Town of Epping

Budget Committee

December 7, 2022

Call to Order:

The budget committee meeting was called to order at 6pm. Pledge of allegiance followed by a moment of silence for the troops.

Attendance:

Budget Committee members: Michael Charkowski-Chairman, Steve Ozols-Vice Chairman, Ben Leavitt-School Board Rep, Jen Chapman, Mark Vallone, Marty Dyer, Joe Trombley-Town Selectman Rep, Brian Reed-no, Jordenne Sargent-zoom, Sean Morrison-zoom and Cynthia Hounam-zoom. Cody Belanger was not present.

Heather Clark, Bill Furbush, Christine Vayda, Robin O’Day, Julie Knight

Roll call: Brian, Joe, Mike, Steve, Marty, Ben, Jen, Sean-zoom, Jordenne-zoom and Cody is not present

Town Budget update: Joe reviewed.

* Highway requested $52,000 to be added to the bottom line budget.
  + The final outcome was there were going to try and incumber funds for a one time purchase of the side walk plow this year so it will not impact the budget next year
  + Added in $30,000 for the plowing contracts, it will be revisited at deliberative session at the beginning of February, if it is mild winter they will withdraw it from the budget

School Budget update:

* Mark asked about the FT database person, would like clarity of the job description.
  + Last year there were 2 tech support people and this year there is 1.5 tech support and .5 data management specialist.
  + Tech support: Making sure the computers, printers, etc are operational
  + Data Management Specialist: Running reports, maintaining parent and staff contact and state reporting.
  + These positions were stipends last year, this year they were taken off stipend position.
* Mike said the budget was easy to understand this year and there was only one change in the software/technology cost
  + Christine said the computer software looks big this year, but it was actually a shift in the budget, all combined as computer and technology
* Steve asked how the teacher contract affects the teacher salary line if voted in
  + Christine said your CBA warrant article, which is the cost items for the increase in salaries for next year, the year after and whatever else is negotiated. When the budget is finalized the warrant article plus the budget becomes the total number for next year.
  + Heather said the numbers in the warrant article does not affect this years’ numbers.
  + If the warrant articles passed for 2023-2024 the number will be CBA plus the budget for the numbers is 2024-2025
* Mark asked if they have any timeline, Ben said they are trying to finished up 3-4 items. Bill said he would like to get the numbers to the committee before the winter break.
* Bill took the boards direction and with the budget and CBA they are hitting the target of 6.25%, they want to make sure it passes.
* Ben said the budget and CBA are two self sufficient items. Heather said they are two separate articles and should be looked at as such.
  + Steve said if you add those two together, this is what the school will be spending and that is why they look at both
  + Mike is concerned that if the contract does not pass it is putting a strain on the ability to staff teachers.
* Steve asked why only 2 years vs 3 years like every other year, Ben said it would not overlap with other contracts, for example the para and police which is 3 years. They wanted to avoid being on the same cycle.
* Sean asked if they have applied for school building aid
  + Christine said to get aid you would have to be doing a building remodel, like an addition or if the school is falling apart then they are put on a priority list. There is nothing right now that they would qualify for.
  + Bill said building aid is not 100%, they are collecting building aid which is paying off the bonds. If they did qualify for building aid it would still have to go to warrant for the voters to approve.
  + They got approved for $75,000 safety grant in the second round. They do look for every grant that they can.
* Mike asked Mark if it would be helpful if the SAU provided the state reps with a priority list, Mark said yes, he would like to hear about specific ones.
* Steve asked if they have anything figured out for enrollment numbers for 2023-2024, Bill said no there are too many variables, he said they have been steady over the past several years
  + Bill said the preschool is the highest it has ever been
  + Steve asked about the homeschool numbers, Bill said they were a guess at best as there is no way to track them as there is no requirement for the families to inform the school.
  + Heather suggested to Mark that this would be opportunity to make a law that they should have to register with whatever school district they are in, Mark said the state mandates that the Dept. of Education tracks homeschool students. Parents don't want the state to track the children for privacy reasons.
* Mike asked about the state voucher program
  + Bill said it affects the revenue and they have no control over it. The families apply, the state double checks and then the schools’ revenue is lowered. It is a loss on the revenue side, so it is hard to track.
  + Mike asked if we know how many students in our district got the vouchers, Christine said no, last year there was 2 and we won’t know about this year until next year.
* Joe said the increase is 4.46% increase, the labor increase are not in the budget because it is part of the contract, which is less than 2% so that will bring it in range of the target. It is right where he anticipated the budget to come in.
* Joe asked about the lunch budget
  + It is $430,083 which is offset by the state and federal money, it is self-funded, but it still shows on the bottom line budget.
* Marty mentioned the book mobile now has a $7000 line item where it was previously paid with essar funds, he asked if there was any other lines that didn’t exist before but are now there and how much they are.
  + Bill said most of them were offset by essar funds, like the boiler project and computer tech. They would have come out of the budget otherwise
  + Ben said they are still using the essar funds to offset tutoring until 2024.
  + Mark asked if they work with library for a book program, Bill said no but with the new personal coming on that is something they can look into
* Steve about line 2169 vision total which was in 2210 in the previous meeting, did something change or is it a shift. Christine thinks it was a shift as nothing changed but Heather said they will look into it and get back to them.
* Joe asked for the balance of the surplus fund
  + Building and Grounds: $154,353
  + Special Ed: $355,717
  + Surplus fund: $200,000. They retain $200,00o and return the remaining to the town. Joe asked if they could not return some of those funds and keep it for upcoming projects. Heather said they could, but they choose to engage the town and before they spent that money
* Joe asked about the special ed increase of $363,000 being in there when it is not a contracted service. Christine said they are mandated by the state to have it in the budget because it is student needed even though it is not contracted, with one exception of the salaries. The $363,000 is based on current students not forecasted.
* Joe asked how they are contracted for electricity. Christine said she went to a program where they provided the usage, they sent it 0ut to 5 or so different bidders and they came back with options for certain rates if you lock in for so many months. Joe asked to share anything like that with the town.
* Steve asked if they do anything like that with the town for the office supplies, Bill said that is harder to coordinate than electric, gas, etc. Heather said there were some challenges, but they can revisit it.
* Mike asked how they were doing compared to last year or previous year with cost per pupil. Bill said we are right were we need to be. You can go to NHdoe website, iplatform and it has comparison of different districts.
* Heather asked if we could discuss all the warrant articles at the meeting in January along with the CBA.

Mike asked if there are any other questions for the school board.

Steve said we as a board need to figure out when we are going to discuss any changes we would like to make for the town and school, let them know and give them time to do so. Heather said the school needs to know by December 15 for any changes.

Meeting Schedule

* December 14, 2022: Town warrant articles, discuss school & town with decisions on changes
* December 20, 2021:
* January 4, 2021: School warrant articles

Steve motions to accept the minutes of the November 16 meeting, seconded by Ben. All in favor, Brian abstained

Mike motions to adjourn, seconded by Jen. Motion adjourned 8:50

Respectfully submitted

Cynthia Hounam