

## Amherst School District Ways and Means Committee Meeting

October 13, 2020, 6:00pm

### In Attendance

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

From the School Board: Tom Gauthier

From the SAU 39 Administration: Michele Croteau (Business Administrator)

Ms. Parisi began the meeting by reminding the group that W&M meetings are public. If any meetings take place jointly with the ASB, it is permissible to have other people in the house while you are participating in the meeting; it just needs to be stated when asked.

Ms. Parisi asked Ms. Schmidt to start a list of feedback and changes W&M would like to discuss with administration at the end of this year's budget process. Ms. Schmidt agreed to do this.

### **Feedback**

- There have been good changes to the process; the Table of Contents is helpful.
- It is helpful to have easy access to Superintendent Steel's budget presentation.
- Ms. Croteau added additional reports and links to the Table of Contents
- The links to the 5 year curriculum and 5 year assessment plans no longer work; Ms. Croteau will contact Christine Landwehrle (Assistant Superintendent) to see why.
- Traversing through the numbers is easy.
- Ms. Parisi noted that the budget is large and has a significant increase. Hard questions do need to be asked, but nothing disrespectful to the board, administration, and staff is ever meant by asking these questions.

The next steps are Subcommittee meetings, which begin this week. If anyone still needs a zoom link, contact Sue Leger at the SAU. At each meeting, there will be one or two W&M members, one or two school board members, the administrator in charge of that particular budget area, and possibly Ms. Croteau. It is the responsibility of the W&M members at each meeting to take notes to share with the rest of the committee. These are not minutes and will not be posted on the SAU site. W&M members should also share any summaries, plans, or goals that are discussed during the meeting.

### **Discussion on the Default Budget Calculation**

Ms. Schmidt commented that W&M members should keep in mind that, although the increase for the FY22 budget is 8.2%, it is important to also look at the difference between the default calculation and the proposed budget. This year, the proposed budget is \$968,347 over the default, which is a 3.4% increase.

Ms. Croteau gave an overview of how the default budget is calculated. The default is not the minimum amount needed to run the school district. It is defined by RSA. Contractually obligated items (such as Collective Bargaining Agreements) and items required by law (such as some transportation costs) are added to the calculation. Other one-time items (such as the FY21 A&E Study Fees) are subtracted. She

is checking on how the UV robots (in this year's proposed budget) will be treated going forward. The district intends to continue to lease them after the FY22 fiscal year.

### **Discussion on the FY20 Undesignated Fund Balance Spending**

Ms. Croteau will also add the document (to the Table of Contents) that shows how the \$1.5 million in Undesignated Fund Balance (approved by the ASB and NHDOE) has been/will be spent. These costs are over and above expenditures in the FY21 approved budget. She indicated that there will not be any funds left over from this. All funds used must be used for designated Covid-related expenditures. These include, but are not limited to, PPE and temporary labor costs. All expenditure accounts related to this are tagged with a project code of "030220" in their account number. These costs only appear in the current (FY21) budget. They are not in the default, nor are they budgeted in FY22. The FY22 budget was developed with the assumption that the district will have a more "typical" school year at that time. If it becomes necessary for the district to spend additional funds for Covid-related items, in FY21 or FY22, those funds will have to come from the regular operating budget. Tax rates will show that \$1.5 million was earmarked for Covid-related expenses, and not available to be returned to taxpayers.

### **Other Items Discussed**

- Negotiations for the Amherst Education Association (AEA) contract will begin next year and take effect in FY23. The contract is in year 4 of 4 (in FY21).
- The Amherst Student Support Association (ASSA) contract is now in year 4 of 5 (in FY21).
- Tuition agreements are still being negotiated.
- The SAU budget is not yet finalized. There is a placeholder amount in the FY22 budget for now.
- Retirements are not yet determined. Notifications are due on December 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Health insurance rates are up 6.3% for FY22. They were budgeted at 10% and will be reduced in the budget. Dental insurance rates did not increase.
- The bus contract is still a work in progress.
- There is always a possibility that the Special Services budget could increase. It depends on the amount of students requiring services (such as new enrollment or changes in service level of current students).
- The possibility of the ASB including a warrant article for facility improvements was discussed, and the group should stay up to date on that process through ASB meetings and SAU39 Joint Facilities Advisory Committee meetings.
- Mr. Gauthier mentioned that the ASB is discussing adding a Facilities Capital Reserve Fund (CRF) Warrant Article in the amount of \$450,000 to the ballot. According to Ms. Croteau, the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) calls for a total of \$636,000 in funding this year from the ASD and the Souhegan Cooperative School District (SCSD). The ASD portion of this is \$500,000, and the SCSD portion is \$136,000.

### **Going Forward**

Mr. Gauthier asked that the administration provide a priority list of items in the budget. It was provided last year, and the distinction between "priority" and "nice-to-have" items was helpful for the board in making decisions. W&M agreed with this assessment.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Christine Grayson