

Amherst Ways & Means Committee Meeting

Wednesday, November 3, 2021, 7pm at Johnson Room, Amherst Town Library

In attendance: Christine Grayson (W&M), Kelly Schmidt (W&M), via Zoom - Marilyn Gibson (W&M), Samantha Linton (W&M) Jeff Candito (W&M), Beth Kuzsma (ASB)

Chair Kelly Schmidt opened the meeting by recognizing Christine Grayson to speak regarding public perception on Ways & Means Committee members in the community. Ms. Grayson spoke to how we are appointed to this committee, and as such, we are to remain impartial when communicating about the Boards and its members. This is prudent when using social media such as Facebook, Twitter, etc. Ms. Linton agreed and stated she felt it was OK to speak opinions on personal pages, but when on public forum, it is important for the optics of the Board to remain impartial.

Chair Schmidt then did a quick recap of the last 2 meetings, and opened discussion about the RSA for Town and School Entities. There has been concern amongst the Ways & Means Committee it has not received much guidance on its role within the School District. It has been asked if Members of the Committee were allowed to ask for more information, request files/documents from the School Board or ASD Moderator. Through the RSA, it is clear that the Committee is simply an advisory and could be dissolved at any time. Conversation ensued on how the Committee can continue to be a value to the ASD/SAU Community and still maintain its due diligence in evaluating the budget.

Discussions took place on regarding the ASD Workshop. Some of the discussion items included the following:

- Technology – laptop cases are pulled from the FY23 Budget. New technology/laptop program will recommend that cases be purchased as part of the technology fee. Current students (grades 6-8) will keep their cases. Additionally, new program will include warranties on all laptops purchased.
- The FY23 budget decrease is approximately \$387K – this is due to salary corrections, changes in health care and dental insurance values. Exact % is unknown and is listed on the proposed changes tab of the Budget worksheet, but not yet updated in the overall budget
- Maintenance – Increase in FY23 budget by 1K for heating costs – this is due to the rate increase seen globally.
- Capital reserve Fund (CRF) –has not been discussed yet (facilities) – has been suggested 650K again this year – has not been discussed or finalized. One outstanding Bond still exists from the renovation of AMS – approximately 195K remaining with 41K due for interest.
- Arts Domain teacher – this will be a new position added to the SAU and shared with ASD. This position would be similar to a department chair – in addition to teaching classes, this position would also be responsible for integrating the Arts programs throughout the SAU/ASD and evaluating teachers. SAU would contribute to .7, ASD .25 and MV .5. This has not been finalized.

Other Items:

No sit to stand desks in FY23 budget year.

Beth Kuzma gave the committee a recap of the 11/2 workshop. The focus was primarily on Clark/Wilkins. FY23 budget includes pilot program for new math curriculum. Increase in budget here due to telephones not being in previous year budgets, has been added to FY23.

Discussion on how to make Specials budgeting more equitable – fixed number per student in order to make it easier for budgeting and what is provided for students

Further discussion about Arts Domain leader– hopefully it would eventually include CW. No really Arts program at the elementary level. Primary focus right now is performing arts (strings, bands etc), then expand to theater etc, then finally to visual arts. Arts Domain Leader has not been approved – still under discussion. Domain leader will be a true teacher at Souhegan. W&M concern that this will grow exponentially over the years, will cause increase in fees.

Special ed assistant director has been approved.

Kelly needs to make sure W&M are on right track on regarding the budget. Overall impression is that the FY23 budget was initially too high, strong desire by the Committee to have it be at or below default.

Major concerns top heavy at the administration and continued growth. Feel good about line items that have been corrected.

Special services good choice/line items that are needed. Band furniture – great explanation – they need to be replaced so this is great part of FFE. Bethany's explanation of trying to fit things in to get things replaced is a great way to go.

Overall great job Roger with Facilities. A lot of trust in his work.

Looking forward to finalizing opinion and vote on Budget. Next meeting is scheduled for 11/19 at the Brick School.

Respectfully submitted:

Samantha A Linton

11/18/2021