

WEARE FINANCE COMMITTEE

JANUARY 3, 2019

1. The Weare Finance Committee met on Thursday 3 Jan at 6pm at the Town Offices. Present were members Lori Davis, Neal Kurk, Bill Anderson, Keith Erf, Gregg McDowell, Sue Morin, Tom Clow, Donna Osborne, Tammi Hagman, Dennis Aubin, James Drury, and Chris Hague. Also present were SAU 24 representatives School Superintendent Dr Lorraine Tacconi-Moore, Assistant Superintendent Jacqueline Coe, and Business Administrator Kathleen Sargent; Weare School Board Chair Marge Burke, Fire Chief Bob Vezina, Board of Firewards Chair Steve Roberts, Town Administrator Naomi Bolton, and Town Finance Administrator Beth Rouse.
2. Business. The purpose of the meeting was to receive updated information on school budget proposals/warrant articles and to start receiving budget briefings from town departments beginning with Fire.
 - A. Weare Schools.
 1. Operating Budget. Dr Tacconi-Moore briefed the committee on revisions the SAU staff has recommended to the Weare School Board for the 19-20 operating budget. The SAU has decreased the previously proposed budget by \$335K, removing new computer upgrades and various maintenance equipment/supplies. The proposed decrease pends review and approval from the Weare School Board. As amended the 19-20 proposed budget is \$15,307,048 which is a 1.1% increase over the 18-19 approved budget of \$15,138,975. The default budget for 19-20 is \$15,185,899 which represents a 0.3% increase over 18-19. Dr Tacconi-Moore reiterated the importance of passing the teachers' contract this year and that these reductions in the operating budget were the SAU's attempt to reduce the total school tax impact.
 2. Kindergarten. Assistant Superintendent Coe summarized the plan for full day kindergarten. Projected costs were noted in the Dec meeting minutes. The plan would create 5 kindergarten classrooms at Center Woods. This would require moving the pre school program out of Center Woods and repurposing the music classroom to kindergarten. If additional classroom space was needed in the future, the art room would be the first to be converted for kindergarten. It is not clear at this time whether the preschool would be moved to John Stark HS or the Weare Middle School. Numbers of kindergarten students in Weare the last four years have been 59, 81, 60 and 78. A number of concerns were expressed by the Committee. They were the lack of certainty in preschool location as well as the risk of having preschoolers in a building with and designed for high school students, the loss of the music room and potential loss of the art room degrading those programs at Center Woods, and that costs presented will not reflect actual costs this year and in the future.
 3. School Resource Officer. Dr Tacconi Moore was asked if the proposed SRO position was an initiative of the School District or the Police Department. She stated it was a joint effort to have earlier intervention between law enforcement and the student population. As stated at last month's meeting the position would be shared between Stark and Weare Schools with costs split across each budget. The

Committee expressed some concern that the position would require a cruiser as well as the impact on current operations with preference for hiring from within existing resources.

4. Furnace/Boiler. The Center Woods Boiler is original issue. A revenue neutral lease, similar to what was done at John Stark will be moved forward in a proposed warrant article. Copies of the Stark energy program from EEI have been forwarded to all Committee members under separate distribution.

B. John Stark.

1. Operating Budget. The SAU and John Stark School Board have reduced their proposed 19-20 operating budget by \$76K; the Board needs to confirm the specific cuts. The 19-20 proposed budget is \$13,650,662 which is a 1.7% increase over the approved 18-19 budget of \$13,418,229. The 19-20 default budget is \$13,550,703 which represents a 0.9% increase over 18-19.

C. Fire Department. Chief Bob Vezina and Steve Roberts provided an excellent historical overview of Fire Department operations in Weare. The discussion of %where we've been, where we are at, where we are headed, and how we propose to get there+ gave the Committee an excellent framework from which to arrive at our recommendations. As recently as 10 years ago, Weare had a poor reputation with surrounding communities who often provided mutual aid due to our lack of consistent resource availability. Today we have EMT/Firefighter coverage on station from 7AM till 10PM with on call response overnight. Chief Vezina's assessment is we are in a period of transition from per diem and on call to eventually having a hybrid of full time and per diem employees. Surrounding communities of Bow, Hopkinton, and Henniker are examples of this.

1. Operating Budget. The Board of Firewards, not the Board of Selectmen, develop and recommend the Fire Department budget. Steve Roberts presented a proposed operating budget of \$585,262 which is a 7.5% increase over the 18-19 approved budget. The main drivers for the \$40K increase are a \$10.8K increase in Chief salary (to reflect comparable compensation levels in the area) and a \$10.2K increase in dispatch/communication contract services.
2. Warrant Articles. There are five warrant articles affecting Fire. Three were presented in the CIP and have no direct tax impact with the Special Revenue Fund (from ambulance reimbursements) meeting the need. The CIP projects are a command vehicle for the Fire Chief, a rigid hull inflatable boat for water rescue, and thermal imaging cameras. Total costs for these are \$113K. There is currently \$188.4K in the Special Revenue Fund with an estimated \$150K in revenue received annually. The next major CIP purchases are \$125K for equipment in 2021, \$450K for a fire truck in 2023, and \$250K for an ambulance in 2025. Two additional warrant articles are as follows:
 - a. Standby Pay. On call personnel are not currently compensated unless called in. This article would compensate EMT/Firefighters who are scheduled for on call. They would receive one hour pay (approx.\$18) for every four hours on call. Estimated cost is \$32K annually.
 - b. Full Time EMT/Firefighter (2). Article would start the transition to a hybrid Fire Department by hiring two full time EMT/Firefighters. Estimated cost is \$99.5K for six months. Chief Vezina anticipates 2 additional positions to be requested next year which would then allow overnight in station coverage.

D. Warrant Articles. Draft warrant articles for town and Weare Schools were also distributed to Committee members.

3. Administrative. Next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 8 Jan at 630pm at the Town Offices for continued presentation of Town budget requests.
4. Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 1010pm.

Bill Anderson, Secretary

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