

Budget Committee Meeting
Thursday, April 3, 2025
4:00 p.m., Hampden Academy Library

Attendees: Budget Committee members Luke Field, Allan Gordon, Stacey Haskell, Brooke Miller, Board members Kirstein Davidson 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; Jennifer Nickerson, Director of Curriculum; Brittany Layman, Director of Wellness; and Nate Savage, Director of IT.

Absent: N/A

Mr. Raymond thanked everyone for coming to the meeting despite the school closure for weather. He gave an update on transportation - savings on contract due to fewer buses being used than what was contracted in current year and for FY26.

Article 5 - Student & Staff Support

Nursing structure will stay the same in FY26 as in FY25 unless health needs change. Ten percent increase budgeted for supplies. Increase in professional development budget to accommodate a conference. Stop-the-Bleed kits for Hampden Academy - kits for other schools were grant-funded. Ms. Layman explained the contents and use of Stop-the-Bleed kits. Mr. Lachance recommends getting RATS vs CATS tourniquets to better suit smaller arms. Each classroom will have a kit.

Ms. Nickerson thanked everyone for keeping us on track by attending. Overall the lines in these budget areas for FY26 are down \$15,000 from this year. New programs funded in this budget this year will be budgeted in the regular education budget in FY26. Reduction in need for new curriculum from FY25 results in savings year-on-year. Some testing was moved to school building budgets so that they are eligible for reimbursement, resulting in a decrease in curriculum budget. Other expenses that students use in schools have also been moved to the school buildings. Some increases result from terms in the Collective Bargaining Agreements.

Do not have the estimates of Title funds yet. There will be a decrease in Title II funds because the State DOE is correcting their use of the formula for allocating funds. Title II will no longer fund the one-and-done type of training - prefer to fund training that will result in sustained improvement such as bringing speakers to school vs sending people to conferences.

Changes in summer programming - this has been funded with ESSER funds. Those funds are done and there is nothing in the budget for FY26 summer programming.

Explained the difference between the Title funds:

I - Challenges due to socio-economic status - this applies to Smith and Wagner, 2 teachers and 1 ed-tech, and a program to address attendance concerns.

II - Professional Development that is school building based.

IV - (1) well-rounded education, including opportunities that students otherwise may not have such as theater shows; (2) safe and healthy schools - walking classroom; and (3) effective use of technology - drone program

Question - confirmation that all Title funds could be lost.

What does the summer program cost: \$48-50k for instruction materials; another \$5k for K-2 packets; Staffing about \$10k for the virtual summer school format. There was hardly any summer slide over last summer, thought to be due to teaching to mastery in K-2.

There are opportunities to bring speakers to school, such as fact literacy.

Question - what is the total cost of professional development, including what isn't in budget? RSU22 spends about \$60k in Title II funds for professional development.

Could others call DOE to advocate for the return of Title V funds. Ms. Nickerson was told that the decision was based on census data. She will provide the contact information to Mr. Raymond to distribute.

What was the budget for Wabanaki curriculum for FY25 and FY26? None spent yet this year on that program. Ms. Boone and Ms. Nickerson plan for next year to align the social studies program with moose modules and TCI guides related to Maine studies. Chris Sockalexis, whose wife works for RSU22 could also be a resource. How could we pay for a speaker who needed to be compensated? Would be challenging due to the requirement to be somewhat specific in the grant applications.

Stacy Haskell - Before the end of budget development, could a plan be proposed for summer programs including cost? The answer is yes.

Four new courses at Hampden Academy - AP World History, will be open to freshmen and already has 43 students registered. Texts and materials are in this budget. Jewelry making and print making courses have been approved - supplies are in this budget. Drones courses - intro and advanced. Advanced courses result in a credential. Includes some less expensive drones for practicing and obstacles. Maker space materials for vests in different colors for various roles. Would like to fund the credential test for students. Speakers from various industries explain use of drones in their industries and have told Ms. Nickerson they will hire students who obtain their license.

Wagner doesn't currently offer a foreign language. Currently neither middle school has that opportunity. The online version was not productive. Tried remote teaching with in-classroom ed tech but that didn't work. RSU22 has not been able to hire a World Language teacher for our middle schools. There are very few graduating with that certification. We are still trying to find a solution.

Title funds: I just under \$327k; Title II just over \$104k; Title IV \$36k. Loss of Title funds would be detrimental, especially Title I.

Mr. Savage explained the Maine Learning through Tech Initiative program and its history. RSU22 uses Chromebooks. Currently in year 2 of 3 year contract. Provides devices to each student and teacher or ed tech that work with those students. FY25 targeted 12th grade; FY26 targeting 8th grade. Includes approximately \$101k in Chromebooks which will be reimbursed by

the MLTI program. This expense is offset by a direct revenue which is reported elsewhere.

Mr. Savage strives to even out the IT expenses by using a multi-year plan. F Y26 includes iPad refresh, spread out across elementary schools \$270k. Year 3 of 3 of projector refresh - Hampden Academy except 3rd floor, \$120k.

Network support and licensing, based on student numbers, sums to about \$82k.

Repairs and maintenance supports devices for students and teachers. Two middle school projects - sound system and projector - each project \$31k.

Software for schools - learning management systems. Priced per student, Google classroom \$12k total. Seesaw Pre-K - 2 \$4k.

Other software includes accounting, monitoring, printer management, website, notification system, student accounts, MS Office, Google Suite, and classroom apps.

Renewal of teacher's MacBooks \$315k - recommends using Tech reserve fund. Also to put \$75-80k per year into the reserved fund to cover staff devices.

e-Rate is in the last of a 5-year cycle. RSU22 is 50% receiver, has to match (\$500k received, \$500k match). All networks in schools were updated. Federal funding may be at risk for the next cycle.

Next year includes refresh of Grade 3-5 Chromebooks \$175k.

Student-based things from budget, teacher-based from reserves.

Could the middle school projects come from reserves? Can be discussed.

Updating app to be more user friendly - a couple of vendors are scheduled to come to the Community Relations Committee. There is typically an onboarding fee. To be discussed further at the committee before coming to this committee.

What happens to Chromebooks of graduating seniors? They get passed to incoming freshmen.

Question regarding tech-related supplies \$142k increase - largely pre-K iPads, 3-5 Chromebooks.

Question regarding \$31k for Middle School projects - has secured quotes, the quotes are comparable. Vendors are known and reliable.

Installation could be phased, audio and visual separately.

In the next year, the cost of the projectors will go away. Otherwise, the costs will be about the same.

Can funds, to be used in five years, be put into a 5-year CD? Need to get clarification on legality of putting school funds into CDs.

Tariffs could increase the tech costs substantially.

Anthem is budgeted at 14% in this draft. Paid Family Leave is required - teaching staff pays 25%, all others currently at 50%.

Sec 504 position added as result of board discussions.

The Other Student Support item will not be included in future versions. The RSU will hire its own employees for those positions, included in the Guidance budget. There is great need for these services. Not necessarily a savings but will be able to serve a greater number of students.

Can the staff serve the number of students? Yes, given the two additions.

Is there any savings to be gained due to lack of providers from Northern Light Acadia? No, because those are paid by hours of service.

The RSU hired social workers are included in the Guidance budget as presented.

Increase in Health and reduction of 0.5 FTE in Tech are due to shifting of personnel.

Library reduction of 1 FTE reflects a resignation from this year, and hasn't been filled during FY25.

IEP students have been identified as Special Ed. Sec504 students have been identified as needing some support but don't rise to the level of an IEP.

504 Coordinator provides administrative support, scheduling and attending meetings.

Social workers in the budget are 2 FTE. RSU will have an Memorandum Of Understanding with 0.5 FTE provider who will be paid for services to students by the students' insurance.

Article 6 - System Administration

Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent are in the Executive Administrative. Fiscal encompasses the finance staff.

Decrease in negotiation item because there are no teacher negotiations in FY26.

Salaries and benefits in these items have not yet been finalized. None of these positions are in CBAs. Paid Family Medical Leave for these positions is paid 0.5% by the RSU.

Board expenses cover audit, liability insurance, \$25 per meeting payment to board members.

Article 7 - School Administration

Salaries and benefits for principals include everyone in the principal's office, not just the principals.

The principals are not included in CBAs, salaries have not yet been finalized.

Will be adding 0.5 FTE Dean of Students at Smith School in Winterport. Seeing a significant increase in the need related to behavior and attendance. Plan to identify 0.5 FTE dean in a current staff member, wage to be determined. That staff member would likely be 0.5 FTE teacher. Teacher portion will be in Article I. Can't be funded from Title I because this position

does not teach students.

Mr. Shaw commented on the passion of the presenters this evening as well as Mr. Booth last week. Mr. Raymond commented that that is true of all the staff, those included in the budget process. He is hopeful that this process of including town reps will result in a better process.

The next meeting is Thursday, April 10th at 4 p.m., at Hampden Academy - Library.

The meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

cc: Board of Directors