

Present: Committee Members Mary Jo Holmes, Chair; Josh Yokela (arrived at 7:13 pm); Michael Nygren left prior to meeting start after a discussion on masks; Jon Benson, Steve Bonaccorsi, Pat Martel, Selectmen's Representative Gene Cordes, School Board Representative Gordon Muench, Recording Secretary Shawn Perreault, Greg Fraize, FCTV; Town Administrator Heidi Carlson; and Member of the Public Keith Stanton.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Holmes at 7:00 pm on the first floor of the Fremont Town Hall. The Pledge was recited.

Motion made by Bonaccorsi to approve the December 2, 2020 as amended, seconded by Muench.
Motion passed 6 Yes – 0 No – 0 Abstain.

Review any School Budget items:

Muench presented Sue Penny's report that was requested last week showing over the last 3 years money returned to the Town and the reason. The School received \$116,200 from the Supplemental Public School Response Fund (SPSRF) in early November 2020. The allocation was based on the formula of \$200 per student for the October 1, 2019 enrollment, this included grades K-12. The \$200 was for each student in that district attending a public school, including chartered public schools. The School received a return of Health Trust FY20 Surplus Fund, for \$51,302.90. These funds will be refunded proportionately to the District, retirees covered on the plan and employees, based on contributions. The total returns in each of the past three years includes 2018 \$571,751; 2019 \$50,848; and 2020 \$445,382.

Holmes would like the School Board to look into the budgeting of the School, with such high surplus amounts for the last 3 years of over a million. Cordes stated they need to look and see the reasons. Holmes stated the hard part are the unanticipated funds, such as grants that cannot be accounted for until awarded. Holmes stated that personally she is not comfortable passing budgets that end up having so much left at the end of the year. A draft of the School District Warrant Articles was presented. Muench stated they are as close to being done with the budget as can be without the GMI from Sanborn. He stated Article 5 was changed from the first draft. They looked to see what the Town could possibly afford this year and decided to lower the amount from \$150,000 to \$100,000 that they are requesting for the Special Education Expendable Trust Fund. He stated that FY18 the refund to the Town was due to adjustments that were negotiated from Sanborn. Something that would not have been anticipated. The \$50,000 surplus looks much better than the larger surplus. This year was due to COVID. Martel asked if Muench thought there would be more special aid giving to the towns by the state again. He stated he really feels that was one-time deal. Further decision was held. He stated that in March there was a complete shutdown, which effected the budget. This school year, the school and staff have been able to keep the kids in-person and they are working hard to maintain that. There have been COVID issues, but overall they are successful. This election Greg Fraize and Gordon Muench's seat are up, which are both for three years. There is also an open for a 2 year term, due to Lisa Marggraf stepping down. Brittany Thompson was appointed to fill that position until the March 2021 election.

Holmes asked if they get Impact Fees every year. Carlson stated that they usually ask for it once a year. They are collected from new houses throughout the year.

Cordes asked if the employees get some of the health insurance money refunded? Muench doesn't believe so. Bonaccorsi asked about the two consulting lines (Pg 7), this line was not used, is it necessary? Muench stated that is for this coming year, it is for the HVAC system going into the building this year. Bonaccorsi also stated (Pg 5) the computer tech, nothing was spent. Muench stated this is the same thing, money that will be spent this year. They are spending the money now to save money in the long run. He gave the Committee an example of where the school tries to save when they can. Mr. Normandin went to

the hardware store to build dividers for the secretaries. It cost the school \$300 instead of ordering them for a cost of \$3,000 or more. Further discussion was held.

Holmes asked Muench about student/teacher ratio. She believes the student/teacher ratio at Sanborn was 8.5 that was reported in the Carriage Town. She stated it appears that Sanborn's enrollment was going down, as is Fremont's. Muench stated it has been discussed in the Sanborn School Board, but the community put back \$40,000 (math program). Sanborn didn't reduce as much as they hoped. Holmes stated she wanted to bring it forward, because Ellis' Student/teacher ratio is low and found it interesting.

Holmes stated next week we will have the GMR, and does the Committee want to do anything with the Warrants? Cordes feels they asked for copies to review them not vote or discussion them. Holmes asked the Committee to send any other questions to Penny by Monday at noon.

Keith Stanton, Resident, said he was looking for information on how much money the Fremont School District has sent to the Sanborn School District under the Tuition Contract. He has requested the information from several people including Allyn Hutton, Sue Penny, Tom Ambrose and the Sanborn School Board. He stated no one will give him a number of what was paid, everyone is playing the blame game. Holmes asked if he looked for the answer in the Town Report? He stated he didn't look. Holmes asked if the MOA was capital cost. Stanton stated no. Stanton asked if the Committee could get an answer to this question by Jan. 1, and asked to put that information on what we have paid Sanborn for the contract in the Town Report? Yokela asked if he was looking for the total cost for the High School per student or what was paid to Sanborn. Stanton wants what Fremont taxpayers paid to the Sanborn School District on the Tuition contract and the MOA (disability act, no date). Holmes asked Muench to look into the MOA that Stanton was referring to. Further discussion was held. Holmes stated it was about \$10,000 per student when the contract was started and about \$18,000 now per student. Stanton would like someone to send him the answer. Holmes stated she would request it for him, but it would be easier for him to go through all the Town Reports and add all the payments to Sanborn High School found in the School's vendor list. Holmes informed Stanton that a couple of years ago, Fremont investigated pulling out of the Tuition Contract. It would have cost us more to pull out then to continue the contract. Stanton thanked the Committee and left the meeting.

Other Town Budget follow-up

Carlson presented the following information from our Town Counsel regarding the Committee's split vote on Warrant Article 8 (new police officer): *"The abstention does not count as either an affirmative or negative vote and does not change the recommendation. The Budget Committee's vote in the example below is a vote to recommend the article. If the vote was 3-3 with 2 abstentions, the article is neither recommended or not recommended. With split votes, the best way to record them on the warrant is to just state the vote totals."*

Carlson stated that Article 2 & 3 are the Planning Board articles and asked the Board to review them. These are proposed Zoning Ordinance amendments.

Article 9 – Contribution to the Town Expendable Trust Fund for Computer Replacements. Motion was made by Bonaaccorsi to recommend raising and appropriating \$4,000 to be placed in the Fremont Computer Equipment Expendable Trust Fund, sum to come from unassigned fund balance. This was seconded by Muench. Article recommended by a vote of 6 Yes – 1 (Yokela) No – 0 Abstain.

Article 10 – Contribution to the Library Building Expendable Town Trust Fund. Motion was made by Cordes to recommend raising and appropriating \$15,000 to be placed in the Library Building

Maintenance Expendable Town Trust Fund, sum to come from unassigned fund balance. Bonaccorsi seconded. Article 10 recommended by vote of 6 Yes – 1 (Benson) No – 0 Abstain.

Article 11 – Contribution to the Library Building Expendable Town Trust Fund. Motion was made by Cordes to recommend raising and appropriating \$10,000 to be placed in the Library Building Expendable Town Trust Fund. Muench seconded. Article 11 was recommended by vote of 6 Yes – 1 (Benson) No – 0 Abstain.

Article 13 – Funding a New Social Service Agency. Motion was made by Bonaccorsi to recommend raising and appropriating \$4,750 to support a new social agency, So. Rock Coalition. Muench seconded. Article 13 was recommended by a vote of 5 Yes – 2 (Holmes, Yokela) No – 0 Abstain.

Article 15 – Amend the Elderly Exemption Value to correct a clerical error from the 2020 vote and update exemption amount in light of the revaluation. Motion made by Cordes to recommend the \$10,000 increase in each age category. Muench seconded. Article 15 recommended by a vote of 6 Yes – 1 (Yokela) No – 0 Abstain.

Article 16 – Amend the Disabled Exemption amount for Fremont in light of the 2020 revaluation. Motion made by Cordes to recommend the \$10,000 increase for the Disabled Exemption. Muench seconded. Article 16 recommended by a vote of 6 Yes – 1 (Yokela) No – 0 Abstain.

The Committee reviewed the updated Town expense and revenue summary sheets. These include many forecasts in the month of December for committed items (PO's, normal monthly expenses, etc) in most departments.

Carlson then explained that the Selectmen had voted to reduce the Police Department operating budget by the amount of the radio lease payment of \$7,464 (removed from 2021 and planned to be paid for year-end 2020). The Selectmen's new recommendation for the PD operating budget is \$659,122.

Martel made a motion to recommend \$659,122 for Department 4210 Police, seconded by Muench. This will be a \$7,464 deduction in the communication line. Motion was passed by a vote of 6 Yes -1 (Yokela) No – 0 Abstain.

Yokela wanted to continue the conversation on the Police Department regarding training dollars. The requirements are increasing and will put Fremont at the minimum level. Yokela would like to add more money for training and would like to ask the Chief what he could use to meet these requirements. Carlson stated she will speak with the Chief and that they have conditionally hired two new officers. Further discussion was held.

Carlson also presented information from the Tax Collector on uncollected historical data, as of 12/08/2020. Carlson suggested the Committee take the information home and review. This information was requested by Nygren. He was concerned about people not being able to pay their taxes. Carlson stated were about 3% uncollected at the end of July on the first issue Warrant. The mortgage companies are paying a majority of taxes, and they usually wait until the last week. Taxes are due one week from today, and the bulk of the money will come in over the next seven days. Yokela feels the Town is still coming in as expected.

Holmes asked if anything was going to be encumbered from the Fire Department? Carlson stated that we are trying to buy a gear extractor (washing machine for bunker gear). There would be some electrical work that will be needed upon installation. This is important for the health of firefighters and the life of

the gear. Holmes questioned the amount left in the budget line. Cordes and Carlson stated the Selectmen will be talking with the Deputy Chief tomorrow night.

Carlson presented the information on pay increases within the 2021 budget:

All Town permanent staff (except FD, PD, Elected and Election Officials) \$12,057 FICA/Medi \$922.36

Police \$22,372 FICA/Medi on estimated 30% PT \$610.76

Medi on estimated 70% FT \$ 227.08 plus NHRS \$5,000 approximately

Fire Rescue \$3,629 FICA/Medicare \$277.59

Yokela stated the 2% pay increases are about \$45,000. Martel added up all the School District employees and it is about \$200,000 increase, some might be due to staff changes. Holmes asked Muench to get the Committee the GMR when the School Board gets it.

Any other business: Carlson said the Selectmen are beginning to review NHMA Town Meeting Guidance Document and copies were circulated for information/review by the Budget Committee as well. This guidance and situation is still very fluid! People can request an absentee ballot. As decisions are made, information will be posted on the Town Website.

Motion to adjourn made by Benson, seconded by Yokela. Meeting adjourned at 8:45pm.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 16 December 2020 at 7:00 pm in the Town Hall First Floor Meeting Room.

Respectfully submitted,

Shawn Perreault
Recording Secretary