

Fremont Budget Committee Meeting Minutes
Approved 09/22/2021

25 August 2021

Present at the meeting were: Budget Committee Members Chari Mary Jo Holmes, Vice Chair Pat Martel, Gene Cordes, Gordon Muench, Jon Benson, Steven Bonaccorsi, Joshua Yokela, Brian McGinn, Recording Secretary Shawn Perreault, Town Administrator Heidi Carlson

Andy Kohlhofer, Chief of Police: Jon Twiss, Superintendent: Ellen Halliday, Business Manager: Nate Castle. Meeting was called to order by Mary Jo Holmes at 7:00pm with the Pledge of Alliance.

Introductions and titles were made by everyone attending the meeting.

Ellen Halliday, SAU Superintendent of School and Nate Castle, Business Administrator, introduced themselves. Holmes asked for any budget transfers to be sent to her once the School Board approves them. Holmes went through the usual procedure on how the Committee likes to see things presented from the school with the time frame, and they like to have the school budget by first week of November. Halliday did state Sue Penny gave her the outline regarding the budget season, but they would usually be waiting for the guaranteed high school number and using an estimated number for the first report from the school. Halliday stated that they are looking forward to working with everyone and that the prior group stated they had a great working relationship. Castle is trained on the new system Infinite Visions, which will save a lot of time.

Holmes did question the school's end of the year numbers. Carlson stated that usually once the audit is done, the school would bring that information back to the Budget Committee to review. Castle said no date has been set for the FY 06/30/2021 audit. Muench will keep Carlson posted on it. Cordes would like the school to present the end of the year books prior to audit, understanding they are preliminary until the audit is finalized. Castle stated he did have the end of the year financials for the Committee to review and proceeded to pass out information to the Committee members. Holmes stated she would like to have everyone review them before the next meeting. Then any questions the Committee members have should be sent to Holmes and she will forward them all at once to Halliday/Castle. Both Halliday and Castle agreed that would be the most efficient process.

Castle stated that what everyone wants to know is what the school will be giving back. He stated that Sue Penny had originally stated the number would be \$224,981.00. However, they have an additional surplus of \$440,086.05. The total amount that will be returned to the district is \$665,067.05. Muench stated that there were a lot of saving due to COVID, such as closing food services and relaying on Sanborn for food. Ellis School was able to stay open all year, there was only a number of grades being quarantined. Holmes stated this give the residents confidence in the administration. It shows the people that if something is earmarked for a certain expense and is not spent for that it is returned.

EDITOR's NOTE: At the 09/22/2021 meeting, Gordon Muench updated the Committee that the final return number quoted did not reflect the District's vote in 2021 Warrant Article 5 to transfer \$100,000 to the Special Ed Trust Fund. So, the corrected return to the District for that tax year is actually going to be \$565,067.05.

Carlson will be sending out new contact lists with all the Board Members and School Administration information. Halliday stated she would love to hear anyone's questions or concerns.

Halliday and Castle left the meeting at 7:17 pm.

Further discussion was held by Holmes explaining the process used when funds are returned from the school to offset the tax rate. Muench also discussed how extra funds can be used for Maintenance funds

or fixing large projects. Holmes asked about enrollment, Muench stated it is up a little, however, he doesn't have the numbers.

At 7:20 pm Planning Board Vice Chair Andy Kohlhofer and Land Use AA Leanne Miner met with the Committee to review the Planning Board's current work on the Capital Improvement Plan Standards and current work plan.

Miner stated Fremont's program has been in place since 1987 and has been updated every now and then. Miner feels there are great members on all the current boards and Department Heads, and with the continued large growth rate this is an important tool. The Capital Improvement Program helps all the departments think about needs and resources. The Planning Board is authorized to manage the Committee, which would include two members from the Planning and Budget Committees, a member of the Select Board and we could include the school.

Kohlhofer stated this would be used to identify the capital projects needed, documenting a plan, what resources are present, what is important, and to outline the process to use. It allows all Departments to plan ahead and for everyone to see what is needed also what would be coming up. Everyone would have their place with projects prioritized by the CIP Committee. This program looks five to six years ahead and gives the taxpayers all the information they need with no surprise large expenses. Further discussion was held.

Kohlhofer believes this is a great way to budget the Town's Capital Reserves as well. The Capital Improvement Committee would be formed this fall and begin looking at items that would be in the 2023 budget, including what is done for 2022. This would involve the Department Heads getting involved and gathering the necessary information for five to six years out. Department would meet with the Committee and the Committee would then review everything for all Departments and prioritize the list. Miner would like to see it get started with the layout and what is needed so the spreadsheet could be started next year. Kohlhofer stated this would also allow the Town to see if certain developments will add additional costs and project what is needed. Yokela stated it can only go out six years, but then you would update it on a yearly basis. Carlson reminded everyone it's only good if everyone follows the plan. Further discussion was held.

McGinn asked how the staffing would work. It was explained a committee would include Department Heads in the process and consists of two Budget Committee Members, one Select Board Member, and two Planning Board members. Cordes really feels this is a useful project. It will be great to see what is coming and not have to react to something when it happens. He would like to see what was completed from the prior project and what was "kicked" down the road. Kohlhofer stated people need to remember to check things that were complete and make notes on why something was skipped for the project to be successful. This would keep the history instead of relying on people's memories or someone not being available.

Holmes asked what the focus was to start. Miner would like two members of the Budget Committee to volunteer for the Committee and start with a look back. The Committee will meet in late September to outline the roles and needs. Then the goal would be to meet after the Deliberative Sessions. Yokela stated we are asking Department Heads what current needs are, stating he felt the Committee already does this. Having a six-year plan could be made as part of the budget process and part of what they present to the Committee, suggesting instead the Budget Committee gathers it. Carlson questioned if the Budget Committee would manage it. Perreault stated her view on what the Budget Committee is focusing on and only now and perhaps next year. This new Committee would be able to look broadly over all departments and manage it. They become more of a team and not competing. Then you have one document that

shows every project. Kohlhofer stated if everyone is separate no one knows what everyone has done. This makes it easier to work together. Further discussion was held.

Miner stated the CIP Committee would be more of an information gathering team. Further discussion in support for the new committee was held by Muench, using examples from the school where something similar was used and found to be extremely helpful.

Chief Jon Twiss arrived at 7:47 pm.

Holmes confirmed that Brian McGinn and Jon Benson have volunteered to be part of this new CIP committee. Bonaccorsi further stated his support for this project. Miner stated there is an RSA that allows the planning board to oversee this committee. This allows the Town to consider impact fee. The fee is on new development. They could add impact fees for things such as fire, police, and library, etc... These fees would only be placed on new develop. You need this report to justify these fees to implant them.

Holmes thanked McGinn and Benson for volunteering their time for this new CIP Committee. Miner and Kohlhofer left the meeting at 7:59 pm.

At approximately 7:55 pm Police Chief Jon Twiss joined the meeting to review the Police Department (4210) and Animal Control (4414) budgets.

Twiss started by reviewing the Police budget by line item. The internet/phone line had a reduction due to switching to a VOIP system. Equipment line has also decreased by about \$3,000. This is due to the initial payment on the body cameras, followed by lower annual lease payments. Firearms training is based on number of hours required and the number of officers on staff. He is hoping to maintain six full-time and six part-time officers. The In-service training increased due to the increase in State requirements and the addition of a full-time officer. First Aid Training recently completed added training in tourniquets.

Patrol wages includes the new (6th) full-time officer approved at the 2021 Town Meeting. Part-time staffing was reduced by two hours per week, about \$1,000. Currently we only have one officer that will qualify for longevity award. Twiss is hoping to use a new Physical Agility Incentive Program to keep and get officers. Chief wages include a 2% raise. Investigative wages were decreased due to the limited number of hours the current Lieutenant is allowed to work (NHRS retiree under the 26 hours per week criteria).

The Prosecution contract has increased by \$427.50 and is done by an attorney who does several smaller towns. The Uniform and Safety line has increased due to the need for new uniforms and replacing body armor, which needs to be replaced every five years. The price for a replacement cruiser has increased. In addition, due to the specs on the new cars, some of the equipment will not transfer over. Holmes stated most of the increase in numbers appear to be in the wages. Yokela asked if the Chief would be reducing further the part-time hours once the new officer is hired. Twiss stated right now it's very hard to retain people. There has been a reduction by a few hours when the full-time officers are available. Further discussion was held.

Carlson went over the timeline of officers leaving the department as well as the hiring process and the timeline for the new officers to working on shifts. Further discussion was held.

Chief Twiss reviewed the Animal Control budget by line item. This is mostly self-sustaining with the fees it generates in dog licensing and fees. There were only a 2% increase in wages and a small increase

in kennel and equipment line items. Holmes wanted to know if ACO always has the truck with her. Twiss stated it is housed at the station and is used by the ACO and the Department as needed to haul the OHRV trailer. Martel wanted to know if the Chief would be able to create a 6-year Capital Plan. He stated yes and has done so in the past.

Chief Twiss left the meeting at 8:37 pm.

Motion was made by Cordes to approve the January 13, 2021, as amended. Benson seconded. Motion passed with a vote of 8 Yes – 0 No – 0 Abstain.

Motion was made by Cordes to approve the April 28, 2021, meeting minutes as written. Martel seconded. Motion passed with a vote of 6 Yes – 0 No – 2 Abstaining (Benson, Bonaccorsi)

Carlson presented some budgets for the Committee to begin reviewing. This included: 4140 Town Clerk Tax Collector; 4153 Judicial & Legal; 4191 Planning & Zoning; 4215 Ambulance; 4240 Building Inspection; 4290 Emergency Management; 4415 Health; 4520 Parks & Recreation; 4610 Conservation Commission; and 4711/4721 Debt Service.

Once the Select Board moves through them, she will bring in new cover sheets showing the Select Board recommendations as well as expenditures current to the date of review at the Budget Committee level.

Holmes reminded everyone to send all School questions to her.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday September 22, 2021.

Bonaccorsi made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Cordes. Meeting was adjourned at 8:48 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Shawn Perreault
Recording Secretary