

Fate of Gale School at hand in Shaker deliberative session Feb. 7

By THOMAS P. CALDWELL, LACONIA DAILY SUN

BELMONT — Voters will decide the fate of the Gale School as well as a \$23 million budget request during the Shaker Regional School District's 2018 deliberative session on Tuesday, Feb. 7. The meeting will take place at Belmont High School.

The Save Our Gale School Committee is looking to purchase the historic building for \$1 in order to move it from its current site to an area where it can be converted to other uses. The building was recently named to the state's Seven To Save list of historic buildings in need of preservation.

Should voters decline that request, another article seeks a \$110,400 appropriation to demolish the building and regrade the property. The cost would be covered by using \$70,000 from the anticipated June 30, 2018, unexpended fund balance and \$40,400 would come from the Facilities & Grounds Expendable Trust Fund, resulting in no new taxation for the project.

The district estimates that, if the proposed budget is adopted, a \$200,000 home in Belmont would see a total local and state education tax increase of \$106.90, based on current information. A \$200,000 home in Canterbury would see a \$230.10 increase. Changes in valuation, revenues, and other factors will be taken into consideration when the New Hampshire Department of Revenue sets the tax rate in fall, so the estimates are for comparison only.

The district's proposed budget represents a \$224,792, or 2.5 percent increase from the current-year budget for regular education, and includes \$153,635 in cost items associated with the collective bargaining agreement with the Shaker Regional Education Association approved last year and the Shaker Regional Education Support Professionals agreement from 2016.

The budget also includes a \$102,728 increase in health, dental, and New Hampshire Retirement System rates.

The amount for supplies and printed materials is \$27,192 less than the current-year budget.

The special education budget is \$168,058 more than this year, with \$121,232 due to the collective bargaining agreements and \$105,533 due to increased benefit rates. A reduction in out-of-district placements lowered the tuition cost by \$55,000.

There is a \$10,500 reduction in the budget request for other special programs, which the administration says is due to staff turnover and reduced requests for supplies and printed materials.

The co-curricular account shows a decrease of \$12,398, with salaries reduced by \$15,879 and benefits reduced by \$3,043 due to fewer co-curricular clubs. That is partially offset by a \$2,125 increase in supplies for Destination Imagination and a \$4,108 increase in support for competitions by various co-curricular clubs.

There is a \$1,227 increase in salaries for athletics due to the addition of a unified sports program, and an \$8,995 increase to provide an athletic trainer. Supplies are reduced by \$5,809 and there is a \$3,600 decrease in furniture and equipment.

There is a \$14,790 decrease in the salaries and benefits line in the summer enrichment program based on actual expenditures. Similarly, there is a \$5,015 decrease in after-school access for the same reason.

The district wants to add a district-wide social worker to help students cope with personal and psychological issues, at a cost of \$45,350 in salaries and \$36,316 in benefits.

The salaries line in Guidance Services is down by \$18,558, reflecting staff turnover and the addition of one day for the counselor at Canterbury Elementary School, as well as reclassifying the director of guidance at Belmont High School as guidance coordinator to provide more counseling time with students. The benefits costs are down by \$9,762, and furniture and equipment is down by \$2,885.

Salaries for the student assistance program increased by \$19,900, and benefits by \$1,897, as a result of the collective bargaining agreements, and the district is adding a two-day-a-week assistant counselor at the high school.

Health Services went up by \$14,700 due to increases in salaries and benefits. Purchased psychological services dropped by \$2,000, but in-house psychological services shows an increase of \$7,829 in salaries and \$1,592 in benefits. Supplies and printed materials are down by \$8,181 after new materials were purchased this year.

Salaries for speech services are up by \$3,114, but benefits are down by \$4,312, based on plan selections, and there is a \$2,557 decrease in supplies and materials.

Occupational therapy services are up by \$3,254 in salaries and \$6,701 in benefits, while supplies and materials are down by \$1,108.

The category for other support services shows a \$52,070 increase, with \$24,900 due to contracted behavioral and vision specialists.

Other highlights are: a decrease of \$47,542 in staff training; an increase of \$11,218 in library services; a decrease of \$9,015 in computer-assisted instruction; a decrease of \$1,982 in school board services, but a \$1,500 increase in printing and postage and a \$14,000 increase in advertising; a \$3,461 increase in the Office of the Superintendent; a \$47,817 increase in the Office of the Principal; a decrease of \$8,833 in fiscal services; and a \$25,636 increase in building operations and maintenance.

Voters may amend the budget during the deliberative session, after which that number would go on the ballot in March. The default budget, which would take effect if voters turn down the budget article, would be \$22,892,599.

Other warrant articles include one to establish a new expendable trust fund for computer software, to place additional money into existing trust funds for technology and buildings and grounds, and to discontinue the trust fund for Gale School renovation. Money currently in that account would be transferred to the district's general fund.

A packet providing additional information about the school district warrant is available on the Shaker website at <https://www.sau80.org> (<https://www.sau80.org>).

Shaker Regional School District Meeting

- **Deliberative session is Tuesday, Feb. 7, 6 p.m., at Belmont High School.**
- **Voting takes place Tuesday, March 13, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., at Belmont High School for Belmont residents and at the Old Town Hall for Canterbury residents**