Chairman Michael Ayles called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.


Town Officials: First Selectman Matthew Hoey and Board of Selectmen Members Charles Havrda, Louis Federici, and Sandra Ruoff. Human Resources Director Mitch Goldblatt, Finance Director Maryjane Malavasi, and Parks and Recreation Director Rick Maynard, Fire Chief Charles Herrschaft and Clerk Traci Brinkman

BOE Officials: Superintendent Dr. Paul Freeman, Business Manager Linda Trudeau, BOE Members Gary Kaisen and Christine Cohen

Others: About 10 in the audience

Media: Mike Graziano, taping for GCTV

Mr. Ayles said they were going to try to move the budget forward tonight, but due to the conditions in town and so many people still without power, he did not think it was prudent to have deliberations or discussions on the budget if the public could not come out. He asked that the board hold off on any decisions tonight. They will save that for the second budget workshop on Monday. He added that tonight would be for the board to ask questions.

1. **Public Forum**

Nobody wished to speak.

2. **Consider and take possible action on proposed FY 2018-19 Budget.**

Ms. Wallace noted the bond request on the BOE side for HVAC upgrades to Jones and Baldwin. She asked how many times they have had issues in those buildings.

Dr. Freeman explained that both those systems are original to the buildings. This last winter there was significant difficulties at Baldwin. It was down for nearly a week this winter. In addition Melissa Jones has had failures in and out over the last two years.
It is also difficult and expensive to get replacement parts.

Mr. Gamerman said if the board has requested cuts from the BOE what areas would they cut.

Dr. Freeman said they would have to look at the new pieces first such as money for the purchase of bleachers for the new field at the high school as well as the two new music positions at the elementary level. He added that there could be possible retirement savings. They could look toward projected savings in medical, but their agent is not optimistic about that.

Mr. Trotta noted that the purchased services athletic transportation is up 29%.

Ms. Trudeau explained that this is a number of things. The bus contract in general has increased. A transfer was made out of the Adams line to put the expense in the proper area and a request for an increase in the number of trips was made because they have been short the past couple of years.

Mr. Ayles asked what the agreed overall increase in salaries was on the teachers’ contract.

Dr. Freeman said it is approximately 3% per year, but that includes step increments for the newer teachers. There are a total of 14 steps. The teachers who have maxed out on those steps only receive a 1 percent raise.

Mr. Trotta noted that under special services in purchased services the budget is $885,000 to contract out consultations, evaluations, physical therapy, etc. This is an increase of 21%. He asked if they can find relief by hiring staff for those services in-house.

Dr. Freeman explained that they look to find the right balance and flexibility to meet the needs of a small number of services. He added that when it reaches a tipping point you do look to see if it is less expensive to hire in house and if it is a short term or sustained need. He noted that they do look at this annually. There are a couple of contracts they are keeping an eye on. He noted, however, that these costs are never as high as outplacing a student.

Mr. Gamerman asked if they are comfortable with a 14% decrease in tuition.

Dr. Freeman said there are a number of students graduating out and fewer students coming up behind to fill those slots. This is the best number they have at this point.

There was a discussion on how they budget for special education students. Dr. Freeman noted that they plan on the actual number of students they have.

Mr. MacKenzie brought up the idea of the district purchasing buses and having the bus transportation done in town rather than contracting the service out. He noted that he received data on a study done 11 years ago. He put a spreadsheet together and he thinks this idea might be viable. He would like to see the cost of doing the busing
ourselves and thinks they could perhaps save money and address the later start time.

Dr. Freeman wanted to clarify that there is no money in the existing budget for any change in start time. A study about bus costs was done 10 years ago and they have not replicated it. They do not have the infrastructure to take that on and it is so far from their mission. He added that their focus is on education, teaching and learning. The idea of taking on ancillary services, which they can contract out at a reasonable cost and not to have to take focus away to supervise that, is important to him. Dr. Freeman said across the state there are no school districts taking ownership of buses in their communities.

Mr. Ayles noted under Guilford High School telephone is up $5,000 and Building Maintenance is up $45,000.

Dr. Freeman said they now have to pay for the phone line at GHS when the state used to provide that and the preventative maintenance contracts are more expensive since they systems are more complex.

Mr. MacKenzie brought up the BOE’s technology lease. He added that they provide a chrome book for every student. He noted that kids are spending too much time on chrome books. Included in the $500,000 technology lease this year is $270,000 for staff laptops. Mr. MacKenzie stated that most of the staff probably already has his or her own laptops and many times they just have to log in to a central site.

Dr. Freeman said they are working toward moving staff to less expensive chrome books, but there are three essential activities they require the teachers to do and they do not have cloud access to the electronic gradebook so they cannot make that move yet. This still requires a laptop with a hard drive.

There was a discussion regarding the replacement schedule of technology.

Mr. Trotta asked if it was necessary to provide every student with a chrome book when many students already have their own. He questioned if they should be able to opt out of this.

Dr. Freeman noted with regard to the earlier comment that students spend too much time on technology, he added that they choose to address that and not avoid technology all together. Students are going to be expected to engage in technology and they help them understand the risks and they also work with parents with regard to limitations, etc. He added that they explored having students bring their own device, but that varies per student. It could be a phone, laptop, tablet, etc. and all are varying ages. Having the chrome books provides for a more consistent platform and if there are issues with the chrome book, it is easily remedied. When it is their own device it is more difficult.

Mr. MacKenzie stated that the BOE pension is underfunded. Over the past six years they have systematically overtaxed people since there is a surplus in the rainy day fund, but pension on the BOE side is underfunded. He asked if they considered
taking money from the surplus funds and getting the pensions where they belong.

Mr. Hoey said they have already had several discussions on this. The BOE would need an additional $400,000 to bring the pension to a level consistent with other plans. His intention in the future is to recommend to the Board of Finance to allocate a one-time payment from fund balance to cover the arc for the Board of Education to bring them up to that level.

There was discussion about using money from the undesignated fund balance for one-time costs not reoccurring expenses.

Mr. MacKenzie said with regard to the golf course budget. The expenses are $280,000 and they are budgeting $180,000 for revenues so they are budgeting for a $100,000 loss. He acknowledged that they got the new golf pro last year.

Mr. Hoey said this adds to the quality of life for the community. There is a significant number of programs the town charges for that do not cover costs. In terms of the increase, the selectmen struggled as a board when presented with the budget. The golf pro has not been there a full year, they did not have an advertising budget and there were some conflicts with tournaments and some other issues. He added that they have made the decision to keep the pro in there for a full year to see if he can make a difference.

Mr. Gamerman asked if the town had to make some cuts where would they cut.

Mr. Hoey said they have presented a budget for what the town and community needs. He added that capital is the obvious place to go, but it is at a level that they want to keep it at. Outside of salaries and benefits the budget has been reduced $287,000.

Mr. MacKenzie suggested renegotiating the catastrophic claims stop-loss insurance. The premium increased from $800,000 to $1.3 million because the town did well the prior year. He recommended maybe increasing the stop-loss number to get a lower premium. He added that there is $3.5 million in that account they can use if they have a year with signification claim activity.

Mr. Goldblatt said they did look at that, but they brought forward the consultant’s recommendation.

There was discussion about interest income, police overtime, the eight new firefighter positions and debt service.

Mr. Trotta asked how the legal revaluation line item was arrived at.

Mr. Hoey said they use historical data on the number of cases following a revaluation. How many appeals there were and the amount that went to court, etc. to come up with a number.

There was a brief discussion on revaluation.
Mr. Trotta noted that utility costs for town properties is up by 11% yet the other departments are flat or went down.

Mr. Hoey explained that this is a new expenditure for electricity for Town Hall South. He added that they just concluded negotiations with Guilford Savings bank regarding their use of spaces in the town parking area. For a significant number of years they were paying the utility bills for Town Hall South in exchange for using the parking spaces. Now the town is paying the bill and they are providing money for the use of the spaces.

Mr. Trotta noted that unemployment compensation is up $4,500 or 20%.

Mr. Goldblatt noted that they have seasonal maintenance staff for the golf course and parks and recreation. When the season is over those employees are then entitled to unemployment.

3. Public Forum

None

Mr. Ayles recapped the budget figures. The total BOE budget request is $59,747,175, which is an increase of $1,097,039 or 1.87% over the current budget. The Town Operating Budget is $29,716,978, which is a $1,057,979 or 3.69% increase from the 2018-2018 budget. Debt Service totals $8,496,654 and represents a $617,620 or 7.84% increase over the current budget. The total Board of Selectmen budget with operating and debt service is $38,213,632 and is an increase of $1,675,599 or 4.59% over the current year. The BOE bond request for Baldwin and Melissa Jones HVAC as well as architectural and engineering for projects totals $3,690,927.

Motion: Upon a motion made by Mr. Gamerman and seconded by Mr. Trotta, the board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 9:53 p.m.

Vote: In Favor: Scanlon, Wallace, Gamerman, Ayles, Beatty, Trotta and MacKenzie
Opposed: None
Abstaining: None

Respectfully submitted,

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Traci K. Brinkman
Clerk
Board of Selectmen