

League of Women Voters, Southern Rockingham County

Meeting Minutes 2/20/19

Submitted by: Diane Coryea

Reminders

March 5th @ 7pm at Atkinson Town Hall - The Women's Civic club is hosting Meet the Candidates Night, residents can meet and ask questions, this event will be televised.

March 12th - Town Election Voting

March 19th @ 6:30pm at Kimball Library - The LWV is hosting Water Community Awareness for local Hampstead Water Company residents. Senator Chuck Morris and Hampstead Water CEO will be attending. Hampstead Water advocates will be raising questions and discussing concerns with area wells. A special thanks to Karen Steele for raising awareness.

Meeting Minutes

Mike Mascola (Plaistow) Timberlane School Budget member was our guest speaker. Mike has served 8 years, on the School Board (5yrs) and Budget (3yrs) committee. Mike discussed the Timberlane district, budget and items that will be coming up in the next voting session on March 12th.

The SAU 55 consists of the Timberlane district (Atkinson, Danville, Plaistow, Sandown) and town of Hampstead. Each town has its own representatives that decide on items for votes. There are 14 board members, five in Hampstead and nine in Timberlane that decide the SAU budget. Hampstead pays 23% and Timberlane pays 77% of the SAU's \$2M budget to hire a Superintendent, set policies and maintain their budget of 11 employees. The percentages paid by each have been set by the Articles of Agreement.

The 9 Timberlane members consist of (2) Atkinson, (2) Danville, (3) Plaistow, (2) Sandown and meet for 4 months, two times per month, to decide on the budget for its district. There are 10 departments that propose budget increase/decrease in spending. Facility tours are required as part of the first process in budget proposals. Tours are open to the public and advertised at School board and Budget committee meetings as well as on their websites. The budget is predicted 22 months in advance which is challenging when projecting fuel costs, electric spending, busses for championship games, and staff health insurance premiums. The state and federal support has been

decreasing each year. The state's support to help fund the district has shifted; for example, the state has progressed to 100% to the district to support retirement pensions.

Mike discussed some major budget challenges, for example back in 2012 during a Police lockdown simulation of over an hour had caused the High School's water tank to fail. The school incurred \$300K in repairs that were not budgeted that year.

Mike discussed current problems within the schools, in particular the issues with repairing outdated buildings. Repairing the schools require all kinds of new code enforcements and the buildings cannot be repaired or changed beyond the current footprint. For example, the Middle school hallways width doesnt meet code and can't be widened due to load bearing walls or the locker room leaking showers cannot be replaced unless they are brought up to current code which are too costly. The High School athletic track can no longer hold track meets and must bus students to other schools due to the condition of the track. Currently the track is not regulation size and the material absorbs water and dries and cracks which cause warping conditions. The issue with repairing the track will cause them to lose a field if it is brought up to regulation size or fix the current size. The voters will be voting on article #12 to fix or repair the track.

The Budget committee monitors student population trends and has seen the lowest student population in 10 years from 5,200 to 4,100. The budget for the district can be difficult to manage with many unpredictable variables such as Special Education. The average cost per student is \$15K but if a family moves into the district and requires services for a student that is not currently available in the district the cost could more than triple. The district considers outsourcing which may include transportation costs.

Mike explained about Warrant Articles and how voting can affect the total School Budget. To keep costs separate two articles may be presented to the voters; however, there is a new law that "No Means No" which means that if an article is voted on and does not pass, monies cannot be used or shift out of the total budget for the item that did not pass. For example, if a separate article for Capital Improvement Projects of \$300K to update large items such as septic, roof, boiler are put in as separate line item to voters and does not pass that item cannot be completed and budget money cannot be used for that article (improvement).

In 1999 a 20-year bond for \$800K was passed by voters; this year will be the last

payment on the bond. The bond was used to build an elementary school and the Performing Arts Center. Back in 1999 the state contributed to the Bond but the state funding on improvements has disappeared. The PAC will be celebrating its 20-year anniversary but the building has been in disrepair. After 6 years of being built the building began leaking. For 13 years the panels have been leaking and require \$531K to fix. The total funding needed to build the PAC was not budgeted correctly and shortcuts in building the facility impacted the current problems. The company hired and building supplier are no longer in business. The voters will be voting on Article #4 for the money to come out of the Capital Reserve Fund which currently has \$1M in reserve. If this article does not pass, the "No Means No" will prevent the district from making repairs. Concerns of mold and future problems have been raised.

In March voters will be voting on the Budget committee's proposed school budget of \$71,333,760 and the School board has a default budget of \$70,930,105. Mike explained the difference of the proposed and default budget; if the proposed budget does not pass the default budget will be accepted. The Articles 1-9 are deal with expenses are proposed by the budget committee and Articles 10+ are non money issues that the Budget committee doesn't give recommendations.

Several other articles that will be voted on in March were discussed. The Budget committee votes to make recommendations to the voters with the best interest of the townspeople current financial obligations. If one of the four towns will be incurring a large expense that year the budget committee takes that into consideration when making recommendations.

In closing we thank Mike for his service to the district and attending our meeting to help educate the LWV members become informed on current issued in our district.