

Budget Committee Meeting
Thursday, March 13, 2024
4:00 p.m., Hampden Academy - Library

Attendees: Committee members Jessica Barnes, Stacey Haskell, John Holmes, Will Seavey, Nick Raymond, Superintendent, and Trish Hayes, District Accountant, Board members Faye Anderson, Les French, and Shelley Sargent. Town representatives: Casey Ashe, Cynthia Grant, Christine Cubberley and Matthew LaChance.

Absent: Allan Gordon

Will Seavey opened the meeting at 4:00 p.m. and explained the process that each meeting will take.

ED-279

Superintendent Raymond presented the ED-279 and explained the funding formula is based on school enrollment and town valuation. Attending pupils shows a loss of 108 students. Comparing years 2022 and 2023, we have lost an average of 41 students. Staff positions are the amount intended by the Essential Programs and Services which is the amount that the state will subsidize the district for. Priority of page 1 is the student enrollment. Page 3 shows the other subitizable costs. These reimbursements run two years behind. Section C on page 3 lists the debt service for the district which includes Frankfort's debt which resulted from the town joining RSU 22. Page 4 – Section A lists the student enrollment in each town, Section B indicates the state valuation for each town. This rate is set by the State, not the district. Superintendent Raymond noted the valuation increases from FY24 to FY25. Section C – lists the amounts that each town is required to pay in order to receive state funding. Minimum requirement from the towns for FY25 is \$9,284,770.68. Page 5 – RSU 22 receives the Education Service Center Member Allocation of \$137,446.65 which is \$6,391.61 less than FY24. In total RSU 22 will receive \$208,759.25 less in FY25 than FY24.

Article 8 – Transportation

Transportation pertains to the transportation of students to and from school. Salaries for transportation is to pay a driver to transport the Glenburn students. Transportation by Other SAU's is RSU 63 transporting Orrington and Holden students. The Newburgh transportation for Pre-K students will not be needed in FY25 as they will be relocated to Hampden. The total of the contracted transportation from Cyr Bus is \$1,236,000 for FY25. There is an additional cost to transport students to UTC in Bangor. The cost for FY25 is estimated to be \$60,000. New this year is the addition of transportation of homeless students to the district to continue their education. The Cyr Bus contract is in year 3 of a 5 year contract.

Article 10 – Debt Service

Superintendent Raymond reviewed the Debt Service article and reiterated what he said in his opening remarks.

Article 11 - School Nutrition

No request has been made for town support. School Nutrition Director, Kathy Kitteridge explained the food service program and how it is supported by the state and federal governments. Maine will continue the free breakfast and lunch programs in FY25. If the program does not continue, we would have to go back to charging the parents for meals.

Priorities

Mr. Seavey explained that we can and cannot do with the excess fund balance. Reduce State and Local share for the next budget, set up or continue to contribute to the reserve funds, or disburse over a three-year period, but the three-year plan continues to roll. Mr. Seavey read and explained the items on the list of priorities that have been compiled to date. Mr. Seavey discussed the special education reserve fund and why it might be needed. The increase in high needs students could cause a serious impact to the budget if we are not prepared. The high needs out of district costs can be extreme. Questions regarding the central office – is this not ADA compliant? Lacrosse costs for field rental?

Casey Ashe, Winterport Town Manager, requests that uses for the excess fund balance not be combined into one warrant article. It was explained that school districts are required to list each warrant article separately.

Cindy Grant, Newburgh Town Manager, asked if the FY24 budget will have an excess of \$1 million as in FY23. Superintendent Raymond explained that we are tracking well this year and that in FY23 there were 7 unfilled Special Education positions and a large credit due to the solar contract that was in place, among other smaller remaining amounts.

Mr. Ashe commented that the school district has legal obligations and moral obligations. Increasing or not “giving back” to the town has major ramifications to Winterport. He says the town could keep the money returned in check form in a reserve fund that would be used for educational purposes. Whatever we can do for the towns is greatly appreciated. Mr. Seavey agrees and feels the need to balance the needs of the district and the towns.

The next Budget Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 28, 4:00 p.m. at Hampden Academy.

The meeting adjourned at 4:49 p.m.