

FREMONT BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING

Fremont Town Hall
295 Main Street
Fremont, NH 03044
January 6, 2016
7:00 PM

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Mary Anderson called the January 5, 2016 Budget Committee meeting to order at 7:00 PM on the main floor of Fremont Town Hall. Due to miscommunication, it was not being recorded for cable television.

Present were: Budget Committee Chair Mary Anderson, Vice Chair Mark Kidd, members Mike Nygren, Gene Cordes, Pat Martel, and Joe Miccile, School Board representative Jennifer Brown, School Financial Administrator Susan Penny, and Town Clerk Heidi Carlson. Members of the public included: School Superintendent Betsey Cox-Buteau and Tammy Kitt.

II. APPROVE MINUTES FROM DECEMBER 16, 2015

Gene Cordes made a motion to approve as amended the minutes from December 16, 2015. Mark Kidd seconded the motion. Motion passed 7:0.

III. SCHOOL ITEMS/FOLLOW UP

There was continued review of the School District 2016-17 Budget. Ms. Brown mentioned that the School Board awarded the transportation bid to Provider for the 2016-2017 school year. Provider felt that 9 buses would be needed but if enrollment changed over the course of the contract, the cost would be adjusted. Ms. Penny noted that an additional bid had to go out in order to have an equal playing field with NRT who submitted a bid for the state standard of \$5million in each liability of general and auto. The original bid that went out included \$10 million worth of liability. First Student said that there was no impact as regards the insurance. Ms. Penny noted that she got an angry phone call from NRT today for accepting a proposal after the bid process (but the bid said it could be negotiated). The amount saved by using Provider is \$43,974.

The School Board decided that it was beneficial to have a full time Assistant Principal, as was originally proposed, so they transferred this amount and removed the evaluator position, to adequately fund the A/P line item. There was no added cost (it equaled out). The total budget increase is \$1,022,923.57 (minus \$129,419 in cuts made by the Budget Committee).

Mr. Miccile said the Budget Committee was trying to cut money but the School Board rolled money back in; Ms. Anderson agreed. Ms. Brown said that the Board did not feel it could make more cuts and not affect student services directly. Mr. Kidd had concern that there were no savings in going with a single-start day. There was uncertainty as to why the transportation cost would be increased for a single-start school day. Part of the need for an additional bus for a single-start day is based on the layout of the town.

Ms. Anderson noted that, to bring the tax impact to a \$2 increase, \$130,000 more would need to be cut from the school budget. Mr. Cordes noted that the last meeting was solemn, in struggling to cut the budget and not affect student services directly. Ms. Anderson agreed that it was difficult.

There was discussion about the Special Education positions and workloads. Ms. Penny noted that the Special Education Director strives to keep students in-district and that Fremont students' needs are being met. There was discussion about case managers and Ms. Penny said, with roughly 16 students per case manager, they were at bare bones. Case managers work with students in or out of the classroom. There was discussion about high-cost out-of-district placements and it was reiterated that, regardless, all students' needs are being met. Ms. Penny explained that there would be reimbursement for catastrophic aid and Medicaid next year. Mr. Cordes queried who would accomplish the work if the Out-of-District Coordinator position were reduced/cut.

Mr. Cordes mentioned that, whatever the budget ends up as, the School Board has authority to move things around. Ms. Brown said that the Board talked about presenting what the school needs in order to help the Budget Committee understand. Ms. Anderson wondered about other areas to cut. Ms. Penny reiterated the main reasons for the budget increases: costs associated with out-of-district placements, Sanborn tuition and health insurance.

Ms. Anderson noted that the town will need to borrow money if people cannot pay their tax bills. She said that the 10% increase in health insurance is very high; Ms. Penny confirmed that is what the GMR is.

There was discussion about bus runs and the risk of going with 8 buses instead of the suggested 9, or reducing the number to 8 for cost savings, looking at the number of students and runs next year.

Gene Cordes made a motion to reduce the transportation line by \$53,879 (8 buses vs. 9 next year). Pat Martel seconded the motion. Motion passed 6:1 (nay, J. Brown).

Ms. Anderson mentioned that the increase was now at \$839,000. She understood the want for good education and services but she also did not want to lose residents if voters vote a lot back into the budget. She said that the message to the School Board for next year is not to buy something if it is not needed. She said any overage should be returned to the voters, with this kind of high tax increase. Ms. Brown spoke about 7 staffing positions that were reduced (.5 nurse, librarian, classroom teacher, etc.) and she clarified that cuts were made along the budget process from the principal on.

There was talk about the fact that the default budget (\$12,700,700) is higher than the proposed budget (now at \$12,353,570.60). Ms. Penny will look at revenues one more time and she said that they will be known for certain before the tax rate is set next fall. Ms. Brown was not comfortable voting affirmatively for the budget, but she expressed that she did not want to have it reduced more. Mr. Nygren abstained from voting on this budget; he thought voters would add more back in the budget.

Gene Cordes made a motion to approve the school district budget of \$12,353,570.60 and default budget of \$12,769,674. Pat Martel seconded the motion. Motion passed 4:2:1

A motion was made and seconded to revote to raise/appropriate \$100,000 to be added to the expendable trust fund from the fund balance. Motion passed 7:0.

IV. OTHER

The Conservation Commission would like to designate as Town Forests, in accordance with NH RSA 31:110, the following parcel of land: Beede Spaulding Conservation Land Map 3 Lot 56. This would clean up the standing of it (for signage purposes, etc.) There is no direct tax impact.

Gene Cordes made a motion to recommend Town Warrant Article 18 (Designating a piece of town land as town forest). Joe Miccile seconded the motion. Motion passed 7:0.

Ms. Carlson said there is a chance of having about \$30,000 of unexpended appropriations this year. The Selectmen will consider the idea of putting money in articles to be funded from unreserved fund balance. She said the town is below the minimum recommended in reserve.

Ms. Carlson reported that revenues are down (about \$0.40 increase in the tax rate, which is less than was anticipated). A newsletter will be sent out about a week before the Deliberative Session.

Ms. Anderson suggested that the Budget Committee and School Board do public service announcements on FCTV for informational purposes only, so that residents can better understand what they are voting for (many Warrant Articles this year). Ms. Anderson spoke about the benefit of having educated voters. She said, for the Town's benefit, the Budget Committee was looking for the School Board's support at the Deliberative Session.

V. NEXT MEETING DATE: DECEMBER 16, 2015 AT 7 PM

- January 12th (snow date January 13th): Public Hearing
- January 12th: Petition Warrant Articles are due to Selectmen's Office by noon; School District Articles are due to SAU83 Office by 4PM
- January 30th (snow date February 1st): School Deliberative Session (9 AM)

VI. ADJOURNMENT

At 8:45 PM, Gene Cordes made a motion to adjourn. Jennifer Brown seconded the motion. Motion passed 7:0.
Respectfully submitted by Susan Perry, Secretary

CORRESPONDENCE

From: "Hunter Phelps" <hphelps@hcna-llc.com>
Date: January 5, 2016 at 1:51:07 PM EST
To: <kidd.mark143@gmail.com>
Subject: Concerns about the Proposed SAU 83 Budget

Mr. Kidd,

Could you please forward the issues below to your committee as they consider the proposed SAU 83 Budget.

Dear Fremont Budget Committee,

As taxpayers in the Fremont Community and Parents of a Child at Ellis we continue to have concerns regarding the following proposed positions being discussed for elimination:

The K-2 Interventionist has worked closely with our Son for the past year and a half including during the summer months. Her knowledge and intervention have been instrumental assisting our Son with his Math, Reading and Writing struggles. She has given us tools and activities to assist him in improving his skills in the classroom and at home. Without her assistance our Son would have fallen behind and for the first time he has received high marks on his math skills and advancements to his reading skills. These improvements can be closely contributed to the work from Mrs. Olm's and her team. We fear the loss of this position will greatly impact his ability to progress and keep up with his peers next year.

We do not support a Part Time Assistant Principal. We prefer a Full Time Assistant Principal and no Evaluator Positions. There have been a number of behavior issues in our Son's Class, which we have had to directly address with The Principal, Assistant Principal and Teacher. We personally believe not having a Vice Principal in the building full time is detrimental to the students at Ellis and directly impacts our Son's classroom and the Administrative support his Teacher needs. We believe a Full Time Assistant Principal establishes a positive relationship with the Students of Ellis and is available daily for concerns and classroom support.

We do not support eliminating the part time nursing position as it negatively impacts the students at Ellis.

We believe these staffing cuts will have a long-term negative impact to the Students at Ellis.

We have warmed up to the idea of a Library/Media Specialist with an additional support person. It seems like a creative way to better utilize the technology resources for our Son.

We support the SAU moving to Ellis to save money. Delaying replacing furniture and supplies/maintenance/repairs we are in support of.

We are in support of tax increases if it is for our Son's educational benefit and the betterment of The Ellis Student Community as a whole.

It concerns us greatly that the majority of the cuts being proposed directly impact the students and yet the overhead and administration is not impacted. If we are going to see our taxes raised, at least it should be to the benefit of students that are in the school district.

Thank You for your Consideration,
Hunter and April Phelps
21 Robinson Court

From: tim smith <tsmith1992@yahoo.com>

Date: January 5, 2016 at 2:04:36 PM EST

To: School Board <schoolboard@sau83.org>, "kidd.mark143@gmail.com" <kidd.mark143@gmail.com>

Subject: Letter of Correspondence for FY17 Budget

Reply-To: tim smith <tsmith1992@yahoo.com>

Dear Fremont School Board & Budget Committee Members,

I am once again writing to express my concerns as a Fremont resident regarding proposed cuts to the FY17 budget. As a tax payer, I would rather endure an increase in my property taxes than continue the distressing trend of reducing the quality of education at the Ellis School.

I do not agree with the unsupported statements made during the December 9th meeting by Ms. Anderson that residents may “need to leave Fremont due to the unaffordability of high taxes” and that “taxpayers expected a reduction”. I have carefully reviewed the minutes from both the School Board and the Budget Committee meetings and have not seen any letters of correspondence or public input from a single taxpayer that supports reductions in the school budget. To the contrary I have read numerous letters from multiple taxpayers that are opposed to reductions of Classroom Teachers, eliminating the Interventionist and part-time Nurse positions, and having a part-time Assistant Principal/Evaluators in lieu of a full time position. I feel that these decisions to reduce the budget are erroneously being made based on the personal beliefs of members of both the School Board and the Budget Committee and not based on the voices of their constituents who have taken the time to attend these meetings and oppose it verbally during public input or through written correspondence.

I would like to point out that Ms. Martel’s suggestion of having the PTA provide snacks for standardized testing is selfish. I have been a PTA member in Fremont since 2003. The PTA is a volunteer organization, and fundraising efforts are geared towards student enrichment activities, field day, and family events. To ask the PTA to raise an additional \$5,000 is not only insulting; it shows a lack of appreciation for everything the PTA stands for and all the wonderful opportunities it provides to the children in Fremont. If you want to see improved scores on standardized testing you need to provide a healthy breakfast and afternoon snack. It is widely accepted in health science and education literature that good nutrition increases attention span, concentration, and test performance.

I would also like to clarify that Special Education Case Managers do not “deal with” 504 plans. It is the responsibility of the part-time Nurse and the Guidance Counselors who manage these plans. In addition the full-time Nurse is responsible for writing Individual Health Plans/accommodations to meet the requirements of each 504 plan. It is the Nurse who is responsible for supporting the Special Education Case Manager if a student with an IEP plan requires medical accommodations. It is the Nurse who ensures that proper vision and hearing screenings are performed to identify if vision or hearing obstacles are preventing a student from accessing the full curriculum. It is both Guidance and the Nurse who have to assess a student with behavioral outbursts or with injuries obtained from such outbursts and fully document the issue. You have already reduced the Guidance Department to 1.75 FTE a few years back and with the proposed elimination of the part-time Nurse position who will absorb this responsibility? I guarantee it will not be either of the two Special Education Administrators. Once again it is the students at Ellis who will suffer.

I would like to reiterate from my previous letter that the residents who will leave Fremont will not be those looking for tax relief, but those seeking to raise their families in a community that cares about the children and providing them with a fiscally supported education. Tax increases are not an issue isolated to Fremont, similar tax increases are occurring in small towns all over New Hampshire and will continue to happen year after year. If residents can truly not afford a tax increase they will not find it any easier moving to Exeter or Raymond, or anywhere else. I do not want to see my taxes increase, but if that is what is needed to maintain the small town quality of life that my family has grown to love in Fremont New Hampshire then yes I will vote to support an increased budget and will continue to do so!

Sincerely,

Carla Smith

28 Ann Lane, Fremont