

Budget Committee Meeting
Wednesday, April 3, 2024
4:00 p.m., Hampden Academy - Library

Attendees: Committee members Jessica Barnes, Allan Gordon, Stacey Haskell, John Holmes, Will Seavey, Superintendent Raymond, Trish Hayes, District Accountant, Greg Im, Attorney from Drummond Woodsum. Town representatives: Cindy Grant, Casey Ashley, Eric Jarvi
Others: Barry Terrill, Jennifer Nickerson, Bill Booth, Nate Savage, and Brittany Layman

Budget Chair Will Seavey opened the meeting at 4:00 p.m.

Superintendent Raymond introduced the articles that will be covered during this meeting. Article 4 – Other Instruction, Article 5 – Student and Staff Support, and Article 9 – Maintenance.

Superintendent Raymond introduced Barry Terrill, Athletic Director, who provided an overview of the athletics portion of Article 4. Mr. Terrill is happy to be here to speak on behalf of the athletic programs at RSU 22.

- Participants at Hampden Academy: spring sports 244, winter sports 257, and fall sports 283
- Participants at Reeds Brook Middle School: spring sports 119, winter sports 169, fall sports 172
- Participants at Samuel L. Middle School: spring sports 71, winter sports 106, fall sports 76

One of the highlights this year was the elimination of sports participation fees. Since the elimination of participation fees, there has been increased participation in sports. 58 participant increase overall from last school year. 33 participant increase in winter sports this year versus last year. 25 participant increase in spring sports this year versus last year. Mr. Terrill believes this is in direct correlation to the elimination of the participation fee.

New programs are thriving at RSU 22.

- Hampden Academy volleyball is established with 47 players this fall
- Middle school program had nearly 70 students signed up
- Increase in swim team co-op with Brewer HS
- 14 swimmers this year
- Coaching and swim facilities were excellent according to the students
- 28 students registered to play in Unified Basketball program
- Boys LaCrosse – 37 players signed up for this spring
- Girls LaCrosse will participate in first varsity season – 18 signed up
- Co-op with Brewer and Hermon HS add 5 more players

HA Boosters have been outstanding in their support. 1/3 of the cost of uniforms, varsity team awards, and help with any extra equipment costs are supplied by the Boosters. Slight increase in middle school football equipment will occur in FY25. Middle school football is expected to have 30 players.

Middle school stipend added for volleyball, support a first team volleyball coaching position, purchase some netting at the middle school for volleyball, Unified basketball coach, JV boys LaCrosse coach, JV boys LaCrosse coach at Hampden Academy. Mr. Terrill noted the high use of the track by the community members. He would like to see the track resurfaced at some time in the near future. Long term ideas – potential need for a new softball stadium.

Superintendent Raymond addressed the Co-Curricular portion of the budget which is very similar to the extra-curricular budget outline. The bulk of the increase deals with stipends which are currently in negotiations with the teacher's union representatives.

Article 5 - Staff & Student Support

Superintendent Raymond explained that Article 5 contains individuals and positions –information technology, nursing, wellness, curriculum, counseling, and library. Two new positions are included in this article for FY25 – 504 coordinators at the elementary and secondary levels. Growing number of students have been identified for 504 needs. Timelines are attached to the 504 deadlines. One coordinator would be at the K-8 level and one at the 9-12 level. The in-school therapy provided by Acadia will continue in FY25.

Brittany Layman spoke about school nurses. School nurses also manage 504 plans. Ms. Layman spoke of the need to add two new nurses this year to replace one that is retiring and one will be leaving in April for another position. Nurse staffing levels remain the same as in the past. Ms. Layman will be at Reeds Brook Middle School for four hours a week. The Health Aid in Winterport has been valuable. The nursing supplies budget has increased only slightly due to product price increases.

Jennifer Nickerson spoke about the curriculum, assessment, and instruction segment of Article 5 which is her responsibility. Grant award of \$71,000 will allow us to purchase reading and writing curriculum. Excited about K-2 writing materials which will be purchased for \$20,000. Title II funds are changing and anyone who is not building based cannot use Title funds for Professional Development. Therefore, there is a slight increase in Professional Development to allow Ms. Nickerson to participate in necessary training. PREP membership is included as well as other dues. Teacher evaluation tool is included. Unified Classroom Curriculum Instruction (UCCI) will be purchased which is needed to meet the strategic plan deadline of curriculum audit. This program works through PowerSchool and will allow consistency district-wide. Student assessment – the state requires testing grades 3-8 and 10th graders - NWEA fees and Early Literacy screener are used for these purposes. New - \$500 report process for SWIS (behavior). Professional Development for student assessment is not often used. Title funds, which have helped support these efforts in the past, are tied up with the federal budget process and may be reduced next year. Supplies in assessment are reduced by \$5,000. Homework clubs at Reeds Brook and Wagner are included for FY25. Software for staff is included in curriculum or technology. Improvement of Instruction – budgeted for three people from each school to attend a conference and six people at Hampden Academy because of the larger staff.

Nate Savage, Technology Director, spoke to the technology portion of the article. Information Technology supports seven buildings and the central office. Teachers, ed techs, administrators, head custodians, and students are supported by this department. Grades 7-8-9 laptop refresh is planned for FY25 with MLTI covering \$110,000 through reimbursement, projectors project cost is around \$120,000 at Weatherbee, McGraw, and a portion of Hampden Academy.

Other Items included in his budget:

- Wagner gym sound system needs to be replaced
- Reeds Brook café sound system
- 2 carts at Weatherbee are at end of life
- intercom systems at Weatherbee and McGraw
- \$68,000 in software includes Securely, ADS, Classroom, Symquest printer software, and JAMF which allows pushing out software to multiple units at once.

Superintendent Raymond spoke to the changes in technology and the need to keep up in order to protect our students as well as provide an education.

The Guidance Dues & Fees proposal of an increase of \$28,665 is requested to pay all student fees for AP testing.

FY26 staff devices \$350-400,000, \$120,000 to finish the projector project and in FY27 Pre-K -2 iPad devices \$245,000 and in FY28 \$270,000 for a grades 3-6 Chromebook refresh.

Superintendent Raymond complimented the presenters. They are truly fiscally responsible for their department, and the district, while also supplying the best products for the students and staff. The bulk of guidance lies in salaries, benefits, and the proposed payment of AP testing fees.

Article 9 – Facilities

Superintendent Raymond highlighted a new position in this article. It is a school resource officer (SRO) at the Smith and Wagner schools. RSU 22 will pay 67% of the SRO's salary. The balance would be paid by either Winterport or Winterport and Frankfort. The SRO would be employed by the Waldo County sheriff's office.

Supplies and the maintenance of our buildings make up this article. Bill Booth, Maintenance & Facilities Director, presented to the committee his budget. Mr. Booth announced that he is fully staffed for the first time in two years. Cleaning products should be fully "green" by the end of this summer. He expects to save money with these green products. He set up a ticket system for repair requests. Mr. Booth does his best to do repairs in-house rather than hiring contractors to do the work. He is now also in charge of van usage. Keeping ahead of auto repairs and doing regular vehicle maintenance has saved the district money. The fleet's maintenance cost has gone down over the last two years, and we have added two newer used vans.

He discussed current projects:

- Painting 20% of buildings every year
- Flooring is done mostly out outsourced but some work is done in house
- Reeds Brook and Smith or Wagner roofs will be done in the near future
- New lighting in McGraw
- He utilizes four Summer crews that work to paint, mow, clean and prepare for the new school year
- Weatherbee ADA compliance project and Reeds Brook facade replacement projects are in the works
- Generator at Hampden Academy will require some work
- 90 cameras have been installed with 11 more cameras to be installed over the April break.

We have saved more than we anticipated on electricity costs. We should have estimates for FY25 from our utilities consultant within the week. Cyr Bus uses some of our vans to transport our students since that is less expensive. Mr. Booth is adding an assistant in the maintenance department – a position that hasn't been filled for over a year.

There were comments and questions from the town representatives that were discussed and addressed.

Superintendent Raymond introduced Greg Im, attorney from Drummond & Woodsum who is guiding RSU 22 through the budget process. Mr. Im spoke to the question of returning the money to the towns. He explained that this is done indirectly through reducing the assessment to the towns. All funds must be spent for educational purposes. All expenditures are approved through the 11 cost centers. He reiterated that it is not a legal expense for RSU 22 to return funds by direct payment to the towns. What gives RSU the authority to move money from the fund balance to a reserve fund? Voter authorization is required to set up a reserve fund and to expend from a reserve fund. The RSU 22 board's authority is given from the voters.

Mr. Ashley asked for clarification on the statute. Mr. Im explained the fund balance must be used to reduce local assessments and may carry forward the excess over a period of three years. Once transferred to the reserve fund those funds are not a part of the unassigned fund balance. Mr. Ashley commented that he supports the SRO position for Winterport schools.

Mr. Jarvi asked if the budget documents could be sent out earlier to allow enough time to review prior to the committee meeting.

Ms. Grant asked that we "don't dump a lot of money in one year to jack up the mil rate in two years."

Will Seavey stated that the committee will be offering more information on how the fund balance will be distributed in the coming weeks.

The representatives from the towns of Hampden, Newburgh, and Winterport presented a written statement to the committee. They asked the committee to provide a written response to their statement.

The meeting adjourned at 5:32 p.m.

cc: Board of Directors