

Benton School District FY2025 Budget Hearing
January 31, 2024

The hearing was called to order at 6:00 by Joseph Boutin III.

In attendance were:

Joseph Boutin III - Benton School Board Chairman

Dwight Swauger - Benton School Board Member

Laurie Melanson – SAU 23 Superintendent

Katherine Ducharme – SAU 23 Business Administrator

William Darcy – Benton Selectboard Chairman

Laura Richardson – Benton Trustee of the Trust Funds – Chairperson

Gil Richardson – Benton School District Moderator

Michael Stiebitz – Benton School District Clerk

Joe Boutin referenced the handout supplied by the SAU and noted that the budget increase is mainly driven by the increase in the number of students projected for the coming fiscal year (FY). In 2024, Benton has 5 unbudgeted students, which will probably drop to 4 in 2025.

A question was raised about the current rate of tuition for Benton students. For High School students, the undiscounted rate is \$17,600. Benton gets a 10% discount on that price since we send 100% of our students through the SAU23. This does not take into account any of the State of NH payments to the districts.

Superintendent Laurie Melanson pointed out that smaller communities pay more per student than the larger ones, in part due to the transportation costs.

The deficit for this FY will require a disbursement from the Education Trust fund. There will be a Benton School Board meeting in April of this year to approve the transfer of funds from the Trust Fund to cover the deficit. It was estimated that the amount will be approximately \$40,000.

The proposed budget for FY 2025 will result in a tax increase of \$2.09 / thousand of valuation. Discussion centered around an appropriate amount of money from the Educational Trust Fund to offset the increase. The figure of \$60,000 was arrived at as a strawman for the Warrant Article.

A motion was made to accept the proposed \$60,000 figure. It was seconded and the motion was accepted.

A motion was made to approve the wording of the proposed warrant article for the total budget of \$728,750.00. One vote Yea, one vote Nay. It was discussed that this may mean Benton would not be funding the SAU23 for our students' education. It was suggested that a way to break the impasse and allow the warrant article to be placed on the 2024 School Warrant would be for the Nay voter to abstain. He accepted that suggestion, under vigorous protest, and the motion was passed with one Yay vote and one abstention.

Motion was made to close the meeting and it was adjourned at 6:18PM.

A true copy - Michael P. Stiebitz - Benton School District Clerk

Attest:

Michael P. Stiebitz