

Minutes of this meeting were approved by the City Council on May 23, 2022

**CITY OF LACONIA - CITY COUNCIL BUDGET MEETING
6:00 P.M.**

5/9/2022 - Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Hosmer called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM

2. RECORDING SECRETARY

Katie Gargano, City Clerk

3. ROLL CALL

City Clerk Gargano called the roll of the City Council: Councilor Soucy, Councilor Cheney, Councilor Lipman, Councilor, Haynes, Councilor Hamel, Councilor Felch.

Councilor Soucy attended the meeting remotely, he verified that he is away on business in Alabama, and he was alone in the room. Because Councilor Soucy attended the meeting remotely any votes must be done by roll call vote.

Mayor Hosmer stated that all members of the Council were present, and a quorum was established.

4. STAFF IN ATTENDANCE

Scott Myers, City Manager; Glenn Smith, Finance Director/ IT Coordinator

5. PRESENTATIONS

5.A. School District - Steve Tucker, Superintendent

Chairman Hayward thanked the Council on behalf of the School Board, he thanked the Superintendent and his team for all their hard work on this year's budget; this is a Tax Cap Budget being presented to the Council tonight.

Superintendent Tucker introduced who was in attendance with him this evening. In addition to the School Board Chair, he had Assistant Superintendent Amy Hinds, and Business Office and Personnel Specialist Diane Clary who will be presenting with him tonight.

Assistant Superintendent Hinds gave an introduction about the priorities of the budget and their main focus which is to continue to work on their instructional and portrait of a graduate goals, and to continue to support the students, staff and programs and to meet them where they are socially, behaviorally and academically. During the past two years health and safety protocols have been in place because of Covid. February allowed them to lessen their protocols in their schools, but they still had to continue to support their students who continued with remote learning. They feel that they are trending into a better place now and are moving toward normalcy in their schools.

Superintendent Tucker said one of the photos they showed was the middle school students on a school trip to NHTI to experience college and their campus. Over the past two years they haven't had any class trips. It was very nice to be able to get back to scheduling school trips, dances, and other

student activities.

They currently have 13 cases of Covid amongst all the schools. They are happy to no longer be talking about Covid cases, quarantining, and isolation like they were last year. They know that the effects of Covid are real and how hard this has been on kids. They are making sure that they are supporting kids where they are at academically and behaviorally, and this is going to be an important part of their work.

Part of their system of support is a three-tier model of School-wide systems for student success. Part of the support is about supporting kids behaviorally and a lot of kids need that support right now. Also, it is making sure that they have a system in place to help do that is very important. They also use a variety of assessments to monitor kids academically. They are resources, teachers in the classrooms and staff members like social workers and behavioral specialists who are very important part of their tiered system of support.

Assistant Superintendent Hinds continued with the Budget priorities: Quality Instructions - staff will continue to work on this as a primary focus, they will continue to focus on professional development to enhance teaching and they are going to do embedded training in the areas of literacy and math. And they will continue to offer coaching and mentoring with their teachers and staff.

Superintendent Tucker discussed what he thinks is the most exciting piece of their work which is Portrait of a Graduate. When he first became Superintendent in July of 2019 he remembers creating this idea and they came together as a group. He remembers Mayor Hosmer joining them and several City Councilors being there and they talked about what are the skills that a student has to know to be successful in school and to be successful afterwards. The pieces that make up the Portrait of a Graduate are Communicate: Effectively communicate for different purposes and varied audiences using appropriate media. Collaborate: work effectively with and learn from others in a variety of situations, in school and beyond. Create: create and refine a unique product or performance that reflects an individual's values, goals, and expression. Persevere: Persevere by overcoming challenges and the fear of making mistakes. Problem-Solve: Define the problem, identify the issues and interests, initiate a plan, execute it, and evaluate the reasonableness of the solution. Self-Direct: set goals, plan for achievement, independently manage time and effort and reflect on one's progress. They are doing a good job focusing their teaching and learning experiences in the classroom on this model and they have community outreach to try to figure out what are the best opportunities for the kids' futures. They have a Portrait of a Graduate Advisory Board that the Mayor sits on with him and Principal Bryant who also is on that Board was present at tonight's meeting. The Advisory Board's goal is to help connect students with career options while they are in school. They are working on having a multitude of pathways for the students to lead them to different careers and offer them different options. The Huot Technical Center is great resource for the students, about 50% of the participation at the Huot Technical Center is Laconia students.

Superintendent Tucker moved on to discuss the Tax Cap compliance within the budget. The 2022-2023 proposed school budget is Tax Cap compliant. He discussed the CPI-U being 47% and the building permit values at \$48.6 million and how it comes to calculate the allowable increase to the budget which is approximately \$1.7 million dollars. He discussed revenues the schools bring in and the optional trust funds they have in case they need to tap into those. The operating budget is an increase of 3.7 % for a total appropriation of \$44,617,727.00

Budget overview:

Increases- salary, benefits, special education contracted services, utilities, contracted services: maintenance, special education transportation, and new equipment.

Decreases- principal and interest on debt

They are continuing to use Covid money for other expenses that are not included in the budget for instruction, staff, technology, and facilities.

Superintendent Tucker continued to discuss the budget in more depth: Salaries and benefits make up a large portion of the budget. The overall increase is about \$400,000.00 across the whole district.

Retirements bring down the salary line from someone who may have been at the top of the scale and they hire a new teacher who would be at a lower scale; this helps present some cost savings, and they have moved some positions out of the union into contracted positions. There are built in increases for nonunion positions including administration. They are also adding two positions to elementary school for art & music.

On the benefits side they received an 11.55% health insurance increase. Mrs. Clary explained that health insurance is a moving target and that there were several babies born last year. They saw a lot of changes from a two-person plan to a family plan. There is a \$10,000 increase for a family plan from a two-person plan. They budget everyone at a two-person plan so when they have people on single plans it helps even out for the increases for a family plan, so they aren't as significant. This is the first time they are offering dental insurance and there are 188 contract employees. The dental insurance is being based off predictions since this is the first year, they are offering dental insurance. They are also offering dental to nonunion employees.

Assistant Superintendent Hinds discussed Contracted services; this is one of the driving forces for this budget. It is for pathologists, therapists, behavior specialists, and psychologists. They try their best to hire their own but many times they must reach out to an agency. These positions are all based off needs of students and IEP's and it fluctuates from year to year.

Mrs. Clary discussed Contracted property services which includes fees for maintenance to the buildings, water and sewer, electricity, and gas prices.

Superintendent Tucker mentioned over the past 20 years all the schools building have received some type of major renovation. He noted that Covid funds have helped get some of the most recent project completed like the LHS Auditorium and a few paving projects at the schools.

Assistant Superintendent Hinds moved on to discuss other property services, the significant changes include Special education transportation costs due to out of district court placements. The school is required to pay for the transportation to the other district, and the tuition for special education also increased. Many of those are out of district court placements and those are placements that they have no control over and continue to be a driving factor in the budget.

Councilor Hamel asked how many students do they currently have out of district?

Assistant Superintendent Hinds stated there are 22 out of district placements; 3 of them are district placements.

Superintendent Tucker went over the supplies slide that covers supplies, propane/ natural gas, electricity, gasoline, books and periodicals and software. The new equipment line includes a project called e-rate, it is the fiber connectivity between the schools and represents \$146,000 of that line. There is a program for 80% reimbursement,

Special Education out of district placements tuition costs are significantly higher, \$53,000/ student.

In closing Superintendent Tucker restated their Budget priorities- students are the center of their focus, providing them support of where they are, where they are at and where they are going. Progress monitoring, academic, behavioral, Portrait of a Graduate, and quality instruction.

Councilor Lipman asked about how the school was doing in regard to there being any lapse in funding from the current year. The budget presentation doesn't reflect where they are in this current budget. Council Lipman then asked if there was a lapse in funding where would they like to see if

go?

Superintendent Tucker clarified with Councilor Lipman whether he meant a lapse in federal and state funding. Councilor Lipman said no, he meant all funding that the school received for this current year budget, noting that any excess funds at year end goes to the City's Fund Balance unless the school requests to the City Council that it go somewhere else. For example, Covid money and Esser money.

Councilor Lipman would like to see a current picture of where the school stands financially in this current fiscal year and if Superintendent Tucker anticipates there being any excess funds available to go towards next year's budget or into reserve accounts. Councilor Lipman stated before Superintendent Tucker replied that it was ok if he needed to get back to him on this answer at a later date.

Superintendent Tucker said that this year is looking good, if there was a shortage, they would look at their building maintenance or special education trust funds that they have in place. He will get Councilor Lipman the information on where they are in the current fiscal year.

Councilor Lipman asked in regard to investments in technology and infrastructure what current projects are planned with additional funding that the school has received because they had mentioned that the budget presented is lighter than in years past. He asked what are they looking to spend in future years.

Superintendent Tucker said that there is a facilities project at LHS, they just had a meeting today with an architect with Esser III funds estimated to cost approximately \$6 million dollars. This includes updates to the kitchen, the locker rooms, the plumbing and heating room, and bathrooms. They spent \$1 million from technology with Esser funds, funds allocated with Esser funds for staff.

Councilor Lipman asked about out of district placements for special ed, and with DCYF; there is Medicaid funding for transportation costs, and he wants to make sure we are taking full advantage of the programs to help offset our costs.

Assistant Superintendent Hinds said yes they are, they bill based off the number of IEP's they have and it does vary yearly.

Councilor Hamel asked what the student to teacher ratio is.

Superintendent Tucker said it varies by school and by grade level. On average it is 17-18 students in the middle school, most classes are less than 20 students. Some classes at the high school may be slightly over or under the average, but he does feel that they are reasonable class sizes. There are about 1,830 students currently enrolled, the amount has lessened over the past couple of years. Prior to this year they were around 1900 students for the past five or six years.

Councilor Hamel asked if the students are at their expected grade levels after having to do remote learning.

Superintendent Tucker replied they are still trying to evaluate the students with conducting assessments to figure out where they are with reading and math. They have seen improvements between assessments and some areas where they need to do some more work with the students. The remote learning and the hybrid learning schedule that the students had to go through was definitely tough on some and, having seen this experience with his own children at home, he knows that VLACS and other remote platforms are helpful for students, but remote learning is not the way for students to learn. Face to face and in person learning is what benefits our kids the most and they are still evaluating where everyone is right now and where they need to support the students.

Councilor Hamel echoed what Councilor Lipman stated, he'd like to see the school budget as a whole. As it stands now and with all the government funds that they have received so far, where that

money has been spent and what they are planning to spend.

Superintendent Tucker said that they do keep those items separate and he will provide it to the Council.

Councilor Hamel thanked the School Board and the Superintendent's team for their hard work in putting together this budget, he is happy to see them making investments into the schools and keeping them in good shape. He appreciates the different avenues they are introducing to the students, so they know that not everyone has to go to college. There is a huge need for public service workers and tradesmen. Those industries do have the potential to make good money. It's important that the school continues to update the Huot Technical Center. Councilor Hamel would like them to look into whether the State will help with funding the updates as they have in years past.

Superintendent Tucker thanked the Council and told them that he will get them the additional information they have requested.

Councilor Lipman asked about the advanced manufacturing program at the Huot Tech. He remembered how the program jumped and he wants to make sure that we are getting funding to keep the Center at the top of the line and up to date. He asked about the enrollment, particularly in the Advanced Manufacturing program.

Superintendent Tucker did know the exact number of students in that current program right now, but he informed the Council that the Huot Tech Center as a whole had very good participation numbers and had a lot of students enrolled for next year as well.

Councilor Lipman asked about the current offerings at the Huot Tech Center. He knew they had a police/ criminal law program but wanted to know if they have anything for Fire/ EMS. There is a major shortage in Fire Fighters and EMS throughout the State right now.

Superintendent Tucker replied they will be offering an EMS course in the fall and are trying to get it available for both semesters. They have been working on putting together a fire safety course, but it has been hard to find people to teach the class. They have been having conversations with Fire Chiefs in the area, as they probably already know that Lakes Region Community College has one of the best Fire Safety programs in the State. He is hopeful that the EMS program will help with the shortage. The other programs offered are well attended and the construction class is so big they have added an additional instructor. There is a need for an electrical course; they have one offered at the night school/ Adult Ed program, but they need people in the trade who are willing to come back and teach.

Mayor Hosmer thanked Superintendent Tucker, Assistant Superintendent Hinds and the staff for their presentation, leadership, and commitment to education to the City of Laconia.

6. **Any other business that may come before the Council**

None

7. **ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Hosmer adjourned the meeting at 6:53 PM

Respectfully Submitted

Katie Gargano, City Clerk

