

FREMONT BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
Fremont Town Hall
295 Main Street
Fremont, NH 03044
DECEMBER 3, 2014
7:00 PM

I CALL TO ORDER

Chair Mike Nygren called the December 3, 2014 Budget Committee meeting to order at 7:00 PM on the main floor of Fremont Town Hall.

Present were: Budget Committee members Mary Anderson, Greg Fraize, Leon Holmes (for Gene Cordes), Neal Janvrin, Mark Kidd, Pat Martel, and Mike Nygren.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Neal Janvrin made a motion to approve the minutes of November 19, 2014 as written. Mark Kidd seconded the motion. Motion passed 6:1 (abstention from L. Holmes).

III. REVIEW OF SCHOOL BUDGET

Mr. Nygren mentioned that the Committee had suggested to the Superintendent that the money for the asbestos removal be taken from leftover money, in the hopes of having a 2% budget decrease and having the teachers' contract pass. He felt that the savings from last year would almost offset the first year's raises for teachers.

Ms. Anderson noted that originally the Superintendent recommended cutting two 4th/5th grade teachers to accommodate the lower enrollment, but that the budget still reflected having the two teachers (26 total teachers). With three teachers in those two grade levels, class sizes would be 14.3 and 14.7, which she said was low. If there were two teachers, class sizes would be 21 and 22. The State average for grades 3-5 was 30 or fewer (strive for 25). Ms. Anderson referenced Derry schools where there was talk of closing a school and there was a policy that capped class size at about 25 in grades 6-8. Mr. Fraize suggested getting information on schools similar to Ellis. Ms. Anderson clarified that she did not favor having classes of 30 students, but she also felt that 14 was very low. She did not think a class size of 20-25 was unreasonable in grades over 4. Mr. Fraize had looked at the State Website and said that in 2009, in grades 5-8, class sizes were about 20; in the years since, class sizes have reduced. Mr. Kidd said that students seemed to be learning more/ the school has rated higher with class sizes as they currently were. Mr. Kidd understood the need to cut but suggested looking to cut elsewhere in the budget first. There was discussion about how classroom aides were mandatory for Special Education students with IEPs as well as how they provided help for teachers.

Mr. Fraize noted that the State Website showed that last year (FY14) the average class size was 19.3 for grades 3 and 4 and 19.7 for grades 5 and 6. Last year Ellis's class sizes averaged 15 in grades 3- 6. There was discussion about the difficulty of keeping attention span of children up to age 12-13 in 90-minute blocks; block scheduling started at Ellis at grade 4.

Ms. Anderson mentioned that there was a parental suggestion at the last School Board meeting regarding the consideration of moving the SAU office to Ellis to save money. There was a question if the lease was up in June 2015 or 2016. Mr. Nygren said the School Board would have to plan for that. Ms. Anderson noted that originally, citizens did not vote on the current SAU office (it was included in that year's budget). She mentioned that Chester was similar to Fremont and the SAU office was in a small room at the school and meetings were held in the library.

There was discussion about the Spanish Teacher. Mr. Fraize mentioned that parents wanted to have a foreign language program so Ellis students would be at a similar level as other students entering Sanborn Regional High School. Ms. Anderson noted that in high school, there was one level for beginners and one level for students who had previous foreign language instruction. She mentioned that currently colleges require only 2 years of high school foreign language. Mr. Kidd wondered what Districts like Danville did for foreign language. Mr. Fraize said the Board referred to Sanborn and that the Spanish program would be offered to qualified RTI students. This year, the Spanish Club enrollment was maxxed due to student interest. The club would not be

leveled to a program leading into Sanborn High School. Ms. Anderson noted that most (middle) schools offer just a half-year or so of a language. Mr. Kidd felt that financially this did not seem like a necessity at this moment. Mr. Fraize thought Sanborn students had an opportunity to “test out”, but he would confirm that. Ms. Anderson wanted to see the survey that was done. She would rather keep class sizes smaller and consider the Spanish program a “luxury” if necessary, but she felt something needed to be done in light of the declining enrollment.

There was discussion about Town demographics, including needing a 5% growth and not having enough new taxable property to offset taxes. Mr. Nygren was concerned that the Town could not afford a Curriculum Coordinator and Assistant Payroll clerk, though he understood there was a lot of work to do. He said the SAU office budget used to be around \$200,000 and was currently \$410,000. He said that when more things/staff get added to the budget, it was harder for the Budget Committee to promote the necessity of passing a teacher contract, which he felt was of most importance. Mr. Fraize clarified that a position was a “remove/add” (net zero gain). Ms. Anderson said a Curriculum Coordinator was an administrative position, not a classroom teacher with direct instruction. She felt that it would help people understand if the School Board and Administration told people that the two teachers were not necessary, and review class sizes, etc., as was originally done in the current budget.

Mr. Nygren said it was necessary to do the maintenance work on the long-range list.

Mr. Nygren felt that non-classroom teachers should not get raises, bonuses, or professional development money until the teacher contract passed. Mr. Fraize said professional development was contractual. Mr. Nygren said the Budget Committee should not recommend funding this (that the money could be found someplace else). Specifically in question were the two \$5,000 (non-union) Administrative raises. Mr. Kidd was concerned that they did not know that the \$5,000 raises were in those contracts. There was a question why there were contractual obligations of \$5,000 raises for two Administrative positions when the teachers did not have raises/contracts. Mr. Fraize would get the contractual information. He did mention that if the Board had voted raises, they were due to positive employee performance. Mr. Nygren felt that until there was budget stability, the Budget Committee did not contract the raises and had to represent the Town. It was noted that Town employees had gone without raises.

There was a request for a New Executive Summary and a list of positions.

Ms. Martel said that all positions seemed to be encumbered as of November 17, 2014 and that there was \$167,000 unencumbered in regular education. She said the proposed budget was \$300,000 higher than the FY15 budget with \$167,000 left. She was concerned about the significant increase in regular education. Special Education was up \$121,000 with \$80,000 unencumbered. There was a fund balance of \$477,000 on the revenue page. Revenues were down. There was concern about the long-term bus contract where there has been the same number of buses even with the decrease in enrollment.

After a discussion about having PDFs emailed, there was a request to have copies of expense reports mailed to Board members’ homes by the SAU. Mr. Fraize noted that the District used electronic agendas, etc. to save on printing cost but that he would make the request by the Budget Committee to the SAU.

There was concern that items not recommended by the Budget Committee was put back into the school budget (money was moved around). Mr. Fraize said that contractual items needed to be funded. It was noted that Townspeople voted for both Budget Committee and School Board members.

Mr. Kidd was concerned that the new Superintendent’s contract was for 5 years; Mr. Fraize clarified that the contract was for 3 years with 2-year option. Mr. Kidd wanted to know if the Superintendent suggested the two \$5,000 raises to the School Board. Mr. Fraize would get that information.

There was a question about what 13 non-CBA positions were included in line 243 (salary pool). Mr. Fraize would get that information.

There was a request to see how the budget process went from the teachers to the Principal, Superintendent, and School Board (to see what cuts were made along the way, etc.). Mr. Fraize said that the Principal had created a “wish list” two years ago and wasn’t sure if that happened this year. The School Board reviewed the SAU budget and made no changes. Mr. Kidd asked if each School Board member reviewed the school budget and Mr. Fraize said he believed each member did review the budget lines and that the School Board had

discussed the budget at the last few meetings. There were about 30 line-item questions that were addressed. The Committee was concerned that the Board made no cuts. Ms. Anderson was concerned about the 47% increase in the School Board budget and there was question about the increase in legal costs (for CBAs and Sanborn contract work). Ms. Anderson said that professional development cost, though contractual, should be budgeted based on historical data because not all teachers take professional development.

Ms. Martel asked about line 3 where \$18,000 had not been used in sick-time rebates. Mr. Nygren thought it was a buy-back at the end of the year. Mr. Fraize would clarify.

Ellis School's enrollment (grades 1-8) in 2006-07 was 510; in 2013-14, it was 373 according to the State data (Mr. Nygren said the State didn't count preschool and kindergarten numbers). This was a decrease of 140 students in 7 years. The cost per pupil in 2009-10 for the State was \$12,000; for Fremont it was \$11,228. Currently, Fremont's cost per pupil (\$13,700) was above the State (\$13,600). The State Website showed in 2006-07, the student: teacher ratio was 13:1; currently it was 11:1. Mr. Nygren said that the cost per student at Ellis grew more than it had at Sanborn Regional. In 2001-02, the cost per student was \$6,600; in 2012-13, it was doubled at \$13,700. Mr. Fraize said Sanborn tuition accounted for much of the budget increase; less money was spent toward Ellis. Enrollment at Sanborn had decreased and the cost per pupil had increased.

Mr. Nygren said the Superintendent had mentioned that if the Budget Committee could provide money for the asbestos removal, there would be a 2% decrease in the budget. He said that the two teachers were put back into the budget. Ms. Anderson said that if the school budget could be readjusted to a 2% reduction, this could fund the teachers' raises and they could be level. Mr. Fraize said the hope is to have a contract (for the support staff at least) by December 16 for the School Board to review. Mr. Fraize had mentioned to the SAU that the Budget needed to see the Warrant Articles in good time to review and be able to support.

Mr. Fraize said that Ida Keane would be at the December 10, 2014 meeting in his place. He was hoping to get information on the support staff contract to the Budget Committee around the end of next week. Total amount Fremont actually paid to Sanborn for each of the past 5 years, including the enrollment for each year (as well as a break out of Special Education, which was extra).

List of items that the Budget Committee wanted to have addressed included:

- Date the SAU lease expires
- Can students test out of high school Spanish I (if taken at Ellis); do colleges require only 2 years of foreign language
- Copy of survey (regarding the interest in a foreign language program at Ellis)
- Curriculum Coordinator Position: was it an "addition"?
- What two positions had the \$5,000 raises; how did they become contractually obligated (did the School Board vote them in after the contract)?
- Contract copies
- Updated Executive Summary
- Budget Committee request to have hard copies of expense reports mailed to their homes from the SAU office before meetings.
- Total amount Fremont actually paid to Sanborn for each of the past 5 years, including the enrollment for each year (as well as a break out of Special Education, which was extra).
- List of positions and salaries
- Who are the 13 people in line 243 (at 3.5% raise)
- Function 1100 and 1200: why is there so much unexpended funds
- What budget processes were done from the teachers to the Principal, Superintendent and School Board: Budget Committee suggested having Principal Safina come speak about the budget process at the December 17th meeting.
- Line 3: attendance buyback (that is not encumbered)

Mr. Fraize would tell the SAU that the Budget Committee would like to see data that was discussed tonight: student: teacher ratios; chart showing enrollment; cost per student at Ellis in the last 5 years.

III. NEXT MEETING: WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 10, 2014

IV. ADJOURNMENT

At 8:38 PM, Neal Janvrin made a motion to adjourn. Mary Anderson seconded the motion. Motion passed 7:0.

Respectfully submitted by, Susan Perry, Budget Committee Secretary