

## Amherst School District Ways and Means Committee Meeting

April 6, 2021, 7:00pm (via Zoom)

### In Attendance

From the Ways and Means Committee: Victoria Parisi (Chair), Christine Grayson (Secretary), Kelly Schmidt, Jeff Candito, Samantha Linton, and Marilyn Gibson.

From the Amherst School Board: Beth Kuzsma, Ellen Grudzien

From the SAU 39 Administration: None present

Ms. Parisi recapped the Amherst School Board meeting from April 5<sup>th</sup>. The School Board asked the administration to reduce the proposed budget by \$100k-\$150k. These savings can be realized by shifting certain budgeted items in the FY22 budget to the FY21 (current year) budget. This is possible because the undesignated fund balance for FY 21 is projected to be approximately \$150k. These adjustments cannot be made until the Deliberative Session. Ways and Means anticipates that the total amount of reductions will be close to \$150k.

Ms. Parisi anticipates having the draft of the Ways & Means write-up for the Voter's Guide ready for April 14<sup>th</sup> and will share with members for edits. Additional changes may need to be made following the next ASB meeting and again following the Deliberative.

### Other

No teachers are retiring this year.

Kindergarten enrollment is up for the FY21-22 year, most likely requiring an additional teacher at that level. The ASB meeting revealed that the funding of this position will be provided partially by a grant, and the remaining amount from the savings realized from the health insurance rate being lower than anticipated. If this position is still needed after the FY21-22 school year, it will be included in the default budget.

A few AMS paraprofessionals are retiring. The costs will remain in the budget, since the positions are still needed, and the administration will not know the wages that will be paid to any new hires until they are hired. Ms. Parisi has asked Michele Croteau (SAU 39 Business Administration) to confirm the number of paraprofessionals retiring throughout the district.

The district is currently working to figure out exactly what the emergency Covid funding will cover. Some technology items/issues will qualify but some won't qualify.

The expected reduction of the FY22 technology budget means that AMS won't begin the planned 1:1 student technology plan for next year.

It is not clear to Ways and Means exactly what other areas (besides Technology) could have cuts.

In order to fund the 2<sup>nd</sup> superintendent position, it is believed that funding came from an eliminated SAU level position, combined with other reductions in the SAU budget. The budget amount did not change, but other areas were adjusted down to accommodate the new position. Various members were not pleased that this position was hired at a higher rate than agreed upon at the SAU budget committee level meeting.

There was discussion around the district's higher Cost Per Pupil (CPP) and test results in SAU 39. The Committee would like to have future discussions with the administration on what makes our district "more valuable" than others who have a lower CPP or higher standardized test scores and what is the additional value our students receive.

The general feeling of the Ways and Means Committee regarding the proposed reductions to the FY22 budget was positive. At this time, the vote is still split. Those who support the proposed budget appreciate the

commitment to reduce the budget by \$150k as a result of varied W&M support. Those who do not support cite that the budget increases year over year are high, and question the need for the 2<sup>nd</sup> assistant superintendent and the Curriculum Coordinator positions.

### **Next Meetings**

The next Ways and Means Committee Meeting will be scheduled (tentatively) for April 29th, once the exact dollar of reductions to be made is known.

The Amherst School Board Deliberative Session will be held on May 4th, in-person and via Zoom. In order to participate in the session, one must attend in-person. Safety protocols will be followed.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Grayson