



City of Franklin
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Committee: City Council/School Board Liaison Committee

Meeting Date: September 12, 2019, 6:00 PM

Location: GAR Room, City Hall, 316 Central St, Franklin, NH

Members:

City Council Members: Jo Brown, Karen Testerman, Kathy Rago

School Board Members: Jeff Savary, Anya Twarog, Tim Dow, School Board Chair

Other Attendees: Dan LeGallo, Superintendent, Delaney Carrier and Scott Burns, School Board Members.

Agenda:

- Discuss ways to improve relationship between City Council and School Board. Listen to each sides' concerns.

Public Comment:

- There was no public comment.

Discussion:

- Jeff Savary opened the discussion by emphasizing the importance of being civil when the council or school board discuss school related issues. He felt that the tone of the School Budget session in April was good – that the Councilors were really interested in the valid issues brought up by the school principals and staff. He stated that both sides need to respect each other's areas of expertise. Anya Twarog agreed and stated that the school board did go over the budget line by line and the part of the reason that the budget is tight is because of unfunded mandates. Savary added that all must understand unexpected costs; for example, the \$123K that occurred recently with the addition of a new Special Education student in the district. He continued that there is no desire to hide unexpected revenue and that the financial situation can be very fluid. Chairman Dow added that the state change in Medicaid rates impacts the school budget because funds are cut but the same services may be required.
- Jo Brown suggested that the board educate the Council in the monthly City Council meeting about such changes and how they impact school funding, rather than waiting

until the presentation of the budget in May. Dow also reminded the committee that the SAU loses \$160K per year, about 4%, from cuts to state education funding and that he and the Mayor were going to meet to see how they can improve Council and Board relations. Twarog added that we need to be careful about the tone both sides use in public forums- if we don't see eye to eye, then work out the issues in committee, not in public.

- Dow advised the committee that the SAU is getting ready to launch a schoolwide Facebook page. Brown expressed a desire that perhaps the school actual costs could be put on that page or another easily assessable page so that, like the City Budget, the School Budget could be fully transparent. This would allow all the citizens of Franklin to see the entire municipal budget, actuals plus expenses and get a better appreciation of the real expenses facing both city departments and the school. It could contribute to a much less contentious budget cycle each year if all sides fully understand the municipal and SAU needs and shortfalls.
- Kathy Rago shared what happened at the April 2019 joint Financial Meeting when she asked for actual financial numbers and School Board member Chris Kneeland said no. She stated that the district budget format is useless without current actual data in it. Dow said that the SAU is actively working to get actual financial information up on the school website, but that the numbers won't go online until after the school board approves the monthly reports. Rago expressed how pleased she was that the SAU was actively working to get these numbers on the website. Brown mentioned that consolidating financials could be mutually beneficial as both sides could discover possible financial opportunities to address the most pressing needs in both the SAU and municipal budgets. Frank Lossani, City CFO and Jefferson Braman SAU Business Administrator are working together to get the actuals on the school website. Brown also asked if it was possible that in the budget process there would be an opportunity to **Not** cut teachers as part of the annual budget balance. Delaney Carrier said that that is not likely because the SAU budget starts out with a \$400K hole every year. Brown suggested perhaps saving could be made by combining school and city employees under one health care plan or using **Teach for America** to fill part-time spots. There was also a recommendation from the **21 Century Committee**. This could be an opportunity to help the teaching staff as Carrier pointed out that burnout is an issue and that the IT Director was resigning in December.
- Karen Testerman pointed out that like the teachers, our first responders in the Police and Fire Departments are also facing burnout. She also went on to say that she would like to see less comparison of the Franklin SAU to other school districts. It is important that we work with what we have. She agreed that all sides need to be treated with respect and that asking questions is important for both sides to understand the needs and wants of each side.
- Brown asked if the teacher contracts could be 3 years but how that would be funded is a concern. Savary stated that if the teacher's union would agree to a 3-year contract it might be possible but he indicated that the union likely won't agree to that term. There was also discussion about the timing of when teachers need to be let go to be in

compliance with state rules of notification. There was a suggestion that the budget cycle be moved back from late April as teachers must be notified normally by the second week in May. Dow stated that the school budget is normally done by the end of March and that revenues come in in April. Brown offered to bring that up to the City Manager to see if there is any possibility of moving the process back to allow for more discussion.

Other Business:

- There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted Jo Brown, City Councilor, Ward 1