

WINNISQUAM REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
Minutes of the Annual Meeting
March 19, 2005

Pursuant to the Winnisquam Regional School District Warrant, the Annual School District meeting was convened in the gymnasium of the Winnisquam Regional High School in the Town of Tilton in said District on the 19th day of March 2005. School District Moderator Pro Temp Jim Shepherd called the meeting to order at 10:19 AM. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Assistant Moderators selected for the meeting were – Scott Hilliard – Northfield, Don Foudriat – Sanbornton, and Peter Fogg – Tilton. They were sworn in by the moderator prior to the start of the meeting.

Moderator Shepherd explained that he was filling in for Ken Randall who could not be at the meeting. He introduced himself, Assistant Moderators, District Clerk, Adele Chertoff, and the district’s legal counsel, John Teague. Jim introduced Larry Prince, School Board Chairperson, who then introduced the school board members, and the administrative staff.

Larry Prince recognized three teachers who would be retiring at the end of the school year – Arlene Sheehan with 37 years at Union Sanborn School, Barbara Laverick with 23 years of service at Southwick School and Sue Nilsen with 20 years at the high school. Larry recognized outgoing school board member, Ellie Lamanuzzi for dedicated service from 1999-2005, and presented her with a plaque. Larry Prince also recognized Ken Randall, with appreciation for 30 years as district moderator.

Moderator Shepherd put the assembly on notice that if at 6:00 PM, there are still articles to be discussed, the meeting would be recessed to Wednesday, March 23rd at 7:00 PM.

Moderator Shepherd asked the assembly to be courteous and asked that cell phones be turned off or conversations held outside. He stated that nothing happens without a motion and a second from the floor. Amendments must be in writing and will be considered one at a time. There are no amendments to amendments. The moderator favors any motion for reconsideration to be made immediately after the vote on the question. If reconsideration were granted after the protection of the vote motion, reconsideration would take place at a meeting no less than seven days after this meeting. Moderator Shepherd explained the voting procedure and explained that a section in the bleachers had been designated for non-voters and non-residents.

Moderator Shepherd read Article 1 as follows:

Article 1

To see if the District Voters will vote to amend the Articles of Agreement of the Winnisquam Regional School District as follows:

AMENDED ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT OF THE
WINNISQUAM REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

This Agreement is entered into pursuant to Chapter 195 of the New Hampshire Revised Statutes Annotated as amended by and among the pre-existing school districts of Sanbornton, Tilton and Northfield. (Two-thirds ballot vote required). The School Board recommends this article.

Section 5. The operating and capital expenses of the Winnisquam Regional School District payable in each fiscal year shall be apportioned as follows:

	<u>Current Apportionment</u>	<u>New Apportionment</u>
Northfield	37.75%	40.75%
Sanbornton	24.50%	25.50%
Tilton	37.75%	33.75%

Motion: A motion was made by Nina Gardner, seconded by Valerie Allen, to bring this article to the floor for discussion.

Discussion: Nina Gardner thanked the assembly for coming out for what is one of the most significant votes a cooperative school district can take. She introduced the Formula Study Committee Members. She told the assembly that the Formula Committee was as the name describes “cooperative”. Nina said the job they faced for the last two years was to try to come up with a formula that adequately addressed the cost allocations between the three towns. She explained that what governed the entire view of the committee was what was fair in terms of the number of students being sent to the district and how it was appropriate to determine these costs. She said it is never easy to ask one community or two communities to pay more and hoped that as they went through the presentation and questions were answered there would be an understanding of what guided their decision making.

Nina explained that from the outset, this was a compromise. The voters from Tilton were looking for a more significant change, the voters from Northfield were concerned about their ability to pay and Sanbornton was recognizing their growing share of the population. Nina gave some of the history of the percentage-based formula that the Winnisquam School District operates from. Nina told the assembly that this formula proposal attempts to address fairness and equity without going to a formula that simply is based upon average daily membership. She said the aim was not to unduly burden a community but to try to take the burden off the one community that is bearing a more significant impact. Nina explained that Sanbornton’s cost would increase 1% as their share of the population has been rising over the last seven years. As for Tilton, they hold 28% of the students in the District. Their share will go down as result of this proposal. Northfield currently has 47% of the students and their share will go up 3% in an attempt to bring their share of school costs more in line with their school population. Nina said it is important to recognize that this formula is a strict proportional share and does not bear on equalized valuation or assessed valuation.

Nina hoped that everyone had taken the time to read the letter from the Selectmen and realize that the Boards of Selectmen of all three communities endorsed this proposal as what is fair and appropriate. Nina hoped that everyone has read the report of the Committee in the Annual Report because it goes into the history of where we have been and why we are here now. Nina asked that this article be opened up to questions.

Lee French asked when was Tilton’s last revaluation. Bob Brown, Tilton’s Selectman, answered that parts of Tilton were undergoing continual reassessment particularly commercial properties and shorefront properties. Residential has not been reassessed for the last 11 years and are contracted with Vision to begin within the next month or so and will be current this year. Lee commented that Northfield’s portion of the tax would be increased on a higher valuation than Tilton’s. Nina said the problem of a cooperative school district is that we would always be on different points in time in terms of evaluation. Lee is concerned that this proposal will last five years and Tilton’s tax base would increase with revaluation and not have any change in the formula voted on today. Nina said that it was not just the equalized valuation piece that needed to drive this argument, but a sense of fairness about per pupil costs. Nina discussed the state aid factor in the towns. Lee said it seems that Northfield is being penalized for receiving \$3,700,000. Nina responded that Northfield is not being penalized, but is being asked to appropriate that money toward the cost of their students.

Darlene Bitetto asked if a study was done of Northfield’s 48% of students and how many live in apartments and if their parents are taxpayers. Nina answered that this couldn’t really be done and the owners of the apartment complexes are taxpayers.

Kathryn Ferrera commented on the projected drop in enrollment of 78 students and calculated 78 students at \$7000 to be \$858,000 and questioned the increase when population is going down. Nina responded that it is acknowledged that over the past eight years that population as a whole has declined

and this factor was considered when the addition was built. The cost of education is not totally related to the number of children in the district. It is related to costs of providing services, maintaining the buildings, the costs of insurance coverage, bussing and any number of other costs that drive the school budget. We are beginning to see people moving into our communities and a rising number of students in our elementary schools.

Mike Ratcliffe commented that he believes all the students of the three communities should have equal education. He believes they all have equal expenses in the school and should be paid equally by all three communities.

Matt Dupee asked for the equalized tax rate per \$1000 for each of the three towns. Nina gave the 04/05 school rates for the three towns as follows: Northfield - \$10.76, Sanbornton - \$12.16 and Tilton - \$18.27 per \$1000. Joyce Fulweiler gave the 2004 total tax rates which includes the local education tax, state education tax, municipal tax and county tax: Northfield - \$18.91, Sanbornton - \$19.13 and Tilton - \$26.76 per \$1000 of assessed value.

Kevin Waldron commented that with the large disparity of commercial development between Tilton, Northfield and Sanbornton and with everything that is already in Tilton and being proposed in Tilton, that Tilton could afford this a lot more than he could.

Donna Bouchard asked if property taxes they pay have no relevance to what is paid for the schools, then how does it relate to EV and asked for clarification on EV. Nina explained that EV is the base upon which the tax is applied. A large EV enables the burden to be spread more significantly and a smaller EV causes it to be spread more slimly. It is not a part of this formula in terms of how we are approaching the payment of school costs. Donna asked if it was appropriate not to be included in this formula. Nina responded that the state of New Hampshire has a variety of ways in its statute to deal with cooperative school districts. One of them is any other formula the school district shall adopt. This is a model many people think is remarkable. In most other communities there is a variation of ADM and EV. Nina said it would be hard for this district to go back to an ADM/EV formula because it will either capture one communities children or it will capture another communities valuation. Donna asked if amendments could be made to this formula. John Teague responded that an amendment to the numbers would be proper at this meeting.

George Sutcliffe asked what the consequences would be if this was not voted on today. Nina answered if this was not voted on today the current percentages stay in place and the disproportionate tax burden that the committee recognizes would remain in Tilton. This could be brought up next year as a petitioned warrant article. This year the people at least had a study committee of residents of the three communities looking at this and running the numbers against the valuations, tax rates and student population to give you what we believe is a sound formula proposal.

The question was called and the moderator called for a vote to end discussion.

Vote: Affirmative Yes – 362 No – 105

The question was called and the moderator called for a ballot vote on Article 1.

Moderator Shepherd said that in the interest of time and with the understanding that no rights would be foreclosed in regards to Article 1, he would proceed to Article 4 while the ballot votes are counted.

Moderator Shepherd read Article 4 as follows:

Article 4

We the undersigned voters petition the Winnisquam Regional School District to hold the annual district meeting on a weeknight following the last town meeting to be determined by the school board (excluding Friday). (Petitioned Warrant Article) (Majority vote required).

Motion: A motion was made by Guy Guinta and seconded by Warren Noether, to bring this article to the floor for discussion.

Discussion: Guy Guinta introduced himself and Tom Salatiello as the ones who put forth this article. He stated that attendance has dropped since meetings have gone to Saturday's. He said today's crowd was unusual due to the formula issue. Mr. Guinta proceeded to give the numbers from past meetings. In 2002 Sanbornton had 27 voters came out from over 1,569 voters, Tilton had 34 from over 1,596 voters and Northfield had 43 voters from 1,934 voters. He said this is consistent over the years for Saturday morning meetings. Mr. Guinta feels times are different, people are very busy with activities and weekends are precious. Tom Salatiello said approximately 10 years ago Guy Guinta, in good faith, brought forth a petitioned article to change the meeting to a Saturday and his hope was that there would be more attendance. Over time that participation has decreased. They believe that going back to a weekday evening may be better in terms of participation.

Nancy McKinnon said the town of Northfield has numerous meetings held during the week and with that commitment her only day left is a Saturday.

Nancy Court commented that if \$20 million dollars is being spent people should be able to come out whatever day it is. If it is important people will come out and the day of the week or the time should not matter.

Center Sanders asked if this would be binding for the School Board, if voted on today, if they came to issues they thought would be better heard on a Saturday where there may be more time. John Teague responded that it is the prerogative of the School Board to call the meeting. If there were critical issues and they needed to schedule a meeting at a different time, it is the Board's call.

Nola Dobrowolski spoke in favor of giving people the opportunity to vote. She doesn't care which day the meetings are held, but people should be allowed to vote possibly by an absentee ballot.

Kevin Waldron prefers to have the meeting on the weekend due to the time needed for the meeting.

Teri Hallowell commented that when voting to spend money on education people will come out whichever day it is held and commented that people should trust in the School Board.

Dee Marshall and Donna Bouchard commented that nights are not a good option, to keep the meeting on a Saturday.

The question was called and the Moderator called for the vote.

Vote: Yes – 84 No – 226 and the Moderator declared Article 2 as read fails.

At this time Moderator Shepherd read the results of the vote on Article 1.

Ballot Vote: Yes – 320 No – 189 and the Moderator declared Article 1 as read fails.

Motion: A motion was made by Lana Dearborn, seconded by Nina Gardner, for reconsideration on Article 1.

Vote: Affirmative

Joy Tilton commented that many people left after the vote and it would not be fair to take another vote now.

Kent Finemore asked the moderator to explain reconsideration. Moderator Shepherd explained reconsideration.

Susan Austin commented that it would not be fair for a revote if people have left. Moderator Shepherd said a motion to reconsider is a proper standard form.

Lana Dearborn said she is the person who made the motion to reconsider. She did this because she has been on the Formula Committee this time for the past two years to bring this body a method of allocating school costs that are fair and appropriate. She said the committee worked so hard to come up with something. For Northfield the percentage that was presented today is not going to go down.

The Moderator cautioned anyone wishing to address the body that their remarks be directed at reconsideration not at the underlying question.

Rosena Baumli said it is fair to reconsider this in light of the fact it was cut short off the floor and not everyone being able to speak to the issue.

Michelle Davis thanked the committee for their time put into this. She does not think reconsideration is fair.

Kevin Waldron commented that Lana said she herself does not believe in reconsideration but is going against her own morals when she loses. He invited her to retract her motion.

Donna Bouchard said a vote against the formula does not imply that people in Northfield do not support the education of our children. The advantage of letting the vote be is that next year when it is voted on there may be some state changes that might have an impact on the formula.

Pat Clark commented the reason for the vote for reconsideration after a monumental vote is to protect your vote. He is going to vote reconsideration down because he feels that when you vote that is the vote. He is proud that they got as close to 2/3 as they did. He hopes this can be resolved next year and thanked the Formula Committee for all the work put into this.

Mike D'Angelo feels that the motion to reconsider was out of order. Only a person who votes in favor can move the motion to reconsider. We don't know how that person voted because it was a ballot vote. Moderator Shepherd commented that this is an interesting point raised and is often debated, but this moderator adopts that reconsideration is an important right no matter if it comes from the winning side or the losing side. Mike D'Angelo challenged his ruling.

Phil Nilsen asked if the vote for reconsideration should be a majority vote. Moderator Shepherd said that is not his position on reconsideration. He said he did not adopt Robert's Rules and it has no force of law.

The question was called and the Moderator called for the vote on reconsideration.

Vote: Yes – 161 No – 162 and the Moderator declared the motion of reconsideration fails.

Motion: A motion was made by Steven Bloom, seconded by Linda Miller, to protect the vote on Article 1.

Moderator Shepherd said this would in effect mean that any other motion to reconsider would not be dealt with at this meeting it would have to be done on proper notice no less than seven days from this day.

Vote: Affirmative

Moderator Shepherd read Article 2 as follows:

Article 2

To see if the Winnisquam Regional School District will vote to raise and appropriate up to \$100,000 to be placed in the Capital Reserve Fund/Building Renovations and Repairs Fund, such amount to be funded

from undesignated fund balance as of June 30, 2005. (Majority vote required). The School Board recommends this appropriation.

Motion: A motion was made by Dave Foster, seconded by Nina Gardner, to bring this article to the floor for discussion.

Discussion: School Board Member Dave Foster told the assembly that this is a motion made every year and does not affect your taxes. It is to put any undesignated funds into the capital reserve fund to do what they are asking in Article 3.

Terry DeSousa asked what the balance is now. Dave Foster said as of July 1, 2004 the balance was \$305,995.

Kathryn Ferrera asked what the interest rate is on this account and does this add more funding to the fund. Allan Demko responded that the Capital Reserve account goes to the Trustee of Trust Funds in Tilton and the interest rates vary from 1 ½ % to 3%. The balance is somewhat higher than quoted. Dave Foster told the assembly that this is unexpended tax money. Larry Prince told the assembly that any surplus goes back to the towns.

The question was called and the Moderator called for the vote.

Vote: Affirmative and the Moderator declared Article 2 as read passed.

Moderator Shepherd read Article 3 as follows:

Article 3

To see if the Winnisquam Regional School District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of one hundred forty thousand seven hundred dollars (\$140,700) to purchase replacement windows at the Union Sanborn School, to replace floor tiles in the 8th grade classrooms at the WR Middle School, replace fencing at softball and JV fields, computerize controls for HVAC systems at Union Sanborn and Sanbornton Central Schools, replace carpets at Southwick School, repair the walkway outside the Media Center at the Middle School and replace the exhaust fan in the B-Wing of the High School, and to authorize the withdrawal of one hundred forty thousand seven hundred dollars (\$140,700) from the Capital Reserve Fund/Building Renovations and Repairs Fund created for that purpose. The School Board recommends this appropriation. (Majority vote required).

Motion: A motion was made by Dave Foster, seconded by Nina Gardner, to bring this article to the floor for discussion.

Discussion: Dave Foster explained that this article does not have any impact as far as taxes are concerned. This is money that the district has voted to put away each year from unexpended funds to address maintenance items to make sure the buildings do not deteriorate. Dave explained the requests.

Dina Hunter asked to clarify if this is to take out of the Capital Reserve Fund or to take out and give in tax money. Dave Foster responded that this is money that has already been raised.

The question was called and the moderator called for the vote.

Vote: Affirmative and the Moderator declared Article 3 as read passed.

Moderator Shepherd read Article 5 as follows:

Article 5

To see if the district will vote to raise and appropriate \$20,450,528 for the support of schools, for the payment of salaries for the district officials and agents, and for the payment of statutory obligations of the District. The article does not include appropriations voted in other warrant articles. (Majority vote required). The School Board recommends this appropriation

Motion: A motion was made by Larry Prince, seconded by Dave Foster, to bring Article 5 to the floor for discussion.

Discussion:

Dina Hunter asked if the Superintendent was retiring this June and when would this position be replaced. Larry Prince said Mr. Couture was retiring in June and there is money in the budget to conduct the Superintendent search. In the meantime Mr. Couture will be hired on a per diem basis. Dina asked if the per diem amount is \$450 a day. Larry said this is correct. Dina asked if any other members who are retiring are coming back as per diem. Larry answered no. Larry added that there are no benefits included in the per diem amount.

Nancy McKinnon asked about the allocated funds for the Franklin Career Academy and how many slots do we use. Larry answered there are six slots. Mr. Couture said the money we get from the state in state aid should accompany that child. The state aid will offset this cost. The money is on a two-year cycle. It is always the two years prior to that year.

Darlene Bitetto asked about the increase of \$75,000 for out of district placements and wanted to know what do our schools not offer that we have to transport someone to another area. Kathy Fagan answered that placement of special needs students is based on federal regulation as well as the New Hampshire rules. Each team meets on each student and determines by law what is the least restrictive alternative that will meet their needs. There are a range of reasons. Sometimes it is behavioral, sometimes they need to be in a setting where they have the most opportunity to make reasonable progress and we also have a great many students who because they are placed by the court system or are in foster care we are required to pay their educational costs.

John Scanlon asked about the increase in purchase services from \$3,950 to \$21,450 (Cost Center 7.2) and the postage increase from \$12,287 to \$27,187 (Cost Center 7.1). Larry Prince responded that the SAU is leasing new accounting software and the first year is \$20,000. Larry said the total budget is increased by 3.99%. He explained the increases and the areas where costs were reduced. The increase in purchase services is for the Superintendent Search of \$17,500. Allan said that \$20,000 is set aside for hardware and software for a Compusense system which is the accounting software for the district. Allan said this is in the postage and supplies because they could not elaborate on 20 different categories. It should have said equipment in there. Allan said the cost centers have 30 or 40 different line items and are summarized into four or five major categories. At the public hearing there is a printout of 48 pages, which has 30 to 40 line items to give more detail.

Nancy Court asked the Board on what date Mr. Couture resigned and why we have not hired a new superintendent to be ready to start next fall. Larry said the resignation was some time in the fall and typically superintendents are not out of work in the fall and the best time to search would be in the spring. Nina added that the Board was notified by the Superintendent of his desire to retire at the end of this year. The board had no money in this budget to engage in the search this year. As they began to consider the fact that they were losing two other senior administrators and the School Board asked Mr. Couture to stay on in a per diem basis. He is officially retiring as of June 30th this year. We will no longer be contributing to his retirement or health care benefits. His contract will be for no more than 220 days with the option if we were to be able to hire sooner he might choose to leave.

Donna Bouchard commented that at \$450 a day Mr. Couture is doing us a service for staying on while we find someone else. She also said we have to put confidence in the School Board that they did this budget and have faith that put money where it should be spent.

The question was called and the moderator called for the vote.

Vote: Affirmative Yes – 223 No – 33 and the moderator declared Article 5 as read passed.

Moderator Shepherd read Article 6 as follows:

Article 6

To transact any other business that may legally come before this meeting.

Discussion: Moderator Shepherd said that as a final matter he would ask the body to make a resolution extending their best wishes to Ken Randall who is in Concord Hospital.

Motion: A motion was made by Judy Stewart, seconded by Jackie Bonafide to extend the bodies best wishes to him.

Vote: Affirmative

David Court asked if there would be a selection committee for the superintendent and if it would be open to the public and how the public would be notified. Larry Prince said there would be school board representation, administrator representation and voters or citizens who express interest in it. Larry said there will be notice in the board meetings minutes and if there was interest to contact the board. Mr. Court said he said they will keep an eye on the selection committee and appreciates the effort the volunteers put into this.

Lana Dearborn reminded the voters that next year there is nothing to stop petitioned articles to come forward to be acted on at next years school district meeting that will not have had the review of people from the three towns. She told the assembly that their job of protecting their tax rate is not done. They need to pay attention and come to the meeting.

Dina Hunter commented that the moderator would not recognize anyone who did not go to the microphone to speak, but yet when people were waiting to speak and someone in the audience made a motion to terminate the vote, he recognized them and feels this was unfair.

Ellen Belair thanked Mr. Couture for the number of years he has given to the school district.

Lynne Long also thanked Mr. Couture and commented on his salary as being a slight raise for the coming year.

Chris Paul asked if the Formula Committee would continue to work for another year. Chris said it is hard to get people to volunteer and after the amount of time they put into this and have their suggestions rejected how difficult will it be to form another committee. Nina said there is no vehicle to establish a formula committee.

Jackie Bonafide thanked all the administrators, teachers, school board and the people on the Formula Study Committee for their amazing dedication to our kids.

Motion: A motion was made by Jackie Bonafide, seconded by Judy Stewart to adjourn the meeting at 1:13 PM.

Vote: Affirmative

A true Record, Attest:

Adele Chertoff, Clerk

