

# School District Meeting Results, Article By Article

By Charlie Darling  
Beacon staff

Over 100 Andover taxpayers settled into the AE/MS gym on Monday evening, March 1, to hold the annual Andover School District Meeting. Moderator Bill Bardsley opened the meeting by introducing scouts Matthew Bent, Jason Lewis, Matthew Reynolds, David Reynolds, and Hayden Buswell who led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance and recited the AE/MS Code:

- Always be respectful
- Everyone is responsible
- Make good choices
- Safety first, last, and always.

## Warrant Article 1

To accept the reports printed in the School District report. With no discussion, the article passed unanimously.

## Warrant Article 2

To authorize the School Board to apply for, accept, and expend state and federal aid to education this year. The article passed all but unanimously.

## Warrant Article 3

To authorize the School Board to accept and expend private donations this year. The article passed unanimously.

## Warrant Article 4

\$4,251,130 for the School Budget. This amount does not include the

amounts from other warrant articles that may be adopted.

As is the custom, Moderator Bill Bardsley led the meeting through the budget section by section. There was vigorous discussion of many budget items, including:

Leighton Terwilliger asked about employee benefits. Robin Heins (school district business manager) said that the benefits include health, dental, life, and disability insurance; Social Security; New Hampshire state retirement; Workers' Comp. Kent Armstrong (School Board member) commented that "we dodged a bullet this year" on insurance premiums. Lynn Baker (School Board member) explained that health premiums went up 26% this year at her job in Newport, but the Andover School District's premiums didn't go up at all.

Jim Delaney asked if teachers pay anything toward health insurance. Lynn explained: If you are a single person, the school pays it all. For a family of two people, the school pays 90%. For a family plan, the teacher pays 15%. There is a buy-back clause if a spouse has his or her own insurance. Jim commented that in the next teachers' contract, the District should negotiate that teachers pay more. Lynn replied, "I think that will certainly be one of the negotiation points."

## Energy Costs

Leighton asked if the school district was pursuing any alternative energy ideas. Kent answered that several groups have come in at no charge and made recommendations. "We've made a number of changes at very low cost that are saving heat and energy. They'll pay for themselves in a few years. We plan on making many more improvements that will save the town money," he said.

Lynn added that new lighting put in with help of two grants from New Hampshire Electric Co-op is saving \$9,000 per year. "We're working very hard to pinch every penny and make this an energy-efficient building."

Charlie McCrave (School Board member) added, "We also have a long-term proposal for an alternative energy heat source like biomass."

Jeff Newcomb, who serves on the Andover Budget Committee, moved to amend the line item for fuel oil from \$55,000 to \$50,000. He cited an on-going problem with wasteful energy practices at the school, including lobby doors and a window in the kitchen being open that evening. "We get frustrated when we see simple things like a door left open. It lets heat out and is a fire hazard. I've been after this for years on the Budget Committee. Now we've got to take their allowance away," Jeff said.

Discussion ensued on the difference between voting to amend a specific line item of the budget and voting

to approve the total (amended) budget. It was explained that amending a line item changes the total budget but only serves as guidance to the School Board. The Board's only obligation is to stay within the total budget that School District Meeting approves.

Moderator Bill Bardsley called for a vote, and the amendment failed.

## Liability Insurance

Brenda Lance asked why the school's liability insurance went down this year. Robin Heins indicated that the school district signed a multi-year agreement with Primex that saved money.

## Storage

Melissa Thompson asked if we couldn't buy the outside storage we use instead of renting it every year. Don Gould (School Board member) said that the Board is looking into alternatives.

## Employee Raises

On the subject of raises, Charlie McCrave said that of the \$78,000 in raises, \$74,000 is contracted 3% raises for the teachers, and \$4,000 is a 1% raise for non-teaching staff. That covers a total of about 40 teachers and staff. The student population at AE/MS is 224.

Mary Hiller pointed out that some Merrimack Valley teachers voluntarily didn't take their raises. "Were our teachers asked to forego their raises?"

Charlie explained, "In all but one of those instances of teachers foregoing raises, it's been part of negotiating a new contract. In Andover, we're in

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**Pat Frost**

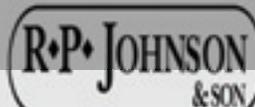
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