# MADISON SCHOOL DISTRICT

SCHOOL DISTRICT PUBLIC HEARING

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2015 – 6:30PM

MADISON TOWN HALL

APPROVED MINUTES

Board members attending: Jim Curran, Wendy Grzesik, Sloane Jarell, Ray O’Brien

Others attending: Edward Rogerson, Ronald Force, Charlotte Emmel, Audrey Epstein, Karen Lord, Stuart Lord, Bill Lord, Cindy Lord, Noreen Downs, Mike Veilleux, George Epstein, Lou Goscinski, Chuck Bates, Marcia McKenna, Chris Martin, Paul Jean, Pat Ambrose, Peter Stevens, Eli Szklanka, Nicole Nordlund, Lynn Carlson, Christian Carlson, Mike Brooks, John Arruda, Melissa Arias

CALL TO ORDER: Board Chair Jim Curran called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

Article X: (Submitted by petition)

Shall we rescind the provisions of RSA 40:13 (known as SB2), as adopted by the Madison School District on 09 March 2002, so that the official ballot will no longer be used for voting on all questions, but only for the election of officers and certain other questions for which the official ballot is required by state law?

DISCUSSION: Mike Brooks said we have just had a public hearing on the town side of this issue and suggested that the minutes of that meeting be appended to these minutes. Marsha McKenna commented that it seemed that people were wanting to cut huge chunks from the budget and therefore the SB2 format must be of some comfort to the school board. She said since there is such a small discretionary portion of school budget where cuts could be made, she would like to know how the board feels about this. Jim Curran said he has not been on the board when it was not under SB2 so he couldn’t really speak to the changes. He said there are things we are statutorily obligated to do, but the board has not taken any position on this as a board. Ray O’Brien added that we have not taken any action on it either. Peter Stevens asked other board members to express an opinion. Mr. O’Brien said at first he was not in favor of SB2, but since then he has seen that it works but has become a bit more of a contentious issue when the budgets are constricting and the default becomes a more contentious item. However he said he has always found that when people vote it comes out the way it should, and he does not mind either way. He added that there is some stability with SB2 and more people can vote with SB2 but there’s not as much discussion. Noreen Downs said she was disappointed with the number of people who showed up at the deliberative session. She asked if the school meeting would be at the same time as the town meeting if we did not have SB2. Mr. Curran said it would be on a different day on the same week. George Epstein said school meetings were very well attended when they were on Thursday evenings, usually somewhere between 200 and 400 people attending. Ms. Downs said she thought the town would do well to move away from SB2 with the warrant articles and the budget. Sloane Jarell said she was strongly for SB2 and Wendy Grzesik agreed with this. She said anyone can attend our board meetings and you have our contact information if you have questions and you have an opportunity to vote on the budget. Mike Veilleux said since the proposed budget and the default budget are almost identical it would seem that people in the administration are doing a good job in managing the budget. Mr. Curran said the board and the administration works very hard to keep the budget as low as they possibly can. Mr. Epstein said he would expect the school board and the selectmen to be supportive of SB2 because it gives them greater power – both legislative and executive. He said if you do not do your homework then it would be perfectly logical to empower the board and administration to do the default budget, but if you want the authority you should oppose SB2 and retain the power of the legislative branch. Ned Rogerson commented on the restrictions placed on the deliberative session by SB2 and said some people wanted to delete a warrant article but couldn’t do that; all they could do was vote for a zero amount and it was voted down. Eli Szklanka said there are statutory restrictions in SB2 that restricts the voters’ ability to modify and make changes. He said although there were 40 people at the deliberative session, only 23 came out voluntarily to that meeting. Mr. O’Brien said he had to be there but would have come voluntarily anyway and he believed everyone on the budget committee and school board would have attended voluntarily as well. He said some of the restrictions were not due to SB2 but were self-imposed due to people’s feelings at the meeting, such as the vote not to zero out the article. He added that since the default budget was close to the actual budget it was perceived as not meaningful. He said we are contracting in numbers and our proposed budget is low, lower than the default. Mr. Epstein said you say default budgets have gotten close due to a decline in students, but it’s because the school board and selectmen have gotten smart and there’s no restriction in what they cook up; it’s a meaningless vote on the part of the people who vote for it. Mr. O’Brien said he disagreed with this, as did Mr. Curran. Mr. Szklanka said that’s why more people don’t go. Ms. Jarell said we meet from September to December formulating the budget and anyone can come to the meetings. John Arruda said there is some difference between the school board and the municipal budget because the school has a lot of contractual obligations that municipal does not have. He said on the municipal side it’s all fair game and that’s why more people should show up at the town meeting. He said he believed there wasn’t a line that municipal has a contract on, and looking at it from the school side he could see their problems.

There were no further questions.

ADJOURNMENT: Motion by Sloane Jarell to adjourn, seconded by Wendy Grzesik. The motion passed unanimously and the public hearing adjourned at 6:44 PM

Madison School District Public Hearing

February 17, 2015

Approved Minutes

Respectfully submitted,

**Patricia Ambrose**

Patricia Ambrose

Recording Secretary