

**ADVISORY BUDGET COMMITTEE
TOWN OF MADISON
December 12, 2019
MINUTES**

Members Present – Chairperson Nicole Nordlund; Ron Force; Ned Rogerson; Steve Bartlett; School Board Representative Jim Curran

Members Excused – Selectman John Arruda; Jeff Balogh

Others Present – Selectmen William T. Lord; SAU 13 Superintendent Meredith Nadeau, Finance Director Chuck Bates and SPED Administrator Paul Borsh; Madison Elementary Principal Heather Woodard; Residents Cassie Rowe, Dick Eldridge, Pat and Roger Ambrose, Sepp Meier, Larry Carr and Ann Bartlett; Town Administrator Linda Shackford; Madison TV Videographer Tim Hughes

Where and When Posted – Town Hall upper & lower bulletin boards and Madison & Silver Lake Post Offices on November 25, 2019.

Meeting Called to Order – By Nordlund at 2:02 p.m.

This meeting was proposed in hopes of setting up a new routine for better understanding of the budget between the Advisory Budget Committee and the School Board.

Nordlund read in to record a summary that she feels takes the pulse of the Town over the last 18 months in regards to the school budget. Her summary raised concern not limited to the confidence felt for the principal's performance, a general mistrust that caused last years budget to fail, per classroom student numbers and lack of grant applications.

Resident Cassie Rowe supported Nordlund's comments agreeing that more grants should be obtained and adding that she does not like that enrichment programs are being lost. Rowe commented that if taxes continue to go up and there are improvements to be shown for it, she would be in favor of an increase, but she is not seeing improvements.

Resident Ann Bartlett gave history of the kindergarten program and how the student to teacher ratios changed over the years.

Force asked the School representatives for an explanation regarding the increase in the school budget. When the items that the School Board has no control over such as tuitions and bonds, etc., are removed, Force sees a 10% increase over last year. Curran responded that the collective bargaining agreement and special education expenses are some of the cause. Borsh explained that out of district placement costs for students aged 3-21 is not uncommon and encompasses a large amount of money citing an increase from FY20 to FY21 of \$283,000. Nadeau broke down the reimbursements from the State adding it is far from a full reimbursement.

Discussion of class size ensued. It was noted that there are 23 total staff with 13 not teachers. These 13 are therapists, or art, music or library employees. No breakdown of full-time versus part-time was mentioned.

Force asked if there was a document that shows a total change summary for this year to last year's default? Nadeau said there is a report that is in the handouts that includes these cumbersome figures with Bates

adding that these are being addressed in individual lines. Bartlett asked if this information is available on the website; Bates responded yes.

Rogerson pointed out that the first cuts to the budget that were made earlier in the year are not reflected. Lord agreed with Rogerson making the point that no credit is being shown for the good work done at the beginning of this process in trying to adjust the budget.

Force hoped that the School Board can look to the future and take into consideration capital improvements that will need to be done understanding that there are always unforeseeable circumstances such as tuition variations. Force brought up for discussion the topic of co-operative school district which Curran stated is an article on the warrant. Curran can see a committee being created that will help Madison participate in the bigger picture.

Bartlett realizes that this committee's interactions between the school board and the interaction with town departments does not work the same and hopes that eventually it will be efficient and done proactively. Curran suggested setting up time either prior or after School Board meetings with the Advisory Budget Committee in the future. Force thanked the school board and Sau staff for their time and understands that this committee needs to be educated on how the school budget works. Nadeau understands what this board is trying to understand and is very willing to share.

Curran noted that there is a public hearing coming up in January and the message from this discussion will be brought forward to the School Board.

3:38 PM – Rogerson made a **motion** to adjourn, seconded by Force. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Linda Shackford,
Recording Secretary