Members Present: Marc DeBois (Chair), Cicely Richardson, David Ricker (Orford); Mark Avery (Vice Chair), Bruce Lyndes (Fairlee); Kathy Hooke (Vershire); Kathy Blanchard (at-large)

Members Absent: Grover Boutin (Fairlee), Mike Fanizzi (W. Fairlee), Sarah Rinehimer (West Fairlee), Jean MacDonald (Vershire)

Administration and Staff Present: Brenda Needham (Superintendent), Keri Gelenian (Head of Schools/RA Principal), Gail Keiling (Head of Elementary Schools/SME Principal), Dick Paulson (CFO), Janet Cole (Director of Special Education), Gary Collins (Director of Operations), Hank Plaisted (Director of Info Technology), Michael Galli (RA Dean of Students)

Others Present: Noël Walker (Fairlee), Paul Dalton (Orford)

Chair DeBois opened Public Budget Forum at 5:30 p.m. and welcomed public to meeting. Copies of the preliminary draft budget were available. DeBois asked if there were any questions/comments.

Some items questioned and commented on: budget presented $9,821,522, Avery noticed $30,000 had been cut from technology since the first budget Board saw, Plaisted explained what the more significant cuts (a software license that was duplicated in budget, a few desktops, elementary projectors), Special Education cuts were reducing paraprofessional staffing and reduction of a clinician’s time, reminder that salary increases still not in this draft budget and will probably be an excess of $100,000, threshold has been raised by State, no agreement yet with REA negotiations, feel that Board and community would like to see a fully inclusive budget, Board needs to vote at the February meeting on the proposed budget to present to community, what items are not included in budget that Administrators still want or need (i.e., reading specialist for grades 5-8, however, a shift of some items to the local budget should free up Title money to cover this; SME’s additional playground equipment, SME need for shades for windows), Cole mentioned that addition of any high need students might necessitate additional paraprofessional hires, Dalton question the drop in instruction of $150,000 and to be prepared that taxpayers would want to know why, Board said once the salaries go into this line there will not be a drop, brief discussion on Early Childhood Program and new legislative changes and effect on local budget and how .5 of our preschoolers will count toward ADM. Paulson said CLAs were in for the three Vermont towns an almost all 100% (Fairlee-100.91%, Vershire-99.06%, West Fairlee-100.37%), RA – .5 FTE teacher reduction.

DeBois stated that the next Public Budget Forum would be held on Tuesday, January 13th, at the Westshire Elementary School at 6:30 p.m. and thanked everyone for attending.

Action: Motion made to adjourn Public Budget Forum. Approved.

Forum adjourned at 6:20 p.m.

Recorded by:
Penny Perryman, CEOE
Executive Assistant/HR Manager