

FREMONT BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING

Fremont Town Hall
295 Main Street
Fremont, NH 03044
December 4, 2013
7:00 PM

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Charles Kimball called the December 4, 2013 Budget Committee meeting to order at 7:10 pm on the main floor of Fremont Town Hall.

Present were: Budget Committee Chair Charles Kimball and members Greg Fraize, Leon Holmes, Pat Martel, Mike Nygren, and Tyra Vargas, and Recording Secretary Susan Perry. Members of the public included School Superintendent Betsey Cox-Buteau, Financial Administrator Susan Penny, Ellis School Principal John Safina, Andy Kohlhofer and Sharon Girardi.

II. SCHOOL BUDGET REVIEW

There was review of the statement of expenditures-general fund-FY13-14. It was noted that \$11,333,689.65 was an overstated amount for the adopted budget (for unknown reason) but this was fixed/adjusted and the revised budget (7/1/13-6/30/14) was \$11,328,695.00.

The Committee members reviewed the answers to questions that were asked at the last meeting. (See attached).

There was a discussion about high school tuition costs and contract. It was noted that there were 31 fewer Fremont students going to Sanborn Regional High school so that the divided cost was higher. There was question as to Fremont's assumption of the burden of Sanborn's shortcomings.

It was noted that Fremont's teacher contract had no Step raises and it was clarified that there was no Evergreen clause, even though it was written before Evergreen was present (there was no discussion in the Town minutes of 1987 about the Evergreen clause). Most of the school budget increase was due to increases in insurance and tuition and CBA. Fremont would arrange to talk to Sanborn. Mr. Nygren suggested getting an itemized breakdown from Sanborn. An option would be to petition to the State Board of Education, stating that the contract was negatively affecting the Town of Fremont.

It was noted that Kingston and Newton were part of a Co-operative and that Fremont paid capital improvement costs above tuition cost. This year, Fremont paid \$13,250.70 in tuition plus \$2,041 in capital gain, which totaled \$15,291. If the historical 3% difference in tuition cost happens again, the cost would go back to about \$13,000.

Mr. Nygren mentioned that the Selectmen gave \$1.00 off the tax rate last year but this year, with no CBA or Warrant Articles, they were looking at \$1.90 this year. He felt that the Town could not sustain that and that, at Deliberative Session, he could not personally present the School Board budget in favor or non-favor. He was concerned that the School Board made no cuts, noting that last year the public added money back and the previous Superintendent suggested (no formal vote) that it would most likely not be spent but it was spend (second nurse, hire back of a retained teacher, pay for higher bus contract cost).

Mr. Nygren asked if the Budget Committee could get monthly expense reports as had been done in the past (including annotation of where money was moved). Ms. Penny would be able to send these to Mr. Fraize for distribution via Ms. Carlson. Mr. Fraize would email the information that was given at last night's School Board meeting.

Mr. Safina clarified that Mr. Herrmann taught science to grades 7 and 8 and did not have a homeroom in order to accommodate his set-up for these classes (therefore it looked in the budget like he had no students, but he was indeed a full-time teacher).

It was clarified that the 6th grade math teacher taught social studies, a section of reading and RTI as well as math. RTI has been successful. More students have moved into enrichment and have advanced well.

Mr. Safina clarified that the math program has been working in conjunction with the high school and that some students were taking advanced math. Teachers were working on aligning Everyday Math (a spiraling scientifically-based math program) with Common Core philosophy (more linear program). Common Core was bringing higher concepts to lower levels and was more challenging as standards were raised. Ms. Cox-Buteau explained that Common Core was being implemented to bring the level of education in the United States up to worldwide levels. It was an adjustment. All students would have to meet the same standards (e.g. read at the same level in the same grade).

There was a discussion about the high tax rate in Fremont. Mr. Kohlhofer noted that assessments only went up \$7million and do not sustain the Town budget. He said that \$20-30million/year for @ 5 years would sustain expenditures. There was also a lack of business in Fremont, which lowered the tax base.

Mr. Safina noted that there were some cuts in staff last year (ESOL, nurse, ¼ Guidance Counselor, etc.) and that interventionists have been cut over the years. This resulted in smaller class sizes, which were good for Ellis in achieving improved scores. Cutting down on Special Education staff and bringing interventions into classrooms has helped. Results on School Digger showed rankings (see attached) and that Ellis was improving but had more work to do. The point was more about the needs of students and not the class sizes. Mr. Safina mentioned that operating costs have not increased (the school was not asking for more) and that they strived to level-fund. Last year parents felt there was a need for certain students and that they had a voice as taxpayers. In the past, programs such as band and Health had been cut. More cuts put more work on teachers' plate. He noted that when Fremont separated budgeting from Sanborn high school cost, Ellis' budget was down by \$3,000 last year.

Mr. Kohlhofer also noted that the Federal government and State required schools to do more and people had to pay for it. Such requirements took from other places. The government put social problems on schools, whose mission should be to educate; a lot of mandates to put programs together cost money. This causes American schools to struggle.

Ms. Girardi noted that the School Board listened to the Budget Committee's request to cut a bus last year. The bus company analyzed routes. Not all students were from the same neighborhood and there had to be accommodations for children not being on buses over 45 minutes per School policy. There was only one transportation bid. There were some savings in the bus contract in that the company moved its office back to Reading and they cut Fremont's cost. There were more bus stops for kindergarten/first grade; and there were no sidewalks in Fremont for safe walking to school.

Ms. Penny would supply state revenues when available. It was noted that enrollment changed periodically.

There was discussion about charter schools and if they closed, students would assimilate back to Ellis and raise class sizes.

There was discussion about summer reading book retention to save money.

The default budget was about \$79,000 less than the regular budget.

There was discussion about the Assistant Principal position, which worked on discipline, curriculum (important currently for the change to Common Core), evaluations, etc. This would be too much work for one Principal. Ellis discipline issues did not warrant Saturday detentions, which would accrue cost also. Discipline issues at Ellis had decreased 80% last spring, which helped account for the increase in grades. Students were proud of Ellis as the culture has changed.

There was discussion about teacher: student ratio (which was about 1:6, similar to Sanborn).

Mr. Kimball was concerned about adding new computers and furniture. Mr. Fraize noted that the nurse's office in particular needed updates (replacement) for safety; there were photos in the budget book.

There would be review of Warrant Articles at the next meeting. Ms. Martel would review the budget and make recommendations for cuts. Mr. Nygren wondered about revenue for high school. The School Administrators and Board members would not need to attend the December 11 meeting.

Mr. Fraize moved to approve the school budget as presented. No second. Motion failed.

Ms. Martel suggested not doing the NEASC accreditation. Mr. Fraize noted that the Town raises increased by 2% so the budget was not flat.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF 20, 2013

Greg Fraize moved to edit the sentence stating that the Town budget was "nearly" flat. Pat Martel seconded the motion. Motion passed 6:0

Pat Martel moved to approve the November 20, 2013 minutes as amended. Greg Fraize seconded the motion. Motion passed 6:0.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Mike Nygren moved to adjourn at 9:00 PM. Pat Martel seconded the motion. Motion passed 6:0.

Respectfully submitted by, Susan Perry, Budget Committee Secretary

11/26/2013

FY 15 MUNICIPAL BUDGET COMMITTEE QUESTIONS

SAU 83

QUESTION	ANSWER
1 Can that part that the district pays for health insurance be cut?	The health insurance premium percentage for the employees in their the administrators (non-union) contracts can be changed if the contract expires June 30, 2014. These contracts would include the following employees: Yvonne Ouellette, Susan Penny, John Salina, JR Bridle, Sarah Krebs, Brenda Fabrizio, and Scott Brown. (The interim superintendent and the school board are presently in contract negotiations which is a non-public process.)
2 Can we not fund the non-union contracts?	Non-union employees included at the SAU: The superintendent, the payroll and accounts receivable/receptionist, the financial administrator, at Ellis these include: the principal, the assistant principal, the special education coordinator, the school psychologist, and the facilities director. Minimum standards require "superintendent services," a school principal for schools with student populations over 300, and psychological services as required to implement the Individual with Disabilities in Education Act's IEPs.
3 Can the number of students per classroom be raised?	Each student must have 36 square feet in his classroom which equals 25 student fitting into a 900 square foot classroom. Some of the classrooms at Ellis School are undersized (below the minimum standard of 900 square feet) therefore, classes in those rooms must use the 36 square foot rule to determine how many students can be educated in that room. Please refer to the accompanying map of the building.
4 Can the high school bus be dropped?	The bus contract presently in force with North Reading Transportation extends for two more years and includes the cost of 8 buses whether or not the busses are used. A copy of the contract is attached.
5 Line 14 of the October expense report and the revised budget do not match?	Money was moved. See the "Adopted versus Revised" budget report.
6 Can the MBC have copies of all budget transfers made since 7/1/13?	Yes, see accompanying copies.
7 What type of validation does the SAU have on the GMR figures that come from Sanborn?	A copy of the FY15 annual SRHS tuition letter and figures are in this packet. You will find among them the DOE - ESTIMATING CURRENT EXPENDITURE PER PUPIL worksheet used by Sanborn to provide SAU 83 with the GMR. The financial administrator completes the FY15 budget, and using the budget estimates for the FY15 DOE-25 figures, she completes the worksheet. This is why this is the guaranteed "maximum" rate, because when the FY15 budget is actually passed by the votes in Sanborn, these figures generally will not go up so Sanborn's risk is minimal. If their budget did indeed go up, they cannot charge SAU 83 more. They most likely will go down and so SAU 83 would receive adjusted figures. Over time, the GMR tends to be about 3% above the final cost per pupil. This has been relatively consistent. I am not aware that any financial administrator in SAU 83 has done a "match-up" between what Sanborn projects into the GMR against their proposed budget. Sanborn would have to be willing to give us a copy of that budget and there is no clause in the tuition agreement requiring them to do so.
8 Why does Fremont not receive any surplus experienced by Sanborn?	In reality, Fremont does. SAU 83 received \$60,059.41 from Sanborn this summer which went back to the taxpayers.
9 There was an inference that the SAU was "hiding" money through budget transfers.	The SAU transfers money between accounts to cover surpluses and deficits in budgeting across the budget. No one can predict with perfect accuracy the needs of a budget a year in advance. It is always a "best guess." Also, with the turnover in the SAU, it is very difficult to know what was in the mind of a predecessor when s/he set up the account allocations during the previous year.
10 There was a question regarding the growth in the supply line.	You will find provided with this sheet an accounting of how the figure in the supply lines was derived from last year's budget into the proposed budget.
11 In line 24, why is the cassette recorder needed?	The 3 CD/Cassette Player Recorders (1 for each kindergarten classroom) are to play CD's and Cassettes in the classroom. Treasures (the new reading program) comes with music CDs and stories on tape and CD. Also, they play a lot of music in kindergarten, and the players that they have now are either broken or on their way out.
12 Are the uniforms for the custodians in their contracts?	The uniforms for the custodians are not in their contracts. In the past, the district has provided shirts and paid for their cleaning. For many years now, the custodians have been provided with nothing. The shirts that they received many years ago are old, worn, and stained and need replacing. For the safety of the students and staff, it is essential that these employees are easily identifiable at all times. Uniform shirts do precisely that.



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Ellis School

Public | Grades: PK-8 | 533 students
SchoolDigger 2013 Rating: ★★★★★

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SchoolDigger 2013 Rankings:

Ellis School: ★★★★★

SchoolDigger Ranks Ellis School 193rd of 219 New Hampshire public elementary schools. ([See Ellis School in the ranking list.](#))

Fremont School District: ★★★★★

SchoolDigger ranks Fremont School District 133rd of 140 New Hampshire school districts. ([See district ranking list.](#))

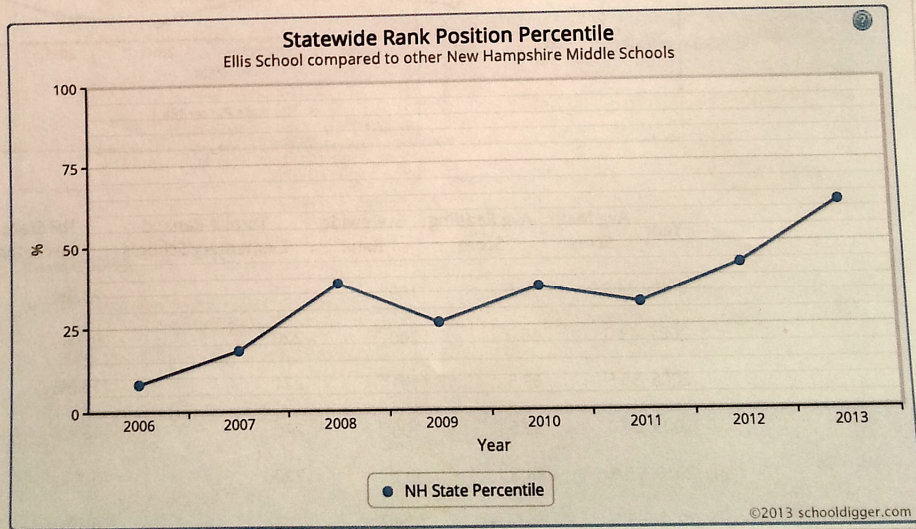
Average Parent Rating: ★★★★★

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Ellis School
 Public | Grades: PK-8 | 533 students
 SchoolDigger 2013 Rating: ★★★★★

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Dear School Board and Dr. Cox,

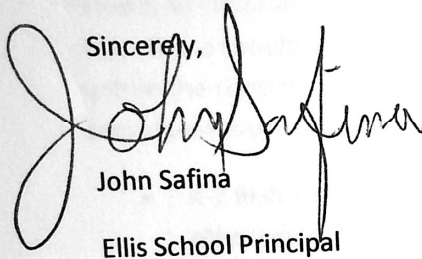
I've submitted a proposal to Dr. Cox for a part-time Spanish Teacher. Adding a part-time teacher instead of full-time (and making other cuts) would allow us to keep the 4th grade teacher and not increase the budget submitted to the board on October 22. I want to reiterate my position on the need for smaller class sizes at Ellis School. Dr. Cox and I had a recent discussion about the need for the 4th grade teacher. During the conversation the idea of a K-3 interventionist instead of a classroom teacher was discussed. Last year we had such a position but it was eliminated from the budget for FY14. My rationale for lower class sizes is due to the increasing expectations placed on our classroom teachers over the years. Ellis School had many intervention personnel in the past that were eliminated. The responsibilities of the cut personnel did not go away. They were redistributed amongst administration, special education and mostly to classroom teachers. I am providing you with a list of Interventionists that have been cut at Ellis. These should illustrate the increasing number of services that teachers have been able to provide within the context of a small classroom size. This list does not include any cuts to administration, secretarial support or Regular and Special Education teachers.

- K-2 Reading Interventionist. There were 2 previously. One was cut several years ago and the other was cut last year.
- Middle School Reading Interventionist.
- Full time Case Manager/Behavior Specialist
- Contracted Service – D. LeClair was a PBIS specialist and consultant from SERESC working with our staff. She facilitated the implementation and execution of PBIS and worked on individual behavior plans for students.
- Enrichment Coordinator – Set up intervention programs for our Gifted and Talented Population.
- Math Specialist – Full-Time Math Specialist for Grades K-8
- Social Worker
- Family Resource Coordinator
- 2 Full Time Title I Tutors – Presently we have a paraprofessional working half time with Mrs. Olms in Title I and half time with Special Education.
- Data Specialist
- Elementary Reading Specialist – Previously we had 2 Reading Specialists – Jen Thomas was the Middle School Reading Specialist and when the second position was eliminated she became school- wide Reading Specialist.
- Elementary Guidance to .75
- ESOL – we had one student in need of ESOL services. When the student graduated the position was eliminated. If we have any students enroll with ESOL needs we will contract out for only 3 hours a week.
- Health Teacher – This was a Unified Arts class that was cut. It was not an interventionist position. However, the Health curriculum needed to be distributed to other personnel. The Physical Education Teacher, Guidance, Nurses and Classroom Teachers have picked up Health standards as part of their program.

- Curriculum Coordinator – Classroom Teachers now take on the full responsibility of mapping and aligning their curriculum.
- First Grade Transition Class Teacher
- World Cultures Teacher – Middle School
- Spanish Teacher

Looking at an enrollment sheet only tells part of the story of what we are asking of our teachers. The achievement of students has increased over the past few years. Part of the reason is that we can provide individualized education and instruction to our students. The lower class sizes have facilitated this and the ability of our classroom teachers to fulfill the responsibilities of the eliminated interventionists. This job will become increasingly difficult as class sizes increase.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Safina". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

John Safina

Ellis School Principal