

Budget Committee Meeting
Thursday, May 1, 2025
4:00 p.m., Hampden Academy Library

Attendees: Budget Committee members Allan Gordon, Stacey Haskell, Brooke Miller, Board members Kristen Peet, Ellen Hassan, Nick Raymond, Superintendent, Kris Franklin, Finance Director, Matt Lachance - Town of Hampden, Casey Ashe - Town of Winterport, Ed Lovell - Town of Newburgh

Absent: Luke Field, Mike Shaw - Town of Frankfort

Please note that all of the corresponding budget documents can be found on the RSU 22 district website on the budget tab. [RSU22.US/budget](https://rsu22.us/budget)

Review of reserve account and contingency discussion occurred. Discussion of keeping the minimum reserve accounts and moving to contingency. Members of the committee supported keeping the three reserve accounts that were discussed in the last meeting.

Also discussed was a special education reserve account versus contingency and anonymity for students receiving special education services. Superintendent Raymond explained how we could protect student and family confidentiality with a contingency fund. The executive session could be used to discuss any specific needs. Then the Board of Directors could have a public vote to transfer funds for the purpose of special education. No details about how it would be used could identify a student or family.

Superintendent Raymond asked for town representative feedback. Mr. Ashe of Winterport indicated contingency is fine and towns are going in the same direction. Mr. LaChance of Hampden agreed as long as there was clarity about where the funds were going.

The distinction between contingency for emergency versus reserve accounts for pre-planned needs was again reviewed.

There was further discussion of the administrative office direction. Superintendent Raymond asked for the board's input. A suggestion was made to put money in the reserve account for that office. Board members agreed. The same question was asked of town representatives. Winterport agreed that is the perfect use of the fund balance. Newburgh agreed based on what they have learned regarding the condition of the building. Hampden agreed that it definitely needs to be done. Do it sooner rather than later due to the rising costs of construction. Superintendent Raymond explained that even with a reserve account and all the procedures required, a local referendum would still need to take place. It was discussed that as a matter of procedure it would need to go through the vote to move money into a new reserve account for that purpose. Suggestion made to work with a modular company and United Technologies Center to reduce costs and partner with our local CTE program. Estimates were received in 2021 for a current building remodel or remodel and extend (two quotes). The third quote was from 2024 and included the modular option. That quote was the cheapest of the three quotes. Our current Maintenance Director, Bill Booth, is quite capable of managing this project. Mr. Booth has spent his career building schools. Site work would go out to bid like a municipality does. There still needs to be engineering certifications to meet code requirements in the town of Hampden. Even though the district is not asking for state money, the state may still have some oversight.

- Review of FY26 Proposed Budget Articles

Article One: Regular Education changes through the budget process

Eliminations - changes that are appropriate due to enrollment and student need. Weatherbee and Wagner classroom teacher, Wagner physical education 50%, Hampden Academy science, Discussion of classes exiting versus classes coming in.

Additions - Smith, 1 day at PK, Wagner Math Interventionist, insurance at 10% - set by Anthem (higher than the past- set by benefits trust)

Decrease reflected in K-2 is due to reallocation of coding. There is not a decrease of K-2 staff, personnel have just been appropriately coded. There was no reduction to supplies and equipment. With the same staff there would be an increase.

Article Two:

Hampden Academy special ed reading teacher will be eliminated and changes to the IEP coordinator responsibilities can be absorbed in the former reading position. We will still have a Hampden Academy special education teacher, but they will take on IEP coordinator responsibilities. Students will still be well served.

Special education teacher hired at Smith this year will remain in the budget for next year.

Four education technicians will be added to meet the needs of incoming students from Child Development Services. Discussion of Child Development Services and future programming.

Discussion of the programs and services including supplies all being the same for second grade students. The topic of grade two and making sure there are no duplicate positions.

Using the special education reserve account as a revenue.

Contingency funds may fund special education emergencies thus making a special education reserve account not needed.

This district does currently get federal money to fund special education. It is called Local Entitlement. Local Entitlement does not come from the towns.

Discussion on longitudinal increases. Specifically the administrative costs in special education administration was broken down for the group. Can break each category down so that people see the details.

Would we consider a policy about what is considered an emergency? Thinking about the worst case scenario. Taxpayers might assume we could spend anything as an emergency.

Teaching position budgeted at \$120,000.00.

Article Four Other Instruction:

Summer school will be added. The goal is to have K-5 summer school - outside of that no changes.

Article Five: Student and Staff Support

The Acadia hospital contract is being eliminated, and we are hiring our own employees to meet the student needs. We have struggled getting services. We have great social work services from those we have hired ourselves so we are going in that direction. Also looking to have the K-8 504 coordinator added. PK-2 iPad refresh.

Discussion of tabling the projectors and ipads. Asked for board input. Can we table for next year? Two schools total would be \$62,000.00.

Research the possibility of leasing the student laptops and ipads. Apple is offering 0% interest.

Articles Six and Seven: System Administration and School Administration

Smaller increase than in other articles because there are far fewer staff included in these categories. A new dean of students, 50% FTE, is included here. This could be a current employee who would work 50% FTE in their other position. Superintendent Raymond explained the difference between dean of students and assistant principal. Ms. Miller explained that the drop-out committee has found that student engagement starts to drop off in third grade for students that are likely to drop out later. It is hoped that the dean of students will address this issue.

Return to Article Five and iPads and laptops: Why do students younger than grade eight need this technology? Superintendent Raymond discussed the change in education and shift in technology over the past few years. The devices are used significantly by students and teachers. Technology Director, Nate Savage, spoke to the State's initiative to bring technology to younger grades, K-4, with a pilot plan in 2017 in which RSU22 was one of five schools that participated. The pilot was quite successful. Technology integrators work with teachers to identify and use appropriate programs, including those that build on what is taught in the classroom. Is technology supplemental or the curriculum? It is a hybrid approach. There was further discussion about the pros and cons of technology in the classroom, including needing to prepare students for the world in the future versus not preparing students with skills that don't require technology. The curriculum includes coding and other hard skills as well as digital citizenship.

Article Eight: Transportation

The transportation contract has been modified to reflect the actual number of buses provided, 23 vs 28. Ed Lovell asked why some buses seem to follow the same route. Superintendent Raymond will bring the route maps to the next meeting. Why does the district contract for transportation vs having its own fleet? There is considerable savings gained by outsourcing rather than acquiring, maintaining, and operating a fleet in-house.

Article Nine: Maintenance

School Resource Officer has been broken out from Building Operations. The heating fuel budget has been reduced to reflect the contracted amounts. Funds from the Energy and Fuel Stability reserves will be used to offset some of the impact of the heating and energy costs. Is playground equipment included in this budget? No, this would be funded from reserves. Architecture and Engineering will be needed for any new administration building that is constructed. Could these costs come from the same reserve account as the building? It could. Mr. Lachance recommends removing these items from the budget and using reserve funds. Mr. Asheby concurs. What was the FY24 expense? Plans for the elevator (or this may have come from reserve) and for the floor plans for an administration building. Consensus to use fund balance to pay these expenses in FY26.

Article Ten: Debt Service - this is set.

Article Eleven: Other - typically food service. RSU22's food service is self-sufficient.

Article Fifteen: Adult Education - no change.

Revenue summary - Total increase of \$2,206,208.79 without the changes made at this meeting. \$1,935,63.64 (87.7%) is in salaries and benefits. See the FY26 Proposed Budget Highlights or Changes document on the Budget webpage. The FY26 budget represents an increase of 6.85%. Last year's budget increase was 4.64%. The \$3m fund balance used to offset taxes last year resulted in a decrease in school tax assessments last. The proposed FY26 budget with recommended fund balance offset is likely to result in a sizable increase in the school assessment. Request for cost per pupil in 23-24, 24-25, and projected for 25-26. Mr. Lachance wonders if reduction in force should be considered. Ms. Miller commented that because in budgets that are so personnel-heavy, the way to cut costs is to hire less experienced teachers and/or reduce staff numbers. Reducing staff would increase student:staff ratios which has been a contentious issue. Ms. Haskell concurred. Mr. Lachance is concerned that some taxpayers are at risk of losing their homes due to tax delinquency with increases. Ms. Miller reminded all that the school district is not the only factor in a tax bill and that reductions should be considered at other levels also.

Appreciation was expressed for the input of the town representatives and suggestions for potential budget reductions.

How many budgeted positions are now vacant? An IEP coordinator and two Ed Techs fairly consistently.

Mr. Ashy requested a detailed sheet and a FY26 Revenue Budget Proposal sheet with the FY24 surplus and \$500,000 applied to reduce taxes vs. the \$1m presented.

Superintendent Raymond again pointed out that the tax assessment increase is largely due to the amount of fund balance used to offset taxes for FY25. Can savings from unfilled positions be used to fund positions in the next year? No, any unspent budget goes to undesignated fund balance.

Other

Town representatives are invited to the next meeting at which the full board will hear the budget presentation on May 14. The board will vote on the budget on May 21.

Ms. Miller asked town representatives to bring to the Superintendent's attention any concerns that they become aware of early in the process so that they can be addressed.

The meeting adjourned at 7:14 p.m.

cc: Board of Directors