

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm in the Town Hall basement meeting room with the Pledge of Allegiance dedicated to the Veterans. Present were Committee Members Mary Jo Holmes, Steven Bonaccorsi, Jon Benson, Gene Cordes, Gordon Muench, Pat Martel, Brian McGinn and Josh Yokela; Superintendent Ellen Halliday, Business Manager Nathan Castle, and Secretary Shawn Perreault.

Fremont School District / School Board and Administration – School District Budget Review Continued:

A list of questions that were sent to Castle after last week's meeting and answers were provided to everyone and will be attached to these minutes. Questions and Answers were further discussed by the Budget Committee.

Cordes asked if the funds return to the Town included the money requested in the Warrant Articles. Castle stated the \$565,067.05 was the amount after all funds were removed for the Warrant Articles. Yokela asked the School Board how much Esser II and Esser III broke down for each year, because these grants are for multiply years. Yokela stated that if we were getting \$100,000 in grant money and the increase to the budget is \$100,000 it's not really an increase. How much will be a tax impact vs. non-tax impact. Most grants have a clause if funds run out the grant is not paid. Esser grants are different. Halliday stated that prior to COVID Ellis was not a one to one school with the Chromebooks. The School has used the grant money for the additional things needed and to obtain a Chromebook for each student. The budget money is trying to keep the computer replacement schedule. Yokela asked if the additional Chromebooks were bought under Esser III vs. Budget. Yokela wants to make sure that they can clearly explain why there is an increase to the budget or high overage to the Town. He is wondering how much of the budget will be covered by the grant money and what will be covered under the budgeted costs. Further discussion was held.

Halliday stated there are some things, such as Chromebooks that we have in our budget but we'll be able to use money in Esser III instead. There is no plan to buy more computers from the budget. Everything that is bought with Esser money must be due to COVID with a 20% taken out for lost learning. Yokela would like to know what grants the school received that they didn't anticipated, Esser II and Esser III and what might be bought with that money. Halliday stated that not all Esser expenses will be known, there are things that come up, such as more tables, that is able to be taken out of Esser funds. Yokela would like to have an idea of items that are anticipated and then what they are leaving for unanticipated items. Further discussion was held.

Muench stated that every time Esser money is spent it must be on COVID related items and it must be approved. Sometimes requests are denied and then the funds must be taken from the budget.

The Committee asked that past numbers be pulled up for money that was given back to the Town. Halliday stated that for the past few years the amounts given back were so high are due to COVID. An example being when the school was closed. The numbers were discussed for amount decreased/increase for Sanborn Tuition and the totals given back to the Town for the past couple of years. The Committee requested the School Board give them a 5 year comparison/review for the next meeting. Holmes stated that the voters were always able to get the budget passed. Holmes stated that it's always been a good faith understanding that money would go back to the District taxpayers. That the money saved was from funds found somewhere else and not spent out of the budget. Further discussion was held.

Yokela really wants to see and understand how close the School is budgeting. McGinn was looking at the transportation line, he asked why the athletic and extracurricular lines were zero. This was related to COVID because everything was stopped.

Martel stated Sanborn's current student enrollment is 182 and they are budgeting for 169 next year. Halliday confirmed there will be 15 less students next year. Castle stated there are 178 students currently attending Sanborn. Martel stated that the current budget also transferred out one student. Halliday asked if Martel wanted to know what we'd have at the end. Castle stated the only thing he can do is take out the students that will graduate and then add in the current number of 8th grade students. Will there be a surplus in this line. Halliday stated we have students that move in, one student that went to another school. Further discussion was held. McGinn asked if there was a certain number of students you automatically go over current levels by to plan for move ins. Halliday stated that it was probably easier for Perry to estimate the number of students at Sanborn because she was here for many years and had the history of how they fluctuated. Halliday feels very comfortable with Castle's numbers.

Yokela explained the Education savings (HB1 / HB2), which allows people to get State money to follow them to a new school system or home schooling to the Committee. This is for low income individuals. This has grown in popularity, it wouldn't change what we are getting from the State right away. However, it will be a phased decrease the School District will see once the student has been out of our district longer. The same department handling the Chapter schools was handling these applications/requests. Further explanation was discussed.

Holmes stated she feels the School budget can come down. There are enrollment numbers that can be looked at and the Sanborn numbers can be lowered. It's not up a lot, but she feels it can be level funded. Yokela asked if Holmes was looking to go lower than the default? The current budget is only up about \$20,000 over the default. She stated that the Budget Committee has to defend the budget they present to the voters. She feels they could level fund this budget and still get the budget passed. McGinn stated that the School salaries go up, but people are losing their jobs and not getting raises. McGinn asked what happens if the taxes don't get paid. Cordes stated we borrow it.

Holmes doesn't want to be done with the budget after two reviews. She wants to see where we can lower it and if there is something that can come down. Cordes asked if the FY23 salaries that are being negotiated are the ones reflected in this Budget. Castle stated it is flat and the contract is for one year. Muench stated that we can't get subs because our rate is so low, people are getting paid more to work at places like Dunkin Donuts. Bonaccorsi is concerned with the amount of the funds we are getting back, are the lines that are in the budget being used. Holmes stated she is going to still go through it again and ask more question and it needs to be a budget she can defend. Benson reminded the Committee of certain items that are not within our control. There are things that just can't be knocked down. Muench stated that this is what the School Board is looking at, the funds that need to be budgeted for. Yokela stated that his vote reflects his feelings regarding giving raises when people in town are hurting. It is his opinion that only the 2% increases should be given. Further discussion was held.

Muench is willing to bring in a report comparing other towns and how close we are. Special Ed is mandated, so we can't really count that. Holmes stated that with the Trust Fund we are OK, if something were to come up. The proposed budget is \$151,000 over the current budget.

McGinn questioned the Staff/students ratio. The Salaries budget is really high, the only real place you can reduce from. He is not stating they should reduce any staff, but look at it and make sure it's where it needs/should be. Holmes stated that class size was looked at. Muench reminded the Committee that these are looked at and even when they are eliminated sometimes voters put them back into the budget at Deliberative Session. The Committee was reminded that there are positions, such as paras that are required under Special Education. Further discussion was held. Muench stated the things you don't see are where staff members save the School money, such as building partition for \$50.00 instead of spending \$5,000. The things the Budget Committee is bringing up isn't anything the School hasn't looked at and

will continue to look at. However, they need to make sure that any changes are going to be in the best interest of the School and really make a good impact on the budget.

Holmes asked how many teachers does the school have per grade level. McGinn asked about Team Good Vibes, is this model going to be spread through the other grades? Halliday stated that they have combined other classes. They don't call themselves Good Vibes, but their work load is the same. You still have a teacher for separate grade levels, but the grade levels work together based on what the kids need. This has been done up to grade four. Halliday will bring the Committee a breakdown reflecting this to the next meeting. Class average is 14 in Pre-K and Kindergarten and 17 in grades 1-4. Halliday would like to see the following class levels: K-3 between 15-18, upper grades between 17-20. Further discussion was held on the ratio break down and how it's calculated.

Yokela is more interested in the number of support staff and job descriptions. Holmes feels that descriptions are more micro-managing the School instead of budget review. Yokela feels he needs to know the reasons behind adding staff in order to be able to vote for something. We have space issues as well, for what can be done. McGinn stated he was more interested in admin vs. staff. Perreault went over the history of how the School has set up the positions of Principal and Vice Principal and how the positions worked within the School in the past. She believed, if memory served, it didn't matter what you called the position, that according to the State you needed to have a certain number of Admin per student enrollment. Muench stated that if Yokela felt a position was not necessary he could vote to reduce the budget by that salary number. However, if the School feels the position is very important, they can keep the position and take it from some where else. Further discussion was held.

McGinn stated that if we wanted to reduce the budget, there needs to be a look at what everyone is doing and see if something could be combined. An example could be Principal and Vice Principal but you wouldn't know that until you look at it. Halliday stated the description vs. requirements is very different, she feels the Superintendent would always be looking at staffing levels. The job description is how the School defines their job according to what they want from that position. Muench is going to look into this and report back.

Holmes asked the Committee to send all questions to her or Castle by Tuesday at noon.

Castle and Halliday left the meeting at 8:40 pm.

Motion was made by Bonaccorsi to approve the meeting minutes of 03 November 2021 as presented. McGinn seconded. Motion passed with a vote of 7-0-1 (Benson).

Copies were distributed of additional Town budgets that are ready for review. This included 4194 General Government Buildings; 4155 Personnel Administration; 4195 Cemeteries.

The Public Budget Hearing is posted for Wednesday January 12, 2022 at 7:00 pm at the Ellis School Gym. The snow date will be the following evening, January 13, 2022 at 7:00 pm at the Ellis School Gym.

Deliberative Sessions have been set for Saturday February 5, 2022 beginning at 9:00 am at the Ellis School Gym. Both the Town and School sessions are posted for 9:00 am. School will begin at 9:00 am to be immediately followed by the Town Session. The snow date for both meetings is Saturday February 12, 2022.

A public notice of all upcoming meetings (include November and December, along with above) was circulated for member information and scheduling. Also distributed was the Candidate Declaration and other important voter dates and information.

Further discussion was held by the Committee on where cuts to the School Budget could be taken, if they could. Members felt there needed to be a review of all positions, if they were needed or if something could be combined. Special education and things that are required dictate a lot, plus people moving in and out make a big difference on staffing needs. Muench stated that the DOE website has some great information for the Committee to look at. There are a lot of numbers you can run or things you can compare to other towns.

Motion was made to adjourn by Cordes, seconded by Bonaccorsi. Meeting adjourned at 8:50.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday November 17, 2021 at 7:00 pm in the first floor meeting room at the Fremont Town Hall to continue with School District budget review.

Respectfully submitted,

Shawn Perreault
Recording Secretary

Budget Committee Questions 11/10/21
Answers in red

Can you please tell me what was returned to the town last June 30th? **Yes, \$565,067.05**

Why is the athletic transportation 00.00? **Athletic Transportation is not zero. It is level funded from FY 22 at \$6,000.**

Are the games all at home? **No**

Did you hire a new Sped teacher? **We did in FY 22**

What is your daily sub pay? **Non certified teachers are \$70 a day. Certified teachers are \$80 a day**

Is new computer line the upgrade we discussed? **Last year computers were taken out of the operating budget so the District could get them through grants. Next year, we are trying to put them back in the budget to maintain a computer replacement schedule.**

How many bus monitors do we have? **We have one bus monitor position that is shared between two paras.**

How many more out of district students do we have this year compared to last year? **There were 7 students budgeted in FY 22. 2 additional OOD students moved in during the year after the budget was approved. This year we are budgeting for 8.**

Are all our sports teams and extracurricular coached by same person? **No**

2162 Do we have a new PT? **No, we have a PT employee that was a .4 FTE last year. Her case load has increased and is resulting in the need for a .6 FTE.**

2225-5431-what is maintenance agreement **Firewall replacement yearly subscription and Aruba WiFi yearly maintenance**

2320-5140-Adjusted Salary? **This line appears to budget for any adjustments to salaries that may occur during the year. We feel comfortable with the budgeted amounts in our salary lines.**

At the FY22 deliberative session an amount of \$100,000 was added to Regular Ed Salaries for a Language Arts Teacher. Was that position filled? **The position was for a Spanish teacher. It was filled.** And you mentioned that you did not fill the Math Interventionist position. Does that result in the same 31.5 FTEs that were requested in FY22? $(31.5 + 1 - 1)$ **That is right.**

The budget explanation summary for FY23 indicates an increase in health insurance but the health insurance line 1100.5211 shows a decrease in the budget in the amount of (\$73,748). This may be a result of increased costs but less staff enrollment - please confirm. **That is correct. This is the result of a 2.5% increase in rates, but it also includes plan changes during open enrollment and plan changes from employee turnover.**