

SCHOOL UNION 69
NOTICE OF FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

May 24, 2023

6:00 p.m.

In person at Hope Elementary School,
34 Highfield Road, Hope Maine

FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES

In attendance: Beth Grierson, Chair; John Williams; Steve Wadsworth, Jude Williams and Nick O'Hara. Also in attendance: Kate Clark, Superintendent, Langley Willauer, Appleton Town Treasurer, Bob Bocko, Appleton resident; Tracee O'Brien, Chair of the Lincolnville school committee but present as Lincolnville resident; Dick Crabtree, Hope Selectboard member; Hope Samantha Mank, Hope Town Administrator, Dave Kinney, Lincolnville Town Administrator Sarah Smith, Hope Selectboard Chair; Lori Costigan, Appleton Selectboard Chair

1. Beth Grierson called the meeting to order at 6:06 pm.
2. Steve Wadsworth moved to approve minutes from the May 10, 2023 finance subcommittee meeting, seconded by Jude Masseur. Vote: 5-0 in favor, motion carried.
3. Continued discussion of Central Office Finance organization.
 - a. Input provided by auditors from Brewer and Brewer via Zoom. Auditors from RHR Smith also invited, but were unable to attend.
 - i. The district has been short staffed for many years in light of the amount of work that needs to be done.
 - ii. The recommendation is to hire new staff immediately
 - iii. The skillset needed immediately is basic bookkeeping.
 - iv. The auditors also recommended streamlining processes at the schools and the towns as part of the transition to new software.
4. Recommendations for Joint Board Meeting June 20, 2023. It was determined that Jude and Kate would meet to visually represent the tasks from complex to basic for the next meeting and at that meeting, develop a list of recommendations for the Joint Board.
5. Public Comment
 - a. Mr. Bocko reiterated the recommendation of the auditors to hire extra help immediately. Mr. Bocko also recommended tapping into local financial supports as much as possible. Mr. Bocko also suggested researching consolidation of our software with Fivetowns CSD. Finally, Mr. Bocko suggested looking into consolidating the three districts into a CSD with Rockport and Camden.
 - b. Lori Costigan
 - i. Lori recommended a research of the education service center as a resource.

- ii. Recommended volunteers to help with data entry.
 - iii. Recommended the school boards understand the required reports and their status.
 - iv. Recommended contacting the DOE for schematics on what financing would look like if the towns consolidated into a CSD.
 - v. Would like to know when the last of the tasks needed by the auditors will be completed so that audit can be finished up.
- c. Sarah Smith
- i. Explained the structure of town governance and the role of the school committee and the select board and the importance of the timely completion of the school audit and how deeply that impacts town finance planning. Two possibilities: raise pay for applicants or hire contractors to get the help our office needs.
 - ii. Crosstrain employees so there is redundancy and multiple staff members can keep tasks going if someone is out. Add positions and train people to reduce burnout.
- d. Tracee O'Brien
- i. Is there ability at the Town Office level to help with some of the basic tasks that need to be done?
 - ii. Expressed appreciation for the committee and for those who attended tonight so that there are a variety of stakeholders and viewpoints.
- e. Dick Crabtree
- i. Reiterated the auditors' view that the district finance team has been in crisis for many years, but did not know it.
 - ii. Recommended a succession plan be a part of this process.
- f. Dave Kinney
- i. Challenges short term and long term face the school finance process and it is important to separate that out and address each as such.
 - ii. The towns could be assessed a penalty and causes personal and professional embarrassment when the audits are not done. The audit provides oversight, insight and foresight and is a key part of the working of the town as well as the school offices.
 - iii. Lincolnville is willing to help, they want this to work.

6. Next meeting: June 7, 2023 at 6pm at Hope Elementary School

7. Jude Masseur moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Steve Wadsworth. Vote: 5-0 in favor and the meeting adjourned at 7:44pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Kate Clark