

Approved 11/20/2019

Present: Mary Jo Holmes, Michael Nygren, Joshua Yokela, Gordon Muench, Steve Bonaccorsi, Joe Miccile, Gene Cordes, Greg Fraize, Ian Fraize, Sharon DeVincent, Angela O'Connell, Sue Penny, Amy Leslie, Allyn Hutton, Nicole Cloutier and Shawn Perreault.

Chair Holmes called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm in the basement meeting room at the Fremont Town Hall. All rose for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Fremont School Board / School Administration 2020-2021 Budget Presentation

Chair Holmes welcomed the School Board and Administration to the meeting. Superintendent Hutton is going to walk the Committee through the budget book that was provided. She asked the Committee to forward any questions to her ahead of the next meeting to make sure the School Board has the answers. Holmes stated that the Committee has decided to send all questions to Holmes and she will forward to Sue Penny.

The 1st tab is the goals the School Board has set. Hutton went through each goal. The 2nd tab is the slides that were shared with the public at last night's public meeting and outlines the needs of the School, highlighting where the increases and decreases to the budget are. The 3rd tab Sue Penny has put items in that she thinks the Committee would want for their review. This includes enrollment data, which is decreasing. The data is there regarding classroom size, how it measures to the State guidelines and the Fremont School Board guidelines.

The 4th tab is Facilities. Phase one of the roof is being completed. Phase Two is needed. They have put in short and long term goals to complete Phase Two. They are trying to fund this without increasing the tax impact.

The 5th tab is the budget proposal being put forth to the Budget Committee, which has decreased \$344,860 from last year. Hutton was very impressed with the budget the school departments put forth coming in under the requested percent she had asked each department to cut.

Some of the changes are: One teacher has been decreased, health increase decrease by 1/2 percent, we are graduating 54 high school students and sending 41 new high school students, decrease in out of district placement (one student that was placed outside is able to get the needed services in Ellis, some kids have moved and some have aged out). The green sheet shows the decreases and blue sheet shows the increases. The School Board has also decreased their legal expenses.

These numbers are based on the last five years of data. The new hires have decreased the budget due to the steps and salary paid out compared to the prior teacher's pay and steps.

The 6th tab includes Revenues. This includes the additional State monies over their next two year fiscal budget passed in September. The School Board voted to give that money back to offset the tax rate. The amount for the current year is \$95,957. In year two, the money will be anticipated because the School Board will have that number from the State by November 15th. The State encourages the School to use it the money for capital cost because the actual amount is unknown. The School Board stated this number can be anywhere from \$250,000 to \$300,000.

The 7th tab includes all of the Trust Fund accounts. The School Board froze the budget when replacing the roof became inevitable. The final payment of \$170,000 has not been made and will only be paid about completion of Phase One.

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The 8th tab is the District budget for 2021 and what they feel will be needed. The 9th tab includes Sanborn Tuition Costs. This includes eight years of data. Per the contract, Sanborn is required to give us an estimated cost by November 1st, followed by a maximum cost by December 15th. Last years numbers were so far off, that the Board pushed back and were scrambling to come up with the difference. The School Board is hoping to avoid that this year and is putting forward 4%, which is above the 3% estimate. The School Board stated that 7-8 grades in Kingston and Newton are moving to the High School and the capital costs should be less because of this. The 27% will be the decrease in capital and the student cost is increasing 7.5%. Hutton does have a lot of verbal promises, but she is making their best guest. On the **Pink sheet** Penny shows how the GMR changed from December to April. This is based on the approval of the Kingston/Newton budget, which happens later than Fremont's budget adoption. Hutton said we are only counting students we have, not adding any to account for someone moving into Town.

The 9th tab is the Default Budget. The 10th tab is the current Fiscal Year Budget.

Hutton said she had done a quick overview and if there is anything the Committee would like to see, to please ask. Holmes gave Hutton a printout of the *Reaching Higher New Hampshire*, sometimes this budget is not fully funded. This an organization that was proposing numbers, but not the State. A discussion was held on the difference between this organization and the State numbers. On November 15th the School District will get the numbers anticipated for next year. Hutton would like a Warrant Article asking the voters to put the money in the Facility Use Capital Reserve Fund.

Hutton feels the budget put forth is very fair, below the budget numbers requested. They took the taxpayers into consideration. There is one teacher retiring that they are not replacing. The teacher that is retiring has one classroom. The School waits until April to see what grade level will be affected. It is based on students that get added.

They are planning on moving the students from one of the modulars back inside the building. The modular will still be used, but for something like storage, and will no longer house students. Holmes asked about Collective Bargaining contracts this year, and Hutton confirmed there are none. Yokela questioned the number of students per grade to teacher and the Fremont guidelines.

Miccile questioned the move of 7th and 8th graders to the High School and if High School enrollment down, is that why they are making this move. Muench said the Sanborn numbers are down as well and that is why. Sanborn did ask us to send our 7th and 8th graders, but we can do it cheaper and this is not part of our contract. Miccile said he would like to see the enrollment numbers for the last 3 to 4 years. O'Connell stated it would be interesting to see what it was from when the agreement started to present day. Discussion was held on where enrollment went.

Hutton said the Sanborn contract goes to 2026. They are looking into the how and whys and what our options are now. People are very divided, but we need to really have discussion on this. They want to develop a plan now. They want to look at how much the Ellis budget had to give up to pay for the Sanborn Contract.

Miccile noted a 10 million dollar revenue from the State which is being distributed state-wide. Penny explained that the State has a formula that they use to determine what we get in revenue, which will be given to us on November 15th. Nygren asked if this was a one-time distribution; and it is, which is why they want to fund the Building Capital Reserve Fund with the year two revenue monies. Penny explained how the State tends to come up with these numbers. The money we got for kindergarten was taken away, but is put back into the formula too.

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Bonaccorsi asked if the money is just for Ellis, or can we dig for grant money to help with off set the impact of Sanborn. Hutton replied that they seek out grant money all the time. They were awarded a second round from the Security grant of \$30,000 for cameras and \$12,000 for barriers. They have applied for security lights as well. There really isn't funding for the type of grant Bonaccorsi referred to. They have had a lot of luck with facility need grants. Muench reminded the Budget Committee that grants come with strings and that needs to be kept in mind. They have been able to shift things around to meet the requirements. For example, The Security grant – we had to come up with 20% of the cost in order to get the grant.

Holmes said the Committee will start looking at the School budget book. She requested all questions by Monday morning to her; in order to have the answers by Wednesday's meeting from the School Administration. Cordes asked the School Board to explain the GMA process again. Penny/Hutton explained that the written estimate of the HS cost per student is due November 1st and shows an overall 3% increase, based on Ellis experience last year's 2% becoming 11% and rolled back to 5.5%. She has been told verbally this will be less than the 3%, December 15th is the guaranteed maximum. This can decrease in April depending on the budget that passes in Kingston/Newton. The break down has per student, the capital cost and the special education cost. The School Board is confident with the number of 4% they put forth in the budget. They want to avoid a scramble. We have the safety net of the Tuition Trust Fund to cover more. Muench said there is no plan to decrease teachers in Kingston/Newton because they will be running a middle school inside the high school.

A discussion was held on the 7th and 8th graders moving to the high school. How we were asked and the history of the decision.

The move of 7th and 8th grade coming in doesn't void our contract because our students do not lose anything. Holmes asked about AP classes. Hutton said this is usually only driven by the numbers. They have offered other things, ie college courses. O'Connell said the School Board worked hard to make sure the students are not losing anything. Muench reminds the Committee this is a contract arrangement not a cooperative, but they have been great about including Fremont in the conversation. O'Connell said the decrease in their students, makes Fremont needed. Muench said the tuition is the same that Newton and Kingston pay. Further decision was held on the cost of the tuition and what the towns in the co-op pay.

Micicile would like to see a contract that is not locking us in for such a long time. Muench feels the current School Board would like that to be the case as well. Hutton said there are some community members that want long contracts. Holmes said the length of the current contract was due to the bond on the new building. Cordes wants to see a plan in place before we come close to the 2026 contract deadline; even suggesting it start now. Everyone agrees there should be clauses in the contract to look at things as they change, give us outs or renewal options, etc.

Cloutier asked if Fremont had an option of the District paying a certain amount for High School and if the student went some where else, the parents paid for the rest. Hutton said that legally Fremont is required have a high school of record for our kids. There have been some requests for this option. If we did this and then a lot of kids went other places, we are paying for nothing. Some people felt the more directions our students went, we lost our sense of community. Micicile asked about displacement funds for a student that decides to go to say Pinkerton instead of Sanborn. Hutton said a family can qualify if they can prove that their student can't get there needs met.

The first Public Hearing on the Future of our High School Student will be held next Tuesday November 12 at 6:00 pm at the Ellis School Library. Hutton said the end game is to do research, share information and have a ballot question on what the voters want the School Board to do.

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Motion to approve the October 30, 2019 Meeting Minutes as amended was made by Miccile, seconded by Bonaccorsi. Motion passed 5-0-0 (JY had to leave the meeting after the School Board presentation)

4130 Executive: Cordes brought this budget back in front of the Budget Committee due to Carlson being able to buy an updated version of QuickBooks this year in conjunction with the other computer upgrades. This removes the need to purchase this next year and decreases the budget by \$1,000. Motion made by Muench to amend the Budget Committee recommendation from \$126,041 to \$125,041. Cordes seconded and the motion passed 5 Yes – 0 No – 1 (Nygren) Abstain.

The 2019 Tax Rate is \$31.05. Cordes explained the rate sheet that was given to the Board (historical tax rate information). When we have a tax rate increasing so much it's a grim day. This increase is mostly due to the School costs. The Town is always looking to keep costs down. We work hard to meet the needs, but do so with minimal costs. The Board of Selectmen will continue to look at the needs and what can be done. He is happy with the progress. We have to make sure things are still being tended to. Some of the increase is to the roads and maintenance of things and the Town are continuing to do so. Miccile commented that taxes have gone up too fast. We have tried to go with the needs, but budgets can't keep going up this way. People don't have the resources. He said he will be pushing back on some of these increases. We need to keep these budgets down. Holmes feels each of the members need to do this with all the budgets and make notes, look at them and push back. More people living in Town are working on limited income. People can't afford the taxes on the homes they are living in. She encouraged all to dig into the budget, and send all School Budget questions to her by Monday.

Holmes informed the Committee that the Selectmen's Office received a call from Jonathan Starr today, resigning from the Committee. She asked the Committee to think about appointing someone to replace him or leaving the position open until voting. Miccile felt if someone is interested, we should always offer the appointment. The rest of the Committee agreed. Holmes said they could talk more next week on how we can fill it, if we get the written resignation in by end of week.

The next meeting will be held at 7:00 pm on Wednesday November 13, 2019 in the Town Hall Basement Meeting Room.

Motion to adjourn was made by Miccile, seconded Cordes. Meeting adjourned at 8:27 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Shawn Perreault
Recording Secretary