

TOWN OF EPSOM
BUDGET COMMITTEE
DECEMBER 10, 2020

Present: Marylou LaFleur-Keane, Chairman; Joni Kitson, Vice Chairman; Gary Kitson, Water District Representative; Virginia Drew, Selectmen's Representative; Meadow Wysocki; Linda Hodgdon; Joy Sheehan; Penny Graham; Mary Frambach; Joyce Heck; Len Gilman; Brian O'Sullivan, School Board Representative

Not in Attendance:

Other Attendees: Amber Wheeler; Patrick Connors; Karen Guercia

Marylou opened the meeting at 6:30 PM.

SCHOOL BUDGET

Ms. Wheeler explained the budget coloring and reviewed the budget for the Committee.

Line 20 – Contracted Services – This line is used for ELL Services and is a required expense.

Line 23 Maintenance Agreements – This line was increased as software was shifted from another line.

For students Line 30 – Tuition to Other Districts – This line is for the tuition for students attending Pembroke Academy. It is based on an anticipated enrollment and also plans for a tuition increase.

Virginia asked why the tuition line was increasing. Amber noted that there was a lot of movement of students. The School Board estimated the highest risk of increased number of students and added 5 additional students.

Brian noted the Board was concerned additional students that might show up. Marylou asked why the tuition increase; Amber noted they had to estimate Pembroke Academy expenses and divide by the number of students. She also has to take into account the tuition increases of the Pembroke Academy budget.

Mr. Connors noted the tuition is an estimate. Amber discussed how she reconciles the budget at the end of the school year.

Line 33/34 – Teaching Supplies/General Supplies – An increase in the cost of supplies

is anticipated.

Line 44 - Supplies Reading –This line was increased due to remote learning.

Marylou asked if there would be an increase in students who require additional support, there may be.

Line 96 –Teacher Salaries - The increase is due to contractual increases.

Line 97 – Aide Salaries – There have been 3 additional paraprofessionals added to the budget.

Line 103 - Contracted Services – This line has increased and is used for special education students.

Line 108 – Summer Special Placements – this line was increased due to the number of students that may require additional services.

Line 109 – Special Placements – This line was decreased due to less students.

Line 126 – Co-Curricular Salaries – The increase is contractual.

Line 135 – Guidance Salaries – The increase is contractual.

Line 136 – Guidance Supplies – This line is increased due to the current situations.

Line 143 – SPED Diagnostic - The increase is based on student needs.

Line 144 – Assessment - This line is reduced as some of the costs were moved to another line.

Line 151 – Nurse Salary – The increase is contractual.

Line 153 – Medical Supplies – The funding has been increased for purchasing PPE.

Line 184 – Inservice Training - A math consultant was added with this to be the 3rd year they are being used. This year the training will be virtual.

Line 191 – Librarian Salary – The increase is contractual.

Line 217 – Secretary Salary – This line is for the School Board Secretary and has been increased.

Line 243 - Auditors – The increase is due to a change in auditing firms to Plodzik and Sanderson. The previous firm was behind in the audits and was unable to catch up. The new firm indicated they would be able to complete all the auditing. The fee schedule is

different with a new auditor also.

Line 253 - SAU #53 – Ms. Wheeler indicated this cost is determined using population and town assessments.

Linda asked about these expenses; MS Wheler discussed the increases in salaries, and that the SAU audit is more expensive due to it being a single audit.

Linda asked about the increase in the Superintendent salary increase; it is contractual.

Line 259 - Principal Salary – The increase is contractual.

Line 267 – Secretary Salaries – These salaries were increased.

Ms. Wheeler discussed that the retirement rates and health insurance costs have increased.

Ms. Wheeler noted both superintendent and her position were up for contract renewals.

Joy asked about the health insurance increase. Amber discussed the increases. Mr. Connors noted the plans have changed over time with use of higher deductible plans with the town paying less toward the insurance costs.

Line 273-274 – Tech Coordinator Salary/Tech Support Salary - The School Board voted to increase these lines.

Line 279 – Equip Repairs/Main Contracts – The costs will be increasing.

Line 281 – Maintenance Contracts – Software costs were shifted to different areas of the budget.

Line 285 - Communications – This line was increased due to Internet band width increase that cost more.

Line 289 – Administrative Travel – This increase is contractual.

Line 308/309 - Water – A reduction in utilities (water) costs is anticipated.

Line 311 – Consolidated Communications est. avg monthly rate \$491.60.

Line 312 - Supplies - The Board added \$15,000 for cleaning supplies due to COVID. Mr. Connors noted they clean the bathrooms at least twice a day and at night. Ms. Wheeler noted the costs are also increasing for supplies.

Line 314/315 – Electricity/Propane – Reductions in these costs are anticipated.

Line 325 – Liability Insurance – A reduction is expected in this line.

Line 345-352 – Pupil Transportation – Busing costs may increase as the contract is going out to bid next year.

Ms. Wheeler noted she is negotiating for a reduction for this year's cost due to less bus usage.

Line 355-356 - Summer Transportation/Special Ed Transportation – A reduction is anticipated in these lines.

Line 371 – 386 – Insurance/Retirement, etc. – Ms. Wheeler noted there are insurance increases and also employees may have changed plans.

Joy asked about dental costs; Ms. Wheeler noted it remained the same.

The other costs will be variable due to contractual obligations. Retirement costs will be increasing.

Line 401- Transfer to Food Service – This line was increased as a reduction in revenue is expected.

Line 411 – Allocation to Charter Schools – Two additional students will be attending PACE Academy next year.

Line 421 – Anticipated Fund II Grants – A grant is anticipated.

Line 423 – Fund IV Food Service – This line includes the overall budget amount. Marylou asked if reimbursement would be received. Ms. Wheeler noted there will be but she did not know the amount.

Penny asked the number of teachers to be retiring in June. Mr. Connors noted there would be one in 2022. Mr. Connors noted the classroom numbers and what they may have to do in the future for class sizes. The class size was discussed with and without COVID.

Len noted that in the spring another gentleman indicated the bus company did a fuel credit.

Ms. Wheeler noted they did a credit for fuel. Ms. Wheeler noted that the company only charges for the buses used. She is working with the company continually. Len noted it was a contract and thought it was wrong to negotiate for fuel cost. He thought if the bus company could not carry out the contract due to lack of drivers was another issue. He did not believe they should have been asked for a fuel reduction cost because if the cost of fuel increases then our costs should not increase. Ms. Wheeler agreed, she had the discussion with the bus company because she was asked to do it.

Len noted if they cannot get drivers; he thinks it is their problem.

Brian noted he would bring Len's point back to the Board. Len noted that it is his opinion only.

Len asked the percentage of increase in the overall budget. Ms. Wheeler noted 4.44% or \$ 52,808.00. Ms. Wheeler noted most of the increases were contractual expenses, tuition, special ed, ELL and Food Service.

Virginia noted that there has been a lot of work on the budget. She is concerned that we are always overbudgeted in the high school tuition line. She would like to have them look at the 5 additional students.

Linda asked the number of high school students asking the number in past years. It was discussed.

Virginia discussed the number of students overbudgeted for in the past years. She would like the budget to pass.

Linda discussed the number of students. It was noted this year's 8th grade class is larger than last years. Len noted that due to financial hardship there are students that might go to a private school but now they would be attending Pembroke Academy. He is concerned if we changed it; it could be more of a problem than it is now.

Marylou suggested it be thought about and discussed in January.

Marylou asked about the Warrant Articles. Brian will let her know after the next School Board meeting.

Minutes of December 3, 2020

The minutes of December 3, 2020 were reviewed and amended.

Meadow motioned to approve the minutes of December 3, 2020 as amended, Len seconded the motion. The motion passed with one abstention.

Marylou wanted to add Linda's questions that she received responses to added to the minutes. Betsy noted that she will add to the end of the minutes.

Marylou asked if there were questions for the Welfare Director. Meadow wanted to know the amount to be spent until the end of the year. Marylou wanted to know if there were changes due to COVID. Len noted we ask questions as she was present.

Virginia noted she had met with the Selectmen. Mrs. Hickey noted there were more requests for rent and she does adjust lines as needed.

Marylou noted she had spoken to Len about the Library. Marylou went over the concerns Len and she had.

Len wanted to know if the Conservation Commission planned to purchase any land in 2021 and the balance in their checking account. Also, the 2021 status for easements. Gary wanted to ask about the mapping.

Joni asked if Conservation had purchased the Zwesper property. Virginia indicated no; they are looking at the Barton property. Virginia noted the Selectmen are also trying to obtain information from them. Joy indicated there are monthly Zoom meetings. Other questions were also discussed.

The dates of the monthly meetings since September were discussed. Virginia asked if there were other properties discussed other than the Barton property.

Marylou noted she has a budget for BCEP but was not able to print it. Penny noted she has not gotten her appointment papers. She has received an e-mail for a Zoom meeting for the BCEP Public Hearing on the budget. She noted that only 6 people are allowed at the meeting for the Public Hearing. She noted she did not want to attend by Zoom. Virginia noted the meeting should be held at a school or other larger venue. It was discussed the notice was for a public hearing. Len noted that was the date for the public hearing. Virginia thought if they had given notice it would be via Zoom asking people to contact them for the information. The issues were discussed. Marylou will contact Hugh.

Virginia asked if anyone could set up a Zoom meeting. It was discussed.

The BCEP representatives and their budget committee was further discussed. They never use a budget committee. Meadow noted they are not being accountable to the bylaws. Len noted there should be one budget committee member, one representative and an alternative. Len noted there are four town who are doing it wrong. Len thinks someone needs to get to the BCEP.

Meadow motioned to adjourn; Joy seconded the motion. The motion passed. Marylou adjourned the meeting at 8:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Betsy Bosiak
Recording Secretary