

Fremont School District Deliberative Session – Minutes  
February 5, 2022  
9:00 am at the Ellis School

Approved as  
Amended 2/8/2022

Present were: Gordon Muench, Amy Leslie, Greg Fraize, Brittany Thompson, Emily Phillips, Nathan Castle, Ellen Halliday, Meghan Glynn, James Thompson, Shawn Perreault, Mary Jo Holmes, Michael Rydeen, Pat Martel, Josh Yokela, Jon Benson, Gene Cordes, Heidi Carlson, 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, bathrooms and the auxiliary meeting room that was available for those individuals unable to wear masks, which were required in the Ellis Gym. School Attorney, School Board and Budget Committee introduced themselves. He proceeded to explain the rules that will govern this meeting. 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. Thomas made a motion to extend the amount of time from 2 to 3 minutes for people to talk on each article, seconded by Acton. Motion passed. Rules were adopted. Leslie reviewed some highlights from the 2021-2022 school year, such as: Returning to full In school learning for all students, resuming extracurricular activities, training, testing, new Math program, Spanish was added to 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade and more. Muench informed every one of several facility projects that were completed, which included: gym divider, arsenic water filtration, HVAC system, heater replacement, ventilators, 331 fixtures that were changed to LED and installation of a chain link fence.

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

School Board Member 2 for 3 years

Jane Pellegrini  
Emily Phillips  
Amy Powers  
Nicole Cloutier  
Leah Kennedy  
Amy Leslie

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

Angela T. O'Connell

J. Thompson read the article and informed the body that is warrant is not amendable.

**Article 02** Collective Bargaining Agreement – Teachers: 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 Fremont Education Association which calls for the following increases in salaries and benefits at the current staffing level:

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Estimated Increase</u>
2022-2023	\$88,612

And further to raise and appropriate \$88,612 for the 2022-2023 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) Recommendation: School Board 5-0/Budget Committee 7-0.

J. Thompson read the warrant and stated this warrant is not amendable. Motion to move the article made by Leslie, seconded by Fraize. B. Thompson from the School board discussed the process, which was done without legal counsel and explained the new benefits and salaries steps the contract will provide for 41 employees. The percentage increase to the steps is 1.5%. This is also a one-year contract to keep teacher contract and the support staff contract on different renewal years. Kohlhofer (Main Street) asked if there is a merit or incentive base for academic performance in the contract? According to his research there hasn't been a lot of improvement in Ellis's performance since he left in 2016. B. Thompson stated there is not. Phillips stated not all kids test well.

**Article 03** 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) Recommended by School Board 5-0/Budget Committee 3-4

J. Thompson reviewed the warrant and stated this warrant is also not amendable. Motion to move the article made by Leslie, seconded by Fraize.

**Article 04** 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 First Session, for the purposes set forth, therein, totaling \$12,298,325? Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$12,308,711, 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) Recommended by the School Board 5-0/Budget Committee 7-0

J. Thompson read the warrant article. Motion to move the article made by Holmes, seconded by Martel. Holmes spoke on behalf of the Budget Committee and would like to make sure that people see the default budget is more than what is being requested. Muench from the School Board stated they worked really hard on this budget and is a .046% increase in last year's budget. There were increases to Health insurance rates to 2.5%, contractual salaries, mandated special education costs, pupil transportation costs, and PFAS and arsenic water filter replacement. There were also decreases in the Sanborn High School expenses (fewer students), new hires have decrease incoming salaries, and dental insurance rates decreased by 1.5%.

Kohlhofer (Main Street) asked if the School Board looked into a Bill that was pass that allowed school to look into direct care at a flat rate. B. Thompson stated they did not. Yokela clarified the bill and stated it was it is a direct care for primary doctors to offer a flat rate to their patients that don't have or don't want to go through insurance.

O'Connell (Gristmill Road) wanted to thank the School Board for all their work on the budget. She knows how hard they work to be responsible to with the Town's taxes while maintaining the needs of the students and staff. Covid has also added its own challenges to the mix.

Motion to restrict for reconsideration article 4 made by B. Thompson, seconded by Fraize. Motion to restrict passed.

**Article 05** Appropriate to ETF from Fund Balance: Shall the Fremont School District vote to raise and appropriate up to the sum of \$100,000 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, 2022 unassigned fund balance available for transfer on July 1, 2022. No amount to be raised from additional taxation. (Majority vote required) Recommended by the School Board 5-0/Budget Committee 6-1

J. Thompson reviewed the warrant article. Motion to move the article made by Leslie, seconded by Fraize. Phillips from the school Board stated these funds would be added to the current \$202,932 which is currently in the Special Education Expendable Trust Fund. It is recommended this trust have a balance of \$300,000 to ensure the school would be able to meet any unanticipated costs in this area.

Kohlhofer (Main Street) confirmed that if this is passed, it would mean the School would give back less money to the Town at the end of the fiscal year.

Hanson (Copp Drive) wanted to know if anything was taken out of the Trust this year and why the school board was seeking to increase the funds that are currently there. He also asked what was spent on special education last year and what is anticipated to be spent next year. Members of the School Board explained this trust is to prevent the school from having to find money in the general budget if a child with special needs that were greater than the school could provide moves into our district. By law the school is required to meet all these needs regardless of funds. They have not need to use the fund to date and have been asking for parts of the \$300,000 each year to lessen the tax impact. Edgerly (Walker Lane) and Bancroft (Whitter Drive) both wanted to know what would be cut if this trust was not funded and the need arose. The members of the School Board stated they would make those decisions with the school administration if that happened, but it would be their goal to cut items with the least amount of impact to the school. Castle stated \$2,434,642 was spent last year in Special Ed. J. Thompson stated lines 1200, 1299 and some of the transportation listed in the handouts are the anticipated costs this coming year.

**Article 06** Appropriate to ETF from Fund Balance: Shall the Fremont School District vote to raise and appropriate up to the sum of \$100,000 to be added to the previously established expendable trust fund, known as the Ellis School Building and Grounds Maintenance Fund. This sum to come from June 30, 2022 unassigned fund balance available for transfer on July 1, 2022. No amount to be raised from additional taxation. (Majority vote required). Recommended by the School Board 5-0/Budget Committee 6-1

J. Thompson reviewed the warrant article. Motion to move the article made by Leslie, seconded by Fraize. Muench stated this is to prevent a huge expense and gave the roof as an example, which was about \$1.3 million and was not a planned expense. This will avoid the Town having to take out a bond. He stated these funds would be added to the current \$104,598 currently in the Building and Grounds Maintenance Fund. It is recommended this trust have a balance of \$500,000 to ensure the school would be able to meet any unanticipated costs in this area.

Kohlhofer (Main Street) wanted to know if any impact fees from the new houses/buildings have been used. Members of the School Board confirmed they have been used, but they can only be used for certain items.

Kohlhofer made a motion to amend the amount from \$100,000 to \$50,000, seconded by Clement.

O'Connell (Gristmill) was against changing the amount. She stated that the School Board worked very hard coming up with a replacement plan that is the more responsible way to spend tax dollars. This plan takes into account the age of the equipment as well as the maintenance schedule. Muench confirmed this by explaining the plan for the HVAC system, which is about \$328,000. Having to raise that amount in one year would be a huge tax burden on the Town. Having this trust and funding it over time allows the impact to be lessened and the school to plan. Further discussion was held on the bonds. Motion to change amount to \$50,000 failed. Warrant to go on the ballot as originally stated.

**Article 07** Appropriate to ETF from Fund Balance: Shall the Fremont School District vote to raise and appropriate up to the sum of \$50,000 to be added to the previously established expendable trust fund, known as the Maintenance and Improvement of Technology Infrastructure and Equipment Fund. This sum to come from June 30, 2022 unassigned fund balance available for transfer on July 1, 2022. No amount to be raised from additional taxation. (Majority vote required) Recommended by the School Board 5-0/Budget Committee 5-2

J. Thompson reviewed the warrant article. Motion to move the article made by Leslie, seconded by Fraize. Fraize stated they are looking at the wiring connecting the systems. There are servers that run in the SAU office that might need replacement. He stated these funds would be added to the current \$25,728 in the Maintenance and Improvement of Technology Infrastructure and Equipment Fund. It is recommended this trust have a balance of \$150,000 to ensure the school would be able to meet any unanticipated costs in this area.

Hanson (Copp Drive) wanted to know what the cost of the items he mentioned would be and why \$150,000 was the amount set. Fraize explained that a server can be anywhere from \$10,000 to \$15,000 each. They also need to replace the firewall, which protect the system from outside sources and that will be about \$25,000.

Kohlhofer (Main Street) ask if there are not enough funds left over to cover everything that is being requested, where does the money go? Fraize stated it would be placed into the Trusts in the order they appear on the ballot.

B. Thompson made a motion to restrict for reconsideration articles 5-7, seconded by Fraize. Motion to restrict was passed.

**Article 08** Received by Petition: To see if the voters will vote to make the student use of facial coverings within the school building, on school grounds, and during any school sanctioned activities or events optional by the decision of the students' parent or guardian. To take effect immediately. (advisory only) Recommendations: Not recommended School Board 1-4

J. Thompson read the petitioner's article. Motion to move the article was made by Cloutier, seconded by Yokela. J. Thompson turned the microphone over to the petitioner to explain the purpose behind the petitioned warrant.

Cloutier expressed her concern that masks are not working. Kids are still getting sick. The masks do not prevent you from passing or catching COVID. Young children are losing important milestones and cues due to the lack of seeing people's faces. She stated that students have been told they will be sent to office for not wearing mask. Teachers have asked kids to raise their hands if they are vaccinated. She described a number of ways masks are not being used properly, kids touching things and then touching their masks contaminating them, taking them off wrong, materials that is being used to make masks. The only effective masks to put on a child is an N95 mask, which are not appropriate for kids. Showed slides on her personal experience of large gatherings with large amounts of people not wearing masks. She reviewed some student based numbers on Ellis and surrounding towns on Covid numbers vs. mask and unmasked. She doesn't want others beliefs to be focused on her and her kids. She supports everyone's right to choose what is best for their family and wants the same.

Kohlhofer (Main Street) – supports this warrant article. Referred to some research he found in Europe and other experiences he has had wearing the masks. If the kids have a cold, they are breathing those viruses back in with the mask on. He feels forcing kids to wear them is harmful.

O'Connell (Gristmill Road) – she agrees the masks are not stopping everything. Students get mask breaks, they are outside as much as possible. She compared this year to last year and the fact there have been different strains. She feels asking her kids to wear them is asking them to think about other. She would like to see the administrative along with the School Board be allowed to make these decisions. They are the ones with the numbers and the information. She can find research that shows wearing masks have helped. When masks were used there were less Covid numbers, nothing is perfect. She supports the Staff, administration, the fact that her kids are not currently going to Ellis, she still wants to see the school supported. If you have someone that has not survived this, it matters.

Burke (Danville Road) - She has a first grader that attends Ellis. Masks were optional at first, now they are mandatory. Her child has gotten thrown up in her mask three times already. They are not getting proper air. There is science that shows after 5 minutes bacteria that causes pneumonia growing on the masks and our kids are breathing that in. Kids are touching their masks with dirty hands, if teachers touch the masks that is more contamination. She really wants it to be the choice of the parents. She doesn't feel this protects other people, unless you are wearing the N95 masks.

Edgerly (Walker Lane) – Speaking from experience, the N95 mask are not helpful if you are not fit tested for them. Before Covid, she was afraid of the Flu. She taught her kids to wash their hand and other ways they could protect themselves from the flu, masks were not an option. She doesn't feel proper hand washing and such is happening to make masks useful.

Pellegrini (Kelsey Drive) – She hears both sides. She hopes masks goes away soon. She thinks the only way to help both sides is to come to some kind of agreement. To agree that at a certain percentage of Ellis population masks will becomes optional. She'd like everyone to try this. Speaking to COVID, she agrees it probably has to do with the variant. Her son got Covid and had a very mild case. Then he developed a very life threatening heart issue post COVID. It's very scary. It's how you approach it with

the kids that will help them not be afraid. She'd like to see another survey to see what the community wants now, are we going off dated surveys.

O'Brien (Main Street) – Her concern with this petition is it takes away protection from the school. She worries it has become more political. She's concerned about Staff not wanting to come to work without the protections. If cases keep climbing, can we keep the kids in school. She wants the administration and the School Board to have the power to make these decisions. They have the data and information to required.

Muench and the School District lawyer confirmed that this warrant is advisory only and explained to the public what that meant with regards to this petition.

Gill (Chester Road)– She wanted to amend the petition to the following: to ask voter to vote for an internal survey to make the student use of facial coverings within the school building, on school grounds and during any school sanctioned activities or event optional by the decision for the students, parents or guardian, to take effect immediately, second by Ireland. Edgerly (Walker Lane) asked what the difference is. The District's lawyer stated the article as amended would request the School Board to conduct a survey. This would go to the parents only and not the community as a whole. This is still advisory only because the School Board is the only one that can make policy.

Lundquist (Tuck Drive) – her understanding is that the original petition came in because the special meeting petition had come in. The School Board was upset that the parents didn't come to them for a new survey be done. If the amendment passes this would get back to what the School Board originally wished had happened.

Yokela clarified that the use of internal as stated could be used to only ask the staff and not everyone. That if it passes internal should be clarified to make sure the survey includes the groups intended. Cloutier (Danville Road) wanted to clarify that the only reason she has brought this petition forward is because she has been asking for numbers or bench marks the needed to be met to have masks be optional. She has never gotten an answer to this question or seen a plan to be put in place. Were there clear expectations to go mask optional, this wouldn't be happening.

Kohlhofer (Main Street) - He a problem with just giving the survey to the school community. People that don't have kids in the school don't count? The town should have a voice, we all have a vested interested in our school. He doesn't like the fact you don't think that his vote shouldn't count.

Pellegrini (Kelsey Drive)– Feels it should be up to the parents and guardians that attend to the school. She thinks it's not fair to have a say on something that has no direct effect on you. She said it would be like her having a say at the nursing home next door and not having a family member that resides there.

Burke (Danville Road) - The petition did leave it up to the parents. It asks the voters to allow the parents to make the decision. Allowing the parents to make the decision, takes the burden off the kids.

Lundquist (Tuck Drive) – Did the town vote back in August? She feels the survey should go out to the same group of people that the August survey went out to.

Downing (Main Street) stated this comes down to freedom of choice. One side wants to choose and one side wants to tell others what to do.

Holmes called the question, B. Thompson seconded.

O'Brien (Main Street) stated it's not trying to take anything away from the school. The school doesn't pay for the masks, this is not a budgeted item. The wording of internal needs to be clarified. It should be people that are in the school community.

Motion on the amendment failed. The petition goes back to the original wording.

Yokela made a motion to call the questions as original worded, seconded by Holmes. Motion passed to place the original warrant article on the ballot.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Holmes, seconded by Yokela. Meeting was adjourned at 11:09 am.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shawn Perreault". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Shawn" and last name "Perreault" clearly distinguishable.

Shawn Perreault, School District Clerk