

FREMONT BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING

Fremont Town Hall

295 Main Street

Fremont, NH 03044

December 5, 2012

7:00 PM

I. CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chairman Charles Kimball called the December 5, 2012 meeting to order at 7:01 pm on the main floor of Fremont Town Hall.

Present were: Budget Committee Members Griffin Cordes (leaving at 8:05 pm), Greg Fraize, Charles Kimball, Patricia Martel, and Mike Nygren, and Recording Secretary Susan Perry.

Members of the public included: School Superintendent Michelle Langa, School Business Administrator Laurie Verville, and Ellis School Special Education Coordinator Sarah Krebs (all three left the meeting at 8:25 pm).

II. SCHOOL OFFICIALS: CONTINUED PRESENTATION OF NEW BUDGET: FOCUS ON SANBORN AND OTHER TUITION COSTS

Mr. Kimball asked a few questions. It was reported that per the CBA, 11 staff members had Step increases and some teachers had track changes. Normal Step increase was around \$1200 and normal track increase was \$1600. Mr. Kimball said that the budget was more than last year even with the cuts. Ms. Langa noted that the operating budget now included grant positions. Two teachers had historically been paid by grants but that was uncertain now.

Mr. Kimball asked about a Special Education teacher that was covered by grant funding (p. 3 /27 in the budget book under Budget Overview). Ms. Verville replied that one person was hired outside of grant funding (with regular funding) and another person had been grant-funded but was in the operating budget now. Ms. St. Germain asked if it was normal for teachers in grant positions to become part of the operating budget and Ms. Verville replied yes for critical staff. Mr. Nygren asked what Title I monies were normally spent on. Ms. Verville said Title I funding was used for items such as equipment, math/reading materials and curriculum supplies directly for the classroom – and not always for Special Education. Ms. Langa said that a goal was to aid struggling students to achieve in the classroom. The IDEA grant was for students with specific disabilities who received services required by law under IEPs. Ms. Martel heard that the IDEA grant went through scrutiny at all levels. Ms. Verville said that the Administration/Special Education Director should not be paid out of the IDEA grant; IDEA funding was applicable for services that students might need, not for salaries.

Ms. Martel asked if there would be no increase in staff for the next several years now that salaries were in the general budget. Ms. Langa replied that they did not intend to have increases. However, if there was a student need that was benefited from contracted specialists, if the cost of the contracted services exceeded the cost of an employee, there could be an increase in staff.

Ms. St. Germain asked about the PBIS program line being moved from the supply line to the administration supply line. Ms. Verville said that this was a reclassification. She noted that there was an allowance per teacher of about \$250 for classroom supplies.

One full-time social worker salary was now budgeted, as well as two full time counselors: one was for the elementary school and the other was for the middle school (programming). Both counselors taught
Committee approved on December 19, 2012

December 5, 2012

a significant portion of the health curriculum and Section 504, which was protection for students with disabilities but who learn well but do not need special services (just physical/health, e.g. diabetes). The 504 Plan had its own separate office of government that oversaw it. There were 61 Special Education students at Ellis.

Ms. Verville clarified that soccer uniforms were reclassified and now paid for within the 1400 function (supplies – athletics and curriculum).

The nurse had a track and Step change per the CBA. The nurse's salary line was actually down by about \$25,000 (there was a reduction of half a position).

The psychologist determined the real need of specialized instruction for students. The psychologist worked 80% of a school day for 4 days/week for 111 days. There would be a CBA in a Warrant.

There was discussion about there not being a decrease in staff over the past 5 or so years even though there had been a reduction in the number of students during that time. One factor was that grant positions were not accounted for before. Mr. Nygren felt that Ellis did not have the student numbers to justify the number of staff. He favored targeting money for required positions and not keeping a position when grant money ran out. Ms. Verville said that she was trying to change what was done in the past. Mr. Nygren presented a spreadsheet he got from 2011 that showed the amount of full time staff members in 2008 as 82. The spreadsheet included psychologists, Speech Pathologist etc. Ms. Langa noted that they had made cuts in relationship to the number of enrollment. Ms. Verville said she would look further at the spreadsheet information and ask Principal Safina for his input. Mr. Fraize felt it was important to see what the Administration gathered for information. Ms. Langa noted that three teachers were being cut (which accounted for about 50 students right there).

Griffin Cordes asked if there were plans to replace James Gough, a social studies teacher who was retiring. Ms. Langa said that they were not looking to replace Mr. Gough. Ms. Verville said that the threshold for unemployment insurance was \$14,000.

Mr. Kimball asked about extended year salaries. Ms. Verville said that the money was put into places where they now made sense (under Salary: Extended Year). Ms. Krebs said that the program was reduced by one week (still appropriate amount of extra needed education while allowing children some vacation time) and there was a reduction in the number of staff.

Ms. St. Germain asked about the transportation bid. Ms. Verville said that the goal was to have bids returned by Christmas break. Mr. Nygren asked if the past bus contract had an escalation clause (e.g. for fuel cost). Ms. Verville responded that she was not certain if there was a fuel charge on that bid; Mr. Kimball said that there was (the company provided so much for fuel and anything above that was the Town's responsibility). Ms. Verville said that if the bid included an escalation clause, the company would need to stipulate what that percentage was. Provider was used for Special Education transportation (3-year bid) and NRT (North Reading Transportation) was used for regular education.

There was discussion about the number of bus routes from Fremont to Sanborn Regional High School. Mr. Nygren noted that there was an increase in high school transportation budget – from \$83,000 (2012-13) to \$116,000. Ms. Verville did not know how they came up with the budgeted amount for 2012/13 but the NRT bid price was correct. Her draft document was based on number of bus routes; Mr. Nygren said that they would need to readjust the figure in the high school budget for transportation. In the new bid, they were asking for ridership information and for more data to be provided to the School District. A clause stated that the District had the right to reduce a bus without penalty.

Ms. Martel noted that 19 Special Education employees were eligible for dental benefits: 6 teachers and 13 Para-educators. Ms. Verville confirmed that case managers were equated as teachers.

The increase of @ \$100,000 in out-of-district placement was in Special Education - O/T, Speech Therapy, Extended Year, etc. were all put in that tuition line.

Mr. Kimball spoke about the elementary tuition rate, which was up a little to around \$12,500, and the relative cost of transportation. Ms. Krebs said that transportation was required to get children to get education. It was noted that the state average was a little more than Fremont.

226 +2 students were planned to attend Sanborn Regional High School. 42 Fremont students in Special Education currently attend Sanborn RHS and 42-44 were projected for next year. Last year, 225 was budgeted for. Ms. Verville noted that Sanborn had not made cuts after their recent budget was made. Ms. Krebs explained that she oversaw Special Education at Sanborn RHS, where there was a Special Education Director and Coordinator. Ellis had an out of district coordinator who goes over to Sanborn as well. Ms. Langa noted that Fremont paid 1 ½ times for Special Education at Sanborn RHS.

Ms. Verville would draw up a history on grant funding. Ms. Martel said she had found a spreadsheet on grants and asked what was covered with FY 2013-2014 proposed funding. Ms. Verville said that the \$210,00 figure she put in there was "not conservative" and that grant funding such as Title I or REAP was unsure. Ms. Langa noted that, with the sequestration bill, grant money might be eliminated.

Mr. Nygren proposed that the administration look at the true history of spending (what was asked for and what was actually spent), as he felt that there were savings. He recommended being innovative and frugal while paying for education. Ms. Verville said that one increase in the budget was for Sanborn's GMR (Guaranteed Maximum Rate); Mr. Nygren said that when the true rate came in, it could be less than the GMR. Ms. Langa noted that there was a budget freeze for most of last year and there was an issue with retirement. Ms. Verville said that there was a savings of about \$46,000 (difference between the Sanborn tuition GMR and actual rate). There was savings in the facilities budget, noting that Scott Brown did a lot of repairs on his own that saved money.

Ms. Verville said that the School Board next Tuesday would review another spending report and she would email it to the Budget Committee.

III. OTHER

Mike Nygren made a motion to table the minutes of November 28, 2012. Greg Fraize seconded the motion. Motion passed 5:0.

The Budget Committee still needed to complete review of the Police Department budget and Warrant Articles. Remaining questions included: if the Police Department was willing to go overtime vs. hire new; \$3,000 for oil changes; accreditation (if there was a limit of part-time positions etc.).

Mr. Nygren had concern that the Special Education budget and the Regular Education budget did not have transportation costs in them. There was a discussion about bus routes and numbers; Mr. Kimball said he had seen two buses coming out of the same street in Fremont. Mr. Fraize suggested waiting to hear back from the school. There was discussion about the increased experience of the school administration in the budget procedure as well as doing what was best for students while also considering the Town/taxpayers. Mr. Fraize had concern with Budget Committee scrutiny over the school budget in particular. It was noted that the school department had the biggest budget and dominates the tax rate in any Town. Mr. Fraize noted that Ellis school part of the budget was level funded and that there were factors such as NH retirement, RIFs, tuition, etc. Mr. Fraize noted that there should be information on the new CBA at the next School Board meeting next Tuesday. Mr. Nygren noted that the CBA had stated that provisions continued until something else was negotiated; he said

this was not an “Evergreen Clause”. Ms. St. Germain wanted to know if there was resolve from the DRA on gross budgeting; she had concern about putting grant funds in twice.

After discussion about numbers not adding up, class sizes vs. achievement levels, and gross budgeting, Mr. Fraize asked for votes on the questions he should pose for the Budget Committee to the School Board.

Mike Nygren made a motion for the Budget Committee to ask the School Board why transportation was not included in the Special Education and Regular Education budgets at Ellis School. Greta St. Germain seconded the motion. Motion passed 5:0.

Mike Nygren made a motion for the Budget Committee to ask the School Board to get a letter from the DRA regarding gross budgeting (putting grant money in the general fund or not). Greta St. Germain seconded the motion. Motion passed 5:0.

IV. NEXT MEETING DATE: WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 12, 2012

V. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:05 pm, Greta St. Germain made a motion to adjourn. Mike Nygren seconded the motion. Motion passed 5:0.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Perry,
Recording Secretary