had received the info they wanted for budgeted vs. actual for high school enrollment. The information showed an average of being over-budgeted by 17 kids each year. Why do we not ask the 8th graders what their plans are for the high school years? Dr. Littlefield stated it is a good idea, but we are doing a budget in September and some people at that point don't know if they can afford a private high school or not. We are obligated to provide a free and public education for every student. Carla Penfield asked if they would want to put that in a warrant article. Dr. Littlefield said no, because if the article fails, you will be in violation of the law because "no means no" and at that point you wouldn't be able to send kids to high school. Christine Watson said if you look at a 10 year span and look at the average differential between the actual vs. budget and maybe come up with a budgeted ratio. Dr. Littlefield explained that towns are different than schools because towns can keep a fund balance to make up unforeseen differences. In a school, if

we guess wrong, we have no place to go to make up the difference. Dr. Littlefield felt that a warrant article might work if it is set up as a budgeted expendable trust. Todd Allen would like a commitment from the school that if any funds are left over from the high school tuition line item, that amount gets turned back to the town. Ingrid Byrd stated that how tuition was handled in the past was that it was included in the budget and a separate warrant article said "Do you approve \$\$\$ for high school tuition. If this article is approved, the amount will be deducted from the operating budget." It also said that if any money is remaining from the warrant article, it will go back to the voters. That way we were covered and the article never failed.

Replacement furniture. Lynn Chivers asked about the trapezoidal desks. Principal St. Cyr said they are constantly embarking on new instruction methods and working toward moving the students toward the future. Trapezoidal tables enable the classes to work in small groups and can be reconfigured in many ways and transition for many different activities. A regular class room of desks in rows and grids is a thing of the past and they are moving forward into the future. Dr Littlefield said that two rooms are scheduled for replacement of furniture this year. He suggested the trapezoidal tables for their flexibility. A School Board member stated that the proposed increase is to replace two classrooms of furniture that is due for replacement anyway. Judith Szot stated that the tables were used about 20 years ago and they did not work well and they got rid of them. Dr. Littlefield stated where he has used them they were used properly and have always worked well. He went on to say that it is an educational decision, the way they set up classrooms.

Additional buses. Lynn Chivers asked about the increase in the transportation line. Kim Royer explained that the School Board has had a scheduling committee that is in its third year. This committee was not intended to look at transportation, but was looking at several challenges that the school has in regard to meeting the requirements of No Child Left Behind, meeting the Average Yearly Progress (AYP), new bullying laws, concerns about safety on the playground with the morning drop off and afternoon pickup times, and looking at the best use for the teachers time. The Committee looked at how to move in the right direction. The Committee is proposing their ideas at the December School Board meeting. The School Board has not heard the full proposal yet. The Committee wants to have all the children start at the same time and have the same end time to help with some of the challenges. In order to accomplish this, the school would need two additional buses. As it stands now, there are 45 minutes of day care in the morning and then 30 minutes also in the afternoon because of the way the buses run now. The school did not make AYP with a certain population, so giving the teachers more time to actually work with the kids would be helpful in increasing those scores. Kim Royer reported that in the NH State tests, the special education students did not make the AYP that they should have. Carla Penfield verified with the School Board that there is a 45 minute wait for the kids that arrive on the first buses in the morning before the second buses bring the rest of the kids. The School Board confirmed this and added that at the end of the day, some kids have a 30 minute wait for the buses to come back to school to pick them up after doing the first bus runs. There was discussion about how information is given out to the public regarding school issues. Ingrid Byrd stated the information that goes out to the parents should also be put up at the post office and the town bulletin board to let everyone see it, not just parents of students. Kim Byrd questioned how transportation will affect the AYP. The School Board said that having the kids all start and end at the same time will add instructional time because instead of being on the playground, they can work with kids that need the help. It will give them more flexibility. It will also improve safety on the playground and hopefully cut down on the bullying issues. This plan will increase the instruction time by 35 minutes each day, times 180 days per year, which equals 105 hours of additional instruction time per school year. Christine Watson asked if the School Board could confirm that the proposed new schedule has nothing to do with the teacher's contract, or the amount of time

the teachers spend at school, or if there are different drivers behind this idea that we are not hearing about. The School Board stated that the teachers are absolutely being asked to do things outside of the contracts, but there are 4 real challenges that the school has. This has been worked on for three years. This is a response to how are we going to work on those challenges. And one of the responses was the transportation piece. There is no hidden agenda. Todd Allen asked what are we getting for our extra \$100,000? There will still be parents dropping their kids off at school, there will still be bullying, so that issue goes out the window. If we are getting added instructional time, that's great. That's what we need to hear. The School Board confirmed that this plan uses the teachers time more efficiently and effectively to actually work with the students. And if there is less time on the playground, there is less chance for bullying. Kim Byrd commented that we have an increased cost for transportation, but we can't force the parents to use the buses. The School Board confirmed that the seats have to be provided for (and funded for) each child, but is up to the parents if they want to use them or not. Carla Penfield asked how the additional instructional time will be dispersed throughout the school day. The School Board stressed that everyone should attend the December School board meeting where there will be a presentation regarding how the extra time will be allocated for each grade level.

Server relocation. Todd Allen asked who has independently investigated and determined that the server needs to be moved as opposed to upgrading its existing location? Dr. Littlefield stated the server is currently in a corridor. Todd Allen asked about the process to move it from the corridor. Principal St. Cyr stated it will be moved across the hall from the nurse's office. It was then mentioned that the cost has been removed from the building maintenance budget. The only cost remaining in the budget is the \$14,000 for the stair lift.

Dr. Littlefield stated that he appreciated seeing the budget committee over the summer to see what the pulse of the community is. This budget is an increase over the current school year, but it will be well below the default budget. He appreciates the opportunity to talk about some of these things, as it is good to have the dialogue.

Questions from residents. Jodie Hedstrom thanked the School board for their work on the budget and asked them to not back down on their budget. She said she will fight for the proposed budget and believes that the bus usage will increase if the start and end times are the same for all the children. Sharon DeWitt said that she understands the Budget Committee's job is difficult, but they are excessive in the questions they ask. Parents are also taxpayers and the Committee should give the professionals who came up with the budget their due. Todd Allen responded that it is the job of the Budget Committee to question things. Sharon DeWitt commented she cannot attend the Budget Committee meetings and feels that the minutes of the meetings are misleading because they contain untruths, such as the comment that Kindergarten is not mandatory. She felt that the Budget Committee members should have known that it is mandatory to provide Kindergarten. She further found it offensive to question Dr. Littlefield about it, as though he doesn't know his job. She would like to see the minutes be changed to correct these things and when the Budget Committee approves the minutes, they should take out the items that are just opinion. Todd Allen stated that the minutes of meetings are supposed to accurately reflect what was actually said at the meetings, whether they be fact, fiction, or opinion. Judith Szot commented that is the point of this meeting, so that everyone can bring up concerns they have, ask questions, listen, think about it, and come back with a budget. She feels we should look at it all. It is the Committee's job to question things. She found it offensive that the Committee is being criticized for doing their job. She added that she always bought her children's school supplies and didn't expect the whole town to purchase them.

At 8:25, Todd Allen made a motion to adjourn. Judith Szot seconded. All voted in favor. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted by,
Cheryl Eastman