# Sanborn Regional School District Budget Committee
# Public Hearing for 2026-2027 Proposed Budget
# Minutes

**January 15, 2026,** High School Library

*Please note: Committee minutes are not meant to be a transcription and will document actions and motions per Robert's Rules of Order for Parliamentary Procedure in the U.S. To view the video of this meeting visit www.sau17.net and click on Budget Committee Videos under Budget Committee tab, or click the following link www.youtube.com/c/srsdmeetingvideos

**Members Present:**
Dr. Pam Brown, Kingston, Chair
Brooks Clarke, Kingston, Vice Chair
Katherine Balukas, Newton
Reynold DiFilippo, At Large
Dr. James Doggett, Newton
Shane Queeney, Kingston
**Excused Absences:**
Dr. Terri Beckett, Newton
Micah Petillo, School Board Representative
**Others Present:**
Dr. Bob Dawson, Interim Superintendent
Marie Mundy, Business Administrator

**Meeting called to order** by Dr. Brown at 7:06 pm.
**Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call Attendance** by Dr. Brown.

The Hearing started with a presentation providing an overview of the budget process and available school district Warrant Articles by Committee members and the Superintendent and Business Administrator. The presentation slides are linked **HERE.**

**Public Comment**

Rick Edelman, Kingston: Slide 6, Article 3 has ELA and other assessment proficiencies listed, but does not indicate changes, progress made. How was it decided to include this information?

Dr. Dawson: State laws recently changed which mandate we provide this information as shown. DRA provided this template.

Edelman: Did we ask to modify it to include improvements?

Dr. Dawson: We can ask, but the language mandated is specific.

Edelman: Slide 14's commentary regarding inflation-adjusted spending and enrollment was misleading. Inflation is not related to students it impacts costs – of our facilities maintenance and staff contracts. Slide 21 does not list the additional opening we have due to the resignation of a School Board member.

Mundy: Yes, we will update that.

Cheryl Gannon, Kingston: Slide 5, “Scope of SRSD budget.” Have we considered moving the SAU office back to available space in a school building, given the decline in enrollment?

Dr. Brown: We were informed it would cost $250,000 to renovate space in one of our existing buildings in order to do that. It is being considered, but not for the coming fiscal year.

Dr. Dawson: the lease for our SAU space is $97,000 and the lease ends in June, 2027. The lease payments include heat, electricity, water, snow removal. 14 people work there full time.

Gannon: The language on slide 5, Article 3, includes “cost per pupil.” Was that calculated using the current budget?

Mundy: It was calculated for fiscal year 2025.

Gannon: It we have 55 fewer students coming in and the cost per pupil as stated here is $21,191, that comes to $1.5 million. This begs the question, why will we not reduce spending by that amount?

Dr. Dawson: We have looked at positional adjustments.

Gannon: How much, money-wise?

Dr. Dawson: It will be about $1.7 million less. The School Board decides the eventual spending changes given the Budget Committee’s proposed appropriation. We do not want to discuss the specifics at this time until we have some more information.

Gannon: Slide 8 does say reductions are part of budget considerations.

Dr. Dawson: It will be a matter of reviewing retirements, possible positional adjustments, etc.

Gannon: How is it that the default budget is so much higher than the proposed operating budget? They have very close, in the past. $1.7 million is the difference now.

Dr. Dawson: We take this year’s budget, it becomes the default. We receive a proposed budget, and ask how are we going to make that work.

Gannon: Is facilities maintenance funded within the operating budget? I have heard we have a new roof needed and other repairs coming.

Dr. Brown: There is a significant increase included in the proposed operating budget for facilities.

Gannon: Will the reserve accounts be used for that?

Dr. Dawson: Those are primarily utilized as rainy day funds. We try to maintain our facilities to avoid major expenses.

Gannon: Slide 20, District’s Reserve Accounts balances. I know we’ve added to them but do we know how much has been spent from these accounts, over the past year?

Mundy: We have considered using them but have been able to stay within our operating budget and preserve the accounts without drawing money from them over the past 2 - 3 years, and they have accrued interest. We have used the Facilities Revolving fund money, which comes in part from rental of the old Middle School, to maintain that building and other district facilities.

Gannon: The contingency fund is large, what does that fund cover?

Mundy: It is an emergency fund, available in case we run out of money in our operating budget.

Dr. Doggett: The contingency fund is for a major unanticipated cost – such as an expensive Special Education placement or a failed septic system.

Gannon: Do the other reserve funds need to be exhausted first?

Dr. Doggett: That would be discussed between the School Board and the DRA.

Dr. Dawson: And a hearing is needed before using the contingency fund.

Gannon: Do these various reserve funds have any cap? For example, if the special education fund reaches $1 million, will that reach the maximum we wanted? Do we have goals for them? Article 6 for example.

Dr. Dawson: There is a number in there, but it was a placeholder amount. It is up to the Board to decide an amount.

Gannon: School Administrators' contract in Article 4, is this a new contract?

Dr. Dawson: Yes, last year's was for one year, this is for a three year contract.

Dan Guide, Newton: For the Special Education fund, I recall the previous superintendent wanted to place a million dollars in that fund. For the Capital Improvement fund, that is for future planned projects in the CIP, not for maintenance expenses which are listed in the actual budget. Slide 12, can someone explain how 'Use of Fund Balance" is in Revenues?

Mundy: That's the Contingency. It's an amount that is available.

Guide: But you're taking it off the amount appropriated.

Mundy: It's an estimated revenue.

Guide: Dr. Dawon, if this proposed operating budget passes, you will have to come up with positions to eliminate. So that's going to change the default budget - if positions are eliminated.

Mundy: That's from prior-year position eliminations.

Guide: It says eliminated in the "proposed" operating budget, not the prior year's proposed.

Mundy: That means last year's proposed budget. If you go to slide 25, we are using this, current year, budget, to get to the default.

Guide: Is this slide the RSA?

Mundy: This is was last year's slide, slide 16. I'm not sure of the RSA.

James Hasselbeck, Kingston: On Slide 12, I'm wondering if we have an approximation of local versus state property tax revenue?

Mundy: We pay $30 million in local taxes and $2.5 million in SWEPT and get 2.6 million in adequacy, so if you take 2.5 from 32.6, that would be our property tax burden.

Hasselbeck: Slide 14, inflation trends – I think this shows excellent fiscal management in keeping budget growth below inflation. My quick math shows even with declining enrollment we have controlled our spending.

Dr. Brown: To know the impact of enrollment you need to look at per-pupil spending, not total spending. If our per pupil spending increased only by inflation our current proposed operating budge would be $38 million.

Hasselbeck: That is a simplistic approach, because there are costs that are outside our control. Generally, our fiscal management has been exceptional.

Dr. Doggett: The DRA uses an antiquated formula which leaves out many things, many cost items impacting a school district.

Hasselbeck: I think we should be looking at inflation costs, from costs we can control. That is unrelated to actual student count. This table indicates we have an actual 10% decrease in our budget compared to inflation growth, this should be the focus. This is a victorious story.

Hasselbeck: For Slide 20, overall it is a 6% contingency budget. That is on the low side, and we should not become Claremont. 6-8, maybe 9-10% is medium to high. Slide 6 – this warrant article's language is misleading. For calculation of per student expenses, RSA 189:75 talks about that, a different RSA addresses proficiencies, RSA 671:20. How do we address concerns about the wording?

Mundy: The wording is dictated by the DRA, a template is to be used.

Hasselbeck: That's not what the law says, so I disagree. You are mixing RSA 189:75, which has a specific formula, and 189:76 which asks for proficiency results, but the language does not prohibit modifications. This is a misleading warrant article, as worded. We have flexibility as a town, to include state average numbers to show our relative assessment success, so we should consider that.

Tim Driscoll, Kingston: The Contingency fund is eventually returned to taxpayers. Are there any other funds that are returned?

Mundy: Yes, any funds that are unused, plus surplus revenues. An unassigned fund balance gets returned to the towns.

Driscoll: So for unfilled positions, that allocation would be returned to the towns?

Mundy: Yes. Unused money is returned.

Driscoll: And the high school bond, it is paid off?

Dr. Dawson: Yes. Mr. Guide, the RSA is 40:13 – wanted to correct that.

Iain McGregor, Newton: On Slide 6, again the RSAs referenced need to be reviewed.

Dr. Dawson: Yes, RSA 189:75 gives cost per pupil formula, but not the exact language to be used. There is a separate RSA about that, which I have noted. We will get clarification.

McGregor: Slide 7 shows we are doing a good job given the proposed's 1.2% increase versus the default's 5% increase. Slide 14, inflation trends, shows we have in fact been doing a great job over time. For the slide showing enrollment trends, did we use data from the group that does professional forecasting for districts for this chart?

Dr. Dawson: yes, we used that data and also we track cohorts of students at each grade level to project our enrollments in coming years. We use DOE data and factor in the decrease in Fremont students. Yes, NESDEC was used. They gave us recent projections which were more optimistic, but had not factored in the loss of Fremont high school pupils.

McGregor: Slide 11, the data is helpful but the chart is hard to read, needs to be clarified to show our progress compared to statewide results. On Slide 20, I will say that 5% to 15% should be held as reserves, for a $40 million budget for problems or issues that come up. That is standard accounting practice.

Gannon: Article 3's inclusion of proficiencies – seem out of place with a budget article, but Concord decided to have it there. Can we put additional language in?

Mundy: I will check on that.

Gannon: And with the lower, proposed budget, what will happen with staffing, etc? Or can you change the budget?

Dr. Dawson:  No, unless it is changed at the Deliberative that is the budget we will work within, within legal constraints, and the School Board will decide the allocation.  The originally proposed number was lower than the default number, and reductions were already being considered.  The Budget Committee also made some additional cuts.

Guide:  I read the RSA about default budgets, and you are right - this year's operating budget is used to get to the default budget.   The cost per student, where did that number come from?

Mundy:  From the Dept of Education, from the DOE-25.

Hasselbeck:  There is a perspective that the district has not been spending responsibly, but the data shows a success story.  Performance has improved, while operating budgets have declined compared to inflation.  That needs emphasis for our community, during the Deliberative in particular.

**MOTION by Dr. Doggett:**  "Recess this Public Hearing until January 22, 2026 at the Sanborn Regional High School to address only the two special Warrant Articles not presented tonight."  Second by Mr. Brookes.   Vote: All in favor.

**Next meeting:**  January 22, 2025, 7pm in the SRSD High School Auditorium.

Respectfully submitted,
Dr. Brown