

Fremont School District Deliberative Session – Minutes
February 3, 2024
9:00am at the Ellis School

Approved
February 13, 2024

Present were: School Board Members: Gordon Muench (Chair), Greg Fraize (Vice-Chair), Nicole Cloutier, Jane Pellegrini, Business Administrator: Nathan Castle, School Superintendent: Ellen Halliday, School Attorney: Meghan Glynn, School Moderator: James Thompson, School District Clerk: Shawn Perreault, Budget Committee Members: Mary Jo Holmes (Chair), Jon Benson (Vice Chair), Josh Yokela, Gene Cordes, Steve Bonaccorsi, Brenda Beauchain, Nancy Murray, Town Administrator: Heidi Carlson, and various members of the Fremont community.

J. Thompson opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and reviewed the meeting's agenda. He discussed the exits and where bathrooms were located. Member of the School Board and Budget Committee introduced themselves. He proceeded to explain the rules that would govern the meeting including the process for speaking on or amending a warrant article once it is opened to the floor for discussion. He then explained "calling the question", "Point of Order" and how voting will take place on the warrant articles once discussion is over. Rules were adopted. The School Board opened the meeting by reviewing highlights of the 2023-2024 school year at Ellis as well as some projects that were completed on the facility.

Article 01 District Officers: To choose the following School District Officers:

School Board Member 2 for 3 years
Gordon Muench
Greg Fraize

School District Moderator 1 for 1 year
James Thompson

School District Clerk 1 for 1 year
Shawn Perreault

School District Treasurer 1 for 1 year

Article 2 Collective Bargaining Agreement – Support Staff: Shall the Fremont School District vote to approve the cost items included in the collective bargaining agreement reached between the Fremont School Board and the Ellis School Support Staff (AFT - Local #6223) which calls for the following increases in salaries and benefits at the current staffing level:

Fiscal Year	Estimated Increase
2024-2025	\$127,832
2025-2026	\$45,225
2026-2027	\$47,811

and further to raise and appropriate \$127,832 for the 2024-2025 fiscal year, such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in salaries and benefits required by the new agreement over those that would be paid at current staffing levels. (Majority vote required) **The Fremont School Board recommends this appropriation 5-0-0. The Fremont Budget Committee recommends this appropriation 6-1-0.**

J. Thompson read the article, Fraize moved the question and Pellegrini seconded. Pellegrini explained that year one was to bring the support staff more in line with surrounding school system of like sizes and currently effect 17 employees. The table included with the presentation shows the current steps and how they will change during the first year, if the contract were to pass (attached to these minutes). The remaining two years, it would increase by 5%.

Kolhofer – Asked if there was an Evergreen clause included in the new contract. He feels this is not a good contract, that a 5% increase doesn't include the step increases. He doesn't feel the Town can afford this contract.

B. Thompson – Feels this contract is fair and very responsible. People working at the grocery store are making \$14.00 an hour.

Pellegrini stated that she knows people are struggling, but some of those people are the ones working in our schools.

J. Bolduc – supports this contract. The support staff is extremely important to the function of the school and the support of the teachers. They support students with IEP, which services are required by law. Kolhofer – Feels there were ways they could have saved more in the contract and asked about sick time, vacation time and health insurance.

Muench responded that health insurance is included in the teacher's contract not the support contract, but they have health insurance. That a lot of the support staff has to have higher education for job requirements. That if these positions are not in-house they would have to be contracted out because they are legal requirements.

Diggins – expressed her agreement with Kolhofer. She stated her husband has not had a raise in a number of years. She agrees people are working hard, however, paying these higher taxes are getting tougher. People have had to move out of town because they can't afford to live here.

Lester – She works as a para here at the school. She is also co-president for the support staff. She is asking the voters to vote yes. She is proud of Ellis and the students here. However, with the current pay scale they cannot hire new people and are having a hard time retaining people. A current para 1 makes \$13.04 an hour and a para 2 makes \$14.50. If the contract passes they would be making \$15.00 and \$16.50. Contracting services out would cost a lot more.

J. Thompson – Article will go on the ballot as written.

Cloutier – made a motion to restrict reconsideration, seconded by Greg. Motion passed.

Article 3 Special Meeting: Shall the Fremont School District, if Article 2 is defeated, authorize the governing body to call one special meeting, at its option, to address Article 2 cost items only? (Majority vote required). **The Fremont School Board recommends this appropriation 3-2-0. The Fremont Budget Committee does not recommend this appropriation 1-6-0.**

J. Thompson read the article, Fraize moved the article and Pellegrini seconded. Cloutier explained the purpose of this article.

Kolhofer – stated he was against this article.

Cloutier made a motion to restrict reconsideration, seconded by Pellegrini. Motion passed.

Article 4 Operating Budget: Shall the Fremont School District raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the

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First Session, for the purposes set forth, therein, totaling \$13,692,793? Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$13,712,081, which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Fremont School District or by law; or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only. (Majority vote required) **The Fremont School Board recommends this appropriation 5-0-0. The Fremont Budget Committee recommends this appropriation 5-2-0.**

J. Thompson read the article. M. Holmes moved the article, seconded by Benson. Muench reviewed the highlights of increases and decreased from the current budget to this proposed budget. He stated that Sanborn portion is 18.66% and Ellis portion is 1.99%.

Kolhofer – questioned getting rid of the social worker position, hired a psychologist.

Muench explained that we have had an increase in the amount of students that need this support. The School Board actually saved \$65,000 by bringing this service in house and increased the availability to our students.

Kolhofer – also feels that administration costs are really high. He questioned the need for a Superintendent. He inquired if it would be possible to have one position Principal/Superintendent.

Lawyer – She explained that according to State law all New Hampshire schools are required to have a Superintendent. You can contract with another district, but you are required to have those services.

Kolhofer – Made a motion to decrease the proposed budget by \$130,000, which would bring the amount to \$13,532,793, seconded by M. Holmes.

Phillips - expressed their support in dropping the administrative costs. That it would reduce the stress on the tax payers. She questioned if all the administrative position were really needed. Inquired if roles could be combined.

Fraize - explained how the positions were structured and that one secretary was spilt with the Special Ed department. He has seen our Superintendent here on her off days. She is part-time but putting in full-time hours. They have looked into the different options on the Superintendent and they are not feasible.

A. O'Connell – Thanked the School Board for all their hard work. She was involved when they were looking at combining the Superintendent position. The work the Superintendent has to do is the same no matter what the number of students is. If the town was interested in doing a co-op with another town, salaries would have to be brought up. Fremont has a hard time retaining Superintendents because this position is part-time and pay/benefits are lower than most other districts.

Lester – She is against combining positions. She has been through four different Special Education Supervisors. This effects staff turnover, how well the teams work together and anxiety. At the present time, they have an amazing team and she hopes that doesn't change.

Diggins – She stated that letting people go is hard, her husband's company just laid off 47 management positions. However, the support for taxpayers just isn't there.

Cloutier – Stated that without really researching these options, she doesn't feel it to be in the best interest of the school.

Muench – Reminded the voters that the school budget is a bottom-line budget. If \$130,000 is removed from the budget that doesn't mean it will come out of a specific area. The School Board would just have to pull the money from some where else.

There was brief discussion held on the cost of the Sanborn contract, however, J. Thompson felt that was more appropriate for Article 6.

Muench explained the School Board would have loved to continue with Sanborn, however, they were looking for items the School Board felt was not what Fremont wanted. They wanted a guarantee of 110 students and if we don't send that many, we would still pay for them. This would take away the school choice.

Motion to decrease the budget by \$130,000 failed.

There was a motion that looked to take out the allowance of a special meeting if the budget failed. After speaking with legal counsel, this language is required by law and cannot be changed. The lawyer did read the State RSA 40:11C into the record.

J. Thompson stated the article will appear as written. Cloutier made a motion to restrict reconsideration, seconded by Fraize. Motion passed.

Article 5 Appropriate to ETF from Fund Balance: Shall the Fremont School District vote to raise and appropriate up to the sum of \$200,000 to be added to the previously established expendable trust fund, known as the Special Education Expendable Trust Fund. This sum to come from June 30, 2024 unassigned fund balance available for transfer on July 1, 2024. No amount to be raised from additional taxation. (Majority vote required) **The Fremont School Board recommends this appropriation 5-0-0. The Fremont Budget Committee recommends this appropriation 7-0-0.**

J. Thompson read the article, Muench moved the question with Pelligrini seconded. Fraize started by giving a little bit of background on why the fund was created. There will be the need to take money from this fund this year. Castle confirmed the number to be \$250,000 leaving a balance of \$65,000. These services are required by law to be paid for any student's special education need.

Phillips – made a motion to reduce the \$200,000 by \$130,000 making the new number \$70,000. She understands the special education system having two children that require services.

Kolhofer seconded the motion.

The School Board feels lowering the requested to that amount would put the school in danger of not being able to support a student should they come in mid-year. Then the money would need to be pulled from other Ellis funds or a special meeting would need to be called to ask the Town for additional funds. This prevents that from happening and gives the school a worse case safety net. This is the first time in three years that the funds have been needed. Halliday feels this would be dangerous for the town

because there are some high need students that have entered or will be entering in the near future coming up that will require funding.

Motion to reduce amount failed. Cloutier called the question with Janvrin seconded. Article will appear on the ballot as written.

Cloutier made a motion to restrict reconsideration, seconded by Pelligrini. Motion passed.

Article 6 High School Tuition Agreement: Shall the School District approve a new ten (10) year Memorandum of Understanding with Pinkerton Academy and a new ten (10) year Memorandum of Understanding with the Epping School District for the education of Fremont high school students at both Pinkerton Academy and Epping High School beginning July 1, 2026 in accordance with the proposed Memorandum of Understandings on file with the School District Clerk? **The Fremont School Board recommends this appropriation 5-0-0.**

J. Thompson read the article and Muench made a presentation to the community on the two contracts (Attached to the minutes). If anyone would like the presentation sent to them they can send a request to the School Board.

T. Albaugh – asked how many high school student does Fremont have? 158 current High School students.

Discussion was held on how Pinkerton's percentage would be calculated at the end of the first 5 years and what that would look like for years 6-10. The ability for either side to reopen Pinkerton's contract at the end of 5 years with the option to extend or end the contract at 10 years. This allows us to look at the formulas and other parts of the contract to make sure they are still working for us. We avoid being locked into something that ends up not working for us, like the present Sanborn Contract. What would happen if students changed their minds on the school they choose? The expectation is that once they decide, that is the school they are expected to attend throughout their high school career. Statutory laws such as Best Interest/Manifest Hardship continue to be available. It was also noted that all other Pinkerton contracts are for 20 years.

Additional public comment included: both contracts give Fremont a voice on each of the high school, public and non-public. This something we don't have now. Pinkerton and Epping would return or credit Fremont for any surplus funds paid to them. Pinkerton has a separate building for freshman to help them transition to such a larger school. Both schools do have trade school options, Pinkerton's is in house and Epping uses SST in Exeter.

Kolhofer – expressed his concern with Epping's current policy of not notifying parents if a student wants to change their gender identity.

The School Board also clarified that students already attending Sanborn High School after the 2026 contract ends will be required to finish out their high school education at Sanborn. Any children going to high school starting in the fall of 2026 will be going to one of the new schools. They may look to add legacy clauses into the two contracts from Epping and Pinkerton. Those are some of the items that still need to be worked out. Both of these options are cheaper than what we are paying now.

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There were residents that expressed their sadness and desire to stay with Sanborn. They recalled the history of our relationship, graduating from Sanborn themselves and having their kids and relatives graduate from there as well. They asked the School Board if there was anyway to go back to the table with Sanborn to come up with something that would keep us there. The School Board expressed their understanding and stated they did everything they could to work with Sanborn. However, Sanborn clearly stated the contract they offered was last and final. The board could not enter into another contract that would not benefit Fremont and would take away school choice, something the community has expressed the desire to have.

Community members also asked if there would be a GPA requirement or application students would be required to fill out to get into these high schools. The school board stated no, the students and their families would tour both schools and then have a deadline to state which school the student would be attending. This would be done before the budget season, this would allow the school to plan accordingly.

The Community wants to make sure those high school students that must remain at Sanborn still get the education they deserve. The school board is watching this as well.

There was a question on how the RFP was handled by the School Board and how Epping got to submit one. Muench explained the process, the extension that was given to Sanborn and how it was extended to Epping. The process the school board took in voting to accept the bid and review it. The school Board acknowledged all the time, effort and how far out the high school committee went when picking the three schools to request RFP's from, but the RFP was always open to any school that wanted to submit a bid.

Muench also stated that each school will be holding an open house, which will be posted and sent out.

J. Schreiber – after discussing his family's legacy with Sanborn High, he made a motion to add – if defeated, the School Board is directed to go back to the table with Sanborn, seconded by M. Gadway.

Muench discussed how we would have no bargain power and that Sanborn has already stated that was their final and best offer. He asked anyone to go back and watch the Sanborn meeting all the way to the end. The board clearly states this. That they will use the extra money that they are charging Fremont to do improvements at their schools. There has always been hardship and best interest exceptions for students, those would still be available to families.

The age of the Epping and Pinkerton buildings were brought up and the School Board was asked how any expansions would be handled. That after looking at the impact the addition of our students would have on these communities and the school board feels there would be no need by either school to increase staff, class sizes and such because we send our students there.

Lawyer, Meghan Glynn – she clarified to the public that this article is advisory only and the school board is not legally bound to go back and negotiate with Sanborn if that is put into the article.

Community members discussed their experience sending kids to different schools, working in other communities that sent to more than one school and how much better these offers were.

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Again, the school board expressed the items that changed from the initial discussion with Sanborn and what appeared in the offered contract. Key frame work that Fremont was counting on, such as a voice and no minimum number of students.

M. Gadway – stated that Sanborn had stated they were prepared to hire a mediator to help with negotiations. Wondered why we didn't use that offer to see if we could come up with a contract that would work. Also, she is concerned with additional 315 units that will be going into Epping and how that will affect numbers.

Kolhofer – called the question, seconded by C. Depeirre. Voting to change the language failed. Article will stay as written.

Pellegrini – stated that she understands people are sad to see our relationship with Sanborn end, however, she has no doubt that Fremont will be able to build the same relationships with the Epping and Pinkerton community.

M. Holmes – asked if the budget committee needed to take a position on this. The lawyer stated they did not because the article is advisory only. The school board has the power to enter into any contract.

Perreault called the question, seconded by Benson. Motion passed. Article will appear as written.

Benson made a motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 6, seconded by Perreault. Motion passed.

M. Holmes made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Kolhofer. Meeting adjourned at 11:56am.

Respectfully Submitted,



Shawn Perreault

Wage Schedule 2023-2024	Appendix C		Current		
	PARA CERT	PARA2CERT	PARA TCH CERT	SCH SEC FT	CUSTODIAN
STEP 1	\$13.04	\$14.05	\$15.37	\$13.78	\$14.34
STEP 2	\$13.38	\$14.39	\$15.79	\$14.15	\$14.66
STEP 3	\$13.76	\$14.77	\$16.23	\$14.53	\$15.06
STEP 4	\$14.12	\$15.13	\$16.68	\$14.93	\$15.46
STEP 5	\$14.50	\$15.51	\$17.14	\$15.35	\$15.91
STEP 6	\$14.90	\$15.92	\$17.61	\$15.77	\$16.34
STEP 7	\$15.30	\$16.32	\$18.10	\$16.20	\$16.80
STEP 8	\$15.73	\$16.74	\$18.59	\$16.64	\$17.26
STEP 9	\$16.16	\$17.17	\$19.24	\$17.11	\$17.66
STEP 10	\$16.61	\$17.63	\$19.61	\$17.57	\$18.15
STEP 11	\$17.08	\$18.09	\$20.21	\$18.08	\$18.66
STEP 12	\$17.54	\$18.55	\$20.77	\$18.57	\$19.20

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STEP 13	\$18.04	\$19.05	\$21.35	\$19.10	\$19.74
STEP 14	\$18.53	\$19.54	\$22.33	\$19.62	\$20.29
STEP 15	\$19.69	\$20.71	\$23.22	\$20.83	\$21.51
STEP 16	\$20.06	\$21.08	\$23.66	\$21.22	\$21.91
STEP 17	\$20.53	\$21.54	\$24.12	\$21.68	\$22.37
STEP 18	\$20.72	\$21.74	\$24.35	\$21.89	\$22.58
STEP 19	\$20.92	\$22.20	\$24.58	\$22.09	\$22.80
STEP 20	\$21.43	\$22.71	\$25.09	\$22.60	\$23.31

Wage Schedule	Appendix C Proposed				
2024-2025					
	PARA CERT	PARA2CERT	PARA TCH CERT	SCH SEC FT	CUSTODIAN
STEP 1	\$ 15.00	\$ 16.50	\$ 17.50	\$ 16.25	\$ 16.50
STEP 2	\$ 15.45	\$ 17.00	\$ 18.03	\$ 16.74	\$ 17.00
STEP 3	\$ 15.91	\$ 17.50	\$ 18.57	\$ 17.24	\$ 17.50
STEP 4	\$ 16.39	\$ 18.03	\$ 19.12	\$ 17.76	\$ 18.03
STEP 5	\$ 16.88	\$ 18.57	\$ 19.70	\$ 18.29	\$ 18.57
STEP 6	\$ 17.39	\$ 19.13	\$ 20.29	\$ 18.84	\$ 19.13
STEP 7	\$ 17.91	\$ 19.70	\$ 20.90	\$ 19.40	\$ 19.70
STEP 8	\$ 18.45	\$ 20.29	\$ 21.52	\$ 19.99	\$ 20.29
STEP 9	\$ 19.00	\$ 20.90	\$ 22.17	\$ 20.59	\$ 20.90
STEP 10	\$ 19.57	\$ 21.53	\$ 22.83	\$ 21.20	\$ 21.53
STEP 11	\$ 20.16	\$ 22.17	\$ 23.52	\$ 21.84	\$ 22.17
STEP 12	\$ 20.76	\$ 22.84	\$ 24.22	\$ 22.49	\$ 22.84
STEP 13	\$ 21.39	\$ 23.53	\$ 24.95	\$ 23.17	\$ 23.53
STEP 14	\$ 22.03	\$ 24.23	\$ 25.70	\$ 23.87	\$ 24.23
STEP 15	\$ 22.69	\$ 24.96	\$ 26.47	\$ 24.58	\$ 24.96
STEP 16	\$ 23.37	\$ 25.71	\$ 27.26	\$ 25.32	\$ 25.71
STEP 17	\$ 24.07	\$ 26.48	\$ 28.08	\$ 26.08	\$ 26.48
STEP 18	\$ 24.79	\$ 27.27	\$ 28.92	\$ 26.86	\$ 27.27
STEP 19	\$ 25.54	\$ 28.09	\$ 29.79	\$ 27.66	\$ 28.09
STEP 20	\$ 26.30	\$ 28.93	\$ 30.69	\$ 28.49	\$ 28.93
Head Custodian					\$ 29.53

Link to the Future High School Update: <http://bit.ly/futurehighschool>