

FREMONT BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING – PUBLIC HEARING
Fremont Public Library
7 Jackie Bernier Drive
Fremont, NH 03044
January 13, 2015
7:00 PM

I. CALL TO ORDER (Budget Committee Meeting)

Chair Mary Anderson called the January 13, 2016 Budget Committee meeting to order at 7:01 pm in the community room at the Fremont Public Library. The Pledge of Allegiance followed this.

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

Members of the public included Selectmen Neal Janvrin and Leon Holmes Sr., Road Agent Leon Holmes Jr., Town Administrator Heidi Carlson, School Superintendent Betsey Cox-Buteau, School Financial Administrator Susan Penny, Police Chief Jon Twiss, Cemetery Trustee/Town Historian Matthew Thomas, Library Trustees Cheryl Rowell and Suzanne Wicks, Bruce White (FCTV), Planning Board Chair Roger Barham, Librarian Eric Abney, Town Clerk/Tax Collector Nicole Cloutier (at approximately 7:45 pm); and Recording Secretary Susan Perry.

It is noted for the record that the meeting was moved to its posted snow date due to the storm on January 12, 2106.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF JANUARY 6, 2016

Gene Cordes made a motion to approve as amended the minutes of January 6, 2016. Joe Miccile seconded the motion. Motion passed 7:0.

III. PUBLIC HEARING

School District Warrant Articles were reviewed.

Warrant Article 1 Officers

Warrant Article 2: Operating Budget

The recommended operating budget is \$12,353,571. The default would be \$12,700,700 (same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Fremont School District or by law).

Warrant Article 3: Raise/Appropriate up to \$10,000 to Expendable Trust Fund

Warrant Article 4: Raise/Appropriate up to \$100,000 to be added to the previously established expendable trust fund, known as the Tuition Trust Fund. The sum is to come from the June 30,2016 fund balance available for transfer on July 1, 2016. No amount to be raised by taxation.

Jennifer Brown read an email that was submitted by Carla Smith (see attached – public input).

At 7:15 PM, Gene Cordes made a motion to close the public hearing on the school district budget. Joe Miccile seconded the motion. Motion passed 7:0.

Town Warrant Articles were reviewed.

Warrant Article 1: Election of Town Officers

Warrant Article 2: 2016 Operating Budget (total of \$2,747,889; default of \$2,592,270). (Tax impact of \$3.52).

Warrant Article 3: Create Town Expendable Trust Fund for Winter Highway Maintenance and Name the Selectmen as Agents to Expend. Raise and appropriate \$20,000 to be placed in this fund. (Tax impact of \$0.05).

Warrant Article 4: Raise and Appropriate \$5,000 to the Library Building Maintenance Expendable Town Trust Fund. (Tax impact of \$0.01).

Warrant Article 5: Raise and Appropriate \$25,000 to the Bridge Construction and Reconstruction Capital Reserve Fund. (Tax impact of \$0.06).

Warrant Article 6: Raise and Appropriate \$10,000 to the Town Hall Renovations Capital Reserve Fund. (Tax impact of \$0.03).

Cheryl Rowell asked if any of this money is to be used for the heating system that was already put in. Ms. Carlson replied no, that this was encumbered from the unexpended fund balance.

Warrant Article 7: Raise and Appropriate \$10,000 to the Property Reassessment Capital Reserve Fund. (Tax impact of \$0.03).

Warrant Article 8: Raise and Appropriate \$25,000 to the Highway Equipment Capital Reserve Fund. (Tax impact of \$0.06).

Warrant Article 9: Raise and Appropriate \$25,000 to the Emergency Management Equipment Capital Reserve Fund (est. tax impact \$.06)

Warrant Article 10: Raise and Appropriate \$81,700 to shim/overlay sections of Chester Road/do associated shoulder work. (est. tax impact \$.21)

Warrant Article 11: Raise and Appropriate \$85,495 to shim/overlay a section of Sandown Road/do associated shoulder work. (est. tax impact \$.22)

Warrant Article 12: Increase in Town Clerk Tax Collector's annual salary by \$5,000 (totaling \$40,000)/include 10 days of paid time off and raise and appropriate \$5,000 for this purpose (est. tax impact \$.01)

Suzanne Wicks asked why this article was not recommended. Mr. Cordes said that the Selectmen discussed it, got the history about the position, considered the number of hours the position works (about 22-25 average hours/week) and the time to support the office and they felt they could not vote in favor of the article. They felt this position was in line with other departments. Matthew Thomas asked what Ms. Cloutier's feeling was about this.

When Ms. Cloutier joined the meeting later in the meeting (around 7:45 PM), she provided information that compared her position to those in similar towns. Where the position is now combined, there is more responsibility. She noted the increased workload since 2008 (e.g. 50 extra vehicles per month, 7% increase in properties, etc.) and that she works up to 30-35 hours some weeks such as during elections. Mr. Cordes noted the importance of defining the job particulars such as time off, etc. Ms. Carlson noted that the Town Clerk job has no benefits because it is an elected position (and part-time). She said other towns have made accommodations for elected official salaries but noted that Ms. Cloutier has fine-tuned the position so that there are less hours cumulatively. Ms. Cloutier felt it would be less cost to the town to ask for a raise instead of asking for benefits. It was noted that the Deputy Town Clerk works about 12 hours/week for an hourly pay for clerical work, plus a stipend for being the Deputy of \$1,800 annually. The Deputy provides vacation and sick coverage, and some extra bank trips, etc.). Ms. Cloutier noted that she has a commitment to the Town and would not leave if this article does not pass.

Warrant Article 13: Create a Town Expendable Trust Fund for the Fremont Police Department DARE Program and name the Selectmen as agents to expend (est. tax impact \$.01)

Chief Twiss gave background of the DARE Program and noted that Officer Huard works well with the school in this program. Leon Holmes Sr. spoke about the benefit of students working with the police in the program. It was noted that donations have diminished for the program, and that the funds help with t-shirts, DARE program graduation materials etc. The DARE Program incorporates Ellis School's fifth grade, which is currently doing a cash calendar fundraiser for the program. It was mentioned that people can still make donations for the program individually through the School and at the Police Department.

Warrant Article 14: Raise and Appropriate \$49,550 to continue the Public Health Mosquito Control Program (est. tax impact \$0.13).

Warrant Article 15: Create a Revolving Fund for Parks and Recreation Field and Parks Improvements and Maintenance (no tax impact).

Ms. Carlson noted that the Department of Revenue requested that the recreation statute reference be changed from the general statute that she used originally. The goal of this fund is ultimately to build a pavilion at the ballfields with money from extra money from the Fun Run and any donations (not large-scale).

Warrant Article 16: Raise and Appropriate \$50,000 to the Fire Truck Capital Reserve Fund. (est. tax impact \$0.13).

Warrant Article 17: Raise and Appropriate \$15,000 to the Historic Museum Renovation Capital Reserve Fund. (est. tax impact \$0.04)

There was discussion about the importance of placing Fremont's historical artifacts, especially the antique horse-drawn hearse (c. 1861, and one of about 10 in NH), into a safe location (garage in back of the museum) for townspeople to see and enjoy them.

Warrant Article 18: Designate as Town Forest, in accordance with NH RSA 31:110, Beede Spaulding Conservation Land Map 3 Lot 56 (no direct tax impact).

This will designate this land as Town Forest will subject it to the existing Town Forest Ordinance and the Conservation Commission can use its own signage at no additional cost.

OTHER:

Public Official Sign-Ups: January 20-29, 2016 – Anyone interested in signing up for Town or School District Office can do so between Wednesday January 20, 2016 through Friday January 29, 2016 during Town Clerk Hours. Special hours will also be held on the last day, Friday January 29th from 3:00 to 5:00 pm at the Town Hall, during which both the School and Town Clerks will be available at the Town Hall, for signups only.

Ms. Carlson mentioned the idea of having a public service announcement on FCTV before voting and she asked that if people have questions, to please reach out so that announcements and information on FCTV may be most helpful for voters. She also said that anyone with questions may email or call her. Contact information is available on the handouts and on the website.

She noted there are extra information sheets from tonight's hearing which will be left at the library, and they will also be available at the Town Hall. The working Town budget spreadsheets and Warrant Article Narrative are available on the Town's website www.Fremont.nh.gov on the Budget Committee page, under downloadable reports.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Gene Cordes made a motion to adjourn at 8:00 PM. Joe Miccile seconded the motion. Motion passed 7:0.

Respectfully submitted by,
Susan Perry,
Budget Committee Secretary

1/13/2016 BUDGET COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING

CORRESPONDENCE

January 12, 2016

Dear Fremont Budget Committee Members,

Due to the change of this meeting from Tuesday to Wednesday I am unable to attend. I respectfully request that you read my letter in it's entirety during the public hearing and place it into the public minutes.

I would like express my concerns as a Fremont resident regarding proposed cuts to the FY17 school budget. I feel that the distressing trend of reducing staffing year after year directly impacts the quality of education at the Ellis School. The Budget Committee is making recommendations based upon bottom line numbers, without regard what is best for the education of our children.

I am tired of hearing unsupported statements that people are being taxed out of their homes and that people will leave Fremont if taxes increase. The impact of the school budget on the tax rate is not an issue isolated to Fremont. Similar tax increases are occurring in small towns all over New Hampshire and will continue to occur as a result of rising fixed costs that are uncontrollable. If residents can truly not afford a tax increase they will not find it any easier moving to Exeter or Raymond, or anywhere else. What the town will face is an influx of residents who will leave Fremont not looking for tax relief, but rather seeking to raise their families in a community that cares about the children and providing them with a fiscally supported education.

I do not support the school budget of \$12,353,570.60 as presented by the Budget Committee as it completely ignores what is needed to provide a safe and dynamic learning environment at the Ellis School.

Safety: Provider Bus recommends 9 buses for safe transportation. The BUDCOM is not taking into consideration that Fremont households are wide spread and many neighborhoods can only be accessed after travel through neighboring towns. Fremont is not a city grid that can be equally divided among 8 buses. Provider Bus is an expert in transportation safety; please respect their expertise, as it is far more valuable than your pen and paper calculations. I stand behind the Fremont School Board in budgeting for 9 buses.

Safety: I do not support the recommendation by both the BUDCOM and the School Board to eliminate the part-time nurse position. As the full-time school nurse at Ellis for the past five years and the town's Deputy Health Officer I am the person whose expertise you should be listening to. Ellis School has a significantly greater than average amount of students with chronic health conditions and complex medical needs. You are jeopardizing the safety and well being of every child at Ellis, and risking liability that will directly impact the taxpayers of Fremont. I do not professionally agree that a single nurse can provide high quality, competent nursing care and documentation for the existing student population at the Ellis School. Nor can I ethically agree that the care provided should be anything less than excellent or sacrificed to meet your demands of underfunding the nursing salary line. The proposed cost savings of eliminating the part-time nurse is significantly less than a resulting lawsuit or the loss of life of a medically fragile child. I urge the Fremont School Board to find funding for this position in whichever budget is passed. If need be I will support the default budget to accommodate funding for this position.

Safety: I do not support the full elimination of replacing teachers desks, countertops, and repair / maintenance of the plant items. I feel this number was looked at as a whole and cut in its entirety. While yes most furniture and repair items can be postponed, there are some items that are safety hazards. Last week in my daughters 5th Grade classroom the leg on her teachers' desk broke without warning causing the desk to collapse and its belongings to crash onto the floor. This could have caused a seriously injury. While it seems these line items are easier to cut as they do not directly impact students, I caution you to consider the impact of not taking care of what we have and not replacing what is truly beyond repair. I feel the Fremont School Board was forced into removing funding for these items from their original budget under pressure from the BUDCOM. I urge the Fremont School Board to find funding for vital repairs and replacements in whichever budget is passed. We simply cannot allow our building to deteriorate any further. If need be I will support the default

budget to ensure the safety of the staff and students in the building.

Education: The teaching staff at Ellis School has already been reduced by over seven positions during the past five years in response to declining enrollments. The School Board has already agreed to not replace a retiring teacher therefore eliminating one position. The BUDCOM wants to further reduce teaching staff, which I cannot agree with. Teachers are the essence of education. They are on the front lines teaching our children, providing supportive services and differentiated education to meet every child's need. I equate this to your supporting an Army with no ground troops but having a room full of Generals who lay excessive responsibilities on the few soldiers who positions remain funded. Children are individuals, not numbers that can be manipulated to fit into class sizes that you feel are adequate. Class size needs to be variable and based upon what is needed to meet the learning needs of every child- not upon a one-size fit all approach. I fully stand behind the Fremont School Board in not recommending additional cuts to teaching staff.

Education: I do not support the elimination of the K-2 Interventionist and the decline to offer a stipend for an existing teacher to take on the role of the Math Specialist. I feel the Fremont School Board was forced into removing funding for the interventionist position from their original budget under pressure from the BUDCOM. Early intervention is key in narrowing the gap of those students who are behind with their peers who are at grade level performance. The interventionist works directly with these students and prevents an influx of special education needs further down the road if a student is no longer able to access the regular curriculum. Denying a child early access intervention is setting them up for a future full of academic struggles. The stipend is compensation for a teacher to give above and beyond their contract obligations to provide specialized training and services to improve math scores across the grade span. This stipend is nominal and equates to pennies compared to the hours of work this teacher will put in. I stand behind the Fremont School Board in budgeting for a Math Specialist stipend, but urge them to find funding for the interventionist position in whichever budget is passed. If need be I will support the default budget to ensure the students who are most in need get the educational supports they require to be successful students.

In closing I urge the BUDCOM to carefully examine their motives for the cuts made to the school budget, and to reconsider supporting the amount of \$12,457,950.00 as recommended by the Fremont School Board.

Sincerely,

Carla Smith

28 Ann Lane

Fremont