

FREMONT BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING

Fremont Town Hall
295 Main Street
Fremont, NH 03044
December 2, 2015
7:00 PM

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Mary Anderson called the December 2, 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, Neal Janvrin (for Gene Cordes), Pat Martel, and Joe Miccile, School Board representative Jennifer Brown, and School Financial Administrator Susan Penny.

II. APPROVE MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 18, 2015

Jennifer Brown made a motion to approve as amended the minutes from November 18, 2015. Joe Miccile seconded the motion. Motion passed 6:0:1 (abstention from N. Janvrin).

III. SCHOOL ITEMS/FOLLOW UP

There was continued review of School District 2016-17 budget questions that were posed at the last meeting.

1. The Technology Director's contract expires in June 2016.
2. Ellis has used student teachers who work with certified teachers. Interns are on ALT Plans and are part of the CBA.
3. The Superintendent has not requested report cards for Fremont students at Sanborn Regional High School (Fremont gets their PSAT and SAT scores as well as questionnaires).
4. Updated enrollment: 429 students/26 teachers in grades 1-8
5. The Superintendent had looked into FEMA aid and said that Ellis was ineligible.

There was review/discussion on budget-reducing options that were reviewed by the School Board last night. Ms. Anderson thought that the efforts made by the Board to reduce the budget, as requested by the Budget Committee, were encouraging and a good beginning. She appreciated the effort to make cuts that do not directly affect students' education.

Ms. Martel had reviewed the history of salary lines and found that the raises put in place in 2015-16 are high (about an increase of \$250,000 in 2 years). She noted that the budget book says that the FY17 budget is based on 415 students at Ellis. Ms. Penny said that the number was based on the NHSA demographic study but in reality the enrollment will be about 425-430 next year. Ms. Anderson felt that the issue was that the enrollment is still declining with an increasing budget. Ms. Penny noted that much of the increase is due to high school tuition.

Transportation Bids are due by December 11th and the high school GMR is due by December 15th. There was discussion about transportation. The bids reflected the single-start school day schedule as approved by the School Board. There were cost reductions in the new schedule and some increases (but they outweighed each other).

There was discussion about cutting the part-time nurse position. Mr. Kidd had concern about liabilities with the need to care for students with needs. Ms. Penny said that many schools the size of Ellis have one nurse and Ms. Anderson agreed that one is mandated by state guidelines. Students with fragile needs have dedicated nursing care through 504s/Special Education (these nurses are utilized when there is need and then leave when students no longer require the services). Ellis staff are trained in CPR, Epi-pens etc. so that all students are cared for.

A potential increase for single day transportation is based on bid recommendation made by the bus company (since students will be picked up at the same time for the single-day schedule). Ms. Anderson figured that there would be less runs with a single start time. However, with the slight decrease in enrollment, it is possible to have 8 buses. There is a pre-bid meeting tomorrow at the SAU. The District is obligated to provide transportation for all students (not preschoolers) whether or not they take the bus. Some buses are more filled than others but bussing is based on location of residencies. A

provision in the proposal is that negotiations can occur at any time. There is school policy that limits the time students can be on the bus. Transportation information will be reviewed at the December 16th Budget Committee meeting.

Ms. Penny mentioned that, where the District was not charged in previous years for Fremont students on alternative learning plans (ALPs) who are half-time/do not step foot at Sanborn Regional High School, they are being charged now (these students get a diploma from Sanborn). The District's counsel, since the tuition contract's language does not speak to allowing previous adjustments, the District may need to pay \$83,000 for FY14-15 and will need to continue paying for these types of students moving forward. Although the tuition contract was poorly drafted, the District is legally obligated to pay it for another 10 years (13, including the last of the Fremont Freshmen to leave the high school). Tuition for next year is \$18,713.66. Ms. Anderson said this was comparable to a college education and thought that \$4 million for regular education cost for 215 Fremont students going to Sanborn was "outrageous". Mr. Kidd said that more is taken from Ellis' budget because of the high school contract and that the School Board is doing the best they can with the budget. Ms. Penny said they did their due diligence by doing the forensic audit. Mr. Nygren mentioned that capital costs were added after the original tuition contract was created that specified that all graduating students had to go to Sanborn or parents could pay elsewhere (unless they were Special Education). Ms. Penny noted that there is educational hardship for special circumstances. Ms. Brown spoke about the need for legal counsel due to the issues with the tuition contract and said that they should keep in mind where to spend money so as not to take it away from students' education.

It was mentioned that to open negotiations on the contract, it would need to go on both ballots and Fremont has no representation on Sanborn's School Board (they are not a cooperative). Mr. Miccile felt that Fremont could build its own school for the same amount of money paid to Sanborn for tuition and he felt that students were getting dropped in the deal. Ms. Penny said that the District pays the projected cost per pupil. In 2013-14, \$13,250 was paid per student, tuition only, but the actual cost ended up being \$13,814. She said that it is the capital costs that are very high. Mr. Nygren suggested petitioning the state for hardship and asking to get arbitration. She said that a 20-year tuition contract is normal but the high capital costs that are being paid are not normal.

The Board decided to have a .625 Assistant Principal and evaluators (rather than having a full-time A/P with no evaluators) for a savings of \$44,000. The evaluators evaluate teachers. Usually the Principal evaluates teachers but the School Board felt it would benefit Mr. Bridle this year to have the expertise of contracted evaluators (as a tool) since he is an interim Principal with a new Assistant Principal and with the new TSEP plan. Evaluations had not been done in years and they are finally up to date.

There was discussion about the Technical Director position. Benefits include the reliability and availability of the Director who helps with various necessary technical tasks in the school and at the SAU building, including computers, software such as Web to School and ADS, and testing which is now done on computers. Contracted technicians would not do tasks outside of their contracted work. The Superintendent did inquire about contracted technical services and the savings did not outweigh the benefit. Mr. Miccile was not sure why an IT person was needed every day but it was mentioned that almost every school the size of Ellis has a full time IT Director. Ms. Anderson agreed with the importance of having a full time IT Director with all the technology used in School Districts currently. Ms. Martel was unsure why the same contract would be renewed that gives a higher raise than everyone else gets.

Ms. Brown explained that the School Board committed to providing bus monitors to ease parental concern about having young children ride in the same buses as older children for the same-start school day. This would be only for the first 30 days of school next year to ease the ridership transition.

It was clarified that the District has not paid for the accreditation work since there were criteria that needed to be done.

There will be a .6FTE math specialist and .6 World Language teacher (which yield savings in benefits for being less than full-time positions). Ms. Anderson agreed that job sharing is helpful by saving on benefits costs. Ms. Brown said that the math specialist will help roll out the new math curriculum and offer support to teachers to be sure the program is used with fidelity. Math is an area in need of support. There was confusion as to teachers not being able to teach math successfully. Ms. Anderson said that the philosophy of teaching math has changed (teach how to apply math vs. the route method) and there is a need to align the curriculum in all grades and classes.

Mr. Miccile said he was trying to find a happy medium because the District is still asking the Town to pay 5% more than last year. There was concern that, even with new programs that were rolled out in the past, Ellis' test scores are still not up to

par with other Districts in the state. (though they increased a bit this year).Ms. Brown replied that the Board did a lot of work to accommodate the Budget Committee's suggestion, but that it also has an obligation to Ellis students and teachers for success.

It was mentioned that the 18 full-time aides in 8 grades are required by IEPs. There are two full-time administrators for about 100 students with special needs. The Out-of-District Coordinator manages 504s, IEPs, etc. Ms. Anderson felt that was a lot of staff for 100 students and suggested sharing aides, depending on the IEPs.

IV. NEXT MEETING DATE: DECEMBER 9, 2105 AT 7 PM

- revenue statement
- answers to any questions from tonight
- monthly fund balance summary to be given to the Budget Committee (is part of School Board agendas)

V. ADJOURNMENT

At 8:50 PM, Mark Kidd made a motion to adjourn. Mike Nygren seconded the motion. Motion passed 7:0.

Respectfully submitted by

Susan Perry, Secretary