

Gorham Randolph Shelburne Cooperative School District
Budget Hearing for the 2011-2012 School Year
Wednesday, January 26, 2011, 7:00 pm
Minutes of Hearing

Gorham Middle High School Cafeteria

GRS Board Members Present: Jo Carpenter, Angela Brown, Greg Corrigan, Sharyl Graham, Anne Hill, Steven Michaud, Ron Ouellette, Paul Parteno, Julie St. Germaine (at ~ 8:26pm), and Mike Waddell

Administration: Paul Bousquet, Superintendent; Karen Cloutier, Principal, Ed Fenn; Dave Goyette, Maintenance Supervisor; Dan Gorham, Assistant Principal, GMHS; Rebecca Hebert-Sweeny, Co-Director of Special Services; and Keith Parent, Principal, GMHS, and Pauline Plourde, Business Administrator

Public: Approximately 90 members of the public.

Press: Craig Lyons, Berlin Daily Sun

I. Call to Order

The hearing was called to order and opened at 7:00pm by Board Chair Jo Carpenter.

II. Presentation of Gorham Randolph Shelburne Cooperative School District Budget/Warrants

Paul Bousquet and Pauline Plourde presented the 2012 budget. They reviewed the handout.

Three changes have occurred since the letter was mailed out:

- The second nurse's position was restored due to student need.
- The teachers' union agreed to reopen the contract. Negotiations have taken place, and the union and administration have agreed to a three year contract extension. The first year of the contract (2011-2012) will have a zero raise; currently calling for a 3.65% average raise. The savings will enable an English position to be restored in the HS.
- Support staff and the school board have ratified a one year contract. There have been changes to the health insurance coverage language to reflect a 72% increase in premium coverage as opposed to 69% at this time. Staff not taking the health insurance will receive a slight increase in salary.

Pauline presented and reviewed the PowerPoint presentation explaining the budget including the proposed changes.

III. Public Comments

Several citizens expressed their disapproval of the newly ratified teachers' contract. It was mainly due to the wage increases and the fact that the contract would run for four more years.

A GHMS student, Kyle Balon, discussed the impact of the technology cuts, based on employment and career prospects in the country. He felt that the cutting of this position was a mistake.

Keith Parent discussed his perspective of the budget process, and how it relates to staffing. A million dollar shortfall was significant and cutting of positions was needed in order to deal with the lesser amounts of both money and declining student enrollments.

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John Turner, Randolph, felt that with the declining enrollments the cuts were justified.

Katy Kelly stated that a committee must be formed to look at future budgets and determine how we can deal with them.

David Dernbach asked about corporate sponsors for sports and activities and offered his assistance in this area.

Shelly Fortin read a letter from her son, recent GHS graduate Scott Fortin, which asked that the technology position not be cut from the budget.

A question about several sports programs was posed, by Bob Balon, pertaining to the cost of each sport. The question was answered by Dan Gorham, Athletic Director.

A suggestion was made by Jay Holmes, to close the EFS and combine all students under one roof at the GMHS, and to combine SAU 20 and Berlin, SAU 13 (**Berlin is actually SAU 3**). Further, offer an alternative education program to 9 – 12 students, by allowing a voucher program for parents to take their students out of the public school and place them where ever they want.

A petition was submitted by GMS students to reinstate Sean Walsh's position. The petition was submitted by middle school student Caleb Scott.

There was a question about the details of school board's budget, where the monies that were listed in the budget handout were going. The question was answered by Pauline Plourde.

There was a question about the scheduling of classes, by Mrs. Levesque, in the middle school. It was suggested that core classes be offered 5 days a week, as opposed to the current 4 days plus a day of academic support. Other people expressed their disapproval of the block schedule system.

There was a question, posed by Mark St.Germaine, as to whether the GMHS Assistant Principal/Athletic Director position was reviewed again this year for abolishment. Keith Parent read from a prepared notes stating he had done extensive research comparing other local school district's student population vs. their need for an AP. He stated that 12 out of 14 districts studied had an AP. He went on to read from a long list of reasons and duties that justifies the position. He also relayed an incident that involved Mr. St.Germaine's son and a cell phone situation. Mrs. St Germaine pointed out that she had initiated this situation when she contacted the school regarding her son's cell phone use.

A citizen, Bill Parlett, stated that they chose to live within the GRS Cooperative School District, specifically for the schools. He stated the cuts were short sighted, and that if there was any time to invest more money in education; it was now. He also stated that he had worked in Honduras and the amount of poverty in that country goes well beyond anything that we have to deal with in our area.

Paul Bousquet said that next year's budget process may well be even more challenging, due to the local economy as well as the potential for even larger cuts in State Aid. Also, the Gorham

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taxpayers will not have the advantage to reduce taxes on the bond as the capitol reserve fund used for the last three years to do so will have been expended.

IV. Other

Jo Carpenter stated that the board always focuses on the students when it comes to decisions. She said the majority of the board felt the contract for the teachers was fair and that the changes in staffing were necessary and had the least negative impact on the students.

V. Adjournment

The hearing was closed at 9:22pm.

bwm