

Sunderland Selectboard
Monday, February 22, 2021

Attending: D. Pierce, T. Fydenkevez, S. Bergeron, G. Kravitz
Finance Committee: E. Crowe, A. Kajstura, L. Forget, S. Smiarowski
Others present: S. Schneider, L. Smith, K. McFarland, A. Hanley, S. Poreda, B. Barshefsky, D. Modestow, P. Gagarin, J. Pelletier, M. Shaw, G. Gottschalk, J. Corwin, L. Baker
Meeting via Zoom recorded by FCAT.
Meeting called to order at 6:32PM.

MINUTES

Mr. Fydenkevez motion to approve Selectboard minutes of February 16, 2021, Mr. Bergeron second, vote 3-0.

BUSINESS

FRONTIER REGIONAL SCHOOL BUDGET PRESENTATION: Superintendent Modestow introduced the draft budget, noting that it had not been voted on and that a public hearing would be on March 9. Ms. Poreda stated that the budget represented a level services approach to retain existing staff, programs and services. The total budget increased approximately 3% or \$341,045. The increases were driven by increases in salaries and operating expenses. Sunderland resident enrollment increased by 14 students, which results in a 14% increase, or \$242,881, for the town. Superintendent Modestow noted that this year there are fewer 6th graders at Sunderland Elementary, so the assessment will likely decrease next year. The state required contribution is the bulk of Sunderland's increase.

SUNDERLAND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BUDGET PRESENTATION: Superintendent Modestow introduced the draft budget and stated that the SES School Committee budget hearing will likely be in April. The proposed budget is 6.66% higher than last year, or \$196,667. \$90,000 in wages for early education and school lunch were moved to the general fund because of the lack of income to those revolving funds in FY21 due to the pandemic. Additionally, the budget includes one new position. There is also a question as to \$50,000 for retirement benefits payout and sick time buyback that may be a separate warrant article. SES will receive \$75,000 in CARES Act funds that was not incorporated into the budget as more discussion needs to happen about best use of the funds. Mr. Bergeron noted that several years ago \$200,000 was moved from School Choice to the operating budget and that with the FY22 request, a total of \$500,000 is being moved over the last three budget cycles. Mr. Gottschalk stated that the original transfer of expenses from School Choice to the operating budget was a first step, not an end. Mr. Fydenkevez asked what a budget increase of 2.5% would look like. Mr. Gagarin pointed out that the FY21 budget was level funded and that was accomplished by moving some expenses to School Choice for that year. Part of the increase this year is to make last year's budget work. Mr. Gottschalk stated that the budget estimates are conservative and that the budget presented preserves School Choice funds. Mr. Modestow stated that natural growth (without a pandemic) is approximately 2.5% and other increases are population driven. It was noted that there is no opportunity for an override without calling a special election.

COVID-19 UPDATE: Ms. Smith stated that there are currently 3 active COVID cases in Sunderland. Sunderland will likely have 25 when the next state report comes out. There will be a vaccine clinic at the Tree House Brewery in Deerfield on Thursday and Friday. PPE is available from MEMA and Ms. Smith is collecting orders for the town. The Town Administrator noted that Sunderland can apply for more relief funds until at least June 30. Mr. Fydenkevez stated that 15-20 volunteers from Sunderland will be working at the Deerfield clinic. Despite disappointment in the state rollout, appreciation for Rep. Blais and Sen. Comerford's efforts was noted.

SELECTBOARD UPDATES

Mr. Bergeron reminded people about the Town Caucus on Saturday and positions are available.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Bergeron motion to adjourn at 8:13 PM, Mr. Fydenkevez second, vote 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Geoff Kravitz, Town Administrator