

**Minutes of Deliberative Session
February 4, 2009**

Deliberative session held February 4, 2009 in Multi Purpose Room at the Chester Town Complex. The meeting was broadcast live on CGTV-20, Chester Public Access Government Channel on the Comcast cable system.

School District Moderator Kevin Scott called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was then recited.

Moderator Scott introduced School Board Chairman Michael Romick who then introduced the District personnel. Present were School Board members Valerie Weider, Katherine Treanor, Matthew Stover, and Royal Richardson. Also present were SAU #82 personnel Dr. Vic Petzy, Superintendent and Annmaire Schribner, Financial Manager. Others present were Ms. Leslie Leahy, Principal of Chester Academy, Ms. Jana Ruiz, Special Services Coordinator, School District Clerk Robert Grimm, and Peter Bronstein school district attorney from Soule, Leslie Kidder.

Moderator Scott read the warrant articles and the rules of being a SB2 voting entity and the rules of the deliberative session.

Motion made to forgo the reading of the warrant articles by Tom Laporte and seconded by Jane Grimm. Moderator Scott asked if any discussion and seeing none asked to a vote on the motion. Motion passed by voice vote.

Moderator Scott brought forward Article 1 the election of district officials.

Article 1 – Election of Officers

To choose the following school district officers:

School Board Member	3-year term
School District Moderator	1-year term
School District Treasurer	1-year term
School District Clerk	1-year term

There was no discussion and Moderator Scott moved Article 1 to the ballot.

Moderator Scott brought forward Article 2 to hear and accept the reports.

Article 2 – General Acceptance of Reports

To hear reports of agents, auditors, and committees or officers heretofore chosen.

Ms. Charlotte Lister rose and asked when the Annual Reports would be available. Clerk Grimm stated that the reports would be available online by February 22, 2009 on the Chester Academy web site and the printed books would be available March 1, 2009.

Moderator Scott brought forward Article 2 to hear and accept the reports of district officials.

Moderator Scott moved Article 2 to the ballot.

Moderator Scott brought Article 3 – the 2009-10 default and proposed budget to the floor. Moderator Scott said that a written request with five signatures requested all votes to be by a ballot form. Ballots were provided to registered voters when they registered with the Checklist personnel.

Moderator Scott read Article 3.

Article 3 – 2009/2010 Budget

Shall the Chester School District raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant, or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling \$11,432,000. Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$11,468,196 which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Chester School District or by law; or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only. Note: Warrant Article 3 (Operating Budget) does not include appropriations proposed under any other warrant articles.

Ms. Rhonda Lamphere, chairperson of the Chester Budget Committee spoke on the handout that was made available to the public describing the SB2 process as well as the 2009-10 budget. Ms. Lamphere concluded that the Budget Committee and School Board were in agreement with the operating budget being presented.

Mr. Romick, School Board Chairman added that on behalf of the school board a thank you be extended to the school administration and budget committee for a cooperative effort. Mr. Romick highlighted the 2009-10 budget: increase in Pinkerton Academy tuition increase, the implementation of Kindergarten, oil price increase, increase in health benefits, increase in teacher and aide salaries due to contractual agreements, technological upgrades, and reduction in staff due to a decrease in student population.

Moderator Scott asked if there was any further discussion, seeing none he moved Article 4 to the ballot as read. Mr. David Clark rose and asked Moderator Scott if he could make an amendment to Article 4. Moderator Scott allowed the amendment this time only because Chester is new to the SB2 process.

Amendment presented by Mr. Clark was “to reduce the proposed budget by \$357,000; so that the total budget will equal \$11,074,600.” Second by Mr. Steve Nelson.

Mr. Clark, 39 Haverhill Road, chose not to speak on the amendment.

Ms. Lamphere rose and asked Mr. Clark to suggest where the cuts should be made.

Ms. Mellissa Stinson rose and said she was unhappy to see the cut in teachers since the school was finally moving in the right direction.

Mr. Royal Richardson said he understands what is happening with the world economy and that a zero based budget is very appealing but the school board and budget committee worked to make the proposed budget manageable. The school board has applied financial responsibility to manage the money and that the budget is not just a number on a piece of paper it is to make our students the best they can be. The board and the residents have an obligation to the students. The budget presented is a fiscally responsible budget and the budget committee agrees to meet the educational needs. It is irresponsible to bring this amendment forward.

Ms. Jane Grimm, 173 Lane Road, rose and stated that she was a former school board member and she wanted to applaud the school board and budget committee to offer all including Kindergarten, impressed to keep the dollars down.

Mr. Tom Laporte, Macintosh Lane, said that on behalf of himself and the budget committee is against the amendment. This budget year is the perfect storm – PA tuition increases; Kindergarten going in but with state dollars to offset it; the third year of a collective bargaining agreement with the CEA (Chester Educational Association); energy costs and if any surplus it is due to the school board’s savings over the year.

Ms. Joanne Flanagan, Smith Road, stated she works in the school as a para and commends the school board and budget committee for doing the work and coming to an agreement. People need to come into the school to see what we do...the children are our future.

Ms. Lorna Hazleton, Derry Road, addressed the meeting and said that remember in the late 1980's it was struggle and a lot of cuts were made to programs. It has taken years and trust factor to make education positive. The amendment will make students suffer and sacrifice their future and she hopes the voters don't take a step back.

Mr. Gene Charron, spoke and said that Kindergarten is a sore spot and does not like mandates from the state. The budget is reasonable; there is no control of certain numbers. Mr. Charron strongly supports the budget and is impressed with the students, the classrooms, and the school.

Ms. Katie Bonner, Fiddle Head Lane, asked about the loss of two teachers one in grade 3 and one in grade 4 for the 2009-10 year and that the class sizes will be the highest in the state. Ms. Bonner is a parent of a second grader and appreciates the size of the current class. Ms. Bonner asked what is the percentage to keep the two teachers.

Chairman Romick addressed Ms. Bonner's concerns and question. Currently the 3rd grade is at an average of 16.75 and the 4th is at 17. With next year's alignment the class size for grade 3 will be 22 and 23 for 4th grade. The state averages are 22 in grade 3 and 23 in grade 4. It would take \$110,000 to restore the two teachers, or 1% of the budget.

Mr. Richard LeBlanc, Fremont Road, took issue with Mr., Richardson's comment calling Mr. Clark's motion irresponsible. Mr. LeBlanc said that in America we are allowed to disagree and Mr. Richardson should apologize for his remark.

With no other people approaching the microphone Moderator Scott closed the discussion of the amendment. Moderator Scott instructed the voters to tear off "Secret Ballot #1" and vote to amend Article 3 to a bottom line of \$11,074,600.

Diana Charron, a representative of the Voter Checklist showed the public that the ballot box was empty, Moderator Scott asked the voters to vote on the amendment. When all the votes were cast the Supervisor of the Checklist, Ms. Barbara Hatch and her team emptied the ballot box and counted the ballots. Moderator Scott and Clerk Grimm confirmed the count.

Moderator Scott announced the results of the amendment.

There were 89 ballots cast.

There was one spoiled ballot, one blank ballot, 75 voted NO and 12 voted YES.

Moderator Scott declared the amendment defeated.

Mr. Step Landeau rose and addressed the meeting by saying he was never in favor of SB2. He was happy with the proposed budget and that it is very reasonable. He questioned the addition of \$7,000 for SB2 costs and the cutting of two teachers and that a percentage of 38% of over 3300 voters are making the changes tonight.

Ms. Pamela Simoneau, Mulberry Lane, presented a written amendment to increase the budget by \$110,000 (1%); Amendment was seconded by Ms. Becky Hannah.

Moderator Scott reminded the voters that the school board is not bound to use the money where suggested. The voters are voting on a bottom line budget.

Ms. Grimm addressed the audience and said that she wants to support the school board and the administration for their decision and is comfortable that the teachers in grade 3 and 4 will do very well.

Chairman Romick addressed the amendment by saying that the board position to remove the 3rd and 4th grade teachers is based upon enrolment, but that the school may not loss bodies due to the addition of a Kindergarten teacher and replacing a retiring middle school language arts teacher. There is an agreement with the budget committee to staff when the enrollment numbers warrant it.

Mr. Richardson added that the decision is based upon enrollment projections and the class size that the district has in place.

Ms. Simmoneau said that students in grade 3 and 4 are at a critical age and increasing the classroom size is not a good idea.

Ms. Stinson asked how high will class sizes go, what is the cut off.

Chairman Romick said the state recommendation for grade 3 and 4 is 25. The proposed budget that is before the town is a fiscally responsible one for the times we are in. The board does look at enrollment number throughout the year

Ms. Lamphere addressed the meeting and said that the school board worked hard to find cuts in the budget. If this amendment passes it will be higher than the default budget and in March at the ballot vote if the proposed budget fails then the default budget would be the one the school has to work with and still would not get the intent of this amendment.

Ms. Rebecca Hannah, Raven Drive, rose to address the meeting. She stated that she is a 7th grade teacher at Chester and as you know when you add students even with aides it will increase the work load of the classroom teacher. Ms. Hannah disagrees with the idea of no jobs being cut based upon the state standards for a 8th grade language arts teacher and a Kindergarten teacher.

With no other people approaching the microphone Moderator Scott closed the discussion of the amendment. Moderator Scott instructed the voters to tear off "Secret Ballot #2" and vote to amend Article 3 to a bottom line of \$.

Ms. Charron showed the public that the ballot box was empty,

Moderator Scott asked the voters to vote on the amendment. When all the votes were cast the Supervisor of the Checklist, Ms. Barbara Hatch and her team emptied the ballot box and counted the ballots. Moderator Scott and Clerk Grimm confirmed the count.

**Moderator Scott announced the results of the amendment.
There were 82 ballots cast,
56 voted NO and 26 voted YES.
Moderator Scott declared the amendment defeated.**

Seeing no other amendments Moderator Scott moved Article 3 to the ballot.

Moderator Scott read Article 4 and there was no discussion.

Article 4 – To transact any other business which may legally come before the meeting.

Ms. Lamphere asked for clarification on what the next step is.

Mr. Grimm said that the ballot election will be held on Tuesday March 10, 2009 at the Multi Purpose Room at the Chester Town Hall from 7 am to 8 pm. The ballot will consist of elected positions – one school board Royal Richardson; one School District Moderator – Kevin Scott; one School District Clerk – Robert Grimm; one District Treasurer – Emily Haswell; Article 2 Report Approval; and Article 3 the proposed budget. Absentee ballots will be available by contacting 173 Lane road or calling 887-8292.

Moderator Scott having no one come forward asked for a motion to close the deliberative session.

Ms. Valerie Weider made the motion “to close the deliberative session.” Motion seconded by Ms. Katherine Treanor.

Moderator Scott asked if any discussion, seeing none asked for a vote. A voice vote in the affirmative moved the motion.

Meeting adjourned at 9:25 pm on Tuesday February 4, 2009.

A True Attest.

Minutes Completed February 8, 2009

Respectfully submitted,
Robert S. Grimm
School District Clerk, 2008-09