

FREMONT BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING

Fremont Town Hall
295 Main Street
Fremont, NH 03044
November 18, 2015
7:00 PM

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Mary Anderson called the November 18, 2015 Budget Committee meeting to order at 7:00 PM on the main floor of Fremont Town Hall.

Present were: Budget Committee Chair Mary Anderson, Vice Chair Mark Kidd, members Mike Nygren, Gene Cordes, Pat Martel, and Joe Miccile, and School Board representative Jennifer Brown.

II. APPROVE MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 9, 2015

Gene Cordes made a motion to approve as amended the minutes from November 9, 2015. Mike Nygren seconded the motion. Motion passed 6:0:1 (abstention from M. Kidd).

III. TOWN ITEMS/FOLLOW UP

The number raised by taxation is \$2,992,302.

Gene Cordes made a motion to open up the discussion to reconsider the recommended amount on Chester Road warrant article. Joe Miccile seconded the motion. Motion passed 7:0.

There was discussion about the decrease of \$40,000 from the Sandown Road article to apply to the Chester Road article. The Road Agent, in reviewing road network in coordination with the grant funding for a road study, determined that Sandown Road needs less work and Chester Road needs more work. Residual money that is not used cannot be used on another road (it can only be applied for the specific road work described in the warrant article). Money cannot be taken from elsewhere in the budget if the voters do not approve the warrant article.

Mark Kidd made a motion to accept the Board of Selectmen's recommendation of \$81,700 for the Chester Road Warrant Article. Jennifer Brown seconded the motion. Motion passed 7:0.

Gene Cordes made a motion to accept the Board of Selectmen's recommendation of \$85,495 for the Sandown Road Warrant Article. Jennifer Brown seconded the motion. Motion passed 7:0.

Gene Cordes made a motion to open the discussion on the TXC Salary Warrant Article. Mike Nygren seconded the motion. Motion passed 7:0.

Mr. Cordes said the Selectmen did not recommend this because they felt that there should be definition about how much time off the Tax Collector got, etc. and how much money should be dedicated to that position. The position averages about 23 hours a week (about \$35,000/year). There was discussion about paid time off and having positions and statutes of positions over 35 hours go in front of voters.

Pat Martel made a motion to not recommend the \$5,000 increase for the TXC Salary Warrant Article. Joe Miccile seconded the motion. Motion passed 7:0.

Gene Cordes made a motion to reopen the discussion of the Fire Truck Warrant Article. Mike Nygren seconded the motion. Motion passed 7:0.

Mark Kidd made a motion to accept the Board of Selectmen's recommendation of \$50,000 for the CRF Fire Truck Warrant Article. Mike Nygren seconded the motion. Motion passed 7:0.

Gene Cordes made a motion to reopen the discussion of the Historic Building Renovation Warrant Article. Mike Nygren seconded the motion. Motion passed 7:0.

For this warrant article, the Selectmen suggested \$20,000 and the Fire Department suggested \$15,000. The Budget Committee members thought it best to recommend \$15,000 this year and next year there might be a plan to go to the voters.

Pat Martel made a motion to accept \$15,000 for the CRF Historic Building Renovation Warrant Article. Jennifer Brown seconded the motion. Motion passed 7:0.

There was discussion about the need for Parks & Recreation to have a fund to place earned money (e.g. from the road race). Parks & Recreation was not interested in doing a non-profit. There was support for the initiative but the detailed warrant seemed cumbersome. Ms. Brown noted that the language in the article says "to raise and appropriate \$1,000" (therefore, tax-payer money as opposed to road race funds) and she felt that tax payers might not go along with that.

Gene Cordes made a motion to recommend the Board of Selectmen's recommendation of \$1,000 for the Parks & Recreation Improvement Fund Warrant Article. Mike Nygren seconded the motion. Motion passed 6:1 (M. Anderson, nay).

Gene Cordes made a motion to recommend the Board of Selectmen's recommendation of \$20,000 for the Highway Winter Maintenance Warrant Article. Mark Kidd seconded the motion. Motion passed 7:0.

Mr. Cordes will mention to Ms. Carlson that the \$1,000 might not be in the Parks & Recreation appropriation/revolving fund line and ask why the fund can't just be created if not for appropriations.

IV. SCHOOL BUDGET FOLLOW-UP

There was nothing particularly out of line in the forensic audit letter. Ms. Brown said that the School Board made the effort to look at this and try to get relief for Fremont tax payers. Ms. Anderson noted that Sandown and Chester's tax rates reduced \$1 this year and expressed concern about the school budget in Fremont increasing over the past 9 years (13% increase in the town budget vs. 53% increase in the school budget with declined enrollment.)

There was an increase of about \$32,489 in the 1100 function due to salaries, FICA, NH Retirement and benefits.

There is a difference of about \$4,000 in the 1200 Special Education and 2130 Nurse lines (due to contracted lateral changes in salary)

The operating school budget is up 8.24% (\$950,729.51); the default is up 6.9% (\$824,641.96). The difference between the operating and default budgets is about \$66,000.

Ms. Penny noted that the School Board, per Union contract, agreed to no changes in FTEs, therefore FTEs had to be kept the same as last year's default budget. She said most of the changes are contractual. Ms. Brown noted items that the School Board suggested to make about \$58,500 worth of budgetary cuts, including: \$14,000 for snow removal; \$25 relocation of the SAU office; about \$19,000 for operation/plant costs (countertops, electrical box); and \$500 in the Activities line (Lego Club). Ms. Anderson suggested looking into FEMA money to see if Ellis School is eligible for snow removal costs. She said that the town cannot support an increase of \$600 in taxes on a \$200,000 home, noting that while she supported education, she had to think about taxpayers not being able to keep their homes due to increases in taxes. Ms. Penny said that she did not anticipate a significant increase in revenue from Medicaid or catastrophic aid next year (there will be no LGC refund or impact fees).

\$56,700 is proposed in the repair plant/building (3 lines).

There was discussion about transportation. Ms. Anderson felt that the 2 days/week after school bus cost could be reduced. Ms. Penny said that the Transportation RFP will be going out by the end of this week, to be due December 11th. She will have a better idea of the transportation cost by mid-December 2015. If the bids come in for larger buses than 71-person occupancy, there could be one less bus.

Ms. Penny noted that the JY health plan and Blue Choice plan are increasing up to 15%. All teachers are on Matthew Thornton HMO and Paraprofessionals have Site of Service and Blue Choice. Some staff members changed plans. Health insurance has increased about 10% in the country.

There was discussion about contracting out the IT Position or not. The position's salary increase was contractual. The beginning salary was inexpensive and it was added to each subsequent year. Ms. Anderson felt that a multi-year contract for this position was atypical. Ms. Brown spoke about the benefit of the position and would inquire when the contract is up.

There was discussion about the Curriculum Coordinator. Ms. Brown said the Coordinator meets with the Principal often and works with alignment with Sanborn. She said that Ellis is succeeding. She mentioned that SATs will now be a standard assessment which will increase the sample size of test-takers. Ms. Anderson said that it is possible for the SAU to get report cards and other information of high schoolers.

Mr. Cordes asked if a 15% average of Special Education students is normal and Ms. Anderson replied that it is.

Mr. Nygren suggested that the Budget Committee look for \$450,000 - \$500,000 in cuts (or an overall 4% increase, per Ms. Anderson) in the School District budget. Ms. Brown said that the School Board knew that the budget would be high based on needs, etc. so the district was doing without things such as bathroom renovations, etc. Mr. Cordes encouraged not to defer one-time expenses such as maintenance so as not to be in a position to have to do an RFP later.

Mr. Miccile asked about an email that was sent to the Budget Committee from a parent about a nursing issue and Ms. Brown said this was a school issue. The single-day schedule would eliminate 20 minutes at the beginning and end of the day so a reduction in the nurse line is being recommended.

IV. NEXT MEETING DATE: DECEMBER 2, 2105 AT 7 PM

V. ADJOURNMENT

At 8:55 PM, Gene Cordes made a motion to adjourn. Mike Nygren seconded the motion. Motion passed 7:0.

Respectfully submitted by

Susan Perry, Secretary