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School Committee Chair Laurence Murphy

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
THURSDAY APRIL 20, 2017
TOWN HALL AUDITORIUM

**PUBLIC HEARING
FY18 BUDGET**

1. Call to order: 6:02 P M.

Present: Danielle LaPointe, Janet Corbosiero, Dawn Fronte, Larry Murphy, Felicia Nurmsen
Steven Haddad, Superintendent, Richard Ikonen, Business Manager

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Audio/Video Recording Disclosure

3. Announcement: Day on the Hill, April 25, 2017-L. Murphy, F. Nurmsen and S. Haddad plan to attend.

4. FY2018 Proposed Budget:

- **Slide 2** - D. LaPointe stated the mission of the budget is built to provide the necessary funding to meet the needs of all needs of all students and to create a quality school parents want to send their children to. The budget also needed to be transparent and responsible to the taxpayer.
- **Slide 3** - J. Corbosiero presented the comparison of the FY17 and FY18 budget, pointing out the district is receiving \$356,822 less than last year. She noted the costs remain, with yearly increases, despite the lower enrollment.
- **Slide 4** - D. Fronte noted increased costs include contract obligations, building maintenance, students who choice out.

- **Slide 6** - S. Haddad presented the three proposed budget options:

Balanced Budget - The committee started working on it in the late Fall. He itemized the positions that would be cut and the position moves of the remaining staff, noting some positions are being lost due to retirements because the positions will not be filled. The technology piece is important since all MCAS testing is taken on computers. Increases in class size would be seen in some grades. Middle School class size will increase. Have been focused in Middle School Social Studies will go to High School. This option requires a budget cut of \$469,671.71

Improved Budget keeps all MMS and MHS teachers. It requires an override of \$240,646.

What We Really Need Budget incorporates what the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education recommended in the District Accountability Report, including hiring a Director of Curriculum. This option also improves the Professional Development program and requires an override of \$417,675.

Slide 8 – F. Nurmsen presented: The Return on Investment was explained, noting the benefits to students and the community.

Slide 9 - L. Murphy noted a tax override of \$417,675 would increase the average single family house tax bill by \$109 per year (\$2.09/week). He added the staff and teachers are working hard to keep the cost of education down, noting this would not make us equal with higher districts but would give a quality education to all students. He asked taxpayers to support this knowing we have a responsible budget that meets the needs of the students. He commended the Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee and the Town Manager.

D. LaPointe noted Town Manager offered the district a share of extra funding the town has received, adding “It is no longer an adversarial relationship”.

S. Haddad noted the various improvement plans and goals that will guide the district forward.

5. Citizens Questions and Comments:

- ❖ Justification of why teachers and administration received raises in light of the disclosed budget cuts and how many positions would be lost due to retirement and not being filled.
- ❖ Concerns regarding the effect of the proposed cuts on the NEASC accreditation at Murdock High School in the Fall and increased class size.
- ❖ Concerns that students will choice-out if programs and teachers are cut.
- ❖ Several students noted Ms. Packard is the heart of the Murdock High School community and makes a huge impact on the children.
- ❖ Several parents stated their children need the benefit of a great school system like Winchendon; they thanked teachers and administration for their great work; they came here because of the smaller school and small town feel.
- ❖ Student perspectives: Most caring teachers you will ever see; are her second parents and friends; wants the school to be there for her siblings; the school is important to her and all the students in attendance; they gain knowledge and lessons for a successful life; teachers care and respect their students and focus on the mental health of their students; the schools are community and student centered; Blue Devil Pride; credits her teachers for keeping her on track; the teachers are invested in their students as people-more than just; students; Murdock High School students urged eligible seniors to vote.
- ❖ Teacher comments--We do more for children than educate them; we are a positive advocate for students; the positive relationship between teachers and students; pride in Winchendon; believe strong schools equal strong community equal strong towns.
- ❖ Tina Santos, resident with children in the school system. She asked voters to stay until the end of the meeting-in case an article is revisited.

- ❖ Josh Romano, Principal of Murdock High School explained some of the Athletic Department increases, including the lack of Robinson Broadhurst funding properly funding athletic transportation. The Murdock Trust will be used to pay stipends for after school programs. He spoke against regionalization, adding the Alumni Banquet and other traditions will go away. He stressed the need to support the children and provide them with the resources they need to lead successful lives.
- ❖ Audrey LaBrie, resident and BOS member.
- ❖ Suzanne Michel, Assistant Director of pupil Services
- ❖ Chris Ricard, WTA President and district teacher for 30 years.
- ❖ Peter Birney, MHS teacher at High school for 18 years, noted it is a privilege to teach those students, positive how kids know each other and develop wonderful r relationships and friendships; the strength of the community supports lives. He Supports the Override.
- ❖ Kevin Fuller, 10-year resident with 3 boys in the school system and a Cub Scout Master, commended the support of the staff and teachers. He Endorses the Override.
- ❖ Victoria Lemire, Murdock High School Senior and Student Council member.
- ❖ Chris Cassavant, resident and Narragansett Superintendent stated he feels uncomfortable that people have to defend their salaries.
- ❖ Aidan Provost, Murdock High School Senior and a 5th generation Murdock student strongly encourages the override even though he is last of his family to attend Winchendon Public Schools.
- ❖ D. LaPointe announced there is a seat open for the Winchendon Montachusett Regional Vocational School representative.
- ❖ Cassie Stadtfeld- Murdock High School Freshman whose friends go to competitive (other) schools.
- ❖ Heidi Bevacqua, 20-year teacher in the Winchendon Public Schools stated she would support the override if she was a resident, noting she attended schools here. The Edgenuity program at Murdock Academy is super successful at helping students get their diploma.
- ❖ Chris Provost, resident and Director of Murdock Academy, reported 64 students are using the Edgenuity program; he was able to negotiate a much lower price to make it more competitive. He explained the benefits to keeping the same program for the students.
- ❖ Thomas Aho, Murdock High School Senior and attended Montachusett Regional Vocational School for several years. He credits Murdock High School with everything he has achieved; adding the teachers molded him and he owes his future success to them. He was accepted to 14 colleges.
- ❖ J. Corbosiero stated 'It is absolutely wonderful to see and hear all of these students.'

- ❖ Patrick Leonard, wants his son to go from Pre-k through High school in the Winchendon Public Schools.
- ❖ Nicole Landry is in full support of the Override. She is a Math teacher moving to the 6th grade. Loop system/team stay with them for 2 years intervened in a suicide of one of her students we are a second parent larger class size will make it difficult to know her students like she does not want to do crowd control. In order to support them this way.
- ❖ Victoria Swanson, Alexis Lancey, Murdock High School student, Sean Wilson, Murdock High School Junior, are in favor of the override.
- ❖ Hailey Kelly, Murdock '12 Alumni stated she still has same amount of pride that (current) students have and there is strength in community and pride. She asked voters to support the override.
- ❖ Britney Jackson, Sophomore at Murdock High School. Britney stayed at Murdock after her middle school friends left. She understands it takes time and work to succeed. She has band practice and can't take all the classes she would like to.
- ❖ A Save Your Schools Face Book campaign and Twitter feed will be used to promote support of the district.
- ❖ Shannon Stadtfeld -parent of one Winchendon Public Schools Alumni and 1 current student.
- ❖ Camille Hart-WPS student- hopes town will do the override.
- ❖ Abigail Guerra- hopes people vote for override.
- ❖ David Jackson-daughters in school system.
- ❖ Maureen Provost, resident and graduate of Murdock, 4th generation, supports the override.
- ❖ Rick Sarkovics urged voters to use absentee ballots for the ballot vote.
- ❖ Sue Polcari, parent of students in system and very active in the Murdock Boosters and other organizations that support the school system
- ❖ Peter Birney, Murdock High School Teacher
- ❖ It was stated that Winchendon has quality schools as testified tonight, and noted the need to preserve them and to increase the perception of a quality school.

6. **Questions and Comments by Members:**

L. Murphy declared there is a lot of Blue Devil Cool here tonight and agreed the town needs to preserve it.

S. Haddad thanked everyone for coming out, adding 'We will fight this thing, it is not positions, it is people.

J. Corbosiero moved to cut Article 17 (the middle override) out of the warrant. Second by D. Fronte.

F. Nurmsen disagreed, stating Article 16 should be kept as an option. L. Murphy added a middle ground option, not a 'not all or nothing' situation is better. The motion failed to pass 3-2-0.

Article 16 language needs to be fixed to read \$417,675. F. Nurmsen moved to correct Article 16 and replace it with that number (\$417,675). Second by L. Murphy.
Approved 5-0-0.

D. LaPointe stated she voted no earlier because the article can be removed on Town Meeting floor.

Budget Vote L. Murphy moved to approve the budget as presented. Second by F. Nurmsen.
Roll call vote. Approved 5-0-0

7. **Adjournment:** 8:42 P.M. L. Murphy moved to adjourn. Second by J. Corbosiero.
Approved 5-0-0.

Respectfully submitted: Barrie E. Martins, School Committee Recording Secretary