Town of Epping

Budget Committee

December 1, 2021

Call to Order:

The budget committee meeting was called to order at 6:30pm. 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, Marty Dyer, Jen Chapman, Robert Hodgman, Mark Vallone-zoom, John Cody-Town Selectman Rep, Steve Thomas, Cody Belanger arrived at 6:45 and Cynthia Hounam. Mike Lecuyer was not present.

Other attendees:

Heather Clark, Bill Furbush, Christine Vayda, Dave Mylott and Deb Brooks via zoom.

Roll call – Robert Hodgman, Steve Thomas, Jen Chapman, Michael Charkowski, Steve Ozols, John Cody, Marty Dyer, Ben Leavitt, Mark Vallone via zoom, Cody Belanger and Mike Lecuyer are absent.

School Budget Review:

* Dave Mylott said they are here to answer any questions. He thanked the superintendent and the school board as they worked real hard to come up with this budget.
* Bill Furbush wanted to thank the school board and the budget committee. Bill introduced individuals who showed up to answer any questions: John Adams-HS Asst Principal, Sean Meaghar-Band Director, Cathy Zylinski-Special Education, Joe Parzych-Facilities Director and Moss Crutchfield-Food Service Director.
* Bill said the budget is a 2.56% increase. Bill broke down why $1.2 million was returned to the town last year.
	+ $700,000 for federal grants, ESSER grants
	+ $100,000 Elementary Health, guaranteed rates came in lower
	+ Savings in special ed and regular transportation due to covid
	+ $35,000 in workshops
	+ $35,000 in tuition
	+ Savings in salaries for a principal who was out last year
	+ There is a total of close to $809,000 in savings due to covid
* There is an excess of ESSER funds for the next 2 years with restrictions
* Asking for a part time hourly data specialist due to changing times, more requirements for technical needs and meet certain state and federal requirements. Therefore, taking away 3 stipend positions: web master, school messenger and information systems. Anticipates the cost to be around $28,205.
* The other position being asked for is regarding the band and Sean Meaghar will speak on behalf of the position.
	+ He is the band director for grades 4-12 which includes 4th & 5th grade band, middle & middle jazz, high school and high school jazz.
	+ 6th grade band is in 6-8 band models due to covid which is not meeting our students needs.
	+ Need for more staffing to alleviate the scheduling challenges: he has had to cancel elementary school lessons in order to be at a high school pep rally, limited the schedules of the music dept, has not been available to work with high school students for their all state and college prep auditions.
	+ This position will support further growth & development of our overall band program. For half of the contract they will cover the 4th & 5th grade program and the other half they will be taking some general music courses in the middle school and depending on the applicants they will be working with the middle-high or high school electives.
	+ The overall goal is the hope that the change will allow for the growth of our high school program and offer a better marching band program
* $516,000 increase in the budget.
	+ $374,000: Special education tuition, which is driven by the IEP process. This is the largest driver of the increase.
	+ $75,124: Contractual regular transportation
	+ Debt Services: New boilers. $117,017 increase to pay off what is owed
	+ Moved a lot of the benefits to consolidate to one line, supplies consolidated to one line, software re-allocated to building district or department.

Michael Charkowski asked for any questions.

* John asked what the enrollment numbers where, Bill said 18 fewer than last year. Christine said that is based on the numbers we give the state on October 1. Steve Ozols asked if they could guess what the numbers would be next year, Christine said it is hard as it is a moving target
* Cody asked if we have seen a decrease since the school choice came in, Bill said no. Christine said there are only 2 students that qualify. They send verification to the schools and if they qualify it is a round number of $8000, which is an estimate as they could pay more for special education, below reading level or need any other special services.
* Michael said there were significant increases and decreases in the 6-7 grade, is there any trend. Bill said this is normal, he does not see any trends
* Cody asked if they planned on purchasing brand new uniforms for the marching band or buying them from Exeter or UNH, Sean has not put in for a budget request but if he does go new he will go out for bid, but does not expect that expense for the first year.
* Robert asked if they have a class break down, Ben said he does not have that. Bill said he will have that for the committee tomorrow. John asked for a breakdown of each teacher that is shared with a different grade and classroom.
* Robert asked for a breakdown of the dues and a list of each entity they are paid to that makes up the $41,119.
* Mark Vallone said the General fund 21-22 $4,714,000 grant is a huge increase from last, would like to know how that plays out for next year and also explain the increase and how much money comes in 2022.
	+ Bill said that is not ESSER funds it is called SWEPT funds, Christine said it is a one-time payment offset the state tax payers for their state wide property tax and sometimes do a one-time adjustment for adequacy education which is around $3360 per student. Increase this year but may not next year, based on a formula by the state tax, valuation and what you paid. Has nothing to do with grants.
* Mark asked if they have an estimate as to what that number will be, Bill said they are at the mercy of the state and they need to wait until the state gives them the number.
* Robert asked when they would know the number, Christine said they just got that number on October 1 based on enrollment numbers. Bill said that SWEPT fund gave us additional revenue this year.
* Steve said this is good for this budget season ending in June, Bill said with the additional funds and grants he would anticipate a larger than typical return to the tax payers.
* Heather said this is another opportunity to have another reasonable tax rate for next year but will not know the number until the states gives it to us. It does not affect what is in the budget now.
* Michael Charkowski asked if he could get a breakdown down of where the covid grant funds have gone to. Christine does not have the breakdown in the budget, but she has those tracked separately and will get those to the committee.
* Christine said there are some things they cannot be in the budget because they would not be able to use the ESSER funds for (example some of the HVAC project, projectors). Michael Charkowski asked if there was a way to see what the budget would have been have we not had the ESSER funds, Bill said he would get that list.
* Steve Thomas asked if these were the ESSER funds that were applied for in August for $332,000, Christine said they received 3 ESSER grants and 1 CARES
	+ The first allotment was the CARES, that was spent last year for expenses from March-December, ESSER 1 and ESSER 2 totaling $618,766.40. ESSER 3 we have not received yet as it is still in approval process estimated to be $574,000.
* John asked where the loss of revenue was, Christine said she can get that information.
* Steve Ozols asked what the timeline is to spend ESSER 3 funds, Christine said 3 years – 2024. They do not get the money until they expense it.
* Mark asked what the cost per pupil by grade and asked for a list of all the elementary, middle, high school teachers. Christine said in the budget details there is a line “FTE” that gives you the teachers salaries. Bill said he will get you a more details list. John asked to add in this list the student to teacher ratio for grades.
* Cody asked for a breakdown of the costs of special ed. Bill would like know if he would like to see what schools we send them too, other services. Cody said yes. Christine said from line 203-284 under the number 1200 those are all special ed.
* Michael Charkowski asked about other local sources for the revenues, Christine said that is the $998,000 bond, the state requires us to put it in revenue even though we need to pay it back

Food Services:

* John asked if there was money given back for loss revenue, Christine it was money that we lost 2 years ago with the stipulation that it goes back into the food services program per the state. The money needs to be expended by June. John asked if that money can be used to offset losses this year, Bill said yes.

Moss Crutchfield review this line item:

* Seamless summer program option where they supplied free meals for every student in Epping, not guaranteed next year.
* More emphasis on maintenance and with training for the equipment
* Michael Charkowski asked if the increase in elementary salaries was an additional staff, Moss said it was for one additional staff member. Cody asked about volunteers, Moss said they were looking into that.
* John asked about the jump for new equipment, Moss said the kitchens have fallen aside, no ice machine, cooling equipment needs to be repaired and maintenance schedule needs to be in place. John said it would be easier if it was broken out, Christine said the big budget has it broken down, food service line item 2100.
* Marty asked if the $8,000 was expected to continue. Moss said not likely it was just large increase for catch up.
* Moss said they really need the free and reduced applications to benefit the families for free/reduces meals and title 1. If they show the need, they will receive funding. Forms available online and confidential.
* Michael Charkowski asked about the other expense for $8,000, Moss uses that line for PTO purchases, they offset and pay that back.
* Michael Charkowski asked about the food supplies for $5500, Moss said that was mostly aggregated from the higher package and fuel costs. Christine said it actually decreased as it was combined for elementary, middle and high and also reduced.

Special Education:

* Steve Thomas asked about the obligated cost vs. proposed. Christine said it was contractual cost. Steve asked to explain the large jumps, Christine it is the grey area and they cannot cut, which are salary, transportation and special ed transportation.

Kathy Zilinski reviewed this line item:

* Tuition was the largest cost, due to covid quite a few students went out of district.
* Transportation: Steve Ozols asked about the increase in transportation that is in a different section of special transportation, Kathy said that is for both in and out of district.
* John asked for the numbers of special ed students for in and out of district, Bill will get that information.
* Michael Charkowski asked what was driving the increase for tuition/transporation. Kathy said they have an IP team, many students with different disabilities, students coming and going with different needs.
* Steve Thomas asked about the increase in special transportation from $287,743 this year to $404,955 in a couple years. Steve Ozols said it was due to kids needing to be transported out of district, John also said many companies are getting out of the special ed transportation business.
* Michael Charkowski asked if we are on budget with special transportation right now, Kathy said as of right now yes, but we could have on student come in and it will change.
* Steve Ozols asked if there is a point where the state would come in and help. Kathy said there is a formula they do annually and the state will give an entitlement.
* John asked how much is in the special education trust fund, Christine said:
	+ Building and capital reserve trust fund: $162,762
	+ Special Ed capital reserve fund: $203,433.60. The special ed fund is funded $50,000 each year.
* Michael Charkowski asked if the salaries and supply lines are just for special ed, Kathy said yes.
* Michael Charkowski asked about the extended year salaries. Christine used the example if the nurse had to stay an extra 5 days the salary would come out of that line. It should be paid from the salary line and that is part of the clean up she is doing.
* Steve Thomas asked about the Tutor Aid Contract Services, $211,541 this year, expended only $176,392 but budgeting $302,037 for next year. Christine said that is contractual. Kathy said it is dictated by special ed law
* Michael Charkowski asked if 2022-2023 budget was for the students we have now, Kathy said yes.
* Michael Charkowski asked if the increase is supplies was for a need or anticipated inflation. Kathy said it is a little of both.
* Steve Ozols asked what you do if you go over budget, Christine said it is a bottom line budget so we can take it from somewhere else and it gives us a better idea of what to budget for next year.

Michael asked for any other questions.

Facilities: Joe Parzych will review this line item.

* Custodian Health: Steve Thomas asked about the increase, Bill said it was the difference between the family and single plan and whichever plan the employee takes.
* Ground Maintenance: Steve Thomas asked about the increase. Joe said it was because they combined the field maintenance, ground maintenance and playground maintenance into one line.
* Safety Alarms: Steve Thomas it was budgeted for $15,000, ended up being $30,202 and budget for $25,000 going forward. Joe said they combined the Bell & Emergency lights line. Heather said it was $30,202 because of a one-time unexpected expense to replace the bells and emergency lights at the elementary school.
* Water/Sewer: Steve Thomas asked about the increase.
	+ John said he thinks they were estimating because they were not sure based on the new plan.
	+ Heather said the rates went up substantially and it effected the budget.
	+ Christine said there was also a one-time expense, the auditors found it was billed to the incorrect line and should not have been expensed to that lines so the actuals are not true to that line, there is no way to change what happened but going forward we will make sure it is expensed to the correct line.
	+ Steve Ozols asked if we are on track to be around the $40,000 mark, Christine said yes.
* Michael Charkowski asked about the ground maintenance line consolidation, they total $78,500 but being budgeting for $58,5000, are you expecting a $20,000 decrease. Joe said they were looking to hire ground maintenance person but that has not happened and that is the difference. Steve Ozols asked if they were hiring full or part time. Joe said full time.
* HVAC: Steve Thomas asked if that $65,000 was repairs or pending replacement. Joe said it was repairs/maintenance. The PM services alone is around $20,000 plus the yearly upkeep. They do have a contract with Control Technologies.
* Fuel/Propane: Steve Ozols asked if they feel comfortable with those numbers, Bill said they feel safe but they have no historical data and it is the first year with the new boilers so we will have to see.

Michael Charkowski asked for any other questions.

Middle/High School: Principal John Adams will review these lines:

* Michael Charkowski asked being the first year of combing the Middle/High how has that affected the budget in 22-23 vs current. John said the lines are still being kept separate and you will see minimal impact overall.
	+ Heather said they had to keep some lines separate because they have to report them to the state separately.
* Michael Charkowski said that with everything combined we cannot see where things were moved to. Christine said there will be a note next to it stating where it was moved to.
* Team Leaders-Middle: Steve Thomas asked what caused that jump. Bill said it was a stipend renegotiating year, they are reorganizing the leadership team.
* Tuition Vocational: Steve Ozols asked if that line was for SST, Christine said yes. Steve asked if that number was adequate. Bill said they base it off of student interest, if more are interested we will always find a way to make it happen.
* John said with world language it says remove program, did they drop a language or just remove the computer program we are using. Bill said there was a staffing issue at the middle school and the schedules were combined.

Michael Charkowski asked for any other questions. Bill asked if there are any questions, please have them before December 8.

* Steve Thomas asked what is the $35,00o for school board other expense is. Heather said that was the climate and culture survey which is a multi-year plan. It was started a then covid happened so that had to put it on hold and that is why nothing was spent last year.

Motion to adjourn made by Michael Charkowski, seconded by Jen. Motion adjourned 10:30pm

Respectfully submitted:

Cynthia Hounam