

**ADVISORY BUDGET COMMITTEE
TOWN OF MADISON
January 7, 2020
MINUTES**

Members Present – Chairperson Nicole Nordlund; Selectman John Arruda; Ron Force; Ned Rogerson; School Board Representative Jim Curran

Members Via Phone – Steve Bartlett; Jeff Balogh

Others Present – Selectmen William T. Lord; DPW Director Jon Cyr; Fire Chief Richard Clark; Officer Michael Mosher; Residents Mark Totman, Robert Dubois and Sally Harrison, Joe Dame, Linda Haver 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 December 11, 2019.

Meeting Called to Order – By Nordlund at 6:00 p.m.

Motion by Nordlund, seconded by Rogerson to adjust the agenda. The motion passed by all present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Motion by Curran, seconded by Rogerson to accept the December 12, 2019 minutes with amendments. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion by Curran, seconded by Force to accept the December 10, 2019 minutes as written. The motion passed unanimously.

Nordlund stated that members Bartlett and Balogh have asked to attend this meeting via phone, as per RSA 91-A:2, III, as they are out of state. **Motion** by Curran, seconded by Force to allow Bartlett and Balogh to join the meeting via phone. The motion passed unanimously by the quorum present.

Bartlett and Balogh were called and placed on speaker phone being able to hear and be heard by all in attendance including the audience. Bartlett stated he was with Bebe Bartlett, Balogh was alone. It was noted that all votes will be taken by roll call.

The committee proceeded to review each article from the School Board's warrant.

ARTICLE 2: Shall the School District raise and appropriate as an operating budget, \$7,107,231.49? Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$7,081,637.30 which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the School District or by law.

Force expressed his concern of student performance citing in 2014 test scores were in the top 20% and in 2018 the bottom 20% with no changes for improvement planned. Balogh's concern was with overstaffing of the kindergarten and Bartlett offered that he does not clearly understand the class size policy and his concern of performance and how it is measured. Rogerson sees no changes being made to improve performance. Nordlund is inclined to vote against the article citing a lack of trust with the School Board after filling vacancies that the public asked not to be filled. Arruda does not see a big difference between the operating and default budgets. Resident Haver offered her concern that there have been

recommendations made to not replace retiring staff, but the school board votes otherwise. Resident Totman fears that the cost per pupil in town cannot be afforded by a town of this size asking what the actual cost is. Curran explained that the number can be found on the Department of Education's website adding that out of district placements for students cannot be controlled. Curran suggested looking at the cost per student as SPED vs non-SPED. Resident Ann Bartlett noted that the staffing issue is nothing new adding that the fact that the default budget was voted in last year should be sending a message to the school board.

Motion by Nordlund, seconded by Force to vote on Article 2. The motion passed unanimously.

Bartlett – yes Balogh – no Curran – yes Force – no Nordlund – No Rogerson – yes Arruda – no

Article 2 was **NOT Recommended** by a vote of 4-3-0

ARTICLE 3: *Shall the voters of the Madison School District adopt a school administrative unit budget of \$707,150 for the 2020-2021 school year in which \$255,270 is assigned to the school budget of this district? This year's adjusted budget of \$693,093 with \$250,294 assigned to the School District budget will be adopted if the article does not receive a majority vote of all the district voters voting in this administrative unit.*

Arruda feels that the SAU 13 is not necessary and would like to see the three town's schools absorbed into SAU 9. Years ago after the Selectmen beat \$30,000 out of the town budget to find the local SAU superintendent was receiving a raise and travel expenses, Arruda inquired with the superintendent how much it would cost SAU 9 annually to handle SAU 13 and was told \$100,000 a year. Lord stated that \$250,000 could lower the tax rate by 6%. Force holds the SAU staff, along with the school board, accountable for the present state of the budget.

Bartlett – no Balogh – no Curran – yes Force – no Nordlund – No Rogerson – no Arruda – no

Article 3 was **NOT Recommended** by a vote of 1-6-0

ARTICLE 4: *To see if the School District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$30,000 to be placed in the capital reserve fund previously established for the purpose of educating educationally disabled children.*

Curran stated that the fund currently contains \$69,639 that will be exhausted by year end. Haver recommends this article as a good investment citing 18 special ed students in Madison. Resident Robert Dubois would like to see the district look for more aid from state and federal funds.

Bartlett – yes Balogh – yes Curran – yes Force – yes Nordlund – yes Rogerson – yes Arruda – yes

Article 4 was **Recommended** by a vote of 7-0-0

Article 5: *To see if the Madison School District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$35,00.00 to be placed in the Building Capital Reserve Fund previously established for the purpose of capital repairs.*

Force stated that the original number proposed of \$85,000 has been reduced to \$35,000. Lord asked how much is currently in the fund. Curran stated \$69,785 with a goal of keeping the fund low until the bond has been paid off.

Bartlett – yes Balogh – yes Curran – yes Force – yes Nordlund – yes Rogerson – yes Arruda – yes

Article 5 was **Recommended** by a vote of 7-0-0

Article 6: To see if the Madison School District will vote to raise and appropriate up to \$100,000.00 to reduce the general fund deficit pursuant to RSA 194:3-b (Majority vote required).

Curran explained that the wording of “up to” takes into consideration that funds from the Special Ed CRF will be tapped before using from this appropriation. The amount needed may be less than the \$100,000 estimating closer to \$50,000. Totman asked if this can only be spent for special ed. Curran explained no, but the deficit was caused by special ed expenses. Bartlett asked what happens if this is voted down. Curran explained that a petition to the court for a special meeting would be required. Force struggles with that this deficit was driven by the additional teacher. Nordlund mimicked Force’s opinion that filling vacated positions caused this problem.

Bartlett – yes Balogh – no Curran – yes Force – abstain Nordlund – yes Rogerson – yes Arruda – yes

Article 6 was **Recommended** by a vote of 5-1-1
Force’s abstention was due to lack of his clarity for the deficit.

A recess was taken from 7:41 to 7:45pm.

The Committee agreed to move on to the Town Budget Review.

Arruda gave a brief review of the 2019 drawdown noting there are still a few bills to be paid out of the 2019 budget. Bottom line of \$2,767,906 with 2,659,335 spent leaves \$108,570. There were approximately \$44,000 in encumbrances that will leave approximately \$45,000 back to the general fund.

Arruda gave a brief explanation of any significant points in the 2019 budget. Emergency Management has some generator issues. Planning Board and Zoning Board had more than normal legal expenditures this year. Arruda explained that some department went over due to picking up a 27th payroll in 2019 absorbed this year versus next.

Mr. Joe Dame from the Freedom Food Pantry addressed the Board and offered a hand out explaining the work done by the pantry. Citing a deficit this year in funds available for those in need, the pantry respectfully requested that the line item for the pantry be increase from \$2,000 to \$2,500. Arruda suggested moving \$500 from the Direct Assistance welfare line to the food pantry line. All were in agreement.

The 2020 Operating Budget Summary was reviewed with Arruda explaining any significant changes. The new ambulance contract begins April 1 which comes with an increase. Assessing will be conducting a revaluation this year. There are several elections in 2020 causing an increase over the single election in 2019. Parks and Rec increased to allow for additional engraved names on the monument. Planning Board increased their legal line. Police’s budget is up by 2.5% adding that the Selectmen have recently received

Several complimentary letters regarding officer performance. Solid Waste has a proposed increase of 4.6% with the current contract ending February 28; ideas for recycling only items that make money are being discussed.

The Warrant Article Summary was reviewed with pertinent comments listed. An increase to the \$100,000 street paving/improvement line is under consideration. The code car ETF will be added back to the list for \$10,000 after inadvertently being removed. There is a proposal to lower the funds from the Land Use Change Tax put into conservation funds from 50% to 15%. Lord stated there are currently \$260,000 in their accounts. Petition charity articles currently have one completed and has been given to Rogerson for review.

The Public Budget Hearing currently scheduled for Tuesday, February 4th is being proposed to be changed to Wednesday, February 12th at 7:00pm. Curran offered to check with the elementary school office to free that evening for the hearing. The Board of Selectmen will address this change at their meeting on January 14th.

Other upcoming dates:

February 3rd at 7:00pm – School Deliberative Session

Notice will be posted for the ABC to meet after the February 3rd meeting in case there are any changes to the numbers that will be presented to voters. This will give the ABC the opportunity to make new recommendations. The ABC will vote after the Public Budget Hearing as to their recommendations on the Town's warrant articles.

8:45 PM – Curran made a **motion** to adjourn, seconded by Force. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Linda Shackford,
Recording Secretary