Budget Committee Meeting Minutes

01-06-21

Attending:

Donna Duclos

Mary Levesque

Todd Goings

Jim Hanson

Jim Hersey

Adam Jones

Molly Morgan

Carla Levesque Recording Secretary

Called to order at 6pm.

Jim Hanson read the right to know checklist.

July 4th Celebration Doug Philips presenting.

Last year’s celebration was cancelled due to the pandemic. Money paid to fireworks company in 2019 for 2020 celebration (5,000) rolled over to 2021. Additional deposit of money (5,000) from 2020 budget has been made. Money not spent in 2020 (4,000) has been encumbered for 2021. 2020 budget was $10,000 minus $4,000 equals $6,000. The July 4th celebration committee is asking for $10,000 for 2021 requardless to make the celebration extra special. Mary Anne Levesque noted that the projected mass vaccination of the public is fall of 2021 and there is no certainty that the 2021 celebration will not be cancelled. Jim Hersey asked if the celebration is cancelled would the funds be returned. Todd Goings said that in the event of cancellation the funds would likely be encumbered for 2022.

AEMS Budget Adam Jones presenting assisted by

 Dennis Dobe Principle

 Hillary Denoncourt

 Mark McLean

There are three big movers in this year’s budget that the School Board has not control over:

High School tuition represents 94% of this year’s total increase.

Mandatory retirement and benefits required by state.

Increases due to collective bargaining agreement.

The net increase in budget is 3.2% with the non-mandatory portion being 2.3%.

Jim Hersey asked if all the high school students will attend Merrimack Valley. The students anticipated to go elsewhere were factored into the budget.

Jim Hanson asked if there is a default budget. Mark Mclean answered No, AMES does not fall into that model.

The school board proposed to reduce 1 teaching position to save $45,000. Other resources can be used to compensate and maintain quality education. Jim Hersey noted that last year this was reversed at Town Meeting. He suggested a presentation by the School Board to educate the voters about how this would work.

There are 238 students with 16 graduating leaving 222 for 2021. Anticipate 210 students attending AEMS in 2021. The school does not have a fulltime substitute teacher but needs one. Class size is about 15.

Increase in spending on special needs mandated by state. Jim Hersey asked if some spending can be reimbursed by Medicaid.

A percentage is reimbursable.

Molly Morgan suggested creating a program for gifted students.

Increase in retirement costs because State stopped paying part of retirements in 2010. The state has down shifted these costs.

School currently has a Plant Manager and 1 full time custodian. In 2021 intend to add part time custodian.

Line 245 is up to upgrade internet and broadband.

Line 2620 is down $11,000 due to prebuy of oil.

Line 272 special education transportation is down $60,000.

Line 4200 is up $1,500 for site improvements for security surveillance and cameras.

Line 5120 decreased due to less intreat on bond.

Line 5221 increased. In years past had to add money therefore increasing request.

Line 287 is down $30,000. Money put aside for boiler out of operating budget in past years. Not in this budget this year because asking for this money in a warrant article. Draft warrant available before public meeting.

Revenue is down. The State is cutting back. People are not signing up for aide.

Todd Goings stated that the condition of the town’s infostructure is declining due to keeping up with the school budget.

Jim Hanson asked how the public is going to be involved in the public hearing? Todd Goings noted that the public seldom shows up for the public hearing.

The $90,000 increase in the collective bargaining contract is still a $90,000 increase regardless of weather it is part of the operating budget or a warrant article.

It was noted that there was not a full-time substitute teacher in 2020 and perhaps the school could do without one in 2021. Donna Duclos said a substitute is needed.

Mary Anne Levesque moved to accept minutes of last meeting. Todd Goings seconded.

Roll call vote as follows:

Mary Anne Levesque Aye

Todd Goings Aye

Donna Duclos Aye

Jim Hersey Aye

Jim Hanson Aye

Motion carried.

Jim Hanson asked if the Town Meeting would be postponed this year. Todd Goings said the town is waiting on the state.

Meeting adjourned at 8:34 pm.

Respectfully submitted by

Carla Levesque Recording Secretary