

# FREMONT BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING

Fremont Town Hall  
295 Main Street  
Fremont, NH 03044  
January 12, 2012  
7:00 PM

## I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Gene Cordes called the January 12, 2012 meeting to order at 7:00 pm on the main floor of Fremont Town Hall. This included a reopening of the recessed Town Public Hearing of January 11, 2012.

Present were: Budget Committee Members Gene Cordes, Charles Kimball, Greg Fraize, Greta St. Germain, and Jeanne Nygren, School Board Representative Sharon Girardi and Recording Secretary Susan Perry.

Members of the public included: Heidi Carlson, Mike Nygren, Lori Holmes, Deb Genthner, Ida Keane, Andy Kohlhofer, Jeff Rowell, Bonnie Sandstrom, Gary Sandstrom, Cammie Fraize, Antje McKee-Courcy, Brett Hunter and Annmarie Scribner.

## II. DISCUSSION

*Jeanne Nygren made a motion to approve the minutes of January 11, 2012. Sharon Girardi seconded the motion. Motion passed 5:0:1 (abstention from G. Cordes)*

Mr. Cordes said that the Budget Committee had recommended (7:0) the Town Operating Budget on January 4, 2012 (\$2,563,725) and that it was not necessary to vote again on it last night. Ms. Carlson noted that not seeing that vote in the January 4, 2012 minutes was an oversight, and that the Budget Committee recommendation on the operating budget should have been listed with Warrant Article 6.

There was discussion about the legality of reducing the wages in the Town Clerk's (an elected position) budget based on the reduction of hours without a Warrant Article. Ms. St. Germain had spoken with Paul Sanderson of Local Government Center who said that the statutes do not state that a separate warrant article needs to be presented and that the operating budget and the amounts within are a warrant article to deliver to the voters.

Mr. Cordes expressed concern that this was being an issue at this late stage of the budget process.

Lori Holmes (Town Clerk) was concerned that, as a Department Head, she had only found out about this issue at the meeting last night and that she had not been asked to sit before the Selectmen/Budget Committee for a change. She said in past years, citizens voted on salaries of elected officials (presented as separate Warrant Articles). She said when she decreased her hours, thereby decreasing her salary, it should have been on the ballot and that this was an oversight. She had an issue with the Budget Committee putting a deduction from her salary in the operating budget at the last minute.

Mr. Cordes summarized Ms. Holmes' input that whether it was DRA required or not, past practice has been that salary changes were stand-alone Warrant Articles.

Mr. Cordes recollect that a statement was made by Ms. St. Germain at a previous Budget meeting in that she spoke of placing a separate warrant article onto the ballot for all elected officials. St. Germain disputed Cordes claim and attempted to clarify her statement in that all elected officials wages/stipends are determined by town vote, and that she had never made a specific claim of the need for a separate warrant article.

In addition St. Germain went on to state that actions or practices of past boards or Committees do not bind current Boards. Unless those practices are required by statute or had been previously set in stone by a Town vote. Therefore, it should not assume moving forward or for future practice.

Ms. Holmes said she asked for a raise in 2011 and was told it would go before voters (as an elected official) and, in this way, the vote reflected job performance. Ms. St. Germain disagreed stating that Ms. Holmes' hours were reduced "in the eleventh hour".

Mr. Cordes said that the question was the Budget Committee voted on the Operating Budget/MS-7 on January 4 (7:0) and if people wanted to revisit that. Ms. Nygren noted there had not been a recommendation by the Selectmen yet. Ms. Carlson said that with SB2, the budget article only includes the Budget Committee's number when the Budget Committee voted on it (it was not necessarily illegal to have re-voted on it.)

Mr. Cordes said he did not see a proposal on anything so the meeting progressed.

Ms. Carlson talked about verbiage to be added to Warrant Articles 7, 8, and 9, stating that "This sum to come from unreserved fund balance and no amount to be raised from taxation" based on the Board of Selectmen's decision earlier this evening at their meeting, to fund those articles from Unreserved Fund Balance.

Mr. Cordes noted that the Budget Committee had recommended Warrant Articles 7, 8 and 9 (7:0) and they were being asked to reconsider their vote subject to adding the verbiage noted above.

Jeanne Nygren made a motion to recommend leaving the verbiage as is for Warrant Articles 7, 8 and 9 (to not recommend the Articles as amended). No one seconded the motion. Motion failed.

*Sharon Girardi made a motion to recommend Warrant Articles 7, 8, and 9 with the added verbiage made by the Board of Selectmen. Greg Fraize seconded the motion. Motion passed 5:1 (nay = J. Nygren).*

Ms. Girardi reported that the School Board had voted to accept the verbiage recommended by the Budget Committee for School District Warrant Article 5.

*Charles Kimball made a motion to recommend School District Warrant Article 5 as written. Sharon Girardi seconded the motion. Motion passed 5:1 (nay = J. Nygren)*

There was more discussion regarding the Town Clerk issue. Ms. Holmes read excerpts from prior minutes defending her position. Ms. St. Germain noted that the present Board was not held to past Board practices unless practices were voted on by the Townspeople.

*Charles Kimball made a motion to close the Public Hearing of the Town's Budget at 7:40 pm. Jeanne Nygren seconded the motion. Motion passed 6:0.*

### **III. PUBLIC HEARING: SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET**

Mr. Cordes gave an overview of the School District budget process this year, noting that there were high school tuition cost increases (increased enrollment/rate increases) that needed to be dealt with. He noted that the Ellis school budget was level-funded and he praised Principal Safina and staff to endeavor to level-fund. Mr. Cordes felt that the experience was different from prior years and he said the outcome was good.

Ms. Girardi gave a synopsis of the budget process this year, saying it was a good experience working as a team. She noted that the Ellis school budget was down by about \$750 with an increase only in high school tuition (@\$157,000)

Ms. Girardi read School Warrant Articles 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. She mentioned that the Ellis School Support Staff asked for no salary increases for the next two years because they understood the recent economic times and they liked working at Ellis and were happy to have employment.

Mike Nygren asked if Article 6 (foreign language teacher) included salary/benefits and Ms. Girardi replied that it did. She explained that it was the concept of having a foreign language program at Ellis that the District wanted to find out if voters accepted. She noted that it would benefit Ellis middle school students to have foreign language experience to match what other middle schoolers have going into Sanborn High School. She said that the School Board agreed for the most part. A School Board member (Andy Kohlhofer said it was himself) thought this could be done via virtual learning; Ms. Girardi felt that a person would still be necessary to manage students and that this type of virtual learning program worked best for self-motivated children. Ms. Girardi said that the foreign language program would be part of the curriculum as a Unified Art. Ida Keane explained that she wanted this to go on a Warrant Article to have voters vote if they wanted the program or not at Ellis. Mr. Nygren asked what the tax impact would be if the program was accepted by voters. Ms. Keane guessed it would be less than \$1.00 per \$1,000.00.

Ms. St. Germain gave kudos to the School District for presenting a level-funded budget.

Regarding Warrant Article 5, Mr. Kohlhofer explained that the school had a Building and Maintenance fund that in years past was funded \$10,000/year. Currently there was \$64,000 in the fund, of which the School Board was in control. Funds could be used for only matters of school building/grounds/maintenance.

Annmarie Scribner asked about the CBA for Support Staff; Ms. Girardi said that they were staying with the current contract with current salary schedule (they would stay at the present salary for 2 years). Deb Genthner mentioned that items in the contract were tightened up.

Mr. Kohlhofer and Ms. Keane mentioned that there was a clause in the contract regarding the possible effect of Obamacare so that the School District would not get penalized by the government for not doing what they needed to do contractually if Obamacare went through.

*At 7:50 pm Jeanne Nygren made a motion to adjourn the School District Budget Public Hearing. Greg Fraize seconded the motion. Motion passed 6:0.*

The Committee members signed paperwork including the School District Form MS-27 and the Town's Form MS-7.

At 8 pm, Greta St. Germain exited to join the Board of Selectmen's meeting downstairs.

The next Budget Committee meeting will be on Wednesday, April 18, 2012 at 7:00 pm.

#### **IV. ADJOURNMENT**

*At 8:05 pm, Sharon Girardi made a motion to adjourn. Jeanne Nygren seconded the motion. Motion passed 4:0.*

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan Perry  
Recording Secretary