

FREMONT BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
Ellis School, 432 Main Street, Fremont, NH 03044
October 17, 2018 at 7PM

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Mary Anderson called the October 17, 2018 Budget Committee meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:00 PM at the front vestibule of Ellis School. Present were: Mary Anderson, Gene Cordes, Mary Jo Holmes, Pat Martel, Joe Miccile, Jonathan Starr, Brittany Thompson, and Josh Yokela. Also present were Allyn Hutton, Susan Penny, Gordon Muench, Greg Fraize, FCTV technician Alex Coulombe and Susan Perry.

TOUR OF ELLIS

From 7PM until 7:25PM the Committee toured Ellis School and saw new projects including the front vestibule/office that was part of the safety project, bathrooms, gym (new sound box), kindergarten counters, renovation of the former SAU offices into rooms for the Reading and Math Specialists, conference room, and new SAU office space. It was noted that the building is cleaner as there is more "ownership" of the cleanliness of the school.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mary Jo Holmes made a motion to approve the minutes as amended of October 10, 2018. Josh Yokela seconded the motion. Motion passed 7:0:1 (abstention from B. Thompson).

OTHER (SCHOOL BUDGET UPDATES/INFORMATION)

The tax rate increased slightly by \$0.21 (from \$29.19 to \$29.40). A large contributing reason for this is that the School District turned back \$500,000 to the Town, which is about \$1.25 on the tax rate. It takes about \$400,000 to raise \$1.00. Ms. Anderson felt that the taxpayers have been good at approving budgets over the past few years after the Town worked with a default budget in 2016. There are proposed budget increases for next year to address numerous needs (e.g. the school needs a new roof) so priorities need to be set, as not every request can be approved. There was discussion about what the Committee preferred to see in regards to a budget increase goal over 2018, noting that even if there was a flat budget, there will be an increase of \$1.50 because the community will not likely see another \$500,000 returned from the School District. There will be increases in health insurance, NH retirement, etc. There will be more discussion about this at future meetings.

TOWN BUDGETS REVIEWS**4140 TOWN CLERK TAX COLLECTOR**

There was discussion about past history of this budget, the benefit of retention, as well as the expectation of this position being 25 hours/week at \$26/hour. It was noted that the Town Clerk Tax Collector had mentioned she would work about 20 hours a week maximum; this equals \$34/hour which is more than other Department Heads such as the Town Administrator and Police Chief. The Budget Committee cannot make changes in the salaries of elected officials, and though it has never been challenged, it would most likely be a legal situation if it were challenged. Whatever the salary is set at, an elected person is paid no matter how many hours he/she works (a Warrant Article cannot address hours), but there could be a petitioned article. The Committee discussed that the choice is for the voters if they want a change, they would need to propose something. As such, the Committee decided to vote as if it is being approved with no change and suggest to taxpayers that there be a Warrant Article if this needs to be addressed. It was noted that the Selectmen reduced the TCX training line from \$900 to \$600; the TCX mileage line from \$605 to \$500; and the TCX Identifying Mortgagees from \$1,000 to \$500. These were based on spending/usage history.

Mary Jo Holmes made a motion to recommend the amount of \$64,175 recommended by the Board of Selectmen for line 4140 Town Clerk Tax Collector. Pat Martel seconded the motion. Motion passed 6 aye: 2 nay (M. Anderson and J. Miccile).

4153 JUDICIAL AND LEGAL EXPENSE

Mary Jo Holmes made a motion to recommend the amount of \$30,000 recommended by the Board of Selectmen for line 4153 Judicial and Legal Expense. Gene Cordes seconded the motion. Motion passed 8:0.

4195 CEMETERIES - TABLED

Updated expense information and Selectmen's recommendation were provided. Cemetery Trustees plan to meet with the Committee next week to review with some changes based on trying to catch up/make additional improvements.

4196 INSURANCE – TABLED

4197 ADVERTISING & REGIONAL ASSOCIATION

It was noted that there was a typographical error in the subtotal of the Selectmen's Request column: it should read: \$8,860 instead of \$8,852. NH Local Government Center is a resource for the Town to get information/legal advice. Rockingham Planning deals with regional planning.

Brittany Thompson made a motion to recommend the amount of \$8,860 recommended by the Board of Selectmen for line 4197 Advertising & Regional Association. Pat Martel seconded the motion. Motion passed 7:1 (J. Yokela).

4240 BUILDING INSPECTION

The budget increase was largely due to the request for Building Inspector wages to be increased from \$22.50 to \$25/hour. There was concern that this 10% raise was more than other Town employees were receiving. There was also consideration to the importance of being competitive to retain good, knowledgeable personnel.

Mary Jo Holmes made a motion to reduce the Mileage and Exp. Reimb. Line from \$1,400 to \$900. Jonathan Starr seconded the motion. Motion passed 7:0:1 (G. Cordes abstention).

Josh Yokela made a motion to reduce the Code Books line from \$400 to \$300. Jonathan Starr seconded the motion. Motion passed 6:2 (nay, G. Cordes and B. Thompson).

This total \$600 reduction yielded a new recommended budget of \$39,154 (from the Selectmen's recommendation of \$39,754).

Mary Jo Holmes made a motion to recommend the amount of \$39,154 for line 4240 Building Inspection. Gene Cordes seconded the motion. Motion passed 6:1:1 (M. Anderson abstention; J. Yokela nay)

4520 PARKS & RECREATION – TABLED

Updated information was provided. Due to the configuration of summer camp and no recent Parks and Recreation meetings, the Selectmen's office mostly put this budget together with input from individual Committee members. The Selectmen will meet with Committee members tomorrow night. Ms. Carlson plans to walk through the budget with the Budget Committee next week. The Committee suggested having representatives from the Committee present next week as well.

The Town budget report spreadsheet dated 10/17/2018 was provided. Ms. Anderson will ask Ms. Carlson about the amount of \$122,990 under the "Spent 2017" column for the "17 Encumbered" operating budget line item. She noted that there is only a \$10 difference between the grand totals of the "Spent 2017" and "Appropriation 2018" lines (\$3,194,557 and 3,194,567, respectfully). She wondered if there could be an issue with the formulas. The Budget Committee Recommended column for line 4220 Fire Rescue Department should be \$204,269 (instead of \$194,269).

There was brief discussion about Warrant Articles, including ones for Chester Road, Fire Rescue, and new Police Officer. Mr. Cordes said that there will be more backup data regarding the Fire Rescue Department and the number of unanswered calls, etc. He noted that other districts such as Danville is adopting the practice of having personnel dedicated to calls during the day and having people sign on at night (paid an on-call rate and then point system when they answer calls). Ms. Anderson contacted Municipal Services regarding the need to re-vote in the affirmative if a Warrant Article is defeated and was told that, if a Warrant Article is defeated, it should say that the Budget Committee "does not recommend" (there is no need to re-vote in the affirmative).

NEXT MEETING DATE: OCTOBER 24, 2018 at Town Hall Basement Meeting Room, 7PM

On the agenda will be: Conservation Commission, Cemetery Trustees, and Parks and Recreation.

ADJOURNMENT

Mary Jo Holmes made a motion to adjourn at 8:46 PM. Jonathan Starr seconded the motion. Motion passed 8:0.

Respectfully submitted by Susan Perry, Secretary