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The meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm in the basement meeting room at the Fremont Town Hall. Present were Committee members Mary Jo Holmes, Joe Miccile, Gene Cordes, Steve Bonaccorsi, Michael Nygren, Joshua Yokela and School Board Rep Greg Fraize. SAU Business Administrator Susan Penny was present, along with members of the public Lisa Marggraf, School Board members Angela O'Connell and Amy Leslie, and Ellis School Principal Sharon DeVincent. The meeting was live broadcast on FCTV and minutes were prepared from the DVD recording of the meeting.

The meeting was spent entirely on review of the School District Budget for 2020-2021.

Holmes introduced the School Board, stating that a number of questions were sent to Sue Penny after last weeks meeting regarding the School Board's proposed budget. The Committee was handed a financial statement that shows actual fiscal year 2019 with adopted budget and actual spent. This statement is ending date June 30, 2019. This shows a full year of expenses. Sue Penny handed the Committee a sheet showing the Sanborn enrollment over the last 8 years and on the back page show the Sanborn District vs. Fremont District. It was determined by the Committee they would start by having the School Board answer the questions that were sent before proceeding through the book.

Holmes explained the reason for the request for the financial statement was due to the statement provided in the book listing everything as a zero ending budget. She questioned this, due to the fact there were no surpluses or overages showing. The Committee members agreed to review and discuss further next week.

Yokela questioned the teacher salary line being over spent by \$40,000. Penny corrected him stating that line showed underspent not overspent. The underspent was due to people leaving and the hiring of new personnel with lower starting pay. Holmes questioned the overspending in the health insurance. Penny explained this was probably due to someone taking a family plan over the budgeted single plan. Holmes further explained that the Committee wanted the financials to show where money in the bottom line budget was going. O'Connell reminded the Committee that with the bottom line budget there are transfers made if a line runs over. Budget transfers over \$2,000 and that are outside functions must be approved by the School Board at a meeting. Transfers under \$2,000 and grant transfers can be done by the Business Administrator and one School Board member's approval, and with the Superintendent's approval.

Holmes stated that prior Budget Committees have asked when transfers are made that the Budget Committee be made aware of it. This saves time at the end of the year. Fraize and Penny said that all the transfers, especially those over \$2,000 are part of the agenda packet send out.

Nygren clarified Holmes' statement stating the Budget Committee would like to be notified when adjustments/transfers to lines in the budget happen as they happen either by email or by the School Board Rep informing the Budget Committee. Discussion was held on how this was going to take place. Penny will forward what she has done so far.

Yokela and Penny discussed the teacher salary line increases over the last couple of years, the first year was \$50,000 and this year is \$30,000, which Penny stated was pretty accurate. Nygren asked how many steps teachers got? Penny stated each cell went up about 1%, but if someone was on Step 15 they only get the 1% not the step increase. The level doesn't matter unless it was a new degree. The people on Step 15 also received an additional \$1,000. Further discuss was held.

FTE by function that was requested was passed out. This is this current year only, so the ones for the teachers will be reduced by one from 32.5 to 31.5. Correction on 2400 was made of 2 school secretaries.

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Miccile asked a question on page 16 of the budget regarding social work services and why are we hiring this? Penny stated it is for the students social and emotional wellbeing, but asked DeVincent to speak more on the services. Miccile stated he wasn't looking for a list of services, more is this a requirement? DeVincent stated this was due to the kids in our district having emotional or behavioral issues that needed to be supported. A lot of these services are listed in student IEP's and it made more sense to have someone in house rather than contracting the services. Further discussion was held and the difference between cost of in house vs. contracting out was also discussed. This line can be found under 125330 ten and thirty (some of this is grant money too). O'Connell stated this was part of the reorganization of the Special Ed Department. Penny reminded the Committee that part of this was so students would have consistency, which is very important. Miccile stated his point was we let go of a teacher but didn't save in salary or health insurance.

Miccile asked where the money for the Spanish teacher went and Penny stated they had a hard time finding a Spanish teacher so this was changed to a Wellness teacher. This shift filled a need in the Unified Arts and we were lacking in the Health/Wellness. Miccile asked if this position is included in the number 31.5 or are we back to 32.5 for the FTE? Penny said under the function of 1100 we are down to 31.5, but 2113 has increased by 1. O'Connell said this is a new position (in 2020) and we are carrying into next year 2021. Penny said i came into the budget during fiscal year 2019-2020. Yokela commented that one line goes up by \$11,000 and one goes down by \$7,000 and you add \$40,000. Penny thinks a lot were in the grant. Most are funded out of a grant line, but there is a portion we still had to cover out of the 2018-19 general fund. Penny explained that grants require services or needs to change, that you can't keep them in the grant. Nygren clarified by stating you can't have the same position grant funded year after year. Bonaccorsi asked if once the position is filled, does the grant only cover that position for a year? Penny said no they get this grant every year. We get to select the activities covered under the grant based on the needs, but to keep the same position year after year in the IDA grant is called supplanting. You know you have a need for it year after year, so you should find money for it in your general fund. Bonaccorsi asked if that is why this position was created and Penny replied there are a number of reasons it was created.

If something is in the IDA grant, they can only work with Special Ed students. By creating the position, we reach our entire student population and the social/emotional needs of all the students. DeVincent also stated the goal with this position is also to provide teachers with training to help them better handle certain student needs, to support them and decrease other students becoming distracted or disrupted. Penny also stated that the State is sending down some new mandates as well, ie Suicide prevention. Yokela stated that Suicide Prevention course is a two hour free online course. Penny acknowledged that, but this person will support the teacher and answer further questions. Yokela questioned the School Board using the State requirement as a reason for a position. Penny said it helps to have someone in house, but not the reason the position was created. Further discussion was held.

Miccile asked about when an IEP lists a requirement is there a set of "rules" on how we have to provide that requirement? Penny said no, that it can be from a contracted individual or one of our employees. In the past in was contracted out, but in-house is more cost effective. Miccile further questioned if it really was cost effective, when we hire someone we now have salary and benefits, and felt that we can't keep doing this. He feels the benefits are killing us. Fraise stated that these concerns should be brought to the School Board.

Penny put together what was asked for and these questions are more for the School Board itself. Nygren asked about the cost of contracting out. Penny will have to get those numbers and get back to the Committee. O'Connell said the District received the default budget this year and had to cut back even further than planned. However, as a Board they still felt this position was needed and put it in. This was part of the whole Special Ed reorganization. Penny will put together the numbers and get back to the

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Committee on contracting costs and hours vs. in house services. Cordes said it will great to see all the numbers, but said he is hearing over and over it was a need. So, we should speak on what was missing before this position too.

Penny said they reduced our guidance FTE's by a quarter, cut back in the Special Education Department in and of itself. This was done with a Special Education Assistant reduced to half time, with DeVinent taking over the roll. Now, we have a High School Coordinator part time instead of a Special Education Administrator. Penny added that since the reorganization we have a Building Administrator, a High School Coordinator and a Secretary. Yokela about whether the high school special education has the needed personnel. Fraize said we need someone from the Ellis School for our students at Sanborn. Penny said our District person goes to wherever our high school student is, Sanborn or out of district, to make sure our student's IEP is being met. This is a part-time position. This position is under budget line 2330. Fraize said this is something that has always been done, but the Board split the functions, saving 7.5 FTEs. Further discussion was held on how IEPs are funded between Fremont and Sanborn. It was also discussed that when we do another contract, this will need to be discussed. Right now, we seem to be paying for our Coordinator and Sanborn's Coordinator because it is part of their budget. Holmes asked about line 5111 – Salary Sped Coordinator (page 9 of the statement Penny handed out) is this two people? It is, but this is last year. Holmes further asked if this is the person that is doing the part time coordinator and the High school coordinator? Penny said the \$145,000 for last year is the Special Education Administrator and the Building Coordinator at Ellis. Last year, we did not have a High School Coordinator, the Special Education Director did it. So we decreased a person by DeVinent taking on some of the duties and by having a part-time High School Coordinator. Penny told the Committee that DeVinent did not increase her salary by adding these responsibilities, she actually decreased it by 10 days. The need is noted, because there are things only a social worker can do as opposed to a Guidance Counselor.

Micicile referred to page 31 on the Computer Tech, an increase of 6.4%. He questioned the proposed 6.5% increase in salary. Penny said because of the way the budget was, this salary was two years old. The adopted budget was without the increase if you go to 2320 line 229 salary and adjustments, page 35 or 73, that \$20,507 is divided by all non CBA employees. She believes it was 2% that was given to them. If you take the 2% and add it to the \$66,300 it won't be 6% any more. You take the people listed under the Non-CBA employees take their salaries and multiply them by the 2% and everyone gets a 2% raise. Fraize said this is in the budget for those employees that don't have a raise due to contract. This allows the Superintendent to bring employees forward to the School Board and recommend a raise % for them. Holmes noted the process but it does look like from \$66,300 to \$70,550 with \$4,250 increase that is 6.5%. Penny said that salary is for two years. The \$63,800 is what the employee got in 2017-18. Penny feels there was an incentive. \$66,300 is what was adopted for fiscal year 2019-20 because we got the default budget. When that happens you have to go back to the salary that was actually voted on, which she thinks was two years ago. This salary would have been without the 2%. The \$66,300 would have two 2% raises in it. That is why it looks like 6%.

Cordes pointed out the new document shows a 1.0 for the Superintendent, which Penny said should show 0.6. Micicile noted there was a variance of \$1,400 from the adopted to the actual for the computers. Is the \$1,400 this year? Penny said that is correct. The \$66,300 was the last budget that was approved by the voters, so for anyone that is a non-CBA position that is what had to be used. That is what will be in the adopted budget for fiscal year 2020.

It is noted that the adopted budget in fiscal year 2020 is the default. Penny said you have the adopted budget, then the revised budget with the transfers and the actual is always what was spent. Further discussion was held. From District Meeting the MS 27 is what goes to the DRA and is by function.

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Miccile returned to the computer budget, noting \$15,751 spend on computer replacement and asked if there was a trust fund for this. Penny said yes, and it is \$25,000, which has not been used yet. She feels it's important that stays funded for now.

Holmes noted line 1100 on, page 1 of the budget, personal day buy back and asked for further explanation. Penny said in 2017-18 there was a zero appropriation, then it went up to \$16,000, then down to \$1,800; now it is up to \$9,600. Penny said in 2018-19 there were two teachers that retired, and according to their CBA they can get up to 120 days times the current teacher sub rate. In 2019-20, there was one teacher that retired and there were not a lot of sick days to buy back. In proposed for 2021, we know one teacher that is retiring and she has 120 days on the books.

Holmes questioned the sub line, understanding the hardship of this line. It is hard to know how many subs will be needed on any given day and then trying to find them is hard too. The rate of certified is \$80 and non-certified is \$70. There was discussion held and the increase of pay by other districts has cost us some good subs and is also making it hard to find new subs. There were some long-term sub needs as well, which only a certified teacher can fill.

Holmes then moved to Reference books on Page 4 of the budget. Penny said the increase was due to literacy materials. It was the \$9,960 one time purchase of the read aloud. DeVinent said we don't have a common literacy curriculum among the grade levels. So we have done some training with the staff on some best practices on literacy. These are mini lessons and read aloud for use in the classroom across grade levels. These are hard copies that can be used year after year. These are for direct instruction not for the computers. Further discussion was held on the program. DeVinent further stated they are kits that teachers can pull out for small group instruction. Title II grant would pay for the professional development that comes with it. This is a one-time purchase (covering all grade levels K-6) and the literacy position can provide them. DeVinent stated these are high quality materials and she cannot speak highly enough of them. Further discussion was held. Marggraf said the future needs can depend on maturity level and the ability to make inferences. DeVinent said our goal is to put something in place to see the gradual growth of the students.

There was discussion about what Math program is being used. DeVinent said the math program is a pilot of *My Math* that was being used for about 4 or 5 years. This is the last year that we can get the free student consumables that the teachers were using. If we are going to continue with this program we will be charged. The Math specialist is currently looking into how we have been using the materials that come with *My Math* as well as comparing a few other programs. They want to find the best fit for us. They have gotten mixed feedback on the *My Math* from families and teachers and if we are going to change the program, now is the time. This is why a specific program is not listed.

Holmes asked if *Dreambox* something we have to purchase every year (page 6 – computer software). The School Board believes they are buying seat and that this is a yearly purchase. \$8,255 is the cost, which is used by K-8<sup>th</sup> grade. DeVinent explained that *Dreambox* is geared toward Math and Achieve 3000 (upper grades) and Smart pants (lower grades) is geared toward literacy. Nygren asked if there were two separate things for Math and questioned why we are buying programs to teach math. DeVinent explained it is not teaching math, it is an online resource. Teachers will use this resource to help students build their skills while they are working one on one with students in the classroom. They will do this for Math and Literacy with these programs. Students also have access to both these programs at home online with their own login. Further discussion ensued on how the program worked and how it is used by students. These are usually subscriptions that need to be renewed every year.

Miccile asked how many Chromebooks we have and what is the target we are looking at for those. Penny didn't have that number tonight. She clarified what Miccile would like to see including how many

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Chromebooks we have, what grades they are servicing, what is the cost to buy them and maintain/replace them and how long to they last, as well as if there is there a better option. Fraize said we previously used terminals. When they were coming to end of life, options were discussed and based on cost and the fact we didn't have enough terminals or room to have enough for each student, so it was decided that Chromebooks would be the way to go. He knows that renting the Chromebooks was investigated and can be done again to compare cost. He believes K-2 have carts that are shared. Starting in grade three, each student has a Chromebook in the classroom. He believes they are replaced every 3 to 4 years. Penny will have the information requested by Miccile at the next meeting.

Miccile referred to Page 42 of the budget, the Custodian, function 2600, salary. Penny said they are looking at that line including a Non-CBA position. This means we need to look at the salary from 2017-18, as the person that was in this position left and was replaced by a person that got more money, but didn't take the health insurance. So, it was kind of a wash. This line includes the Supervisor, two full time custodians and a part-time Building and Grounds Supervisor. The Supervisor was the person that left, which is an important job to fill. Miccile asked about the current Supervisor salary. Penny noted it is \$63,240. Further discussion on if we have one full time and two part time, what is the summer help for and if we are down on enrollment and we have new bathrooms, why do we have the summer help? Penny indicated there are many classrooms that need to be turned around in a very short period of time. The summer help only work 5 hours a day for 7 weeks, (2 people) and they do a deep cleaning of each classroom. Further discussion was held on the process. This also frees up Custodians to paint, which is no longer outsourced. The lawns and grounds are still maintained by the regular employees. We pay for the grub control and fertilizing but the rest of the maintenance is done in house. Fraize noted that even though the enrollment is going down, the building size and needs are the same. Penny said it really does cost a lot to keep the building looking good and clean.

Miccile referenced a spreadsheet of data located on the NH DOE website and will bring next week. He said you are able to compare Town by Town things like transportation and facilities costs. He has done some calculations with Fremont and similar schools in the area. Fremont is higher than the other schools. For example, there was maintenance cost we came in at \$200,000 more than Chester and Hampstead. Fraize asked if it was also including items such as the roof. Miccile said it breaks it down.

Transportation was about \$160,000 more than the average Towns. Penny said the District sends out invitation for bids on things like Transportation and the responses are what they are. Penny requested Miccile send her his numbers ahead of time to review. She will also go on the DOE website and look at what he is referring to. Further discussion was held. Fraize and Penny informed the Committee that when sending out the transportation bid requests the School Board raised the age of the bus from 7 years to 10 years, and are using less buses. Yokela said it would be interesting, using the transportation as an example to see the cost and if it is a lot lower, reach out to the comparison towns and see who they contract with. Miccile said it would be nice to use this information to see what other towns are doing better and how we can use that to help us. Yokela stated that things like maintenance is going to be harder to compare, because maybe a school had to replace a roof or build new classrooms. Discussion ensued.

Holmes referenced two stipends in the budget. Under Function 2400, 5124 (Page 39) there is a Sub Coordinator and she asked if we still need to pay a Sub Coordinator when we use Frontline. Penny said yes, this person comes in early to make the calls for positions not filled by Frontline. Further discussion ensued about making this part of someone's job description and not a stipend. DeVincent indicated these are hourly employees and most of this is done during night, early morning or weekend hours. Because there is a lot of last minute needs, the Sub Coordinator spends time on switching people around from jobs selected on Frontline and making calls to fill openings. Holmes inquired about the District still using the old way, then why are we using Frontline as well. Frontline was supposed to do it and save money. The

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cost is only \$1,500 but any amount saved for the taxpayers is money saved. Maybe if this can be incorporated into someone's job, maybe for the first hour of the day, we could save. The other stipend is Free and Reduced Lunch. Holmes asked if we contract our lunch program, why are we responsible for this? This cannot be done by the contracting company. The Free and Reduced Lunch Program is a form filled out by families. The School is the only one with this information, due to privacy. The contracting company has the list, but not the family's financial information. Penny said we want our Free and Reduced numbers to be higher, so having someone that knows the needs of the student is crucial to increasing those numbers. Holmes suggested that somewhere down the line we really need to rethink this contracted food services because it is costing us a lot more than it used to. People have expressed to her the cost being more by contracting out than keep it in house. Penny said that since she has been here, this is the first year it hasn't taken care of itself. It usually breaks even and this year it was subsidized by \$300 or \$400. We always made the money through lunch sales or the money we get from the State. Holmes asked to see what has been put into the Food Program for the last 5 years. Penny said they have only made one transfer from the general fund and that was this year. (She has been here for 6 years.) When the money comes in it does come to the District. Cordes suggested that the District makes sure they are collecting everything owed to them by the State. The Food Service vendor has no vested interest in the outcome. Penny believes we are in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of a 5 year contract with the Food Services Company. They are renewed by 1 year increments.

Holmes then referred to the Fund Balance and asked where that information appears in the budget. Penny and O'Connell provided that some of this was money given to the District that was not anticipated. The School Board voted to return the \$52,000 back to the District rather than request a special hearing to spend it. This \$95,000 offset the tax rate just set, as this was \$95,000 that was not raised by taxes.

There was discussion about Warrant Articles and Penny said they haven't really delved into them yet. The next School Board meeting is November 21<sup>st</sup>, so they will not have anything for the Board on this by the next meeting. Penny said she doesn't really see any surprises. There was discussion about Trust Funds and Fraize said he feels the Board is leaning towards the Trust Funds that are building related. Penny said they have the funding to offset it, and discussion continued.

Holmes said the Budget Committee really needs to look at all the budget left for review, not just the School. She has received a number of letters from concerned citizens that are on very limited budgets. They may not have pensions or retirement savings and maybe depending solely on Social Security. All the budgets are up. Fraize and Penny highlighted that the School budget is down. Holmes said it looks down, but we can cut more. Holmes said we have people in this Town that SB2 is still driving out because it kills small towns. It has its pros and cons and she personally feels it hurts Fremont. There are some residents that can afford the small increase, but there are elderly people that can't afford even a small increase in the taxes. She asked the Committee to keep this in mind when reviewing budgets. She believes Social Security has only gone up by 1.6% this year. O'Connell agreed and states this is the reason the School Board voted to return the money and they are working very diligently to be responsible. O'Connell offered that with that being said, if you do not have a good educational system people will not want to move into Town. It's protecting the value of what you have, a balance of the two. Holmes agreed, and there was discussion about people having to move because they can't afford the taxes; leading to discussion about how to balance needs and funding.

Penny said they will have the figures by this Friday, November 15<sup>th</sup>. Holmes requested Penny to send the numbers to the Committee as soon as possible, so they will have the numbers before the next meeting. Penny will also get more accurate with the revenues, which are up. Penny anticipated State numbers by Friday. O'Connell added that one of the reasons this past year has been so up and down is because of the funds unspent from Sanborn were raised and then returned. This year, because they budgeted so tight, the School Board did not have those monies to return.

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Yokela noted there is not much difference between the default and the proposed school budget. Penny said it's about \$131,000; adding that getting the default budget makes a lot of work. (Page 73 of the packet). Fraize feels the Board coming in so close to the default shows the amount of work the School Board has done with the budget. Further discussion was held.

Penny said there was another question regarding where Fremont ranked among other Middle Schools. That is a very hard question because we are counted as an Elementary school by the State because we are K-8. There is a new report that was emailed to her for 2018-2019 data that was due to achievement, showing where a student ranked compared to the State averages. It compares students in Language Arts, English and Math. This is the only ranking she could find. DeVincent looked at School digger, which said Fremont was 167th out of 233 schools. Penny has not had a chance to vet the site and where they obtain their information.

Penny responded to another question about how many people are actually on the payroll. A breakdown of employees by function will be emailed to the Committee by DeVincent tomorrow.

Penny then gave the Committee a cost per student analysis. This is from the DOE website and summarizes us against a couple of schools in the area. There are a couple that are lower than us, but many are above us. We are doing the best we have with the money we get. There was discussion on the class size at Ellis. Miccile felt we were way under the State average and Penny stated we are only a person off. Further discussion was held.

Holmes again asked Committee members to send all question to her by Monday. She will then send them to Penny to allow her as much time as possible to gather the answers.

Members discussed the minutes of November 6, 2019. An amendment was noted to the bottom of page 2 noting 10 million dollars was added to the Special Education Revenue, this refers to the State budget to spread around to the Towns. The State is giving 10 Million dollars in total to the Towns of New Hampshire). A motion was made by Cordes to table the approval of the minutes to the next meeting. Nygren seconded and the motion passed 7-0-0.

It was noted that a replacement Committee member is needed. If the Committee appoints someone, that person will serve until the vote in March. Heidi posted a notice and it was circulated for review. Former member Patricia Martel has expressed interest to Chair Holmes; and Lisa Marggraf (in the audience) expressed an interest this evening. The Committee will meet with the interested parties and have someone in place by next week.

At approximately 9:00 pm a motion to adjourn was made by Cordes and seconded by Bonaccorsi. Motion passed 7-0-0.

The next meeting will be held at 7:00 pm on Wednesday November 20, 2019 in the Town Hall Main Floor Meeting Room.

Respectfully submitted,

Shawn Perreault  
Recording Secretary