

Present: Committee Members Mary Jo Holmes, Jon Benson, Gene Cordes, Gordon Muench, Brenda Beauchain, Nancy Murray and Joshua Yokela (arrived at 7:05 pm); SAU 83 Business Manager Nathan Castle and Superintendent Ellen Halliday; Recording Secretary Shawn Perreault.

Holmes called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm in the main floor meeting room at the Fremont Town Hall, 295 Main Street in Fremont and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Motion was made by Benson to approve the meeting minutes of 13 December 2023 as written, seconded by Murray. Motion passed with a vote of 6 Yes, 0 No.

Review of School budget and Warrant Articles

Castle gave the Committee an updated default budget and a copy of the current School Warrant Articles. He confirmed that the default budget was reviewed with the attorney and done correctly. The new default budget decreased by \$10.29.

Article 1 – Open Positions for the School – Gordon Muench and Greg Fraize’s seats are up this year. The other open positions were reviewed.

Article 2 – Staff Contract – there was discussion held on what positions were part of this contract as well as what the major changes were from the current contract. Halliday stated that the two largest changes were benefits and pay scale. The District is trying to retain staff and be competitive in what we offer to these employees. The largest bump will be in the 1st year of the new contract. Castle did review the increase of the Health insurance, which was 10.2%. He stated that our District was not as high as other districts, which were as high as 20%. Motion was made by Muench to recommend Article 2, seconded by Benson. Motion passed with a vote of 6 Yes, 1 No (Yokela)

Article 3 – Special Meeting – if the contract article fails, the District is requesting permission to call one special meeting to renegotiate the Staff contract. The contract can change from what was originally submitted in Article 2. The School Board would enter into a new negotiation, which would then be brought to the special meeting to be voted upon by voters. In the meantime, the staff would be under the current contract. Cordes expressed his concern with the cost of a special meeting, as well as low turnout for the re-vote. Yokela stated that if this fails, the School Board can still call a special meeting, but there are more steps they would be required to take before the meeting could take place. Holmes made a motion to recommend Article 3, seconded by Muench. Motion failed with a vote of 1 Yes (Muench), 6 No.

Article 4 – School’s Operating Budget – Holmes asked for an update on Sanborn negotiations and the GMR. Muench and Halliday confirmed that the School Board voted to reconsider negotiations with Sanborn at last night’s meeting. They met with Sanborn for three hours on Sunday and the impasse could not be overcome. The School Board then made a motion to continue negotiations with Epping and Pinkerton. Cordes asked what the next two months would look like in terms of the negotiation process. Halliday stated that a small group would continue to meet with the two schools and come up with a contract to present to the voters for the March ballot. The School Board’s goal is to have both contracts before the Deliberative Session so the residents could look it over and ask questions before voting.

Muench stated that Epping negotiations were just paused when it was agreed to move forward with Sanborn, so they are not starting from the beginning. Castle confirmed that the GMR did not change and will remain at 25.6% or \$24,093.53 plus capital cost of \$2,565.03 per student. There are currently 150 Fremont students scheduled to be at Sanborn next year. The Budget Committee expressed their disappointment that things with Sanborn could not be worked out. Benson asked for the per student cost

of Pinkerton this year. Castle stated it was \$15,408. Muench wanted the Committee to be aware that he believes Sanborn will follow the formula in the contract for it's remainder. Fremont will not see any more decreases when the GMR is issued. Motion was made by Muench to recommend Article 4, seconded by Murray. Motion passed with a vote of 5 Yes, 2 No (Yokela, Holmes).

Article 5 – Special Ed Fund – The School Board is seeking to put \$200,000 in the Special Ed Capital Reserve Fund using unassigned fund balance (surplus) money from this year's budget. Castle stated this year they had added to the Facility's Fund, but will need to dip heavily into the Special Ed fund and want to replenish it. Motion was made by Cordes to recommend this article, seconded by Muench. Motion passed with a vote of 7 Yes, 0 No.

Next meeting date: Public Hearing on Wednesday January 10, 2024 at Ellis School. The Budget Committee will meet at 6:30 pm to review petitions and any other information. The Public Hearing begins at 7:00 pm. A January 3, 2024 meeting will not be needed.

Motion to adjourn made by Cordes, seconded by Muench. Meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Shawn Perreault
Recording Secretary