

## Amherst Ways & Means Committee Meeting

Tuesday, October 19, 2021, 6:30pm at the Brick School

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

Chair Kelly Schmidt opened the meeting by discussing our roles as Ways & Means Committee members. Members are representative of the town residents/taxpayers. A member's personal vote is not necessarily the same as the vote as a member's Ways & Means vote. Part of the Committee's responsibility is to ensure that what is in the budget is presented clearly, is in the best interest of the town/taxpayers, and help catch errors. Not all members agreed that a member's personal vote doesn't need to be the same as their Ways & Means vote.

Members of the Committee agreed that more guidance is needed. There hasn't been any guidance or instructions shared from the ASD Moderator Nate Jensen, who is responsible for appointing Committee members. Kelly will check in with Superintendent Adam Steel and the Souhegan Advisory Finance Committee to see if either are aware of any information available.

Discussions took place on the Subcommittees that have already met. Some of the discussion items included the following:

- Food Service – The FY23 budget estimates were made assuming that there will not be federal funding available. Administration thinks that this budget will be flat or positive for FY23. As a side note, the Food Service budget is supposed to be fully self-supported.
- Technology – Technology has a 5-year replacement plan that has been frequently unfunded or underfunded, and therefore there are more replacement computers budgeted this year. There is no market for our old/used technology to be sold. Concerns were raised regarding the use of technology to keep students from socializing, and masks during lunch. It was determined these weren't budget-related topics, and that this would be a topic for anyone concerned to discuss with our Superintendent. Members of the Subcommittee did request a list of what software/licenses the district owns, and the usage rate of each one. Assistant Superintendent Christine Landwerle will provide this information.
- Clark-Wilkins – The discussion centered around laptop rations for students, and the new math curriculum, that has a large one-time expense in the FY23 budget.
- AMS – The discussion centered around the furniture items in the budget, particularly standing desks and ergonomic band chairs. These items are expensive, and the Committee discussed whether or not they are critical items. Also up for discussion for the same reason were the new band instruments in the budget.
- Curriculum – The Subcommittee noted that there is approximately \$70,000 budgeted curriculum, not including Professional Development. Other curriculum-related topics were also discussed as part of Technology, CW, and AMS.

Other items:

- There will be a 2.0 version of the budget released soon, that will account for errors, omissions, and correction (such as the correct health insurance rates that have since been received).
- The Q&A tab of the budget worksheet has been working well, and turn-around time has been quick.
- The Committee would like to see the priorities of the budget to be clearer.
- Kelly asked the Committee members to each put together a list of budget line items (including the budget account numbers) that they feel would be possible recommendations to reduce/cut. Please send them to Kelly, and she will combine them into one list.

Submitted by Christine Grayson

## Committee Communications prior to 10/19:

Kelly Schmidt

Thu, Oct 14, 5:30  
PM

to Christine Grayson, Marilyn Gibson, Jeff Candito, Greg Fritz, Samantha Linton

All,

There were several items of note in relation to the budget discussed in the SAU Meeting last night. I wrote up a few notes.

\*\*\*\*Please do not reply all to this email with your feedback. We need to be cautious about anything that could be considered a non-noticed meeting under the right to know laws. You're welcome to respond just to me or hold thoughts until our first meeting. \*\*\*\*\*

\*\*MVSD and ASD charged back to Souhegan\*\* -- This impacts the portion of the SAU budget that gets allocated to the ASD Budget. While the intent is to repurpose an existing position, it is not an existing position that ASD currently pays for. They have not yet put together details on how costs would be allocated.

Additionally, if you listen to the answers to questions asked, Adam states that there will likely be a change in salary for that position and they are hoping that it will be neutral in terms of budgeting from cuts in other places. There was not any information stated about what the suggested cuts would be. It was also stated that the "minimal budget impact" refers to this budget not future ones. There was an acknowledgement that future budgets will likely see increases as a new director would ask for more supplies, etc. He stated the plan is for other Domain leaders to bridge within our district as well, so likely more positions will take this approach in future budgets too.

Amy presented the SAU level budget 2:27:00 though 2:53:00. 8.3% increase. \$225,000 over FY22 adopted budget with the main driver being staffing. Assistant director for student services is currently in the ASD budget with portions of cost billed to MV and Souhegan. This is a re-allocation and reverses a previous move in the other direction based on historical use. Adding an administrative support position for business office of .5 to support business administrator. (\$38,500). Adam hopes this will help with the attrition issue they have had with BAs. Reduction of .2 director of operations- budgeted but not filled for FY22. Amy is to figure out what portion of % increase comes from the reallocated position and what each district has been paying to ASD for use. Several board members were interested in being able to calculate the true change in cost to their particular budgets.

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Marilyn Gibson <mgibson@sau39.org>

Thu, Oct 14, 9:23  
PM

To Kelly Schmidt

Hi Kelly,

I appreciate your email,

Since you asked that we not share our thoughts regarding any SAU information for fear of non-noticed meeting.

I did look into the SAU meeting and there are a few concerns.

1) A performing Arts Director and Administrator - as precipitated by Mike B. - brings a conclusion that more money will be needed to support the program. While Steel states "this focus will not require budgetary investment, but will require budgetary adjustments." Well we all know that initially, no budgetary investment, but as always when introducing a new program, it will require more money in order for its sustainability. As it appears the position is being implemented this year. Therefore, any expenses to be paid out for the FY 23 school year will not be covered? (Or will Steel perform his magic trick and move money around for the special interest this garners?)

2) I do not see instituting the position as being equitable to other fields of study, when the goal of the district is to meet the educational needs of all its students. Remember Steel's goal is an educational plan for every student. (How many students are transported out of district to attend to their brown collar needs, plumbing, welding, cooking, construction, etc.) What happened to his presentation of a military presence, such as cadets on campus?

3) I recommend that every member of the community be advised about Policy BEDH - Public comment...

I might have missed it, was there an attachment with the agenda for the SAU budget FY23?

I represent the longtime residents of the community and year after year the budget goes up. With the warrant article for renovations to AMS, and a new C?W building, it would serve the entire community, if the budget was scaled back.

Marilyn

DRAFT