

The meeting was called to order in the basement meeting room at the Fremont Town Hall at 7:00 pm by Chair Mary Jo Holmes starting with the Pledge of Allegiance. Present were Committee members Mary Jo Holmes, Pat Martel, Gene Cordes, Jon Benson, Josh Yokela, Emily Phillips, Gordon Muench and Steve Bonaccorsi; School Superintendent Ellen Halliday; School Business Administrator Nathan Castle; Town Administrator Heidi Carlson; and Recording Secretary Shawn Perreault.

Motion was made by Bonaccorsi to approve the meeting minutes of December 7, 2022 as presented, seconded by Benson. Motion passed by a vote of 7 Yes – 0 No – 1 Abstain (Phillips).

Review the School Budget and Warrant Articles:

Castle presented the Committee with a new printout of the School budget presentation, as well as printouts of the budget summary, proposed budget and default budget all with updated numbers. He also presented a printout of all questions that were asked and his answers, which will be attached to these minutes.

Castle stated they have reviewed the budget again. The GMR has come in at 5%, which is what he used to calculate the tuition number to begin with, so there is no change. Halliday stated they took a look at the budget and felt they could sustain the level of services required and still lose one teacher and one paraprofessional position. Therefore, the new proposed school budget is \$12,445,335 which is an increase of \$58,398 or 0.47%. The new default budget is \$12,490,379 which is \$45,000 over the proposed budget.

Holmes questioned the cost per student, asking if our enrollment is decreasing why the cost increased. Muench explained that enrollment is going down in both districts and the money required to run the school is the same, so therefore the cost per student increases because there are less students to spread the costs out.

Yokela asked Castle about several functions in the default budget and how the calculations were done. These functions were 2130 Nurse, 2152 Speech, 2162 OT, 2225 Admin (computer tech), 2320 SAU Office 2330, 1st line of 2400 and 2600 one employee that is not under a CBA contract. Muench also stated that every year there are positions such as OT, Speech and Social Worker that are looked at to see if contracting someone will be cheaper than hiring them as a staff position. Most of these positions are based on the requirements of IEPs. Therefore, they change year to year.

Phillips feels it's important to make sure residents understand that the District is required to cover these costs no matter if they are giving to a student in house or out of district. Halliday agreed and stated this was one of the hardest points to make people understand. This needs to be made clear at the Deliberative Session, which everyone is hoping more people will attend. This is the one time that taxpayers can voice their concerns or ask their questions. Everyone is hoping for better turnout than prior years.

There was discussion between Castle and Yokela about how the default budget is calculated. Castle stated the numbers are very hard. There are some rules and then exceptions to those rules. In addition, transportation was discussed. They are waiting for further information or clarification on what would be a required transportation and what is not. This might change the number in the default.

The Board then reviewed and took positions on the School Warrant Articles:

Article 1 is the open positions for the School District and no action was required by the Budget Committee.

Article 2 is the new teacher contract. The Warrant Article was read and the increase for each of the three years were stated. Muench feels passing this Article is very important. The District is trying to retain quality teachers, decrease turnover and be competitive. Halliday stated that even with these increases, when comparing Ellis to similar districts we are still below most. In addition, a lot of those districts will be coming to an end of their current contracts and salaries in those districts will likely be increasing again as new contracts are approved. Phillips feels the staffing in the building is still higher than necessary. Halliday stated they look at the numbers and needs every year. Yokela asked what the make-up of the Contract Negotiation Committee looked like. Halliday stated, according to contract, it was made up of 2 teachers, 2 union members, 2 administrators (SAU) and 2 School Board members. Bonaccorsi made a motion to recommend Article 2, seconded by Muench. Motion passed by a vote of 6 Yes – 2 No (Yokela, Phillips) – 0 Abstain.

Article 3 is to approve one special meeting if the teacher contract (Article 2) fails. This meeting is held in the old meeting style. Holmes made a motion to recommend Article 3, seconded by Bonaccorsi. Motion failed by a vote of 3 Yes – 5 No (Yokela, Phillips, Benson, Cordes, Martel).

Article 4 is the School District budget. The budget is \$12,445,335 with a default budget of \$12,490,379. Muench made a motion to recommend Article 4, seconded by Benson. Motion passed with a vote of 8 Yes – 0 No – 0 Abstain.

Article 5 seeks to put \$50,000 into the Maintenance Trust Fund from unassigned fund balance on July 1, 2023. Motion was made by Muench to recommend Article 5, seconded by Benson. Motion passed with a vote of 7 Yes – 1 No (Bonaccorsi) – 0 Abstain.

Town Warrant Articles Review

Fire Truck - This Article is requesting \$405,000 to purchase a new fire tanker truck and equipment for the Fire Rescue Department. Carlson explained that this has been written according to DRA specifications. Of the total, \$305,000 will be coming from the Fire Truck Capital Reserve Fund and \$100,000 will be coming from Unassigned Fund Balance. No money will be raised by taxation for this Article. Discussion was held regarding another \$100,000 coming from ARPA funds, which is off-book revenue and the DRA has recommended the Article be worded without using that sum (as it cannot be shown on the tax rate submission forms). Yokela discussed the wording of the Article. He feels it's unclear the way it's written. Carlson will further look into how it might be able to be reworded, however, the DRA has strict standards. She will also add more details to the explanation paragraphs she puts out on each Warrant Article. Motion was made by Bonaccorsi to recommend this Article in the amount of \$405,000, seconded by Benson. Motion passed with a vote of 7 Yes – 1 No (Yokela) – 0 Abstain.

Cemetery Trustee stipend increase - There was a prior tie on this Article, so Carlson asked the Committee to review it again. Motion was made by Holmes to recommend this Article, seconded by Bonaccorsi. Motion passed by a vote of 4 Yes – 3 No (Phillips, Yokela, Martel) – 1 Abstain (Holmes).

Article N and O are the Veteran Credit readoptions - According to the Technical Information Bulletin Carlson received from the NH DRA, these Credits must be adopted again because the law has changed. The credit would be the same, but adopting the new guidelines with additional qualification criteria. According to the bulletin, if we do not pass this those that receive the credit now will loss their current credit and be reduced to \$50.00. Yokela asked Carlson to send him the bulletin. He doesn't feel this was the intent of the new law and plans to bring the issue forward to try and fix the language before voting. Motion was made to recommend the Veteran Credit Article by Benson, seconded by Muench. Motion passed by a vote of 7 Yes – 0 No – 1 Abstain (Yokela).

Motion was made to recommend the All Veteran Credit Article by Benson, seconded by Muench.
Motion passed by a vote of 7 Yes – 0 No – 1 Abstain (Yokela).

Fremont Parks and Recreation Expendable Trust Fund and name the Select Board as agents to expend -
The Article seeks \$5,000 to start an expendable Trust Fund for field improvements at Memorial Fields on
Main Street. Motion was made to recommend this Article by Benson, seconded by Bonaccorsi. Motion
passed by a vote of 6 Yes – 2 No (Yokela, Phillips) – 0 Abstain.

Martel wanted a revote on the Road Agent stipend increase Article so that she could vote consistently on
all of the stipend Articles. Martel made a motion to recommend this Article, seconded by Yokela.
Motion passed with a vote of 4 Yes – 3 No (Martel, Yokela, Phillips) – 1 Abstain (Holmes).

Yokela asked about the Town's default budget and employee raises. Carlson stated that no position are
reduced or salaries decreased when something doesn't pass. The default keeps the approved increase (for
example 2%) for the year and the Town calculates the default to include that, so that employees don't get
a pay decrease if the budget fails, they just don't get any increase. This statement is written in the
explanation, it's not biding like the warrant articles, but the Town has always handled the issue this way.

The next meeting is January 4, 2023 in the first floor room of the Town Hall at 7:00 pm.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:38 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Shawn Perreault
Recording Secretary