

**Newfields School District
First Session of the 2024 Annual Meeting
Deliberative Session – February 5, 2024**

School Board Members: Chair Jennie Bishop, Jackie Tassinari and Bobby Kelly
NES Principal: Suzie Griffith
SAU Attorney: Peter C. Phillips
Asst. Director of Finance: Michelle Larson
Asst. Director of Student Services: Ellen Riiska
Moderator: John M. Hayden
School District Clerk: Sue McKinnon
Supervisor of the Checklist: Connie Murphy

The Moderator, John Hayden opened the meeting at 7pm and called for a pledge of allegiance. He introduced the head table and town officials in attendance. He explained that warrant articles may be amended at this meeting. Voting will be held on March 12, 2024 from 8:00am to 7:00pm at the Newfields Town Hall.

Article 1- Operating Budget

Shall the school district raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling \$3,252,038? Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$3, 123,430, which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Newfields School Board or by law; or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only. The Newfields School Board Recommends \$3,252,038. (Majority vote required)

Jennie Bishop explained that the majority of changes this year is for salary and benefits to hire a reading specialist. Newfields is the only school in the district that does not have a reading specialist and it is required by law. The other changes are due to the increased cost of supplies and operational expenses.

Jim Lieberman asked if the Newfields Advisory Committee met to make their recommendation on Warrant Article 1. Jennie Bishop indicated that the meeting was posted, and the Budget Advisory Committee met on January 27, 2024.

Article 1 as read will be moved to the ballot for a vote.

Article 2- Collective Bargaining Agreement

Shall the school district vote to approve the cost items included in the collective bargaining agreement reached between the Newfields School Board and the Newfields Staff Association which calls for the following increases in salaries and benefits at the current staffing level:

Fiscal Year Estimated Increase

2025: \$73,589

2026: \$86,013

2027: \$66,402

and further to raise and appropriate \$73,589 for the current fiscal year, such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in salaries and benefits required by the new agreement over those that would be paid at current staffing levels. The Newfields School Board recommend \$73,589. (Majority vote required)

Jackie Tassinari said the School Board reached an agreement with the staff to bring their salaries up to a reasonable level. With a 3.5% increase in 2025, 4.5% in 2026 and 4% in 2027. These salaries are for 18 teachers.

Michael Sununu asked if this article was to approve the collective bargaining agreement. Jennie responded that the agreement has already been approved and this is for the approval of the cost of the collective bargaining agreement. This is a new contract that the School Board negotiated with the teacher's last fall.

Michael Sununu questioned why the amounts were not included in the operating budget and why the Town was not approving the agreement. He finds it confusing that the Town is voting on the cost but not the agreement itself.

Attorney Peter Phillips stated that by law this must be a separate warrant article. It is a new agreement and is a package deal with costs involved. The amounts will be rolled into the budget in future years. If the voters approve Article 2, they are approving the contract. If Article 2 fails, the Board will be required to go back to the table and renegotiate the agreement. This is standard language that is being presented to voters for a multiyear agreement.

Article 2 as read will be moved to the ballot for a vote.

Article 3-Other

Shall the Newfields School District, if article 2 is defeated, authorize the governing body to call one special meeting, at its option, to address article 2 cost items only? (Majority vote)

Jackie Tassinari stated that this article gives the Town permission for a special meeting if Article 2 fails. Peter Phillips added that without this article the Board would be obligated to renegotiate the agreement. The article prevents having to go to superior court for special permission and is language by statute.

Article 3 as read will be moved to the ballot for a vote.

Article 4- Special Ed Trust Fund

Shall the school district vote to raise and appropriate the sum of up to \$10,000 to be added to the Special Education Expendable Trust Fund previously established? This sum to come from June

30 fund balance available for transfer on July 1. No additional amount to be raised from taxation. The Newfields School Board recommends approval. (Majority vote required)

Bobby Kelly said three of the next four warrant articles are similar in nature and have been on the ballot for years. The funding comes from the undesignated fund balance and no money is raised by taxation. The current balance of the Special Education Fund is \$107,420. The recommended amount for the fund is \$275,000 to be used for unpredictable variables each year. This article would allow us to add up to \$10,000 to the fund.

Article 4 as read will be moved to the ballot for a vote.

Article 5-School Building Maintenance Fund

Shall the school district raise and appropriate the sum of up to \$10,000 to be added to the School Building Maintenance Fund established at the 1992 School District meeting for the purpose of repairing and maintaining school buildings? This sum to come from June 30 fund balance available for transfer on July 1. No additional amount to be raised from taxation. The Newfields School Board recommends approval. (Majority vote required)

Bobby Kelly indicated this fund was established in 1992 and has been used for emergencies such as replacing the boiler. The balance of the fund is \$59,521 and the recommended amount is \$150,000.

Article 5 as read will be moved to the ballot for a vote.

Article 6-Technology Capital Reserve Fund

Shall the Newfields School District vote to establish a Technology Capital Reserve Fund under the provisions of RSA 35:1 for unanticipated technology expenses and to raise and appropriate up to \$10,000 to be placed in this fund. This sum to come from June 30 fund balance available for transfer on July 1. No additional amount to be raised from taxation. Further, to name the Newfields School Board as agents to expend from the fund. The Newfields School Board recommends approval. (Majority vote required)

Bobby Kelly indicated this a new fund that was recommended the Board start and it will be used for technology upgrades such as cabling and access points for internet. The Board has been informed that computer upgrades will be ongoing for the next several years. The recommended goal for the fund is \$30,000.

Michael Sununu asked how much in the current budget is expended on technology and would fall under this capital reserve.

Michelle Larson indicated that expenditures are currently listed under the technology costs, line 11-2225.

Jennie Bishop mentioned that past upgrades have had to come from other areas of the budget.

Article 6 as read will be moved to the ballot for a vote.

Article 7-Safety and Security Capital Reserve Fund

Bobby Kelly indicated this is a recurring warrant article for the safety and security of our children. The current balance is \$51,000 and the recommended amount is \$50,000. No amount to be raised by taxation.

Michael Sununu asked how much had been spent out of this fund in the last 2-3 years. Michelle Larson replied that no funds have been expended from the fund to date.

Bobby Kelly added that the doors into the building now have badge access.

The meeting adjourned at 6:28pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sue E. McKinnon

