

**POMFRET**  
**SCHOOL DISTRICT ANNUAL MEETING**

**March 1, 2016**

The School District Meeting was called to order at 1:00 PM by Kevin Geiger, Moderator.

1. Kevin Geiger was nominated as Moderator, and was unanimously elected.

2. Norwood Long moved to accept and act on the reports submitted. Anne Bower seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

3. Anne Bower moved that the voters of the Pomfret School District approve a budget of \$1,540,907 as the amount necessary for the support of the Prosper Valley Joint School District (TPVS) for the year beginning July 1, 2016 (the estimate based on current information is that the Pomfret School District assessment will be \$848,342 of the total Joint School budget). Terry Kenison seconded the motion. Anne asked why the budget had gone up 13.7%. Board Chair Greg Greene noted three main drivers in the increase: 1. A 7.9% increase in staff health care costs; 2. A slight decrease in equalized pupils (approx. 3); and 3. When the schools consolidated the Bridgewater staff was significantly less compensated than other schools in the area, and a 2-year plan was implemented to get those salaries on par. Michael Reese questioned what portion of the health insurance the teachers paid out-of-pocket. Greg replied that the negotiated amount was 16% of the premium, which is a higher cost than other district schools and across the state. Bob Hatfield asked which of the three points Greg made were most significant in raising the cost. Richard Seaman (Financial Officer for the Windsor Central Supervisory Union) noted that the implementation of the preschool for Fall 2016 and health care costs were factors, but the number of equalized students made the most difference. Jody Eaton noted that the pre-k program runs at a cost of \$3,000 per student, and is a new program for this year. Orson St. John asked if other local towns, specifically Barnard and Reading, have expressed interest in joining the consolidated school. Greg stated that the consolidation agreement is flexible, but as of yet no talks have happened – the primary focus of most schools now is Act 46. Brad Burrington asked how close last year's approximation came to the actuals spent, and didn't the budget actually go down this year? Greg responded that we don't know yet what the actuals are as we are not yet at the end of the fiscal year, but it looks like they will stay under the projected budget. Lisa Sjostrom (TPVS Principal) agreed that the school will likely come in under budget and may even come away with a surplus. Richard (WCSU) noted that based on pro-rating and the equalized pupil rate, the Pomfret assessment is slightly less than last year, but Bridgewater's assessment went up slightly. The motion passed by a ballot vote of 35-3.

4. Michael Reese moved that the voters of the Pomfret School District appropriate \$5,000 as the amount necessary for the operation of the Pomfret School District, as a legal entity with continuing responsibilities, for the year beginning July 1, 2016. Terry Kenison seconded the motion. Anne Bower asked if this was for a group separate from the school and what it covered for expenses. Greg Greene explained that this was a small operation expense in case the board (separate from the Joint District) needed funds as legal consultation fees. Bob Hatfield asked whether this amount needed to be recreated or re-funded, and Greg stated that the funding was already there in the account, but that this authorizes the board to expend it if necessary. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

5. Anne Bower moved and Terry Kenison seconded the motion to authorize the Pomfret School Directors to establish a reserve fund for the purposes of supporting contractual obligations upon the retirement of three teachers and appropriate \$10,000 to this fund. Greg Greene explained that in the original contracts of the three remaining teachers from the Pomfret School, there was a clause that allowed the teachers to accrue up to 120 sick days and at retirement be paid for half of that time. However, no funding mechanism was put in place at the time that the contracts were made to account for where the money would come from. The total potentially owed from those three contracts could total as much as \$80,000, and we are contractually obligated to fund it. Michael Reese asked if that amount was figured into the new per pupil rate, and Greg replied that it is not, it needs to be funded separately from the new district. Joanna Long asked if the teachers were still able to use the sick days that they had previously accrued, thus lessening our financial obligation. Greg replied that when the new contracts were negotiated, the previously accrued sick days were "frozen", so the obligation stands. Betsy Rhodes asked what the long-range plan would be for fully funding that \$80,000 – whether it would be done over time or by investing the initial appropriations. Greg noted that the next article up for vote would cover some of that balance, as it was money that was built into previous budgets for a health care account that is no longer needed for that purpose and can be reallocated. If that money goes into the account, it will reduce the amount that needs to be raised by taxes in the next 5 to 10 years for the balance. Bob Hatfield questioned whether there is a difference in the contract for a teacher who simply leaves and does not retire, and Greg answered that because the three teachers have all met the contractual requirements, the contract allows for leaving and is not limited to retirement. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

6. Terry Kenison moved and Bob Merrill seconded the motion that the voters authorize the Pomfret School Directors to transfer previously established reserve funds in the amount of \$23,593.72 to the newly established

reserve fund (Article 5). Brad Burrington asked if there was just one reserve fund and it is only for the contractual obligations. Greg Greene replied that it is the only reserve fund that the district has established. Richard Seaman (WCSU) explained that other reserve funds exist, and Greg acknowledged that there are other funds but they are more like accounts, not funds that have been voted into creation by the Town. Scott Milne thanked the school board for their work, then asked whether or not the teachers can still use those old accrued days. Greg clarified that they have new sick days built into their new TPVS contracts. Scott then questioned why the funds could not be paid out now since the teachers have met the requirements, and Richard replied that at the time of the new contract negotiation the teachers did not want the money paid out – they wanted to wait and receive it upon retirement. Terry Kenison asked if the teachers would be able to use any of the built up sick time if they run out of sick time in their new contract, and Kevin Geiger replied that the old sick time is not part of their new contracts. Alice Worth (WCSU) agreed, saying that when the Pomfret School ceased to exist the old benefits did not come over to the new district as they were now two separate entities, two separate employers. Sarah Woodhead asked about the other “reserve funds”, and whether they could also be reallocated to offset the amount owed. Greg revealed that the teachers have been asked to use up these funds in order to deplete the old accounts, most of which are under \$300 each. Sarah noted that those funds were owned by the Pomfret School District and not TPVS, and Alice stated that they had recommended the funds be used up on items still owned solely by the Pomfret School District (building, grounds, etc). Following this discussion, the motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

At this time, it was noted that Greg Greene would not be seeking reelection to the board, and he was thanked by Kevin Geiger and the entire assembly for his 9 years of service. Greg stated that the staff and other board members have made it easy for him to do all the work, even with the challenges in the current education climate. Bob Coates (Board Member) stated on behalf of the other board members that they would not be here without Greg and his hard work and vision. Lisa Sjostrom presented him with a hand-made certificate from the kids at the school, and later announced that the newly acquired greenhouse (purchased at a reduced rate from Chippers) on school grounds would be renamed the “Greene House” in honor of the contributions he had made to the school.

7. Greg Greene nominated Seth Westbrook as School Director to the Pomfret School Board for a term of three years. Greg moved to have the clerk cast one ballot for Seth, and Anne Bower seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

8. Joanna Long moved to authorize the School Directors to borrow money in anticipation of taxes, and Norwood Long seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

9. Other business:

Greg Greene expressed his thanks to State Representative Teo Zagar for his work on the Act 46 “nightmare”. Teo is a huge supporter of our students and community, and was able to secure our district an exemption to the cost-containment measure penalties imposed by Act 46 legislation totaling nearly \$91,000.

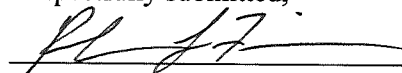
Joanna Long praised the eloquence and wisdom of our board members and moderator, and noted that the school and access to the library are at the heart of providing the education necessary to nurture that curiosity and wisdom.

Justin Shipman (Bridgewater School Board Member) spoke on behalf of the WCSU Act 46 Study Committee. He offered a presentation on Act 46 and the implications of a future merger, the costs, and potential for our district. He noted that the WCSU website and the Agency of Education website have more information if anyone is interested.

Terry Kenison moved to adjourn, and the Moderator declared the meeting closed at 2:32 PM.

Results of Pomfret vote for WUHS District #4 Article 4: Budget of \$11,629,208 for the year beginning July 1, 2016: Yes – 137 / No – 43

Respectfully submitted,



Rebecca Fielder, Town Clerk

Minutes approved by:



Date:

4/4/2016  
4/4/2016