

*Unapproved Draft Minutes  
Subject to review and revision, pending final approval  
at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Municipal Budget Committee*

**Municipal Budget Committee**  
Minutes of the Public Meeting  
**Kearsarge Regional School District**  
**9/8/2026**

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| <b>I. Call to Order</b>         | Call to order at 6:31pm by Richard Anderson                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>II. Roll Call</b>            | <p><b>Present:</b> Jim Bibbo - Bradford<br/>Richard Anderson - New London<br/>Winfried Feneberg - New London<br/>Jesse Evans - Warner<br/>Rebecca Harned - Sutton<br/>Claire Ketteler - Newbury (online)<br/>Deb Reznicek - Warner (online)</p> <p><b>Absent:</b> Luke Gorman - Springfield<br/>Tom Schamberg - Wilmot</p> <p><b>Attendees:</b> Superintendent - Michael Bessette<br/>Director of Curriculum - Andrea Castaldo<br/>Director of Facilities - Brett Paré</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>III. Approval of Minutes</b> | NA                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>IV. Public Comment</b>       | Mag Francis of New London asked for clarification regarding committee members' dual roles and related processes.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>V. New Business</b>          | <p><b>Election of Officers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Richard Anderson was nominated for Chair by Jim Bibbo. Rebecca Harned seconded. Motion carried (6/0/0); Anderson abstained.</li> <li>Jim Bibbo was nominated for Vice Chair by Richard Anderson. Motion was seconded by Winfried Feneberg and carried unanimously.</li> <li>Election of additional officers was tabled until additional members are present.</li> </ul> <p><b>Review of MBC's Role and Process</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Ensure Long-Term Sustainability:</b> Oversee and safeguard the school district's financial health.</li> <li><b>Provide Strategic Oversight:</b> Serve as a proactive watchdog to identify fiscal risks early, rather than enforcing arbitrary budget cuts.</li> <li><b>Prioritize Essential Allocations:</b> Balance community demands against financial constraints by prioritizing critical needs over wants.</li> <li><b>Maintain Fact-Based Transparency:</b> Ensure all decisions are data-driven and fully transparent to taxpayers.</li> <li><b>Execute Collaborative Governance:</b> Commit to a rigorous, months-long review and negotiation process before final approvals.</li> </ul> <p><b>Proposed Calendar</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The committee reviewed the proposed meeting calendar. Richard Anderson noted that he is unavailable September 17.</li> </ul> |

#### **Impact of Legislation on Budget**

- The committee reviewed the potential 3-to-6-month impacts of **HB 1300** and **HB 1374** on the district budget and school operations, focusing on:
  - **Budget Restructuring:** Separating the District and SAU/Administrative budgets into two individual warrant articles.
  - **HB 1300 (Property Tax Cap):** Analyzing the changes to the property-tax levy cap, the pending injunction/ruling, the impact on recurring contracts, and the special exception request process if the cap is exceeded.
  - **HB 1374 (School Closure & Authority):** Assessing the potential shifts in local voting authority regarding school closure petitions.

#### **Facilities Planning**

- The committee reviewed current facility needs and potential infrastructure projects across the district, focusing on the following:
  - **District-Wide Needs Assessment:** Evaluating critical needs at Simonds School and Sutton Central School, while continuing to refine data for the High School, Middle School, Bradford, and New London facilities.
  - **Bradford Project Evaluation:** Discussing a potential expansion project at Bradford—including additional classrooms, specialized instructional areas, entrance security enhancements, and expanded physical education space.
  - **Long-Term Investment Strategy:** Weighing the long-term community and operational benefits of major renovations at Bradford against sustained investments in other existing district facilities.

#### **Other Business as Required**

- **School Configuration / Consolidation**
  - The committee evaluated transitioning to a two-elementary-school model by closing two existing facilities. The discussion focused on:
    - **Operational Impact:** Facility capacities, class sizes, program space (preschool, arts, special education), and the future use of the Simonds and Sutton properties.
    - **Financial Approaches:** Comparing a major consolidation expansion at Bradford (plus moving 5th grade to the middle school) against a smaller investment in a single school.  
*Engineering estimates for Warner are pending.*
    - **Tax Distribution:** Reviewing operational savings versus the tax burden shift across member towns.
- **Long-Term Planning**
  - The committee discussed deferred maintenance, facility needs, budget constraints, and the importance of making long-term decisions regarding district facilities. Members also noted the impact of legislative and tax-cap constraints on the district's ability to address these needs.

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|                    | <b>Public Comment / Closing</b><br>Mag Francis thanked the committee for the respectful discussion and encouraged consideration of how these issues and the financial information will be communicated to voters. |
| <b>VI. Adjourn</b> | Motion to adjourn by Rich Anderson. Jim Bibbo seconded motion. The meeting adjourned at 8:45pm                                                                                                                    |

Respectfully submitted,

Rachel Dupere

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