

Amherst School District Ways and Means Committee Meeting

November 2, 2020, 6:00pm (via Zoom)

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 Amherst School Board: Tom Gauthier

From the SAU 39 Administration: None

Discussions

During a discussion about negative comments posted on social media regarding the school budgets, Ms. Parisi reminded the Committee that whenever one of us is speaking outside of a W&M meeting, we are speaking as an individual, not for the Committee. All W&M meetings are open and accessible. They are public, and meeting times are posted on the SAU 39 website. Minutes from these meetings are posted in a timely manner to the SAU 39 website.

The Committee reviewed the slides Ms. Parisi put together for the presentation at the 11/09/20 ASB Meeting. There was a consensus amongst Committee members that the budget is too high, and that the board/administration priorities are not clear. The Committee would like to see the proposed increase be very close to or flat to the default budget.

Ms. Parisi asked the Committee if there are specific items we support/don't support. The context considers the entirety of what could possibly be presented to voters in March (operating budget, CRF warrant articles, and a facilities warrant article). The following items were discussed:

- Wait on hiring new teachers
- Purchasing student laptops if critically necessary, but think about waiting on the full technology plan for this year
- Wait on purchasing non-essential things like band instruments and chairs

In general, the thought was to keep the budget flat, or very close to flat. A suggestion was made that a 1% increase over default might be acceptable, and still give voters a choice.

Outstanding Questions/Items

- Mr. Candito's question regarding the cost of custodial labor on the Reopening Request spreadsheet still stands. The cost is listed at \$75,000 per person. Is this the cost the district is paying under the temporary employment contract, or the estimate of how much it would cost to hire each FTE employee? Mr. Gauthier will review the spreadsheet and get back to the Committee.
- Mr. Candito asked if the district considers saving money on benefits by hiring part-time vs. full-time employees.
- The Committee thanks Superintendent Steel for his reply regarding non-CBA raises and how they are handled in a default budget year. However, the question was meant to be a simpler one. The question is: "In FY20, did non-CBA employees get raises? If yes, how much (in total)?" Mr. Gauthier will follow up on this with Superintendent Steel.

Mr. Gauthier clarified the board's position on the proposed UV robots. Their decision is that the administration can, in fact, procure the robots. The board does not support specifically budgeting for them though. If the administration decides to sign the contracts for the 3 robots, they will have to find the money elsewhere in the budget.

Ms. Schmidt asked if the ASB Budget Workshop Meeting recordings and minutes can be posted to be viewed after-the fact. Mr. Gauthier will follow up on this.

The next Amherst School Board Budget Workshop is November 4, 2020 at 6:00pm.

The next Amherst School Board Meeting is November 9, 2020 at 6:00pm. Ms. Parisi will present the W&M opinions and recommendations.

The next joint meeting between ASB and W&M is on November 16, 2020 at 6:00pm.

There is an Amherst School Board Meeting on December 14, 2020, where the board is expected to vote on the budget.

There is a Ways and Means Committee Meeting of December 15, where the Committee is expected to vote on supporting/not supporting the ASB's budget.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Grayson