

**TOWN OF RYE BUDGET COMMITTEE  
MEETING AND PUBLIC HEARING  
RYE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
PROPOSED BUDGET FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR ENDING 2024  
Wednesday, January 11, 2023  
6:30 p.m.  
Rye Jr. High School Cafeteria**

**Committee Present:** *Acting Chair Jeffrey Ross, Scott Marion (via Zoom), Jaci Grote, Suzanne Barton, School Board Rep Matt Curtin, Rye Water District Rep Ralph Hickson, Rye Beach District Rep Shawn Crapo, Doug Abrams, and Selectmen's Rep Tom King*

**1. Call to Order**

Acting Chair Ross called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**2. Work Session**

*No unfinished school budget work before the Budget Committee.*

**3. PUBLIC HEARING – RYE SCHOOL DISTRICT PROPOSED BUDGET**

The purpose of the hearing is to consider the Rye School District's proposed Budget for the school year ending 2024, including warrant articles.

At 6:41 p.m., Acting Chair Ross opened the public hearing on the proposed Rye School Budget for the school year ending 2024.

**Member Curtin, School Board Representative,** thanked the S.A.U. 50 staff and members of the School Board, who put a lot of time and effort into the budget. He noted they are seeking comment on a very responsible budget. The budget fills the needs of the schools in a way that is respectful for the taxpayers of the Town of Rye. Member Curtin pointed out that the budget has a 5.64% increase over last year. The major drivers of that increase are due to emergent facility needs, special education requirements, and Portsmouth High School tuition. Pulling the high school tuition and special education requirements from the budget, which are non-optional, the impact on the actual operating budget is less than 1%. A lot of the costs are being driven by things that are essentially required by area agreement, as well as statute.

Member Curtin continued that in addition to the budget itself, there are six warrant articles. Warrant Article #1 is for the approval of the proposed school budget, which is \$16,576,387. If that were to fail, the default budget would be \$16,279,349 which is last's year's budget plus costs that are required by statute or contract. Warrant #2 is an update to the final year of the Rye Educational Support Personnel Association (RESPA) Collective Bargaining Agreement. RESPA

is the collective bargaining unit for support staff in Rye, which encompasses secretarial, paraprofessional, janitorial, and food service employees. There have been problems with filling those positions because of pay disparities. This has created a great deal of staff attrition and significant problems with recruiting. Federal grant funding was used for the current school year in order to close that pay gap. What is being proposed for the next school year in the warrant is to increase compensation \$3.00 per hour for each of the RESPA employees. The total cost impact will be \$131,408. This article is an attempt to get the School District to a point where it's competitive in the market. As it stands today, the District is far below market value. With approval of Warrant Article #2, the District would be in the middle for pay compensation. It would by no means put Rye above other districts they are competing with for talent. If Warrant Article #2 is defeated, Warrant Article #3 is to allow for a special meeting, so this is a procedural warrant article.

Member Curtin noted that Warrant Article #4 proposes to appropriate \$75,000 to the Special Education Fund. This article has no current tax implications because it's being funded out of the unassigned fund balance at the end of the budgetary cycle. The idea is to put away funds so that unexpected special education costs don't create future tax impact and to even out any possible spikes in spending through the utilization of that fund. Warrant Article #5 is for the Tuition Expendable Trust Fund in the amount of \$50,000. The fund is to cover an unexpected spike in high school tuition. There is no current tax implication because it will be funded from the unassigned fund balance at the conclusion of the budget cycle. Warrant Article #6 is to raise and appropriate the sum of \$1,000,000 for the roof replacement project at Rye Elementary School. Half of the cost would be from taxation. The balance would be paid through the retained fund balance or through the School Property and Maintenance Trust Fund. Member Curtin pointed out that the roof was replaced in 1996, so it's approaching thirty years of life. Based on expert opinion, as well as the real-life experiences of the elementary school staff, the School Board has asked the Town to fund this warrant to replace the roof.

Member Curtin addressed questions asked by **Joe Cummins, 990 Washington Road.**

There were no further comments or questions from the public.

#### **4. Other Business**

*None*

#### **Adjournment**

**Motion by Ralph Hickson to adjourn at 7:03 p.m. Seconded by Jaci Grote. All in favor.**

Respectfully Submitted, Dyana Ledger