

FREMONT BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING ~ TOWN & SCHOOL DISTRICT PUBLIC BUDGET HEARING
 Fremont Town Hall, Fremont, NH 03044
January 10, 2018
7PM

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Mary Anderson called the January 10, 2018 Budget Public Hearing to order with the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:00 PM at the Fremont Town Hall in the basement meeting room. Present were: Budget Committee Chair Mary Anderson, Neal Janvrin (standing in for absent Gene Cordes), Mary Jo Holmes, Joe Miccile, Kathy Miccile, Josh Yokela, and Jennifer Brown. Also present were: Susan Penny, Greg Fraize, Brittany Thompson, Angela O’Connell, Susan Levine, Heidi Carlson, Police Chief John Twiss, Eric Abney, Leon Holmes Jr, Roger Barham, Keith Stanton, Mike Nygren, Matt Hewson, Jonathan Starr, and Susan Perry.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: DECEMBER 27, 2017

Jennifer Brown made a motion to approve as amended the minutes of December 27, 2017. Kathy Miccile seconded the motion. Motion passed 6:0:2 (abstentions from P. Martel and N. Janvrin).

It was announced that there are re-broadcastings of meetings on FCTV and that the filing period for open Town positions will take place between January 24 and February 2, 2018. During tonight’s meeting, viewers were able to email questions to FremontTA@comcast.net to have them answered during the Public Hearing.

SCHOOL WARRANT ARTICLES

The MS-27 Form was available, along with the draft School District Warrant and the School District Default budget form. Each Warrant Article was read aloud and discussed.

Warrant

Article	Description
<u>2</u>	Support Staff CBA FY18-19 \$27,708 FY 19-20 \$27,940 FY 20-21 \$23,731 Further raise/appropriate \$27,708 for FY18 (add’l costs attributable to the increase in salaries/benefits required by the new agreement over those at current staffing levels).
<u>3</u>	<u>Special Meeting should article 2 fail (the Budget Committee did not recommend it due to the cost of calling such a meeting)</u>
<u>4</u>	<u>Operating Budget: \$12,405,605 (default \$12,762,314).</u> It was noted that the approved budget is \$210,645 less than the current school year and that the Budget Committee and School Board worked together and is moving in the right direction (with decreasing enrollment, cutting back positions by attrition, meeting student needs, etc.) Superintendent Hutton was new to the District as of July and now will have more background with the budget moving forward. Mr. Nygren asked what the original budget was; Ms. Penny replied that it was about \$307,900 more (about \$50,000 less than the default) and kept two positions in. Unknowns are revenue and aid at the end of the year. Mr. Stanton asked who voted against this article; Josh Yokela and Mary Jo Holmes replied that they thought it could be reduced more due to low class sizes and number of staff. Mr. Miccile felt that voting on the operating budget was more favorable since it is lower than the default budget.
<u>5</u>	<u>To raise/appropriate up to \$50,000 to the Ellis School Building and Grounds Maintenance Fund (from unassigned fund balance).</u> Mr. Stanton felt that it was deceptive to say that no amount is to be raised by taxation since it is (referring to articles 5-8). Ms. Anderson favored saving for the future and said that the DRA and lawyers determine the legal text on Warrant Articles. Mr. Miccile said that it was thought best for citizens to vote for or against these articles. Ms. O’Connell noted that the Board budgeted leaner so that if something goes wrong, the funds could be used. There are no lines for contingency and no building projects are budgeted (though it is an aging building).
<u>6</u>	<u>Raise/appropriate up to \$100,000 to the Tuition Trust Fund (from unassigned fund balance).</u> Ms. Levine noted that \$300,000 is the goal for the balance of this fund; if this article passes, the District would not repeat the article next year. This fund is helpful to use if tuition goes over the GMR or if there is an increase in enrollment; no ghost students are budgeted anymore).

- 7 NEW: to establish a Special Education Expendable Trust Fund per RSA 198:20-c and to raise/appropriate up to \$100,000 to be placed in the fund (from the unassigned fund balance).
This is to cover unanticipated Special Education expenses, which can get expensive – it is good to save for emergencies so as not to appropriate each year.
- 8 NEW: to establish a Technology Expendable Trust Fund per RSA 198:20-c and to raise/appropriate up to \$25,000 to be placed in the fund.
This was not recommended by the Budget Committee because some members felt that it could be budgeted more easily (can plan more for things like server life in the budget). Ms. Brown noted that technology is part of education now and is expanding (working on 1:1 technology) and that it can get costly when servers and environments go down. The fund would help if a problem arises, so as not to pull from elsewhere in the budget. This fund would cover whole-school (staff as well as students). Mr. Fraize noted that there is no insurance policy on the Chromebooks (\$140 each) and this fund could help if needed.
- 9 NEW CITIZENS PETITION: To list legal actions, etc. filed against/by the School District during the budget year (July 1st to June 30th) and publish it in annual reports, per NH Right to Know laws and Freedom of Information Act.
Mr. Stanton spoke to this. Ms. O’Connell mentioned that anything that can be legally disclosed is in minutes and videos that are publicly released online, on cable TV, or by request. Ms. Levine said that she agrees with transparency and is supportive of this as long as it is legal (e.g. re. personnel issues).

TOWN WARRANT ARTICLES

There was a review of the Town Warrant Articles. Each article was read by Budget Committee members. Mr. Barhum noted that the Planning Board will post information on the lengthy Zoning changes (articles 2-7) on FCTV. Ms. Carlson noted that the warrant is on the Town website homepage, along with dates, sign-ups etc. A shorter version will be on the ballot. The MS-737 form was available, plus other documents such as budgets, estimated tax rate changes, and revenues. Also available at the meeting were the abbreviated version of the tax rate estimate page, expenses and revenues, along with the State Budget Forms MS 737, Default budget and a full expense detail report for 2017 that also contained the 2018 line items from Department requests through budget Committee recommendations.

Warrant

Article	Description
8	<u>Operating Budget: \$2,962,671 (Default: \$2,893,632)</u> This is up \$15,000 from last year. Increases include items such as: the full year of an additional part-time position in the Selectmen’s office; a full year of the additional 3 hours added in 2017 for the Town Clerk/Tax Collector Office; two more State elections added to the slate; increase in legal services line (utility issues); fifth police officer funded in 2017 and full year in 2018; increase from 32 to 40 hour position in the Highway Department; increase in oil price and IT costs; ambulance service contractual increase, change in weekend duty stipends for the Fire Rescue Department; completion of paving work on Whittier Drive, and street lights; annual 3% increase in solid waste cost; and a new 20 hr/week position at the Library.
9	<u>Hire an Additional Full-Time Police Officer. (\$37,272). Tax impact \$0.09. 2019 cost of about \$90,000</u> Chief Twiss spoke about the significance of public safety, especially when there are more violent crimes now. He feels that 6 full-time officers would be more beneficial than part-time officers who often go on patrols alone, for reasons of safety and scheduling. The full-time police academy is a 16-week program/640 hours per officer whereas the part-time program is only 200 hours and is bare-minimum. Chief Twiss will add a list of crime facts in Fremont in relation to similar towns on the Police Department website. The Town Report has incident response lists. He noted that Fremont does not have a full-time fire department so police officers often deal with medical emergencies as well. Ms. Anderson noted that a reason some on the Committee did not recommend this article was that other departments need employees also and 2 out of 3 officers were approved over the past 3 years; they favored revisiting this article in another year.
10	<u>Contribution to the Library Building Expendable Town Trust Fund (\$5,000 - tax impact \$0.01)</u>
11	<u>Contribution to the Fire Truck Capital Reserve Fund (\$50,000 – tax impact \$0.12)</u> The standard life of fire trucks is about 20 years and the department has one about 28 years old. The cost is about \$500,000 to replace a basic engine; there is about \$100,000 in the savings account now.
12	<u>Contribution to the Bridge Capital Reserve Fund (\$25,000 – tax impact \$0.06)</u>

Fremont should be in the State of NH Bridge Aid Queue in 2020-21. The Town is saving for it now and will be eligible for 80% reimbursement once formally approved for the Bridge Aid Program.

- 13 Contribution to the Highway Equipment Capital Reserve Fund (\$25,000 – tax impact \$0.06)
Mr. Holmes noted that a backhoe was purchased, then a one-ton truck in 2012 (\$70,000) using these savings. In 2017, a new roller was also bought out of this truck as well as a used truck and bucket for the backhoe. The Town now owns this equipment rather than spending money on rental costs.
- 14 Funding Highway Paving & Improvements to Beede Hill Road (\$213,094 – tax impact \$0.52)
Mr. Holmes has a plan to get caught up with roadwork and this is the higher-traveled road (e.g. than Red Brook Road, which is also in need of work). It costs more to maintain a road in bad condition. This road work would serve 15-20 years and the town is overdue with Beede Hill Road. Work would be done in one year.
- 15 Funding Highway Paving and Improvements to Red Brook Road (\$162,710 – tax impact \$0.40)
The Budget Committee felt that it was costly to have two roadwork articles so it was best for voters to decide.
- 16 Funding the Mosquito Control Program (\$49,550 – tax impact of \$0.12)
There was discussion from the floor about including this in the operating budget in future years since it has been funded regularly.
- 17 Contribution to the Historic Museum Capital Reserve Fund (\$15,000 – tax impact \$0.04)
This fund would help if something happens to the museum or if an edition is put on it to house the many historical artifacts in town (such as the hearse).
- 18 Designate the Selectmen as Agents to Expend from the Historic Museum Capital Reserve Fund
- 19 Consider Amending the Elderly Exemption income and Asset Limits
Ms. Carlson noted that it has been more than 10 years since these numbers have been adjusted. Fremont has a low census of elderly exemptions. Income and asset limits are at base level so Fremont is not making enough effort for older residents to stay in town. This is not a huge change; a few more people may be eligible.
- 20 Consider Amending the Veteran Credit Allowance for Fremont in Light of New Legislation
Ms. Carlson noted that this year, the New Hampshire Legislature changed the wording in the Veterans tax credit as regards time of services and war or armed conflict. Now, it allows more people to get credit. Several residents have asked about this in Town so the Selectmen put it as a Warrant Article.
- 21 Consider Supporting a New Social Service Agency: One Sky Community Services (\$3,500 – tax impact \$0.01)
Ms. Holmes explained that this company helps families with disabled children teach them life skills and be productive in the work force. She said that families in Fremont take advantage of this organization. Ms. Carlson said that past practice when a new agency comes forward is to put out their information.
- 22 Consider a Petition Article to Require Legal Actions to be Published Annually in the Town Report
It was suggested that the \$0.01 tax impact be removed from the text and that “confirm” be changed to “conform”. (This was a typo).
Mary Jo Holmes made a motion that the Budget Committee make no action/recommendation on Warrant Article 22 since it is a Citizens’ Petition. Joe Miccile seconded the motion. Motion passed 8:0.

UPCOMING DATES: School Deliberative Session: February 3rd; Town Deliberative Session: February 5th; Voting March 13th

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:21 PM, Kathy Miccile made a motion to adjourn. Pat Brown seconded the motion. Motion passed 8:0.

Respectfully submitted by,

Susan Perry, Secretary