

FREMONT BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING

Fremont Town Hall

295 Main Street

Fremont, NH 03044

November 14, 2012

7:00 PM

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Gene Cordes called the November 14, 2012 meeting to order at 7:02 pm on the main floor of Fremont Town Hall.

Present were: Budget Committee Members Gene Cordes, Griffin Cordes, Greg Fraize, Charles Kimball, Patricia Martel, Joe Miccile, and Mike Nygren, and Recording Secretary Susan Perry.

Members of the public included: School Board members Deb Genthner, Sharon Girardi, Ida Keane, and Andy Kohlhofer; School Business Administrator Laurie Verville; Ellis School Principal John Safina; Special Education Coordinator Sarah Krebs; and citizen Margie Diggins.

II. SCHOOL OFFICIALS: PRESENTATION OF NEW BUDGET

School Business Administrator Laurie Verville mentioned that School Superintendent Michelle Langa was absent due to illness but noted that she had put her "heart and soul" into the school budget. Ms. Verville thanked the Budget Committee for the opportunity to review the budget with them. She said that their goal was to do zero-based budgeting and that the "gross-based" budgeting accounted for each expense, how it was spent and how it figured into education. She reviewed their budget process that started after Labor Day and noted that a major part of the budget was the tuition that Fremont pays to Sanborn Regional High School.

Ms. Verville stated that there had been a request to use carryover money to pay for some positions that were grant-funded in the past but for which there was no money to pay for it (Special Education Case Manager as part of IDEA Grant; Title I reading/math case manager). It is unsure how much the District will get from Federal grants. The default budget included the current contracts/collective bargaining agreements. The expired teachers CBA allowed for Step and track changes. Many teachers were at the top level and had not had wage increases. The FY 2013-2014 proposed budget of \$10,923,162.70 included Federal grant positions.

There was a discussion regarding NH Retirement increases. The employee rate for next year will be 10.77% (up from 8.8% this year); the teachers' rate will be 14.16%. There would be a \$98,000 impact on the budget.

There was review of the high school budget, which was up 4% (\$170,000). The guaranteed maximum (tuition) rate (GMR) presented by Sanborn H.S. was an increase of 7.54% overall. This reflected what Sanborn's budget was now, before their Superintendent made cuts; Fremont budgeted this accordingly.

Included in the teachers' bargaining agreement was that two teachers could retire/early out at \$10,000 each. One teacher was interested in this already.

To make up for increased costs, Reductions-in-force were proposed:

1. Retirement position that has not been renewed (duties were recognized in case this position is necessary in the future).

2. Reduction of a Special Education teacher
3. One less Speech Therapist (look at having 2 Speech Pathologists driven by IEPs)
4. Reduction of a Para-aide
5. Reduction of full-time nurse to half-time nurse

These cuts would result in a savings of \$358,000.00.

Health insurance and dental premiums have gone up a bit (2.3% and 3.9% depending on plan). Local Government Center (LGC) over-collected on premiums to fund the liability pool. After litigation at the State level, there was need to return money as a "premium holiday". Out of the \$12 million, \$28,223 would go to Fremont, shown as an offset (adjust budget down). There might be another premium holiday in August 2014, but Fremont would only get the money if they remain with LGC. Credits were reflected in the budget as reduced expenses.

The budget was level-funded for all nine District employees.

The \$68,500 in budget cuts made by the Administration and Facilities and Technology Directors included: not pursuing Web design, relooking at the formula for substitute hiring, textbooks, and not purchasing digital whiteboards or a science room plumbing project.

Mr. Cordes asked if IEPs would be delivered with the cuts being made. Special Education Coordinator Sarah Krebs replied that IEPs would be delivered and that they were data-driven based on needs. She was disappointed at the late resignation of the case manager, noting that it was cost effective to front load services, especially reading, when children were younger.

Ellis Principal John Safina said that they looked at the least amount of impact on students and staff. They needed to rework the schedule to have one nurse. Class size would go up in certain areas but not across the board. He commended the staff and noted that it was not easy to make cuts and level-fund when they involved children and education. He mentioned that Ellis was making gains. Test scores were increasing and Ellis made AYP last April. They were looking at Special Education services and if they were actually necessary and if reclassification/discharge would make sense. This would reduce the need for services rather than cut services.

Computer system was upgraded last year and access and speed are better and quicker now. The Technology budget reflects maintenance/additions to what the school has. Some cuts included laptops (not directly what students have), Website and smart boards (not in the Tech Plan). Mr. Safina mentioned that he just joined the Technology Education Board for the State (Christa McAuliffe Science Center) and he should be able to keep an eye on technology grant opportunities. Ms. Keane mentioned that over the past two years \$100,000 was put into technology infrastructure (more reliable Windows computers), funded through savings, and were able to return money to taxpayers to offset the budget. The Technology Plan was still in the purchase schedule (in the budget).

Mr. Cordes asked if, for example tuition was \$50,000 less, that would be isolated and Ms. Verville replied yes. She said that the Board was involved in oversight/assisting her with what was being spent in the budget.

Ms. Martel asked if the projected student listing reflected RIFs and Ms. Keane replied that the enrollment sheet was as if everyone stayed.

There was discussion about identifying students as they enter high school. Ms. Krebs said that identified students were re-evaluated every three years so sometimes it made sense to re-evaluate in the eighth grade; it depended on where a child is at and what boundaries there were. There were 61 identified students (preschool – grade 8), the largest group being in the eighth grade. With an

enrollment of 437, this amounted to around 15% identified students in preschool – grade 8 at Ellis (based on need). This percentage was down this year. They were doing more with interventions at Ellis and progress was being made. They were looking at the high school population and discharging if students do not have Special Education needs.

Mr. Nygren asked if test scores reflected class sizes and Ms. Keane replied, yes, that test scores were better as class sizes were smaller.

The Ellis School budget was made separate from the high school budget.

Mr. Nygren asked what the difference in staffing. Ms. Keane answered that Ellis was down by two teachers from two years ago and this year and down more than 70 students. She said that the numbers were different then/2 years ago. There was discussion about class sizes. Mr. Safina mentioned that when he first started working at Ellis, it was more crowded and he noted that there was a different feeling at Ellis now. He noted that students have come and gone from Charter school or families have moved out of the state to find work. Building capacity was around 490. Mr. Cordes noted that actuaries envisioned a reduction in enrollment. Mr. Safina mentioned that NH enrollment was down around 126,000 students but the population in NH rose by around 86,000.

Budget Committee members would take the school budget home to review. Any questions would go through Greg Fraize to Ms. Verville and, in turn, Ms. Verville would email answers to Heidi Carlson to distribute to Budget Committee members.

The following meetings were scheduled: November 28 (focus on K-8 budget), December 5 (focus on high school/out-of-district placement, December 12 (non-academic/support staff/equipment/other expenses, and December 19. Petition Warrants are due January 8, 2013 by 4pm. The public hearing for Town and School will be on January 8, 2012, with January 9 for continuation if necessary or as a snow date (in that case, January 10 would be used for carry over).

Mr. Cordes said that the Selectmen had tied up loose ends with the Police Department budget and was ready for Budget Committee review.

III. REVIEW & APPROVE MINUTES FOR MEETING OF OCTOBER 31, 2012

Mike Nygren motioned to amend the meeting minutes of October 31, 2012. Charles Kimball seconded the motion. Motion passed 7:0.

IV. NEXT MEETING DATE: WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 28, 2012

V. ADJOURNMENT

At 8:22 pm, Griffin Cordes made a motion to adjourn. Charles Kimball seconded the motion. Motion passed 7:0.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Perry,
Recording Secretary