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## School District Meeting Approves \$5.9 Million Budget

### Voters restore one full-time teacher position

Dean Barker, Andover School Board

Thank you to all who came out to the 2020 Andover School District Meeting on March 2. It was heartwarming to see so many of Andover's citizens engaging with and deliberating upon the upcoming budget and other important items involving the functioning of Andover Elementary/Middle School (AE/MS) for the following school year, 2020-2021. It is your participation that helps our school community thrive!

The meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance, *The Star-Spangled Banner* sung by AE/MS music teacher Alex Ager, and a performance of *The Witch Is Dead* from the student cast of the AE/MS play, *Wizard of Oz*.

**Budget**

Arch Weathers, Chair of the Andover Budget Committee, made opening remarks on Article 2 of the warrant, pertaining to the Budget Committee's recommended 2020-2021 school budget of \$5,819,721 that the attendees would be voting on. I then went through the overview of net increases and decreases of the originally proposed Andover School Board budget (not recommended by the Budget Committee), while board member Gilman and Superintendent MacLean explained the \$46,500 difference between the two budgets, most of which pertained to a proposed change from two full-time custodial staff to two and a half, with one shifting to a salaried position of plant manager to better maintain the infrastructure of the building in light of the recent facility project upgrade.

A lively discussion and debate from various attendees then followed about the pros and cons of adding one regular education teacher to the budget (both the Budget Committee budget and the Andover School Board budget contained one less regular education teacher due to a retirement that, based on projected enrollment numbers, was not being re-hired).

In the end, an amendment to Article 2 to add \$75,000 to restore this position

easily passed. Another amendment to add another \$15,000 to increase hours for the reading specialist position was tabled.

Andover resident Percy Hill then offered an amendment to address the original discrepancy between the Budget Committee's budget on the warrant and the School Board proposed budget. After further discussion and debate about special education costs and the proposed plant manager position, this amendment to add \$46,500 passed on a vote of 42 to 27. Finally, Article 2 was adopted by the meeting, as amended to \$5,941,221.

**Other Articles**

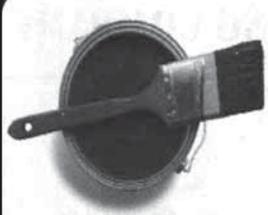
Article 3 concerned the upcoming three-year support staff contract between the School Board and the Andover Support Staff Association. It was adopted without discussion, obviating the need for Article 4.

Article 5 concerned raising \$30,000 for the Building and Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund in order to begin building up equity for when AE/MS' heating system will need replacing down the road. This money will come from available unassigned fund balance, or, lacking that, general taxation. After a short discussion and debate, which included a motion to restrict a future boiler to an oil-burning one, (it did not receive a second), Article 5 was adopted.

Article 6 included a motion from town resident Andy Guptill "to instruct the board to use the high school expendable trust fund to reduce increases in high school tuition impact on taxation." After a brief discussion on the pros and cons of the motion, it did not pass.

Prior to adjournment, we honored our wonderful moderator Betsy Paine, who will be leaving this role after eight years of outstanding service to the town!

I want to thank Christie Coll for providing a draft of the meeting minutes to help craft this summary. The full minutes will be publicly available once they have been approved at the next Andover School Board meeting in April.



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