

**Benton School Board Minutes**  
**January 8, 2025**

**Benton School Board:** Dwight Swauger, chair, J.B. Boutin, vice chair.

**Also Present:** Dolores Fox, SAU Superintendent, Kathryn Ducharme, SAU Business Administrator. **Public:** None

*These draft minutes of the Town of Benton School Board are believed accurate and correct, but they are subject to additions, deletions, and corrections by the School Board at the next meeting when the Board votes its final approval of the minutes. These minutes are made available at this time to conform to the requirements of New Hampshire RSA 91-A:2.*

Chair Swauger called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Member Boutin made a motion to approve the minutes from 10/23/24. Seconded by Member Swauger and passed unanimously. Manifests were signed.

**Superintendents Report:** Dolores Fox reported 2 employees of SAU 23, Mike Bonanno and Christa Casey attended a train the trainer program. This will enable further training on ALICE program involving active shooter response.

FYI e mails are being sent to all board members to advise of current happenings at Haverhill Cooperative schools.

2 right to know requests from a Benton citizen led Ms. Fox to state “we do not create documents or reports for RTK requests and only supply existing documents.” Information from the NH School Board Association:

- non-public sessions may be convened for the preservation of anyone's reputation, except school board members. It is not limited to employees of the district. ● Public spaces or access include district websites.

The NH legislature opened its legislative session with 945 Legislative Service Requests, 272 may impact education/schools. The Legislature Education Committee has been divided into 2 committees: one to handle education policy and administration LSR, and another focused-on education funding LSR. Representative Rick Ladd chairs the committee on education funding.

Discussion ensued about our lack of adequacy funding from the state and board members and taxpayers need to lobby their representatives either by phone or e mail.

Next SAU #23 Policy meeting is Tuesday January 28, 2025, at 5 PM in the SAU Conference Room.

2024-25 (this school year) tuition agreements need to be signed.

After members Boutin and Swauger reviewed this document it was noted there were a few errors that needed to be addressed before the Chair would sign it. These corrections will be made and returned at the next meeting to be signed.

**K. Ducharme, Business Administrator:** The FY2026 general fund budget is \$753,486 which is an overall increase in the budget of \$61,338. This represents an 8.86% increase from the FY2025 budget. As a reminder, the Board reduced the current year budget by \$60,000 in tuition expenses to be pulled from the Trust Fund. These funds now need to be raised in FY2026.

Tuition expense adjusted (\$13,878 increase). Haverhill voted for a 3% (elem), 5% (middle) & 7% (high) increase in tuition.

NH School Board Association changed (\$267 increase). Primex property, liability and worker's compensation insurance (\$241 decrease). SAU assessment change based on the final SAU budget (\$1,623 increase).

Estimated adequacy aid amounts have been received and are included in this draft (\$32,726 less).

\*Discussion ensued as to why this figure was less was due to the fact we do not have enough welfare cases in Benton (free breakfast, free lunch etc.)

Tuition is currently budgeted with a 3% increase in rates for Haverhill & Riverbend and a zero increase for French Pond/King Street schools. Haverhill tuition does reflect the 11.72% discount for sending 100% of students. The budget does not include contingencies for regular tuition. ✓ r-Y2025 BUDGET: \$387,760 (23 STUDENTS) v/ FY2025 ACTUAL: \$368,119 (22 STUDENTS) - under budget \$19,641 v/ FY2026 BUDGET: \$356,197 (21 STUDENTS)

Increases/decreases from FY2025 to FY2026 budget:

Tuition (including regular education, French Pond, King Street, Vocational, and charter school) — decreased \$31,563 (Regular education looks like it increased \$51,193 — however this amount was reduced by \$60,000 in the current year to use trust monies).

○ Special Education (including summer school, speech, physical/occupational therapy) increased \$8,645

○ Transportation (regular/special education) increased \$1,132 o SAU Assessment — increased \$6,876

○ School Board — liability insurance — increased \$721.

The estimated tax rate is \$10.17, which is an increase of \$.91 or 9.8% from the current year.

The current balance in the trust fund is approximately \$268,805. As a reminder, the Board approved using up to \$75,000 of the trust to cover the balance of the deficit last year due to the seven additional students. Of that amount, only \$28,553 was needed.

**Kerri Reilly, Special Education Director:** Director Reilly was unable to attend. Supt. Fox reported requested information from last meeting.

According to our records, there continue to be 10 Benton students who have an active IEP. SAU #23 wide, there are about 182 students on active IEPs. There are 21 students registered from Benton. Special Education:

1 Elementary

3 Middle

6 High

Policy EEBB was read for the second time and approved as follows:

EEBB

USE OF PRIVATE VEHICLES TO TRANSPORT STUDENTS OR ON SCHOOL BUSINESS

(Benton)

1. Any use of private vehicles for transportation of students to or from school on field trips, athletic events, or other school functions, must have prior authorization by the Superintendent or his/her designee. Those providing unauthorized student transportation do so at their own expense and liability.
2. Any employee or private citizen using their own or a rented vehicle to provide school authorized student transportation must have auto liability insurance of not less than ~~\$100,000~~ \$300,000 Combined Single Limit and is required to provide a Certificate of Insurance. The district will maintain liability insurance, which will be in excess of the owner's primary insurance for authorized student transportation.
3. A person under contract to transport one or more children to school, on field trips, to athletic events, or other school functions must have a valid School Bus Driver Certificate from the Department of Safety. This person's vehicle must be approved by the N.H. Department of Safety to meet all applicable school bus safety standards. (Parents

transporting their own children are exempt from this requirement, even if reimbursed by the School District.)

4. Those providing transportation on an incidental basis, i.e., not specifically as part of a contract for transport, must have a valid driver's license, and a vehicle that has a current NH inspection sticker. A commercial license is required for any vehicle that has a capacity of 16 or more.

5. The Board specifically forbids any employee to transport students for school purposes without prior authorization by the Superintendent or his/her designee. All employees who regularly transport students must have a School Bus Driver Certificate. 6. No student shall be sent on school errands using any automobile.

7. Reimbursement for use of private vehicles may be made, but only if the employee or other person has prior approval of the designated administrator.

8. No student will transport another student for school-authorized transportation.

9. Parents/guardians may enter into a contract with the school district to transport their own child[ren] without proof of liability insurance. When liability insurance is not presented to the district, the parent/guardian or other caregiver designated to provide transportation assumes all risk and responsibility for the transportation of student and agrees to hold the School District harmless for any and all bodily injury, personal injury, property damage or loss, or other liability for damage of any kind, incurred at any time resulting out of his/her responsibilities under this contract.

School Administrative Unit 23 \_\_\_\_\_ School District 2795 Dartmouth College HWY  
Haverhill, NH 03774

Contract for Transportation

Parent/Guardian transportation of own child

This document is to confirm an agreement between the \_\_\_\_\_ School District and [Name of Individual Providing Transport] who both agree to the following:

1. This contract shall cover the period from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

2. The School District agrees to contract with [Name of Individual Providing Transport] to transport [Name of Student] to and from [student address] and [school name and address] at the rate of \_\_\_\_\_ per day, based on 1 round trip each day at \_\_\_\_\_/mile.

3. [Name of Individual Providing Transport]t agrees to

- a. Deliver student where location no later than [A.M. each morning that school is in session unless student is absent due to illness or other authorized absence.
- b. Pick student up from [school name and address] location no later than \_\_\_\_\_ PM
- c. Provide the school district a copy of his/her personal auto insurance policy. IF NO POLICY IS PRESENTED, see 3d.
- d. Until an insurance policy is presented to the district, [Name of Individual Providing Transport] assumes all risk and responsibility for the transportation of student \_\_\_\_\_ to and from [home address; school

name and address] and agrees to hold the School District harmless for any and all bodily injury, personal injury, property damage or loss, or other liability for damage of any kind, incurred at any time resulting out of his/her responsibilities under this contract.

- \_\_\_\_\_ e. Provide the School District with an itemized summary of services at the end of each month on the form provided.
- f. Complete a W9 for tax purposes.
4. This contract may be terminated at any time if the above conditions are not met. Signatures:

I agree to the above conditions

Name of Parent/guardian      Date

Name of Superintendent      Date

Motion made by member Boutin to have the public hearing for the school board budget to be held January 29, 2025, in conjunction with the Town of Benton budget hearing on the same date at 6:00 pm and 6:15 respectively seconded by Chair Swauger and passed.

Member Boutin made a motion to adjourn and seconded by member Swauger.

Meeting adjourned at 6:46 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Dwight Swauger, Chair



