

## SOMERSWORTH SCHOOL BOARD

February 16<sup>th</sup> 2015

Somersworth City Hall

7:00 pm

- 1. CALL TO ORDER - ROLL CALL - PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Austin called the meeting to order at 7:00pm upon call of the roll the following members were present: Rivers, Austin, Paradis, Philpott, Hiller, Pepin, Brennan, Gibson and Bolduc.
- 2. COMMENTS BY VISITORS:** None
- 3. CONSENT CALENDAR:**
  - 3.1 Removal of items from the consent calendar:** Gibson asked that the minutes of the February 10<sup>th</sup> budget presentation be removed from the consent calendar.
  - 3.2 Approval of Consent Calendar:** A motion made by Paradis seconded by Hiller to approve the consent calendar as amended. VOTE: motion passed, unanimously. Approved were:
    - February 10 2015- Minutes from the Somersworth School Board Meeting
    - February 5<sup>th</sup> 2015- Minutes from the Somersworth Budget Workshop
    - Maple Wood Newsletter- March
- 4. ANNOUNCEMENTS:** Supt. Mosca stated that it is with sadness to share some news we had two tragedies over the weekend with the passing of an elementary student at Maple Wood and the passing of a parent of a student. Our thoughts and prayers are with both families. She stated that she would like to thank the community and staff for rallying around and going above and beyond. People in the community don't know that people don't do this job Monday through Friday, people do amazing things and she commends folks for stepping up. She stated that last Thursday Dana, Bob and Dave Witham started conversations on combining city and school services and they hope to start a strategic plan to combine efforts where possible and she will have further updates in March.
- 5. DISCUSSION ITEMS:**
  - 5.1 BOARD REPORTS:**
    - Building, Grounds & Transportation:** Rivers stated they have not met and the next meeting is on March 23<sup>rd</sup>.
  - 5.2 Curriculum and Activities:** None
  - 5.3 Policy Committee:** None
  - 5.4 City Council Update:** None
  - 5.5 Student Representative Report:** None
  - 5.6 Minutes from February 10 2015 Budget Presentation:** Gibson stated that a minor change on the wording on page 17 it should say disposed of.
- 6. ACTION ITEM:**
  - 6.1 Budget 2015-2016:** A motion made by Gibson seconded by Paradis to move the budget as presented to the city council. Gibson stated that he would like to make clear and he believes that the rest of the board feels the same way they understand the feelings of the community who have spoken. None of us want to do what we're doing; it is devastating to the system. He stated that one year is devastating but what is really devastating is that we have never presented a budget that hasn't involved cuts, there has never been a budget approved as presented. He stated that the city has a tough job but the amount of personnel and resources that have gone out of the system is horrible. People of the community need to speak up as some of you have and make clear what you expect out of your community. He stated that the school has accommodated amazing things and what is most amazing is the dedication of staff in the school system that has had constant reductions in staff and resources. He stated that we need to look at why we do things and it starts with the community level and both local and state government. He stated that education is the most important thing that we provide and we are failing that responsibility in the state. He stated that he hates reaching into his wallet as much as the next person but there has to be some other solution it is really getting ridiculous, communities like

this are desperate and this budget is the best we can do presented by the administration with the restraints by the law. He stated that the tax cap is in place and we are obligated to present a budget under the tax cap amount and the only way it can change is if the city council can override the budget we presented by a two thirds super majority vote. If you are unhappy get to your councilor and get some action there. Bolduc stated that the question is moving this budget forward tonight and he doesn't know how he will move this forward. The budget proposed is what the superintendent has to do but it is not adequate, there is a shortfall of a million and we are digging the hole bigger each year, we can't continue the cuts. He stated that he won't be voting to move this forward he can't do that. He stated that five members have to vote to move it forward but he can't. He stated that when you talk about an override this year, it will only help to correct this year and the problem is still there next year. He stated that the loss in revenue is still there year after year so it is not a fix. He stated that he doesn't want to pay any more than anyone else but we are here to do a job and do it right so I will not pass this forward. Hiller stated that none of us like this budget, it's terrible but our hands are tied. She stated that it seemed like we had a perfect storm of three things happening, the health insurance increase, Rollinsford taking the students out which was a big loss of revenue that we normally have and the tax cap. She stated that we made cuts as thoughtful as the administration could and we don't like them, nobody does but our hands are tied. She stated that she is hoping that the city council can help us out some other way. She stated that she said at the last meeting that the quality would be the same and she meant that the teachers staying are quality teachers and will teach a quality education. Marty Pepin stated that he would like to clarify that there are two ways the council can give extra money, the tax cap override and taking money out of the general fund. He stated that if they take it from the general fund the budget stays the same but if it is a tax cap override the budget will increase and it goes forward to the next year. He stated that if we take it from the general fund we will still be short next year. He stated that he doesn't know what the council feels but there are different options and he feels that the tax cap override is the best. Paradis stated that nobody likes this budget and she agrees with everyone tonight including overriding the tax cap, she would like to see it go away. She stated that it is with heavy heart that we present this budget and she hopes that the elected officials do the right thing and what is necessary. Philpott stated that it has really been difficult when she ran for office she wanted to see us utilize the CIP budget and the past two years they have taken it to put into education and staff because we felt that was more important. She stated that we have to trust what is here is going to make the least amount of impact. She stated that every penny in the school budget affects our children whether it is at the SAU level, administration, classes, or secretaries it affects the children. She stated that she is sick to her stomach since she heard the first set of cuts and she doesn't have children in the school but she lives in Somersworth because she values it. She stated that year after year we are devaluing the education system and she doesn't want to pay taxes for something that we devalue, she is willing to pay more and she knows that she is not alone. She stated that she does hope that people contact their city councilors and do what is best for our school and city at large. She stated that we have to put money in different places in the city it is all important but we have to put money into education, school is a priority and we have to face the fact that if the community wants to grow we have to do something about the tax cap. Austin stated that his thoughts echo everyone else. If you listen to the presentation last week he made it clear where he stands on the issues and as a board this is not something that we want to do. He thanked everyone for coming to express their opinions, they are all valuable. He stated that this is only the beginning of the process we still have a long way to go before the end of the process and hopefully at the end the authorization will look incredibly different than this evening. He stated that he looks forward to working with the city council to get to an optimum solution, are we going to get the full million, no he doesn't think that is going to happen and are we going to be able to cover all the cuts probably not but if we can cover a significant portion of that and recover some of the cuts it can make a dramatic difference. He stated that we do have a job to do this evening in order to meet the terms of

the tax cap the superintendent and the staff worked very hard to maintain some semblance of service to provide a quality education that we can provide to them. Thank you that was not an easy process but the fact remains that with the tax cap issue which he did not support right from the beginning we are seeing the impact and where the rubber hits the road. He stated that the community gets to choose what you want for your community or do you want to provide a bare bones budget. He stated that if a member of the community wishes to go that route that is what will happen and if not have the education to continue to be the rising star of this community there needs to be support of something different than this. He reminded everyone that this is not the end of the process, talk to your councilors and build support for some form of modification. Supt. Mosca stated that she would like to remind the board as we move through the discussions they are looking at combining services so that is also a possibility moving forward with that. Gibson stated that people have been saying can't you find pennies somewhere else but we have been finding them for a long time, we have cut individual supply lines last year and there have been a lot of cuts like that over the years and we are at the point now we are not cutting fat anymore we are cutting muscle. He stated that he is not an advocate of the tax cap but he understands the people had the best of intentions when they did it because they were feeling the pain of the tax increases and everyone feels pain when they reach into their pocket and we are seeing the end result of that perfect storm because we were hit with the health insurance increase, Rollinsford withdrawal and the limitation on the tax cap as well as expenses just go up. VOTE: Upon roll call vote the motion passed, Bolduc Opposed.

**7. NEW BUSINESS:**

**8. OLD BUSINESS**

**8.1 Vision 20/20 Committee:** None

**8.2 Budget:** Austin stated that the current year budget update is included in the packet if anyone has any questions.

**8.3 CTC Renovation Update:** Paradis stated the next meeting is on March 11<sup>th</sup> at 2:30.

**FUTURE MEETING DATES/SUGGESTED AGENDA ITEMS:**

- **February 19 2015- Rollinsford School Board Meeting**
- **March 2 2015- State of the City Presentation**
- **March 10 2015- Somersworth School Board Meeting**
- **March 19 2015- Rollinsford School Board Meeting**
- **March 23 2015- SAU 56 Board Meeting**

**March 24 2015- Somersworth School Board Meeting\_**

Austin stated that he would like to remind the board that the NEASC visit is March 15-18 and asked them to be available for Sunday and then periodically over those three days as it is important for accreditation. Gibson stated that he won't be available for the state of the city.

**10. CLOSING COMMENTS**

**10.1 Visitors:** None

**10.2 Board Members:** Bolduc stated that he fought with his vote tonight but he had to do that.

Austin stated that he appreciates that he does that. He thanked the school board for all the work they put in, many people don't realize the hours that are put in and this year has been extraordinary and this board has provided outstanding service above and beyond the expectation and have represented the city and school extraordinarily well. He thanked Jeni and the staff for all their work they did to put the budget together as it has been extremely difficult this year. He stated that there has been a lot of tears and pain and suffering and we heard some of that tonight. He stated that this is not the end and he hopes the end is something different.

**11. NON-PUBLIC:** None

**12. ADJOURNMENT:** A motion made by Philpott seconded by Paradis to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:41pm.

Katie Krauss  
Board Secretary

Pending Board Approval