



Update on the Norwich School District 2021-22 Budget Proposal

As we are careful to note when we go through our budget formulation process, decisions that are made in Montpelier can have significant impacts on the education tax rate calculation well after being presented during the School Board's December and January budget meetings, and often well after Town Meeting Day. This has certainly been the case this year. With Town Meeting on Monday, March 1st, we wanted to provide an update on these changes, as well as to provide some answers to questions that have arisen on two warrant articles.

Changes to the Tax Rate Estimate

We have updated information that we want to pass along, as two changes to what we presented, based upon the status of the numbers at the time, mean that the tax rate impact on Norwich residents ***should be less than previously estimated***. The two changes are:

1. A higher equalized pupil count. This number is finalized by the Agency of Education (AoE).
2. A higher, proposed, property dollar equivalent yield/base amount. This must be signed into law.

As of now, the AoE has given us an equalized pupil number of 632.98 and the Vermont House Ways & Means Committee is now recommending a yield of \$11,385. Assuming both of these numbers remain the same, when combined, the estimated education tax rate would increase ~3 cents, up 1.83% from last year, and would result in an additional \$165 in education-related taxes on a ~\$500,000 property. For the full calculation, see page 14 of the latest [Norwich School District Proposed Budget](#) book, dated February 2nd.

Warrant Articles

We have heard questions about two of the warrant articles on the ballots (Norwich and Dresden), which we would also like to clarify.

Technology Warrant Article (Norwich and Dresden Ballots)

This is an article for improvements to the technology infrastructure for the Marion Cross School (on the Norwich ballot) and the Richmond Middle and Hanover High Schools (on the Dresden ballot). We have estimates on a potential bond term, but not exact numbers as of yet. An exemplary projected tax impact, based on a higher than expected interest rate of 2% over 10 years, is posted to the [SAU70 Business & Finance page](#). The current estimate would put an increase of \$54K (for both Norwich and Dresden) a year at just below 1 cent; keeping in mind this is 2021-22 data for a potential payment cost that won't begin until 2022-23. We also are pursuing special funding rates, available to public schools, which could reduce costs, but will not be known until after voting on the articles.

6th Grade Tuition Warrant Article (Dresden Ballot)

This warrant article is only on the Dresden ballot and, if approved, would result in changes to the way tuition is calculated for the Hanover 6th grade students at the Richmond Middle School. The current process is extremely convoluted and has contributed to significant swings in the Dresden budget (we are witnessing one this year). Also, if in the future it was decided that it made sense to send Norwich's 6th graders to RMS, this article would provide a legal avenue to doing so. However, this would, of course, include a community-wide discussion. A detailed presentation on the proposed article can be found on the [SAU70 Business & Finance page](#).

All budget documents are posted and can be downloaded on the [SAU70 Business & Finance page](#). Click the "Norwich 2021-22" and "Dresden 2021-22" links for the specific information. We hope you can join us, virtually, for the Dresden Annual Meeting and Norwich's Town Meeting for more information on the budget and an opportunity for Q&A.

Dresden Annual Meeting

Thursday, February 25th at 7pm

via [Zoom](#)*

Due to Vermont COVID Guidelines, Vermont residents cannot attend in-person.

Norwich Town Meeting

Monday, March 1st at 7pm

via [Zoom](#)*

The School Board presents first this year.