

Meeting of the Candia Municipal Budget Committee

Unapproved Minutes

December 11 2024

Town Office Building

Members Present:

Budget Committee Chair Allyn Chivers , Vice chair Susan Gill, Selectman's Rep. Susan Young, , School Board Rep, Mark Chalbeck, Brenda Coughlin, Katrina Niles, Ryan Young, William Saffie, Joshua Reap,

Absent members;

Chairman Chivers opened the meeting at 7:00pm.

Pledge of Allegiance

Minutes from 12/03/2024 approval.

Changes/Corrections

List absent members.

Correct typos

Selectman Brenda Coughlin Motion to accent the minutes with changes.

Joshua Reap; Seconded.

All in favor.

The meeting begins with initial recording adjustments and seating arrangements. Chair Lynn Chivers announces the meeting as the December 11th Municipal Budget Committee meeting, and the group recites the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America. Lynn Chivers explains that the meeting is a public hearing on the school

budget and clarifies which budget document to use. The committee then addresses the approval of the minutes from the previous meeting on December 3rd. Brenda Coughlin points out a missing "yes" or "no" next to names on the last page regarding a motion for non-public session. After clarification and correction of this omission Lynn Chivers proposes a motion to approve the corrected minutes, which is seconded. The meeting began with a vote, where Josh seconded a motion. The meeting facilitator reminded everyone to state their names before speaking for AI transcription purposes. A question arose regarding warrant articles; only one was expected, details of which would be provided later. The public hearing was opened. Bill, the superintendent of schools, presented a budget update, specifically addressing changes in principal services. The original budget for principal services was \$11,057,097, updated to \$11,100,810. No further questions or comments were received from the public during the open hearing. The public comment period was closed. A discussion ensued about whether to allow questions from the committee members before closing the public hearing. It was decided to close the public hearing first, allowing for a dedicated discussion and question period afterward.

Brenda Coughlin asks about the \$222,580.54 received in FY24 from federal grants, specifically inquiring about their purpose and accounting. SAU 15 superintendent William Rearick clarifies that these ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act) federal grants—including Title I, Title II, and Title IV—are supplemental funds, not part of the operating budget. Title I funds are used for at-risk students, including those experiencing homelessness, providing support services and transportation as mandated by McKinney-Vento. Title II funds support professional development outside the district's operational obligations, focusing on supplemental areas not covered by the operating budget. Title IV funds are also supplemental and used for extra activities and programs beyond the district's core responsibilities. The speaker emphasizes that district obligations must be met through the operating budget, with these federal grants serving as supplementary resources for specific initiatives. A SAU member discusses various funding sources for the school, clarifying their uses. IDEA funds are specifically for students with disabilities, ensuring compliance with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). CARES Act funds, used for COVID-19 learning loss relief, are no longer available. A small annual allocation exists for preschool students with disabilities, also under IDEA. REAP (Rural Education Assistance Program) grants are available to rural schools under 600 students, with varying yearly allocations (e.g., \$42,000 one year, \$98 the next). The speaker emphasizes that Title 1, Title 2, and Title 4 funds require a comprehensive needs assessment to determine spending, preventing pre-allocation based on anticipated amounts. The federal government mandates this real-time needs-based approach to funding allocation.

Kimberly Sarfde SAU 15 member explains the school's iterative budget process, starting in the summer with feedback gathering from stakeholders (teachers, students, parents, community). This feedback informs initial

spending plans for the school year. Ongoing feedback, including student performance data, is used throughout the year to adjust spending. Brenda Coughlin raises concerns about the significant fluctuation in federal grant funding between FY23 (\$309,000) and the current year (\$222,000), questioning how these funds are used and allocated. Kimberly Sarfde SAU 15 states that the allocation depends on various factors, including state funding, reduced lunch numbers, student enrollment, and other criteria. These factors are not considered by the school when budgeting, as federal guidelines prohibit it. The funds are received mid-July, but the exact amount for the next fiscal year (FY25) will be known around June. Emphasizes that these federal funds are highly restricted and cannot be used flexibly. Speaker 8 agrees, noting the strict federal regulations regarding the use of these funds. SAU 15 superintendent William Rearick explains the arduous process of submitting a plan to the state department for funding, highlighting the need to tie the plan to specific requirements for approval or denial. The federal government's role is limited to providing data to the states, with the actual funding allocation determined by the state. Brenda Coughlin raises a question regarding the use of funds for special needs children, specifically how to distinguish between operational budget and special education needs within the context of the IDEA grant. Kimberly Sarfde SAU 15 responds that planning for special needs funding is challenging due to unpredictable student needs and potential cost overruns (e.g., transportation, additional professionals, out-of-district placements). They explain that while they attempt to create a spending plan in June based on existing data, the arrival of a single student with significant needs can drastically alter the budget (up to \$250,000). An example is given of a student experiencing homelessness, further illustrating the unpredictable nature of these costs. SAU member then brings up This chapter discusses unexpected transportation costs for a student requiring special education services. The district faces a \$55,000 expense for transporting a student back to their sending school, a cost not initially budgeted. The funds will be split between Title I and IDEA funds. A question arises regarding the use of a special education trust fund for such unforeseen expenses. It's clarified that the trust is intended for extreme, unplanned situations, and the \$55,000 expense doesn't qualify, as it's related to a known student need. The discussion then shifts to the overall budget of \$10 million for 2023-2024, including an additional \$222,000 in grants. A question is raised about the lapsing of unspent funds, and it's revealed that new guidelines require a plan for spending federal funds by December 14th. Failure to allocate and use these funds by December 31st results in the state reclaiming them. The previous lack of such strict guidelines is also mentioned.

Conversation changes to Title 2 funds have been allocated due to their importance. Budget committee member inquiries about the consideration of items not listed in the operating budget, specifically regarding continuing education for teachers (Title 2, Section 2). SAU 15 member clarifies that Title 2 funds are for teacher professional development and principals, but not other staff. Budget committee asks about tuition reimbursement listed in the operating budget and whether it can be shifted. Kimberly Sarfde SAU 15 explains that using federal funds requires

evidence, research (less than five years old), justification tied to district/school goals, and demonstration of positive student outcomes. The accountability applies to all activities, regardless of cost. SAU member uses the analogy of a college student's spending money: anticipated gifts don't count towards essential expenses like books and food; similarly, anticipated funds shouldn't be counted on for Title 2 spending. Budget committee member then asks about the use of grant money for supplemental items. Conversation shifted to the assumed disposition of supplemental budget items at the year's end, specifically whether they are automatically absorbed into the operating budget. Budget Committee member uses the example of an additional student requiring supplemental funds, which would then become part of the following year's operating budget. SAU 15 clarifies that the use of these funds depends on the following year's needs, and while similar functions might be funded, the exact use varies based on student needs and available resources. The funds aren't automatically carried over but are considered when planning the next year's budget.

Brenda Coughlin, following up on a previous request for state administrative staff requirements, asks why the school employs an assistant principal despite having a student population of 275, which is below the state's 500-student threshold for mandatory associate principal positions. Speaker 08 explains that the school's K-8 structure and the increasing complexity of student social and emotional behavioral challenges necessitate two administrators to effectively manage these issues. The workload requires the support of both the principal and assistant principal, making the position necessary despite the school's size. SAU 15 member discusses the challenges a school faces in supporting students with behavioral and social-emotional issues. The conversation centers around the availability of staff to address these issues, specifically mentioning the roles of the guidance counselor (Pam), who is already heavily involved in classroom activities and group work, and the lack of a dedicated social worker. The school considered adding a social worker to the staff last year but decided against it, planning to include it in the budget for the following year. The frequency of such incidents requiring significant administrative intervention is unclear, with one speaker noting several high-profile cases in the last three or four years, while another seeks clarification on whether these situations are daily occurrences or happen only a few times annually. The need for additional support staff to handle these situations is highlighted, particularly given the existing workload of the principal and guidance counselor. This segment focuses on clarifying budgetary items and the rationale behind specific salary increases. Speaker 03 expresses difficulty understanding salary allocations within the budget, particularly regarding administrative wages and the roles of the Student Services Director (which includes a Special Ed Director and a BCBA), the guidance counselor, the principal, and an administrative secretary. Brenda Coughlin explains that these positions are listed separately, reflecting the school's operational structure. And then questions the significant raises given to the principal (9%) and assistant principal (just under 9%), inquiring whether COLA was included and the reasoning behind the increases. SAU 15 superintendent William Rearick explains that the board values the

principal's work and that the raises aim to remain competitive in recruitment and retention, particularly for teachers, noting that this is the third year of salary increases for teachers to retain good staff. SAU 15 superintendent William Rearick presented salary comparisons to the board, referencing paid schools and neighboring schools within a 30-mile radius (excluding certain areas). Brenda Coughlin appreciating the effort, lacked the presented data to confirm the reasonableness of the salaries. Brenda Coughlin expressed concern over the budget increase, noting the narrow budget passage two years prior, a default budget last year, and recent significant taxpayer re-evaluations causing "sticker shock." Despite an 8.6% budget increase, highlighted a 4% decrease in K-8 enrollment and a 17.5% decrease in high school enrollment since 2020, totaling 27 fewer students. While SAU 15 superintendent William Rearick cited consistent enrollment numbers over the last three to four years, Brenda Coughlin countered with data showing fluctuations, arguing that despite minor variations, the overall trend shows declining enrollment percentages while the budget increases significantly. This discrepancy between budget growth and student enrollment decline is the core reason for not supporting the proposed budget. Brenda Coughlin shares concern over the number of administrative positions and their associated costs, questioning the allocation of funds. They highlight a desire for more teachers, particularly a sixth-grade teacher, while expressing difficulty understanding the budget's structure and the location of certain positions within it. SAU 15 superintendent William Rearick the number of administrators at the school, including a principal, assistant principal, student service directors, and special education director. The discussion then shifts to the principal's recent significant salary increase (almost \$10,000, a 9% raise). Brenda Coughlin questions the value of this raise compared to the need for additional teaching staff. The conversation turns to the school board's budget, clarification on a \$44,500 expense for school board services. School board Mark Chalbeck interjects, clarifying that this includes legal fees and other expenses, totaling approximately \$25,000, with legal fees alone at \$15,000. The discussion centers on the budget, specifically the allocation for board member stipends (\$4200), secretary salary, annual audit (\$96,660), and legal fees (\$15,000). A board member questions the legal fees, noting the high cost of legal services. The treasurer explains that the actual legal expenses for the previous school year were \$14,573.04, while the budgeted amount was \$12,500. A \$2,500 increase is proposed for the next year. Concerns are raised about justifying the increase without a clear understanding of how the previous budget was utilized. The treasurer assures the board that all requests for legal assistance have been met, and any suggestions for improvement would be considered. Difficulties in accessing detailed budget information due to small print are also mentioned. A board member highlights a recurring problem with email attachments not reaching all board members. This was attributed to the current secretary's handling of the distribution. A suggestion is made to switch to printed copies instead of relying on email, to ensure everyone receives the necessary documents. The treasurer confirms that they already provide hard copies at the town hall and send electronic copies to the board, and that they are open to adjusting their distribution methods to improve communication. SAU 15 superintendent William Rearick suggests providing hard copies of documents in addition

to electronic distribution to improve efficiency. They propose designating a single point person at the start of each year to streamline communication and document management. Sue Young suggest streamlining the way information is obtained from SAU and school board, suggesting the easiest method for document distribution to this point person. Lynn Chivers confirms that electronic distribution to them, is the preferred method. Joshua Reap asks about dues and fees associated with the district also ability to provide merit bonuses for principals instead of yearly wage increases, particularly for one-time recognition. The question references a previous meeting where the process was explained, Joshua Reap seeks clarification on the district's flexibility in using merit bonuses as a recognition tool for exceptional performance within a specific timeframe. The discussion centers on the appropriate compensation for an employee, specifically considering a bonus versus a pay raise. Concerns are raised about the long-term implications of compensation choices on retirement funds. A one-time bonus is suggested as a preferable alternative to a pay raise to avoid future retirement complications. The group then shifts to discussing a specific employee who was named "Principal of the Year" out of 409 principals in New Hampshire. The rigorous selection process, involving peer review, school visits, and interviews with parents and students, is explained.

Finally, the conversation turns to a budget review, Brenda Coughlin specifically questioning the maintenance line item which shows approximately \$65,000, custodial salaries at \$110,771, and maintenance admin other salaries at \$68,000. Clarification is sought regarding the personnel associated with these costs, including the number of custodians and the roles of the maintenance director and other staff. The discussion begins with a review of custodial staffing. There are four custodians: one full-time employee working 40 hours a week, and three part-time employees. The maintenance director's role and involvement in custodial work is questioned. The total budget of \$110,000 is mentioned in relation to the four-person custodial team. Bill Saffie shifts conversation shifts to health insurance. The district uses Primex for medical, dental, property and liability, workers' compensation, and unemployment insurance. A question arises regarding whether the district shops around for better rates or simply renews with Primex annually. It's explained that Primex was chosen years ago due to competitive rates and is a major provider for many school districts. The discussion also touches upon the bidding process for other services, confirming that individual contracts are used and bids are considered on a case-by-case basis. Finally, a question is raised about the increase in personnel over the past five years, but a definitive answer is not immediately available. The final segment attempts to determine the change in personnel over the past five years. However, the exact figures are unavailable at the moment, requiring further investigation into budget records to provide a complete answer. discussion centers on the number of regular education teachers. There's a discrepancy between the reported number (20) and the actual number (28). The initial confusion arises from including various support staff like special education teachers, guidance counselors, and world language teachers in the overall count. The speakers clarify that the 20 figure refers solely to regular classroom teachers for kindergarten through first grade. The total

number of teachers, including support staff, is 28. Joshua Reap shifts conversation to the procurement of office supplies and other resources. A question is raised regarding whether the district handles purchasing independently or if a group discount option exists through the SAU (School Administrative Unit) process. A response mentions that this is the first year using a unified trash service across multiple districts, implying a potential shift towards centralized purchasing for some resources, but no definitive answer is given regarding office supplies. SAU 15 superintendent William Rearick discusses the challenges of streamlining school budgets due to the varying needs of different districts. Each district has unique requirements, leading to resistance to budget cuts even if streamlining could save money in the long term. The speaker uses the analogy of children in a family to illustrate the differences in needs. Ryan Young raises a question about the bonus structure versus a salary increase for employee retention. They suggest a bonus structure as a more sustainable alternative to a 10% salary increase, acknowledging the importance of retaining good employees but expressing concern about the potential for grant money to be used for bonuses. SAU 15 superintendent William Rearick on the challenges and considerations surrounding teacher contract negotiations. notes the difficulty in navigating these negotiations, acknowledging the board's awareness of the challenges. SAU 15 superintendent William Rearick provides context, explaining that previous contract renegotiations were necessary to prevent teacher loss due to low pay compared to neighboring districts. A comparison of teacher salaries with similar-sized districts was conducted to justify the proposed changes. Mark Chalbeck emphasizes the limitations of comparing salaries with larger districts like Hooksett due to differing commercial bases. Sue Young expresses inability to compete with larger districts like Manchester in terms of police and teacher salaries is also highlighted. Mark Chalbeck that the salary comparisons included districts like Chester and Deerfield, acknowledging the differences in student populations between the districts. SAU 15 superintendent William Rearick adds that comparisons were made for both teachers and administrators, noting that larger districts often use this data selectively to support their arguments. The discussion centers on the school budget and its affordability for the town. SAU 15 superintendent William Rearick explains that the board voted on a budget that resulted in smaller class sizes but also higher teacher salaries. This decision was presented to the town as a warrant article and passed.

A question arises about the possibility of going below the default budget, with Susan Young confirming that it's possible, although Lynn Chivers personally doesn't recommend it. The example of another New Hampshire town requiring a supplemental budget meeting due to exceeding their budget is mentioned. The need to finalize a recommended budget for the January 22nd meeting is highlighted. Before proposing numbers, Brenda Coughlin 3 requests that everyone consider the fund balance data provided earlier. They emphasize the fluctuation of the fund balance over the past five years, ranging from \$300,000 to over \$1 million, and caution against over budgeting due to the fact that leftover funds aren't necessarily returned. Speaker 2 clarifies that the numbers being discussed are

before encumbrances, and Speaker 3 offers to explain the data further. Lynn Chivers explains budget figures, referencing a previous balance of \$565,000 before the incumbent. They request clarification on the provided columns showing amounts received and spent, aiming for better understanding of the fund balance. Brenda Coughlin justification for overages, referencing a previous meeting and noting that the numbers haven't changed, only their breakdown. Joshua Reap asks about employee benefit rates, specifically concerning CEA health plan costs (8.5% for medical, 0% for dental). They inquire whether these rates are set by the collective bargaining agreement or are negotiable. SAU 15 superintendent William Rearick explains that these rates were discussed in the spring and will be a topic for the board's discussion regarding future cycles and potential changes. Joshua Reap expresses satisfaction and concludes their questions.

Sue Young ask Lynn Chivers about can we vote for a budget below default Lynn Chivers says yes but does not like the idea. Sue Young a motion to vote on a increase last year's budget by 5% . Lynn Chivers clarifies that a motion is a 5% increase to last year's budget bringing the total to 10,661,352.20 Sue Young makes a motion to increase the budget by 5% Katrina Niles seconds the motion. The discussion centers on calculating a five percent budget increase. Initial calculations, based on an incorrect figure of 10 million for the previous year, yielded a result of 10,661,352. However, Brenda Coughlin corrects the previous year's figure to 10,404,679. Speaker 02 initially uses the wrong year's data (2023 instead of 2024), leading to further calculation errors. After clarification, the correct previous year's budget is identified as 10,404,679. Using this figure, a five percent increase is calculated, resulting in a new budget of 10,924,842. The difference, representing the five percent increase, is confirmed to be 520,163. The speakers work collaboratively to correct the initial errors and arrive at the accurate budget figure.

The discussion centers on reviewing and adjusting the proposed budget. Speaker 10 clarifies that last year's budget was \$520,230, and a 5% increase results in a total of \$10,924,842. Speaker 2 confirms this calculation. However, this proposed budget is \$175,968 less than the default budget of \$11,100,810. Brenda Coughlin 2 expresses concern about recommending a budget below the default, citing contractual obligations and the need to account for these commitments. Sue Young agrees that only contractual obligations can be added to the budget. Lynn Chivers explains that the default budget includes last year's budget plus contractual obligations, minus one-time expenses. Brenda Coughlin out that there have been hundreds of thousands of dollars in positive fund balances over the last five years, even exceeding the default budget. Lynn Chivers acknowledges that the current year's final fund balance is unknown, and Brenda mentions a school board member's previous concern regarding the budget. The group discusses the budget, with Brenda Coughlin mentioning that there might be two hundred thousand dollars leftover. Bill Saffie clarifies that voters will choose between the default budget and a proposed lower budget. Lynn Chivers 02 explains that a "yes" vote approves the proposed budget, while a "no" vote results in the default budget. A motion for

a 5% increase is put to a vote. The vote results in a defeat (3 yeses, 5 nos). Following the failed vote, discussion ensues regarding the reasons for the rejection, with some members stating the proposed budget was too low, while others felt it was too high. Brenda Coughlin then proposes a new motion for a 3% increase based on the current budget of 10 million dollars and the inflation rate.

This segment focuses on the discussion surrounding the proposed 3% budget increase. Brenda Coughlin recommends a 3% increase despite decreasing enrollment and a history of default budgets. Lynn Chivers confirms the calculated budget amount as 10,716,750, representing a 3% increase. Speaker 10 expresses concern that the 3% increase might still be too high, considering the cost-of-living increase of 2.7% and the possibility of further reductions during the deliberative session. Speaker 03 raises another question, and Speaker 01 inquires

about the possibility of budget changes during the deliberative session. Lynn Chivers explains the deliberative session process, clarifying that the operating budget (warrant article) is amendable, allowing for changes in the proposed amount. Speaker 02 uses last year's budget as an example, illustrating how a reduced budget was later amended and approved during the deliberative session before going to the ballot. Speaker 09 adds that opinions can be voiced and amendments proposed during the deliberative session.

The Budget Committee discussed a proposed budget increase. Speaker 03 proposed a percentage increase, citing declining enrollment, substantial fund balances, and taxpayer pressure for tighter budgeting. Speaker 02 confirmed the proposal was for a 5% increase. Following discussion, a vote was held on a 3% budget increase totaling 10,716,750. The vote resulted in 6 in favor and 2 against, passing the 3% increase.

Following the 3% budget increase vote, the committee discussed procedures for tie-breaker scenarios. Speaker 02 noted that with nine committee members, a tie would result in the motion failing. Speaker 10 confirmed this, referencing a similar situation in the previous year's deliberative session. Speaker 04 added that the voters retain the power to alter the budget even after the committee's decision. The discussion concluded with Speaker 02 reiterating that the committee's decision is merely a recommendation, and the final decision rests with the voters.

Speaker 10 clarifies that the 10% variance rule allows for a maximum 10% increase in the budget, but decreases can exceed this limit. Speaker 3 confirms this interpretation. Speaker 2 provides an example of the rule's application in a past instance where a \$370,000 property purchase request was denied by the budget committee because it exceeded the 10% threshold. Speaker 2 expresses frustration with the piecemeal information flow regarding the budget and acknowledges their past inaction in addressing this issue. They then introduce a key point: budget-related questions must originate from the budget committee as a whole, not individual members. Speaker 2 explains

that individual committee members cannot independently request information; all requests must be approved by the committee as a whole. They emphasize that while members can ask questions during meetings, individual inquiries outside of formal committee sessions are not permissible. Speaker 2 then reads from the basic law of budgeting, highlighting that the committee can request information from various sources, but must allow a reasonable timeframe for responses. The committee cannot dictate employee actions or timelines for information gathering. Finally, Speaker 2 reiterates that a single committee member lacks the authority to independently request information; all requests must be formally approved by a committee vote.

The discussion centers on the process for asking questions about the budget and the limitations placed on the committee's ability to answer certain questions. Speaker 02 explains that the process begins early in the year with an initial meeting for questions. Further questions arising from the answers given at that meeting can be asked at a subsequent meeting. Speaker 10 suggests that individuals can file a "right to know" request outside of the committee process, which has a five-day turnaround. Speaker 04 expresses concern that some requests are unreasonable. Speaker 03 raises a concern about being restricted from asking valuable questions until a later meeting, even if the information would be helpful for the team's understanding of the budget. Speaker 03 also points out a lack of response from the committee to a previous request for a meeting to discuss town-related matters. Speaker 02 reiterates the established process, emphasizing the need for early scrutiny of the budget and the multiple opportunities for questions throughout the process, including initial meetings, a public hearing, a supplemental meeting, and a deliberative session. The speaker clarifies that while some questions might arise after several meetings, it's the responsibility of committee members to thoroughly review the budget beforehand and formulate their questions accordingly.

This segment focuses on concerns regarding the timing and process of budget review. Speakers discuss the need to improve the process for reviewing the school budget, noting that the current timeline is too compressed. The budget was officially received around a month before the November 18th review meeting, leaving insufficient time for thorough analysis. Participants express frustration with the lack of time to ask questions and receive complete answers, particularly given the pressure to make decisions quickly. The suggestion is made to start the budget season earlier and potentially hold more frequent budget committee meetings to allow for more in-depth review and discussion. The limited number of people who thoroughly examine the budget line by line is also highlighted as a concern. The discussion touches upon the nature of the budget documents, with one speaker clarifying that they are not merely guidelines but are based on established budgetary laws. Despite the challenges, the expectation is that the voters will ultimately decide.

This segment discusses citizen engagement in town matters and the challenges of receiving timely information from town and school officials. Speaker 10 notes that citizens will participate in meetings concerning various issues, including police matters and budgets. Speaker 9 suggests that providing information in advance, such as tax bills, increases involvement. The upcoming meeting on the 22nd will involve final votes on the town and school budgets and warrant articles. Questions regarding the town budget must be asked before the vote. A previous issue of delayed information is raised, specifically concerning a request for information regarding night shifts. Speakers 9 and 10 highlight the difficulties in obtaining clear and complete responses to information requests, citing internal communication problems. Speaker 2 explains that past issues with late information delivery have been addressed, but the town office closure on Fridays creates a new challenge. The need for the committee to receive information before the weekend is emphasized by Speaker 3, highlighting the insufficient time if information is provided on Thursday. Speaker 10 acknowledges the school's larger staff but points out that the request for Thursday delivery becomes unreasonable. Finally, Speaker 4 indicates a general question about the process of asking questions.

This segment focuses on improving the process of gathering information for the budget. Speaker 4 suggests creating a comprehensive list of questions to be sent out earlier in the process, ideally before the main meeting in September, to allow for timely responses and clarification. This would enable a more efficient review and prevent issues like receiving the wrong type of information (e.g., white oak instead of red oak). Speaker 10 agrees, suggesting that a general list of questions could be sent out earlier (June or July), allowing the town to respond before August. Speaker 3 emphasizes the importance of collaboration and compromise, citing the example of the assistant principal position, which is not needed due to the school's size. They suggest that by working together and asking clarifying questions proactively, the budget process can be streamlined. Speaker 2 agrees with the need for earlier questions and suggests writing down questions for future meetings to ensure nothing is missed.

Speaker 02 clarifies that a vote on the "red shoes" issue isn't necessary. Speaker 03 raises outstanding questions needing answers before the final decision on the 22nd. A discussion ensues regarding the necessity of another meeting before the 22nd, with some suggesting it's unnecessary. Speaker 02 proposes an additional meeting to address these questions and discuss the school budget, emphasizing that all meetings are public, allowing public participation. Speaker 03 suggests a short meeting focused on budget recommendations and proposes a format where each member asks one question to streamline the process. Speaker 03 mentions previously submitted questions and their answers, including off-hour police responses, while Speaker 02 confirms the availability of these answers, addressing a concern about information not being shared with Andrea. The discussion concludes with an acknowledgement of the volume of information exchanged recently.

The discussion centers around scheduling a follow-up meeting before the final vote on January 22nd. Concerns are raised about missing documents; Speaker 03 mentions not receiving copies of previous documents and needing a revised default budget from Andrea to address errors. Speaker 10 suggests a meeting on December 30th to address remaining questions and ensure the warrant article is available for the January 22nd vote. The need for clarification on the default budget, including school board stipends, is emphasized. Speaker 03 requests information on the stipend amount and the status of the budget review. The discussion also touches upon the upcoming election and the potential candidacy of Russ and Brian, with some uncertainty about their participation. Finally, the group seeks consensus on the proposed December 30th meeting.

A discussion ensues regarding the scheduling of a follow-up meeting on December 30th. Concerns are raised about the necessity of another meeting, with questions about the agenda and the potential for further questions arising after deeper review of the budget. Speaker 03 emphasizes the need for a timely meeting to address questions before final decisions are made, arguing that delaying until the 22nd would hinder the process. Speaker 02 questions whether additional questions would change votes, highlighting that some individuals may have voted without fully understanding the implications. Speaker 10 points out that six people may not have realized the full implications of a previous motion, suggesting a lack of clarity in the voting process. The possibility of using the revolving fund for ambulance expenses is discussed as a potential factor influencing budget reduction proposals. Speaker 03 suggests that providing a rationale for budget reductions, rather than simply stating percentages, could improve acceptance. The conversation concludes with a general agreement that another meeting would be beneficial to allow for further discussion and a more informed decision-making process. Speakers discuss how to access individual tax bills online, with Speaker 02 suggesting checking the town website or using the tax collector's website and searching by address or alphabetically. A discussion ensues regarding the accuracy of information shared about tax increases, with Speaker 10 emphasizing the importance of accurate information and discouraging the spread of potentially misleading details. The conversation touches on the overall increase in tax amounts. Speaker 03 updates the group on a citizen's petition regarding the tax impact worksheet. Speaker 03 highlights Susan Gill's efforts in creating the worksheet and mentions previous unsuccessful attempts to include the tax impact on every warrant article. Due to the board's refusal to even discuss the matter, a citizen's petition was created and will be submitted as a warrant article for a town vote. The decision will remove the responsibility from the budget committee. Speaker 02 clarifies that the vote will be advisory. This segment discusses the process of warrant articles and the role of citizen input. Speaker 02 explains that if a warrant article passes, the board is only advised, not compelled, to act. Speaker 03 questions the purpose of a petition warrant article if the board can still disregard the outcome. Speakers 10 and 02 provide examples of past instances where the board acted against the majority vote on warrant articles (full-day kindergarten and air conditioners). Speaker 10 expresses concern that ignoring citizen input is detrimental,

especially to those who signed the petition. Speaker 04 suggests alternative methods of informing citizens, while Speaker 03 highlights the need for clear information on the ballot, such as tax impact worksheets, to facilitate informed voting. Speaker 03 advocates for responsiveness to voter preferences, and Speaker 09 agrees. Speaker 01 mentions a previous instance where a high percentage of voters supported a particular issue. This segment begins with a discussion about the high cost associated with passed warrant articles, with some expressing surprise at the amount. The conversation then shifts to the accessibility of public meeting minutes. Speaker 10 inquires about the availability of minutes, prompting Speaker 02 to confirm their existence. Speaker 06, absent from the previous meeting, asks how to access these minutes and whether it's permissible. Speaker 02 assures them of access but clarifies that the minutes will be shared, not discussed in detail. Speaker 03 proposes an amendment to the minutes, referencing existing guidelines. They discuss the board's typical response to briefings, aiming for concise language. Speaker 10 mentions receiving the minutes via email. Speaker 02 reiterates that the minutes will be distributed. Finally, Speaker 03 suggests making a recommendation to amend the minutes, with Speaker 02 offering a specific wording suggestion for online accuracy, potentially changing "accurate" to "inaccurate," while considering the length of the amendment for public viewing. Speakers discuss missing information, specifically the absence of "B.O." and "B.H.D." There's confusion about the necessity of certain information ("We have to read in college"). Speaker 03 questions the omission of information from a document. Speaker 10 points out the presence of QR codes on a document, suggesting a solution to a visual issue. Speaker 01 comments on the document's orientation. Speaker 02 explains a request for the CYA budget that has not received a response. Speaker 10 suggests a deadline of January 22nd for a response, expressing skepticism about the likelihood of success. Speaker 02 notes the inconsistent availability of the relevant personnel but mentions the existence of a website listing contact information for the financial person, whom they have emailed. Speaker 02 explains they will contact someone again if they don't hear back. Speaker 10 inquires about additional funding sources for the library beyond the operating budget. Speaker 02 clarifies that there isn't regular funding, mentioning occasional small donations and a past grazing endowment that is no longer available.

A brief interruption occurs (Speaker 00). The conversation shifts to call breakdown data. Speaker 02 expresses uncertainty about the data's format and whether it provides a time-of-day breakdown. Speaker 03 explains a request to drill down the data to the midnight-to-6 a.m. timeframe, noting potential issues with people only reading the initial part of requests and misinterpreting the full scope. Speaker 06 adds that people often make assumptions about the rest of a question based on the first part. This segment begins with a lighthearted exchange between Speaker 03 and their children about the speed of thinking. The conversation then shifts to a discussion about the Smith building, its purpose, and its history. Speaker 09 raises a question about the building's past use, mentioning a "slip library" and the town's involvement. Speaker 03 inquires about the building's current use, stating it's "nothing."

The discussion then touches upon the installation of a well five or ten years prior, with differing opinions on the exact timeframe. Speakers 10 and 01 debate the timeline, while Speaker 03 suggests the building had no use. Speaker 10 explains the well's installation was for water and bathroom access. The conversation concludes with Speaker 03 mentioning the Board of Selectmen's involvement and the transfer of the building to a trust. Speakers 02 and 10 discuss documents related to the building, with Speaker 02 noting multiple versions and Speaker 09 mentioning the building's two floors. The meeting concludes with a discussion about the distribution of documents. Speaker 02 expresses a need for organization, mentioning taking documents home. Speaker 03 and Speaker 01 inquire about the whereabouts of their respective documents, leading to a brief exchange about who received which folder. Speaker 10 also mentions taking their documents home. Speaker 01 confirms that someone is being assigned to take minutes. Speaker 02 states that they are not close to finalizing a fourth-year term and expresses concern about this. Finally, documents are distributed amongst the attendees, with some clarifying who received which document. Names mentioned include Josh, Bill, and Susan Gill and Sutton. SPEAKER_00 offers a 24-hour turnaround, which is accepted by SPEAKER_09. SPEAKER_02 also confirms a 24-hour turnaround. SPEAKER_09 clarifies they are not being unreasonable. SPEAKER_06 mentions something about credit. SPEAKER_10 objects to a budgeting method, stating it's illegal and incorrect, emphasizing that the default budget should be used and not adjusted by adding desired hires. SPEAKER_03 requests the revised default budget, mentioning Andrea's involvement. SPEAKER_10 reiterates that voting cannot proceed until the default budget is available, citing the rules.

SPEAKER_03 wants the revised default budget that Andrea is supposed to provide. SPEAKER_10 reminds everyone that voting is not allowed until the default budget is available, as per the rules. SPEAKER_02 apologizes for the interruption and asks for a consensus on the meeting. A vote is taken, with SPEAKER_02 indicating a preference for one of three options. SPEAKER_00 makes an unrelated comment ("I'm gay now"). SPEAKER_02 concludes by announcing another meeting will be scheduled. Speakers discussed scheduling the next meeting. Speaker 10 suggested a quick meeting, aiming for less than three hours. Speaker 2 proposed the third, which Speaker 10 confirmed was a Monday. Speaker 3 mentioned the availability of a room, suggesting the Memorial Building due to its new roof. However, Speaker 2 expressed potential unavailability on the 30th, necessitating a search for an alternative date that accommodates everyone's schedules. Speaker 2 suggested checking the town calendar to find a suitable date.

Following the scheduling discussion, Speaker 3 revealed their prior unawareness of the Smiths Memorial building's availability, particularly its unused nighttime hours. Speaker 9 also expressed a lack of prior knowledge regarding the venue. Speaker 3 suggested the need for further information or confirmation regarding the venue's availability and booking procedures.

The discussion centers around scheduling the next meeting. Participants discuss conflicting information regarding previous communications about the meeting date. Speaker 10 relays various statements from the principal and Mark, mentioning possibilities like before the end of the year or the 20th. Speaker 3 adds that someone believed the meeting would be before the deliberative session. The group then considers Friday the 13th and Friday the 20th as potential dates, with some clarification needed on whether Friday the 13th refers to a specific date or just any Friday. The conversation concludes with the identification of two possible dates for the next meeting. The discussion centers around reviewing the budget and scheduling a meeting. Speaker 03 proposes that people dive into the budget between now and the 13th to prepare questions, anticipating a month-long review. Speaker 04 requests more information from the police department, noting that this has already been requested. There's a discussion about the feasibility of obtaining this information by the 13th, with Speaker 03 suggesting a later date, initially the 20th, then corrected to the 30th. Confusion arises regarding the date, with several speakers mentioning both the 20th and 30th. Further complicating matters, several speakers express scheduling conflicts, particularly around the 20th, and Speaker 10 explicitly states a preference for no meetings before Christmas. The chapter concludes with Speaker 02 suggesting a new proposal to resolve the scheduling issues. Speaker 02 proposes scheduling a meeting with the Conservation Commission on Tuesday the 17th at 6 pm, aiming to conclude by 7 pm. There is some brief confusion caused by background noises (identified as a child's voice and a phone notification). Despite the interruptions, the group agrees on the 17th as the date. Speaker 10 expresses frustration about not receiving requested information for months. However, the majority favors the 17th, and Speaker 03 agrees to schedule the meeting, clarifying that it's a preparatory meeting before the 17th. Speakers 02, 03, and 10 discuss the timeline for formulating questions for the police department and the budget process. Speaker 03 clarifies that answers to questions regarding the police department will be received on the 22nd, and questions must be submitted beforehand. Speaker 02 suggests formulating questions by the 17th to allow for voting. Speaker 10 mentions receiving information, and the need to answer questions before a certain date. Speaker 02 explains that the default budget will be available on the 16th, but the final numbers, including leftover funds, will only be available on the 22nd. Speaker 10 notes that the 30th is the deadline for budget finalization and signing off on documents. There is some confusion regarding the exact dates and information availability.