

1. **Call to Order-Roll Call- Pledge of Allegiance:** Nelson called the meeting to order at 5:30pm and upon call of the roll the following board members were present: Pass, Nelson, Kunz, Robinson and Leach.
2. **Budget Discussion:** Nelson stated that it is nice to see everyone here tonight. She stated that this is a workshop so they won't be taking any public input and she reminded the board not to engage in conversation with the public. She stated that before we get started she would like to quote the goal from the retreat which is "We are actively pursuing keeping education at Rollinsford Grade School. In order to accomplish this, we are aggressively looking to reduce operating costs and asking tough questions regarding the budget." She stated that following the last board meeting they mentioned that as they work toward understanding the budget they want to make it clear to all stakeholders that they won't make any decisions until we know more information. She stated that they are in the gathering information stage and it may be confusing at times. She stated that she will open the discussion to determine what we want to accomplish in this year and this meeting. Robinson stated that his objective is to ask the tough questions in order to get an idea where to reduce operating costs. He stated that we don't have a lot of room to cut so he would like to go line by line to figure out where we can cut to reduce operating costs to make it more affordable for the town. Nelson stated that you would like to look at the budget line by line. Robinson stated that he will be looking at impacts of cuts and what the true cost of education in Rollinsford is and what that education really means and for this workshop he is focusing solely on RGS. Kunz stated that as a whole he thinks that we will always be concerned about cost but he doesn't want to make cuts for the sake of making cuts. He stated that he doesn't want it to impact what is being provided. He stated that if a reduction can be made they have to make sense and have some value. He stated that he doesn't want to see us losing for the sake of budget cuts. He stated that line by line is good but the budget itself is a vehicle to move something else, the budget fuels something. Pass stated that the purpose is to make the budget manageable and palatable for the town to get their buy in. She stated that is the basis for this conversation to solve the problem of lack of support from the town. Leach stated that we need to find an effective way to figure out an effective way to communicate our decisions to the town. She stated that as we go through the budget we need to ask the question if it adversely affects the education our children and town and community are getting. Nelson stated that the town feels and has spoken clearly and loudly that RGS is very expensive and we need to look at things closely and understand the budget better. She stated that there are different ways to go about it and she feels that it is too soon to go line by line through the budget. She stated that they started drilling down and they will continue to do that to get a full understanding of the whole budget and how it is put together and what is possible to with it if anything. Robinson stated that one area he would like to spend time on is the cost of special education. Nelson stated that that is a big one and is hard for people to understand because we can't get too specific in order not to identify kids. She stated that she would suggest a timeline which we may not be able to do until later so we can be letting the town know when answers

may be coming. She stated that one thing they did not mention is they talked about the lack of town support and she wanted to add that if there is any way to increase revenue that is important to look at such as tuition kids into our school and if there is an opportunity for that. She stated that at the last meeting we were provided with information on the breakdown of the school K-6 and 7-8 and high school and she asked if the board wanted to look at the information that has been requested since then. Robinson stated that he would like to see the new information. Supt. Mosca stated that in terms of increasing revenue, you have a policy on accepting tuition and non-resident students. She stated that if you have a kid who lives in Dover and wants to tuition to go to Rollinsford they would have to send a letter to me and then I would bring it to the board. She stated that the board can set the tuition rate and then that child pending the board approval could attend RGS and the parent would be on the hook for the tuition. She stated that a couple of things to think about are that you are in the position to accept some students but you are not in the position to take an entire enrollment. She stated that the issue you face is that you have a tuition agreement and god forbid Eliot and South Berwick get a lot of people they could say they don't have room anymore you become orphans 7-12. She stated that you are not in a position to accept an entire school but you do have a policy to accept some if parents pay the tuition. Nelson stated that we need to find out if possible how many tuition students we can take but the fact that it is possible is good. Leach asked what the state tuition rate is. D'Agostino stated that for 13/14 the per student cost based on actual cost is \$18,373.06. Supt. Mosca stated what is included in that calculation. D'Agostino stated that Cost per pupil represents current expenditures less tuition and transportation costs. Any food service revenue is deducted from current expenditures before dividing by ADM in attendance. Capital and debt service are not current expenditures and are not included. Leach stated that we would get no extra if we accepted a special education student into the district. D'Agostino stated no, tuition is subtracted. Nelson stated that we don't have to accept special education students. Leach stated that it says in the policy that the Board's decision on whether to enroll a non-resident student will not be based, in whole or in part, on whether that student is a student with a disability, as defined by applicable state or federal law. Lucas stated that if a special education student came into the district we could charge a la carte like Marshwood. She asked Marie if that figure included things such as when we did the fire alarm. D'Agostino stated yes. Lucas stated that this is not just the cost of running the building it is the whole district. D'Agostino stated that it is just RGS. Pass asked if we accepted a student they would be charged the \$18,373.06. Supt. Mosca stated that is what it costs you to educate a student. Nelson stated that we have to remember that this is based on one year's cost. Supt. Mosca people can't just pull the information off the website because they don't have the meaning behind the numbers. She stated that the best thing to do is to educate the public and clearly state that and that it is formula based. It is best to tell people to come get the facts to help walk them through it and that is what we do here. D'Agostino stated that you have to remember that ADM also fluctuates. She stated that in 12/13 the cost per pupil was \$16,881. Leach stated that if we spent \$100,000 to improve the building in that year that would have been part of that number. Nelson stated that this includes special education. Supt. Mosca stated yes it does. Nelson stated that is important to share with people. Robinson stated that

what we are trying to do with the breakout is we are trying to be transparent with the numbers if we want to compare them against other districts we need to make sure as a school the special education costs are on average with everyone else's so we know if we have a high number. He stated that when I talk specifically about what I am including to come up with a cost per student, as a board we can use a baseline for the cost of education in Rollinsford if we use these numbers. D'Agostino stated that the state looks at it as a whole, that is the cost to educate all children, it doesn't segregate. Leach stated that the tough part about using these numbers is that people are comparing it to what we pay Marshwood. Supt. Mosca stated that she would suggest that you educate people on how it is derived and that Marshwood is derived in a different way because they pull out special education costs and the state is inclusive of all. Pass stated that we need to compare apples to apples. Nelson stated that we need to look at pulling special education out. Pass stated that we need to boil our number down so we have apples to apples. Nelson stated that we need to remove special education from our number so we are comparing apples to apples. Supt. Mosca stated that what you're tinkering with is a formula and it is an all-inclusive formula. Robinson stated that it sounds like we are being told we do not have the ability to work with our financials to have an apples to apples comparison without special education included. Supt. Mosca stated that is not what I was saying, we gave you regular education, special education costs and that number also includes operating costs. Robinson stated that so we could look at this breakout with actual minus special education. D'Agostino stated that the ADM does not breakout special education. Pass asked if they could break out their numbers through the Maine formula. Supt. Mosca stated that we could, they also take their budget amount and divide it by their whole enrollment. Nelson stated that is this something that we could ask Dr. Joyce to do an apples to apples comparison. Supt. Mosca stated we can try running it through the Maine formula. Robinson stated that he can change his approach and ask the administration because the town is having a hard time comparing it against Marshwood can you help us come up with numbers that we can provide and the administration is saying we can't do it. Supt. Mosca stated that we get that but we want to do what is real, we are not trying to be difficult. She stated that we want to give a number that is real and true. She stated that she understands that it is a high number but we will try to help the best they can but it has to be a real number. Robinson stated that we will need a formula and how we came up with them but we need to be able to compare the two schools. He stated that the choice the town is looking at is sending K-6 to Marshwood or keeping them at RGS and we need to compare that. Nelson stated that we have no idea, the town may say we want to tuition but that could be years in the making. She stated that we have no experience with Marshwood; we have no idea of the costs. Pass stated that she would rather not spend her efforts on stonewalling them. Nelson stated that our approach is to make it palatable for the town and to keep costs down. Robinson stated that we need to keep in mind that there will be an election before we get the numbers from Marshwood and the decisions are ours today but they may not be going forward. Nelson stated that we want to do what we can to keep the warrant off the ballot to close the school. Supt. Mosca stated that we will play with the formula. She stated that she has answers to the other information that they requested. She stated that for preschool, currently Rollinsford has two preschoolers that attend the SEE program. She

stated that to determine the cost they take the cost of running the program and divide it by the number of students and currently the cost is \$129,248 divided by 39 students equals \$3300.00 per child. She stated that the question was would they save money if you brought it back to Rollinsford and you would have to hire a teacher so paying \$6600 is far cheaper than that. She stated that in terms of typical students the first year there was no charge and this year it is \$10 a day. She stated that there is approximately 28 students that receive special education services of those 28, 20 receive speech and 8 receive OT. She stated that OT is contracted out and we only pay for the service time if the person is there and currently we have no PT students. Nelson asked if the 28 included the speech and OT. Supt. Mosca stated yes. Pass asked why we contract out for OT and not speech. Supt. Mosca stated that we have a limited number of kids in OT and speech children may get three times a week and it would be much more expensive to contract out. Nelson stated that is there an idea of at what point does it make it cost effective to not have a full time teacher. Lucas stated that it is hard because it is not the number of students it is units of service. She stated that there are a total of 28 students and 20 receive speech and 8 OT but all 28 receive academic special education services as well. She stated that if you look in the budget they are broken out. She stated that when you are comparing it to other schools it is also important to look at the special education percentage. Supt. Mosca stated that the state average is 17-19% and we are at 17%. Nelson stated that a big education effort needs to be made that we have no idea who will come in and who will need services. Supt. Mosca stated that a question was asked on full day kindergarten and the big savings is the middle day bus run which is an \$18,000 cost. So if we start the year with full day kindergarten we will save \$18,000. Pass stated that she understands the background as to why it is important but her concern is that if we say we have full day and then we have a big influx of students what do we do. Supt. Mosca stated that are you saying if people move to Rollinsford. Robinson stated or if they use private versus public kindergarten. Pass stated that a lot of kids have not yet registered. Supt. Mosca stated that we have the option to change our decision, if we have 20-24 kids the staff could make it work. Also, if folks choose to come to Kindergarten it will help with the revenue numbers. Pass stated that we will have a hard time going back on it if we commit to a full day. Kunz stated that we have to have a measurement and let the class size dictate and if we can't have it and if people want to go elsewhere they will have to go elsewhere, we deal with stuff like that all the time. Supt. Mosca stated that we could state with a caveat provided the numbers don't get over 25. Lucas stated that we aren't even close to that threshold. She stated that we were at 29 four years ago and now we have a literacy specialist so we could do 25-16 with a kindergarten teacher and aide and the literacy specialist going in two hours a day, that would be our goal. Supt. Mosca stated that you could make the motion with the threshold in place. Leach stated that if we message it properly it should be fine. Nelson stated that she believes as a board they all believe in full day kindergarten we just needed to know the impacts. Supt. Mosca stated that we will watch the numbers and if it goes over we will re-examine and have a conversation with the board. Leach stated that she thinks that this makes the most sense for kids. Nelson asked if there is anything else the board wants answers on tonight. Robinson stated that we had a great conversation tonight and they are understanding the numbers better but he still feels like we need to start looking at the hard

decisions and he will be looking at administration to tell me what they are. He stated that he is looking for ways to reduce operating costs and at the next budget meeting he would like to have ideas coming in on how to reduce costs. Lucas stated that they are working on it. Nelson stated that they will be looking for early June to have the next meeting. Robinson stated that from a town perspective nobody ever questioned the value of education but no they are comparing to Marshwood. He stated that he has no intention of adversely affecting the education in Rollinsford but some adverse cuts may be needed to keep education in Rollinsford. Supt. Mosca stated to that point is there a set number or dollar amount of reductions. Robinson stated that he wants to know if the rate at Marshwood is a 75 and RGS is at 95 maybe we can come down to 85. He stated that we are seeing big number signs between the cost. Pass stated that it is not a specific number but we need to show effort that we are trying. Nelson stated that the budget committee is watching our decisions very carefully and we have a lot of work to do to make a good effort. Supt. Mosca stated that the Marshwood number seems like a palatable number. Nelson stated that it is a huge job to educate the public to say here is the value you are getting for the money and it's worth it. D'Agostino stated that Marshwood's enrollment is also higher than RGS so we need to communicate that. Supt. Mosca stated that we can leave here tonight with an \$18,000 savings if we move forward with full day kindergarten. She stated that she is trying to navigate an \$18,000 cost per student which is too much and a \$9600 baseline and you are looking for something in the middle. Robinson stated that he is not asking for 20%, he is saying that the education in Rollinsford is expensive and Marshwood is less expensive and we need the education in Rollinsford to be less expensive. Pass stated that she got cornered yesterday by someone saying that the building is overstaffed. Robinson stated that is the mentality that we are dealing with. Kunz stated that then you have other folks like me, he stated that not once did we talk about what we can do to enhance the population of students we have now, are we going to be bare bones. Pass stated that they are trying to keep a building for them to be in. Kunz stated that we need to think about the kids who are there now and the kids who are going to be there and what we can add to their experience and he hasn't heard a word about that except for full day kindergarten. Nelson stated that we want to make sure that we keep the school going and that is value added. Lucas stated that she doesn't answer to you and the parents she answers to the kids and she feels accountable to the children and if I feel like the kids are not getting a quality education she does not want them to go to RGS, she wants them to get the best education they deserve the best education they can get. She stated that she believes that they can make the education system superb and still can cut money, we can do that. She stated that she believes in us and the community and what is going on there is special and we will be thoughtful and considerate but if I can't give it to your kid, I want someone else to give it to them. Robinson stated that if they are at 75 and we are 95 maybe we can come down to 85. Kunz stated that he has had conversation with folks and I said no matter what happens you still won't be able to live here, you still have to educate children and have a cost. Lucas stated and no say on that budget. Kunz stated that we should be concerned about cost but no number will make anyone happy. Nelson stated that we can make an effort and show something. Kunz stated that he doesn't want a great idea to get passed up because we are being reactive, we have to put our best foot forward not from a defensive position. Nelson

stated that she feels that we are doing that. Kunz stated that he is hearing about cuts but we need to be able to raise the bar and that bar changes every year. Robinson stated that I am asking tough questions and one big point that we didn't talk about is that our building is falling apart, this year we are doing some improvements but we can't increase the budget we have to reduce operating costs and add into maintenance. Nelson stated that what will work in the town is a plan over five years. Leach stated that when she hears things like there is room to go down, that says we are willing to compromise an excellent education. Robinson stated yes I am because if there is a ballot we are going to 75 and in our initial investigation a letter came out and we will have Dr. Joyce look at that and if that comes back we are going to 75 so he is willing to make those cuts to keep education in Rollinsford. Leach stated that having attended all the meetings and the board needs to be better about communicating the kind of education we are getting and that has not been the message at the meetings. She stated that she thinks that if we are sending the message about the excellent education and that were doing XYZ and why it is amazing and why you want it in your town. Lucas stated that the impression that she gets from some people knowing the figures that they do place value on education and there is a huge percentage of people that said I am willing to pay more for the children of Rollinsford. Pass stated that she is very frustrated with Tom, you need to speak up. Kunz stated that he is disappointed; nothing is attached to the reductions. He stated that Dr. Joyce's report will show a lot and the cost difference is only going to be a part of the story. He stated that we are always on the defensive and we have to be on the offensive. He stated that we need to use social media better than we do. He stated that we need to advocate for the school and reach people who aren't coming to the meetings. He stated that he feels like he is the voice in the wilderness. Nelson stated that you have to continue to be that voice. She stated that we need to engage better with the community. Kunz stated that if you want to talk about cuts fine, but he also wants to hear what we can do to provide more resources for the kids that are there. Nelson stated that if you have a beautiful Cadillac and you can't afford the gas what is the point if you can't drive it on the road. Supt. Mosca stated that full day kindergarten gives us a savings and you are adding and showing you are being responsible with cost and that is a great one right out of the gate. Nelson stated that it is important that we all have the same message. Robinson stated that he is okay with going with a board approach but if Tom doesn't agree he doesn't have to. He stated that he came tonight to talk about cuts; he didn't come to talk about the value of education. He stated that possibly you could do more with less and he is willing to trade my Cadillac for a Lincoln. Nelson stated that at the last budget committee meeting they asked us to get a legal opinion on if we could spend our balance and the legal opinion says that we can that we are moving money between lines that haven't been expended. Robinson stated that this is great; I sent this question in because we needed to provide a legal response to the budget committee. To say that this is what we are dealing with in the town is an understatement. He stated that they were concerned that these were capital expenditures and that they should be warrant articles so I will provide this to them. Nelson stated that the plan next time is to talk about what Kate is coming up with for reductions. Robinson stated that the next meeting they can talk about a timeline on when things will be done. Nelson stated that Kate has offered to give us an overview on the paraprofessionals. Lucas stated that we talked as

a staff on the ways to better educate you so once a month they will do a presentation so you can ask questions of us so they thought they would start with a better understanding on the para roles and responsibilities. Leach stated that we should videotape the presentation and put them on the website. Nelson stated thank you it was good to have this discussion tonight and she feels clearer already. Thank you to everyone who attended tonight.

3. **Adjournment:** The workshop closed at 7:15pm.

Katie Krauss
Board Secretary

Pending Board Approval