

Budget Committee Meeting
Thursday, March 28, 2024
4:00 p.m., Hampden Academy - Library

Attendees: Committee members Jessica Barnes, Allan Gordon, Stacey Haskell, John Holmes, Will Seavey, Nick Raymond, Superintendent, and Trish Hayes, District Accountant, Board member Faye Anderson, Rebecca Cross, Adult Education Director, Greg Im, Attorney from Drummond Woodsum. Town representatives: Cindy Grant, Casey Ashe, Eric Jarvi, Mike Shaw

Article 15 Adult Education

Article 15 was presented first. Rebecca Cross is the Director for Riverside Adult Education which consists of RSU 22, RSU 26, and RSU 34. Rebecca presented her budget to the committee and attending public. Rebecca's presentation included:

- College Prep, English Language acquisition, and medical training are the most used programs offered
- Over 55,000 adults in Maine need a high school diploma
- 29 students are enrolled in the high school completion program (21 of these students are aged 16-22; 8 students aged 23-50 and 4 are parents)
- Barriers & challenges – unhoused, low efficacy navigating help systems, mental health issues, and substance abuse issues to name a few.

12–15 students will graduate this year on June 13th at Hampden Academy. Rebecca thanked the district for its support. Superintendent Raymond thanked Rebecca for the passion that she shows for the program and the students that she works with. This year RSU 22 will have the most graduates! Superintendent Raymond explained the Adult Education budget. There is one part-time employee in the district, a part-time teacher, and Rebecca supervisors the employee.

Article 6 – System Administration

Article 6 consists of the Board of Directors, system leadership, and the fiscal services office. Superintendent Raymond explained the items and financial needs within the article. In the past, the Assistant Superintendent was split between the central office staff and the fiscal office staff but that is no longer the case. The grant writer position and communications specialist positions have been removed from the budget for FY25 as these positions have not been filled. A grant accounting specialist has been added to the fiscal services budget for FY25. This is a part-time position – currently about 10-15 hours per week. Overall the Article is down by \$22,441.98.

Article 7 – School Administration

Article 7 consists of the school leadership and support and general operating expenses. The article is up by \$106,177.10 mostly due to increases in salaries and benefits. Salary increases have been built into the current version.

Each article of the budget is continually being reviewed and revised as we go through the budget process.

Dr. Jarvi had a question about the cutoff date of the reports that are provided for the current year to date. The cut off date is the date the report is run.

Priorities

The fund balance priorities remain the same. The priorities list was reviewed in depth at the last budget meeting.

Other

Anything that is relevant to this meeting or the last meeting will be allowed.

Casey Ashley asked what gives the RSU the right to use the fund balance for “wish list” items. State Statute 15-004 specifies that the fund balance will be used for educational purposes. Mr. Ashley read section 6 which states that you can have 9% of fund balance. He then asked about seeing the plan for fund balance from past years.

Mr. Ashley had clarifying questions from the last meeting: Statute which was already addressed. He asked again about the plan for spending down the fund balance. Superintendent Raymond explained that he had already shared that plan with him, as it’s in a spreadsheet also known as the priority list. Mr. Raymond explained to Mr. Ashley that there is no requirement to have a written plan, but the district has put a list of items together so they would not lose sight of it.

Mr. Ashley asked about the local excess amount that the towns have contributed above and beyond the required minimum indicated from ED-279. It was stated to him that historically speaking the towns have contributed more than the required local amount reflected on the ED-279.

Mr. Ashley then asked if the budget committee and the district as a whole understand how the towns could use the money for educational purposes and how that could impact their own appropriations. Chair Seavey explained how the district has consulted with the Department of Education and our legal council about what we can do with that money, and the district is very aware about how that money can be allocated. RSU 22 is being advised that they cannot simply give money back to the towns in the form of a check.

Cindy Grant asked if the RSU is aware that there is a special provision that the 9% rule will end in FY26? Will Seavey responded that we are aware. The committee will re-evaluate each year on how much can be used to reduce assessments each year.

Ms. Grant commented that the FY23 audit noted that the district was above the 9% rule.

Ms. Grant commented that the excess comes from not spending the money. Mr. Seavey explained that the majority of the excess has come from the inability to hire for open positions.

Ms. Grant asked why we need two additional tennis courts? Superintendent Raymond explained that each committee – Building, Budget and Finance – reviews the list each month. She also asked why paving, etc. is listed and not part of a maintenance plan. Superintendent Raymond explained the items are listed so we don’t lose sight of them. She also questioned why the Weatherbee project was listed and asked are we planning to make a one time payment for that project?

Mike Shaw, Frankfort selectman, commented on the allocated fund balance. He is passionate about sports. He appreciates the district not charging participation fees. He commented the softball field would be a good use of funds.

The meeting adjourned at 4:56 pm.

cc: Board of Directors