

2025 Lempster School District Meeting Minutes

The inhabitants of the Lempster School District, in the County of Sullivan, in the State of New Hampshire, qualified to vote in district affairs. You are hereby notified to meet at the Lempster Community School in Lempster on Saturday, the 8th of March 2025, at seven o'clock (7:00) P. M. to act upon the articles set forth in the Warrant. Articles 1-4 of the Warrant cover the election of: School Board member, District Moderator, District Clerk and District Treasurer and will be acted upon at four (4:00) P. M. until seven thirty (7:30) P.M.

The polls were opened at 4:00PM by Moderator Michael Shklar

Salute to the American Flag

The moderator asked if there was anyone present who is not a registered voter in the town of Lempster.

He informed those present who were not registered voters, that they would not be allowed to vote.

He then explained how the meeting works for those who've never attended a meeting.

Article 01 School Board Member

To choose one School Board member for a three-year term beginning upon qualification at the close of the annual meeting.

Elected-Alyssa Brenner

Write ins-none

Article 02 Moderator

To choose one District Moderator for a three-year term beginning upon qualification at the close of the annual meeting.

Elected-Michael Shklar

Write ins-none

Article 03 District Clerk

To choose one District Clerk for a three-year term beginning upon qualification at the close of the annual meeting.

Write ins-Jodie Hibbard-11, Wanda Ash-2, Korrie Goodspeed-1, Jacob Champness-2, Rachel Tirrell-1, Vermon Supreme-1

Elected-Jodie Hibbard

Article 04 District Treasurer

To choose one District Treasurer for a three-year term beginning upon qualification at the close of the annual meeting.

Elected-Jodie Hibbard

Write ins-none

Article 05 Reports

To hear reports of agents, auditors, committees, or officers chosen, and pass any vote relating thereto.

Motion made by Kelly Caron, seconded by Debbie Wirkkala

The motion passed unanimously

Article 06 Operating Budget

To see if the district will vote to raise and appropriate the amount of THREE MILLION, EIGHT HUNDRED FIFTY- FIVE THOUSAND, TWO HUNDRED FIFTY-SEVEN DOLLARS (\$3,855,257.00) for the statutory obligations of the district. This article does not include appropriations contained in other warrant articles. The School Board recommends this article. (Majority vote required)

Motion made by Everett Thurber, seconded by Norma Proper

Mr. Lewis spoke to the budget increase of 2.8%. The board worked hard to keep it under a 3% increase. He described that most budget increases for example; the cost of postage up 11%, eggs 36%, vehicle insurance 11% etc. and stated that most of the cost increases were not things that the district had any control over, and yet our budget remains at 2.8%.

The operating budget this year includes a library support person, as we don't have the services that we need in the library, such as research help. And the legally mandated special education services and out of district services including transportation.

Mr. Lewis stated that other options for funding education costs without more taxation are available, including Free and Reduced Lunches. He emphasized the importance of parents filling out the Free and Reduced Lunches program paperwork, as it helps get a large amount of money from the state added to our budget to offset additional cost items and reduce your property tax. Reapplying for these programs can help as well.

A free 'back to school BBQ' is held each year in an effort to allow parents an opportunity to fill out these forms while enjoying a meal with their children. He showed a chart of the estimated added revenues. There is a direct correlation between average estimated adequacy aid which last year was \$799,000 and this year is \$1,059,350. The majority of the difference is the funds we received from the state due to Free and Reduced Lunch program funds. The equation is property value divided by Free and Reduced Lunch program applications. We can get a quarter of a million dollars more with the F&R lunch paperwork being filled out.

If we get more money from the state, we don't have to ask you, the taxpayers for more money!

Reading together at home and math facts help our students tremendously! He offered math flash cards for anyone to take home for their children.

He publicly thanked Sally Hooper, business administrator, for her precise and innovative accounting skills.

She has done an exemplary job of keeping our financial records up to date and finding corrections that were not found previously.

He went on to say that our beloved principal, Mr. Peterson, is retiring this year and went on to introduce, Ms. Robin Croteau as our new principal.

Mr. Shklar-are there any other questions?

Jacob Champness asked for clarification of the cost (per student) of public school versus private school; it appears to be \$22K per student, which makes private schools about \$8K less. Are we getting a good value for our money?

Ms. Caron-right now our average is \$21,600 per student and we have an obligation for educating our children in our town and with shipping them out, there is no guarantee that they are going to be accepted into the other institutions and the decision of the taxpayers has been to keep our students here. We budget the best we can, we look at our budget and look at our scores which are improving. We have a wonderful administration and dedicated teaching staff. We look at our state and local contracts and we are still paying below what the normal going salaries are. There is not a line item that we haven't gone through and researched. We looked at our teacher contracts and our para contracts and we are still below the average in the state and stated that our costs are not egregious. The best thing for our students is to stay here and not be on a bus for 2 hours per day. We are doing the best job we can for your students with your tax dollars.

Selena Leite stated that the original budget, last year of (give or take) \$3,600,000 and \$100,000 was added to that then why does the current year list \$3,750,000? Where does the extra \$50,000 come from?

Ms. Caron-if you go to the back of the book and look at page 22, you will see that the para contract cost was \$45,400 and if you add in, that was the difference.

Ms. Leite also made comparisons to last year's book to this year and stated that with the extra \$100,000, voted in last year, if you compare all of the line items, it's like two years of increases all at once.

Selena Leite made a motion for a level funded budget with no increases for this year, seconded by Jacob Champness.

Mr. Shklar-Does anyone else want to be heard on the motion to amend?

Ms. Caron-I'd just like to say to the taxpayers that of the \$3,750,858.00 that was our budget last year, we did return over \$55K to taxpayers.

Mr. Shklar-We will now vote on the motion to amend.

The motion was defeated.

Mr. Shklar-does anyone else wish to be heard on the original motion?

Mr. Champness-he again asked for clarification of costs per student and made comparisons of different towns.

Mr. Shklar-You've made your point and I don't think that anyone can answer whether or not it is a good value.

Jon Thomas stated that it is often hard to compare the major differences between a public school over a private school, as the requirements, student population, curriculum, contracts, retirement etc. are different.

Ms. Hooper noted that private schools do not pay for or offer services for special education.

Mr. Shklar- I'm going to call for your vote on the main motion?

Article 06 has passed.

Mr. Shklar stated that it was 7:30 and voting is now closed.

Article 07 Lempster Educational Association

To see if the town will vote to approve the cost items included in the collective bargaining agreement reached between the LEMPSTER SCHOOL DISTRICT and the LEMPSTER EDUCATION ASSOCIATION which calls for the following increases in salaries and benefits at the current staffing level:

Fiscal Year	Estimated Increase
2025-2026	\$85,225.00
2026-2027	\$47,860.00
2027-2028	\$51,630.00

And further to raise and appropriate the sum of \$85,225.00 for the 2025-2026 year, such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in salaries and benefits required by the new agreement over those that would be paid at current staffing level. The school board recommends this warrant article.

(Majority vote required.)

Motion made by Kelly Caron seconded by Amy Murray.

Mr. Cragin stated that the school board recommends the passage of this article as it reflects the responsible, carefully negotiated agreement between the district and our teachers, providing reinforced salaries acknowledges the critical and essential role that teachers play and helps maintain morale. Approval of this article will support our commitment to our teachers and the long term support of our students.

Mr. Shklar-do anyone have any questions or comments?

Selena Leite asked why \$85,000 was asked for this year, yet last year it was \$45,000?

Ms. Caron noted that last year the contract was for the support staff and this year the contract is for the teachers.

Ms. Leite asked what percentage of a raise were they given?

Mr. Lewis stated that if this contract is passed, Lempster still is in the bottom third of area schools. He explained that we don't have a lot of teachers leaving and they could be making more at other schools and we think that it's fair to increase their salaries, which still leaves them among the lowest paid in the state. He stated that the average raise would be 3%.

Jacob Champness said that the ratio of teachers to students is 11 or 12 and how does that compare to other districts.

Mr. Lewis answered that the other districts have a lot more kids and they can't keep teachers, so they have larger classes, sometimes 28 students to one teacher.

Ms. Caron noted that revenue has gone up.

Mr. Shklar-Does anyone else wish to be heard?

Article passed

Article 08 Special Meeting

Shall the school district, if warrant article #7 is defeated, authorize the governing body to call one special meeting, at its option, to address warrant article #7 cost items only? The School Board recommends this article. (Majority vote required.)
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Article 09 Building and Grounds Capital Reserve Fund

To see if the school district will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$50,000.00) to be added to the Building and Grounds Capital Reserve Fund previously established. The School Board recommends this appropriation. (Majority vote required)

Motion made by Kelly Caron second by Jessica Hooper.

Jillian Thomas spoke to this warrant and stated that currently \$54,353 is in the account and if you go to page 12, it highlights our five year plan for our building improvements, so mostly we are looking for \$50K and in the reserve we normally request \$82,500 in the fund, which is not available until the end of the year. Otherwise, any unfunded projects that come up will be able to be funded in the next year.

Mr. Shklar-made note that if anyone has extra musical instruments, the music department would be interested in them.

Article 10 Special Education Capital Reserve Fund

To see if the school district will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$50,000.00) to be added to the Special Education Capital Reserve Fund previously established. The School Board recommends this appropriation. (Majority vote required.)

Motion made by Jillian Thomas, seconded by Kelly Caron

Ms. Hooper spoke to the special education fund. If you go to page 13, you will see the costs for special education and this fund is like a cushion in case a special needs student moves into the area, there would be funds to cover their education needs.

The motion passed unanimously.

Article 07 Special Meeting

Shall the school district, if warrant article #4 is defeated, authorize the governing body to call one special meeting, at its option, to address warrant article #4 cost items only? The School Board recommends this article. (Majority vote required.)

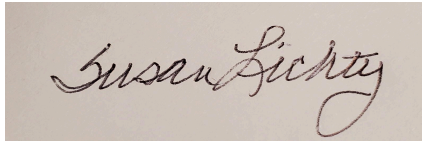
Rebecca Farrand spoke of the appreciation and faithfulness that the students and staff have for Mr. Peterson, his love of the children, the school and the community, he knows the name of every student and we really appreciate Mr. Peterson!! He will be missed.

Mr. Lewis spoke of his appreciation to school board chair, Kelly Caron, for her dedication to the school, students and the board and we wish her well.

Motion to adjourn was made at 7:51 pm by Everett Thurber and seconded by Maggie Kemp and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by,

Susan Lichty

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan Lichty". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

School District Clerk