

**MINUTES
ANNUAL SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING
TOWN OF BARNET
MARCH 1, 2016**

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. at the Barnet Elementary School gymnasium by Moderator Dennis McLam. The Barnet Elementary School band played the National Anthem. Mr. McLam led the salute to the flag, announced that lunch would be served by the school cafeteria at noon, and explained the rules of order for the meeting.

The Moderator announced that prior to the commencement of warned articles the School Board would present a slideshow presentation regarding the school budget and various other matters relating to School Board business. The lights were dimmed, and the presentation commenced as summarized below.

- Louis Bushey presented slides regarding:
 - “Budget at a Glance,” which compared the fiscal year 2017 budget and tax rates to the previous fiscal year;
 - Article 3’s discussion of increased per-pupil spending;
 - Major budget increases.
- James Schenck presented slides regarding:
 - Major budget decreases;
 - 2016 legislative action affecting the school budget and tax rate.
- Louis Bushey presented slides regarding:
 - Changes in tax rates from 2015 to 2017, including analysis of 2017 penalty (resulting from legislation), and estimate of taxes on a \$150,000 home;
 - The new tax penalty resulting from Act 46.
- Susan Roberts presented slides regarding:
 - High school tuition rates;
 - Student population from fiscal year 2012 through fiscal year 2017;
 - Student and staff comparison from fiscal year 2008 through fiscal year 2017;
 - Fiscal years 2016 and 2017 classroom configurations;
 - School staff census from fiscal year 2008 through fiscal year 2017;
 - Student-to-staff and staff-to-student ratios from fiscal year 2008 through fiscal year 2017.
- Robert Farlice-Rubio presented slides regarding:
 - The membership of the Caledonia Central Supervisory Union (SU);
 - The services provided by the SU.
- David Warden presented slides regarding:
 - The replacement of the school roof;
 - A recapitulation of the proposed 2017 budget, tax rates, and estimated taxes on a \$150,000 home.

ARTICLE 1 To elect a Moderator.

- Moderator stated that one-year term of Dennis McLam is expiring.
- Dennis McLam nominated by Marvin Bailey.
- Mona Marceau moved that nominations cease. Seconded by Joyce Evans.
- Moderator instructed Town Clerk to cast one ballot for Dennis McLam.

ARTICLE 2 To elect a School Director for a term of 2 years.

- Moderator stated that the two-year term of Louis Bushey is expiring.
- Louis Bushey nominated by Dylan Ford.
- Hearing no further nominations, Moderator announced that nominations would cease.
- Moderator instructed Town Clerk to cast one ballot for Louis Bushey.

To elect a School Director for a term of 3 years.

- Moderator stated that three-year term of David Warden is expiring.
- David Warden nominated by Roseann Leute.
- Hearing no further nominations, Moderator announced that nominations would cease.
- Moderator instructed Town Clerk to cast one ballot for David Warden.

ARTICLE 3 Shall the voters of the Barnet School District authorize the Barnet School Directors to approve the school board to expend \$5,046,333.00, which is the amount the school board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year? It is estimated that this proposed budget, if approved, will result in education spending of \$15,176 per equalized pupil. This projected spending per equalized pupil is 6% higher than spending for the current year.

- Merle Fitzgerald spoke in commendation of the School Board's efforts in preparing the budget.
- Merle Fitzgerald moved to approve the budget as warned. Seconded by Roseann Leute.
- David Willis spoke in commendation of the School Board's presentation of the budget, indicating that for the first time in many years the budget was thoroughly understandable to a layman.
- Theodore Faris spoke, stating that the school's roof situation has been handled poorly by the School Board since the construction of the school building, resulting in excessive costs to the taxpayers.
- Mona Marceau spoke: The School Board should be commended for their budget presentation. It appears that control of a number of facets of the school is being shifted to the Supervisory Union. Does the School Board or the voters have any control over these areas?
 - Louis Bushey spoke: The School Board is represented on the Supervisory Union (SU) Board by Louis Bushey, David Warden, and Robert Farlice-Rubio. The SU Board hires the Superintendent. It is true that the cost shifts in recent years have been from the local budget to the SU budget. Many of these changes have been mandated by the state legislature; some have been non-required, but pursued as a cost-saving measure.
- Jeremy Roberts spoke: The presentation indicated that the School Board received a payment in the amount of \$180,000 relating to the roof. If the roof remained under warranty, why does School District absorb some of the cost of replacing it?
 - James Schenck spoke: The payment referenced in the presentation is a confidential contribution. Public discussion of the contribution could jeopardize its receipt.
- John Cook spoke: Barnet's contribution to the SU is \$888,000, but the voters of Barnet have no opportunity to vote on the SU budget. Barnet voters should be urging the state legislature to allow for a local vote on the SU budget.
 - Robert Farlice-Rubio spoke: SU Board meetings are open and public. The voters have an opportunity to make their voices heard. Also, changes with regard to local budget voting are afoot with the approaching implementation of Act 46.
 - John Cook spoke: This would suggest an even greater imperative for a local vote on the SU budget.
 - Louis Bushey spoke: The voters can affect the SU budget indirectly by voting down the School District budget.
 - James Schenck spoke: The SU offers what can be considered "contracted services:" the SU, like other sub-contractors, are not School District employees, but are part of the School District budget.
- Theodore Faris spoke: The \$180,000 roof contribution discussed earlier is similar to a prior-year surplus amount. Are these numbers related?
 - Robert Farlice-Rubio spoke: The Board cannot publicly discuss the confidential contribution.
- Moderator Dennis McLam asked for the dollar amount of the SU budget.

- With the consent of the voters, non-voter Patricia Amsden, SU Business Manager, spoke: The SU budget is found on page 107 of the Town Report. The total expenditures for the proposed fiscal year 2017 budget are \$2,635,185.
- Shirley Warden spoke: Now that the SU is in control of the Food Service budget, will it still run at a deficit?
 - Louis Bushey spoke: It is never the School Board's, or the SU Board's, intention to run a deficit. The SU hopes to find efficiencies to decrease the deficit.
- Mona Marceau spoke: Why are the salaries for Special Education listed as School District salaries in the Town Report if these positions are now at the SU level?
 - Patricia Amsden spoke: Special Education teachers are now under SU contracts; para-educators' contracts remain with the School District at the present time.
- Eugene Perkins spoke: As an employee of a small school bus company, there is a concern that Act 46 will result in large bussing contracts that will squeeze the smaller companies out of the picture, resulting in less competition and loss of local jobs.
 - Louis Bushey spoke: Act 46 is an ongoing conversation. The legislation was passed at the state level, and the School Board must respond to incorporate its mandates for at the local level. The School Board is sensitive to concerns about competition and local jobs.
- Eugene Perkins moved that this motion be decided by paper ballot.
- Mona Marceau requested that the School Board provide their presentation regarding Act 46 prior to the vote on the budget.
 - Louis Bushey spoke: Act 46 will not be implemented at the local level until after the budget cycle currently under discussion. The School Board would prefer not to muddle the conversation about the budget with a deeper digression into Act 46.
 - Moderator Dennis McLam stated that the Act 46 presentation would be provided after the vote on this article.
- Merle Fitzgerald spoke: For the past twenty or thirty years there has been a continuous movement away from local control of school districts. Voters are urged to attend School Board meetings to make their voices heard.
- Merle Fitzgerald moved to call the question.
- Joyce Evans spoke: Monthly meetings of the School Board are very poorly attended by voters.
- James McFaul seconded Merle Fitzgerald's motion to call the question.
- Motion to call the question passed by voice vote.
- Moderator Dennis McLam indicated that a motion had been made to vote by paper ballot. He asked if there were seven voters who also wished to vote on this motion by paper ballot. Seven other voters signified this by show of hands; the Moderator announced that this motion would be decided by paper ballot.
- While the votes were being tabulated, State Representative Marcia Martel, a non-voter, was given permission to speak by the voters. She spoke about various bills and activities in the state legislature.
- The Moderator announced the results of the vote: 154 total votes; 78 votes needed to pass. Total "Yes" votes: 113; total "No" votes: 41. The motion was passed.

ARTICLE 4 Shall the School District authorize the Barnet School Directors to borrow money to pay its lawful debts and expenses for the fiscal year which ends June 30, 2016 in an amount not to exceed 90% of the anticipated collection of taxes and receipts of other funds to be used for those purposes?

- Moderator Dennis McLam indicated that the warned article contained a typographical error: the fiscal year in question will end June 30, 2017, not June 30, 2016.
- The article was moved as warned, with above-referenced amendment to the fiscal year-end date. Seconded.
- Motion was passed by voice vote.

ARTICLE 5 Shall the voters of the Barnet School District authorize the Barnet School Directors to transact any other non-binding business that may legally come before the meeting?

- The School Board provided a slide-show presentation about the Act 46 legislation.
 - A discussion regarding the requirements of Act 46 and plans for its implementation in Barnet ensued, involving the School Board, State Representative Scott Beck (a non-voter who spoke with the consent of the voters), and the voters assembled.
- Moderator adjourned the meeting at 11:50 a.m.

Dennis McLam, Moderator

Louis Bushey, School Director

Attest: Benjamin Heisholt, Town Clerk