

Budget Committee Meeting
Thursday, April 10, 2025
4:00 p.m., Hampden Academy Library

Attendees: Budget Committee members Luke Field, Allan Gordon, Brooke Miller, Board members Ellen Hassan, Faye Anderson, and Kristin Peet; Nick Raymond, Superintendent; Kris Franklin, Finance Director; Matt Lachance - Town of Hampden, Casey Ashey - Town of Winterport, Mike Shaw - Town of Frankfort, Ed Lovell - Town of Newburgh; Andrea Bozzino, Assistant Director of Student Services; Lynne Well, Director of Student Services; Jennifer Nickerson, Director of Curriculum; Reg Ruhlin, Hampden Academy principal; Ryan Crane, Hampden Academy assistant principal; Matthew Lindeman, McGraw principal; Wagner principal; Susan Thibodeau, Reeds Brook principal; Dawn Moore, Smith principal; Weatherbee principal; Christine Boone, Assistant Superintendent; Dorothy Dawson, Gifted & Talented Director.

Absent: Stacy Haskell

Article 1 - Regular Education

Principal Moore is asking for an added teaching position. Otherwise there aren't many changes. Incoming kindergarten class is expected to be typical in size. PreK will expand to five days (vs four) per week next year. This is provided by WCAP. The change increased the cost by \$4,500.

Principal Lindeman explained that there are no personnel changes. Pre-K has been added since being moved from Newburgh. Some equipment needs to be replaced.

Principal Cyr explained that the building budget increased due to moving grade 2 from McGraw. Will need to add staff due to increased student count, anticipated large Grade 2 class.

Principal Thibodeau explained that the building budget is level funded other than an increase in the field transportation line. There are no planned personnel changes.

Principal Pratt proposed a reduction of one teacher due to projected decrease in enrollment. A full-time social worker is being added to the Winterport campuses. Also adding one teaching position for math intervention. The facilities budget includes furniture for Wagner. The technology budget includes a sound system.

Superintendent Raymond explained that Title funds cannot be used to supplant local funds. This is the start of a two-year plan to add two Title positions to the Winterport campus to be equitable to the Hampden campus.

Principal Ruhlin explained that most of the increase is due to increases required by the collective bargaining agreement. There is some increase for the new drone program. There is a reduction of one teaching staff, proposed in Science, due to an anticipated decline in enrollment of 30 students.

Mrs. Dawson explained that there are no planned personnel changes. The budget includes an increase of about \$2,000 for materials and participation fees for co-curricular activities.

Superintendent Raymond explained that expenses for gifted and talented programs are reimbursed by the State two years later through the ED279 process. Mr. Lachance voiced support for the program budget. He further explained that the bulk of increases in the lines is in salaries and benefits for staff. The district also provides basic instructional supplies.

Mr. Field asked how the reduction in a Science teacher position affects what is taught. Superintendent Raymond explained that the curriculum will stay the same; that class size will increase from 15 to 18.

Superintendent Raymond explained that there is nothing in this budget that can be addressed with fund balance. There is nothing in either of these articles that is not a recurring expense that will need to be budgeted every year.

Article 2 - Special Education

Mrs. Wells explained there is a sizable increase in the number of incoming students: 33 with IEPs plus some in the referral process. This will require an increase in Special Education Ed Techs. Also wants to retain the Special Education teacher position that was added during FY25. Need to add a social worker to reduce the case load to a manageable level. The daily rates for out-of-district places are set by the State and are likely to increase next year. The budget reflects an increase to cover this. Mrs. Wells expressed support for adding to the Special Education capital reserve fund.

Mrs. Wells explained that federal funds (local entitlement, \$600k this year) are not certain for next year. These funds have covered a social worker, psychologist, three ed techs, summer programming, and an out-of-district placement. She explained the process of identifying a placement for a student and the limited inventory of slots. Superintendent Raymond emphasized the need to build up the Special Education reserve account.

Mr. Lachance asked whether the services provided at an out-of-district placement could be provided in-district? Mrs. Wells responded that an out-of-district placement is the last resort; all other solutions are exhausted first. Superintendent Raymond explained that families are moving to our district because of its reputation for doing everything possible for every child.

Ed Lovell asked for verification that every district provides special education services. He praised Mrs. Wells for the services provided in RSU22. He asked about the IEP coordinator. This adds a position and reclassifies the one that was budgeted last year in a different line.

Mr. Shaw asked if the fund balance could be used to build reserves. Superintendent Raymond said yes.

Questions were asked about the self-contained program and the \$1m increase. Staffing has had to be increased and one position was reclassified from resource room to self-contained. Student:staff ratio is dictated by statute, and the ratio is lower for self-contained than resource. Mrs. Miller pointed out the historical data on the summary budget page, that a \$1m increase is not out of line with that trend. Mrs. Wells explained that needs are increasing. Identification of children needing services happens earlier than it used to, thanks to the Child Development Services (CDS) program. In FY27, the district will be responsible for these services for ages 3 and up. CDS will continue to serve children from birth to 2 years. CDS funding is expected to follow the children. However, there will likely still be a need for the district to fund some. The district will be responsible for administration of those children's plans, arranging services, etc.

Superintendent Raymond explained that, like regular education, the Special Education budget covers supplies and materials.

Mr. Shaw asked if the principals had omitted anything from their budgets that they think their students need. If so, he asked them to say so now so he can advocate for them. None of the principals had any additions.

Superintendent Raymond pointed out that personnel is about 80% of the budget. The committee asked for a proposal for a summer program - that will be forthcoming.

The next meeting is Tuesday, April 15th at 4 p.m., at Hampden Academy - Library. That meeting will be about fund balance, reserve accounts, revenue and revisions made since articles were first presented.

Mrs. Miller summarized the schedule for future meetings and voting. Superintendent Raymond explained that the May 14th budget hearing will be noticed as a board meeting. The town representatives are invited to attend. It is up to the board to decide how the town representatives participate - in public session or as a broader part of the process.

The meeting adjourned at 5:02 p.m.

cc: Board of Directors