

Appleton Budget Committee 2021

March 15, 2021 AVS budget presentation. Meeting called to order by Bob Bocko at 6:02

Committee Members present:

Bob Bocko

Fred Bucklin

Ed Carroll

Rebecca Diaz

Jane Jordan

Mary Kate Moody

Gary Sukeforth

Missing: Walter Esancy, Bill Fiegener

Select board members present:

Peter Becket (PB)

Lori Costigan

John Fenner

Charlie Garrigan

School Committee Members:

Beth Grierson

Carly Kincaid

Jessica Pearson

Stephen Wadsworth

Principal Susan Stilwell (SS)

Kate Clark Superintendent Union 69 (KC)

Teacher Josh Mitchell/PE

Community members present

Kay Neufield/Camden Herald

Introductions completed by all present

Minutes from 3/11/21 approved as written by unanimous vote

KC presented background information for AVS including Covid-19 adjustments.

Questions: ELA means? English/Language Art

CRT1&2 are Corona virus relief funds

18% impact to taxpayer, can you explain? It will be in Susan's presentation.

Drop in enrollment, fixed versus variable costs. Please point out the variables. KC noted that SS has trimmed this budget.

SS shared her screen.

Lines 4-19 SS explained local allocation, debt service and additional local. In State revenue we are down, and this impacts the taxpayers directly. Total budget is an increase of 5.25%. \$100,000 from fund balance already applied to this budget (line 10).

With respect to possible additional funds, will you know by next week's budget meeting? March 29th is the next school committee meeting. SS will work with KC to keep budget committee up to date. KC will try to get it resolved asap. When do you want B/C input? Let review article first.

Regular Instruction

SS reduced as much as she could to try to increase salaries to eliminate the loss of teachers to other local schools.

Line 33 New teacher with lower salary but cost AVS more in health insurance. Can you explain the family insurance? Teacher contract includes family at 80%. AVS pays 95% of single payee. Why 31,000? Rate increase overall. Is insurance out to bid? Through MEA education trust. Do all educators use this? Yes, it is the only option. MEA goes out to bid and is hosted by BC/BS. Budget from July-June so when does the policy change? July. Noted that the insurance increases are less than 5% for other businesses.

Line 25 Salaries, how many teachers? 14, 2p/t, 12 f/t. 58% master's level, 53% with 10 plus years. Where are we in teacher contracts? Just beginning negotiations. Seems counterproductive to show your hand before negotiating. No new positions, we cut one. So, what is the increase? The cut is not in this line. Any Covid relief funds in this budget? No.

Line 29 is summer school program. We are one of the only in-person summer program for students with IEP. The increase is one additional staff member. Why, changes in program with more staff and few students?

Line 30 why the increase? School committee raised the rate to match other school to get subs.

Line 42 is Me State Retirement.

Line 57, why increase? See-saw communication program for parents? Why next year if we already have it? It's an annual subscription. In addition, this line includes Power school, ALEX, Brain-pop, Moby-Max and Effective Educator software. We will be using Covid funds for teacher Zoom accounts.

Line 64 what is it? Retired teacher is paid to provide Math services and can be offset by federal funds and this is our portion.

Gifted & Talented (part of regular ed) is 100% subsidy from the state.

Line 82 is contingency as an audit's recommendation. Is this new? Every year it was in there. This helps with moving funds across cost centers.

Special Education

Salary line increase due to hiring at the top of the scale when the prior teacher was on step two. Elected for single health insurance.

Line 89 is down due to cutting a half time position. This also saved in insurance. How is it that elimination and ed tech is only \$8,000? Low salary and part-time employee.

When negotiating, are you doing it as a whole? Yes, it is a collective bargaining.

OT services going down. Based upon IEP requirements.

2 out of district placement, one in public school. Saved \$30,000. Other in a special purpose private as an 8th grader in 21-22. Are lines 112-113 in subsidy? Partially but SS was unable to detail. KC explained about a cost limit and AVS are expected to absorb some. Cost center down \$11,000. First time in years!!!

Other Instruction

Zero increase due to modified sports seasons. Down 8.10%

What happened to unspent stipends? Into fund balance after the audit.

Missing Article 4? Mystery (insert humor here)

Student & Staff Support

Line 161 why? Staff completed master's and will be enrolling in PhD program and has requested two programs to be paid.

Librarian is retiring and decreasing to a half time position

Line 184 to include summer salary. Used Covid funds last year.

Line 194 Computer lease program MLTI laptops for middle school students. Decreased last year due to buy-out of equipment. Enrollment in middle school to decrease for former years (19-20). This is a 6th grade cost only.

Line 199 covers keyboard cases, replacement of mac mini and a monitor.

Line 215 School nurse earned her master's degree. 25% includes contract negotiations and the raise in level. 3 years ago, we went to f/t due to a student critical health needs. Beneficial to have a nurse during Covid-19.

Free and reduced food program numbers were shared from the past years, not related to special education.

20-21 population 129. 9 homeschooled students due to Covid. 9, additional 9 registered as homeschoolers prior to Covid-19. 9 in AVS with Sup's agreement. 5 AVS kids with Sup's agreement attend elsewhere.

System Admin

Line 244 explained by KC as insurance increase for secretaries. This is an increase in insurance coverage. These numbers may be high than reality due to one not electing coverage.

School Admin

Multi-year contract for Principal in what year? Every year we negotiate salary and benefits, but it is a three-year contract.

Transportation

Did we pay when school was out? Yes, and we used a bus to deliver food to students at no additional costs. Required by Luce's? Unknown but Ben Luce 'bent over backwards' to accommodate including summer school transportation.

Facilities Maintenance

Covid funds to improve air quality.

Can now be an emergency shelter if needed due to generator. 30-hour capacity tank of diesel. School budget included 3 days' worth of fuel. SS encouraged the town to be prepared to fund diesel if necessary. Currently run the generator for 30 minutes a week.

Town warrant allows us to move funds across departments. Can the school do that? SS believes it is 3% across cost centers. That is why there is a contingency in the largest cost center.

Line 282 If we have two staff, why the increase? One added family insurance.

Line 304 Miscellaneous, why if there is a contingency in Article 2(Regular Instruction)? If we leave \$20,000 we can remove this? No other cost centers have this.

Reserve fund is \$112,000 left. We upgraded phone system last year and used Covid funds to get individual phones.

Debt Service

Fixed rate? No, decreases annually.

Is interest fixed? Town office question. PB said fixed for 14 years and we are about 5 years into it.

Other Expenditures

This reflects only half of the total cost and the other half is generated funds from sales. Can we compare the other 2 towns? Hope has a grant so hard to compare. All funds go through the town office.

Starting last March every student was provided two free meals a day.

Line 318 Aid 3 hours a day at 7800 but auditor recommends additional funds to cover to keep the program from "going in the hole".

Additional conversations:

Capital Reserve funds explained by SS no new phones (Covid paid), tree work and carpeting replacement money not spent as budgeted. Audit not complete and due to Pandemic, it may be recommended to increase balance or off-set taxes.

Comment reflecting potential \$100,000 fund balance, please place an honest amount. SS noted that it may be an increase to taxpayers in another year. Can the numbers be updated without the completed audit? KC explained that she thinks the auditors will have a fund balance number by the end of the week. Comment made, Is it too speculative? Who knows? Can the budget committee really make recommendations without knowing true numbers for line 10-12? Line 10 and Line 11 explained by SS as \$100,000 is available to apply to this budget year. SS is reasonably confident that an additional \$100,000 can be added. This would start us \$200,000 'in the hole' for 22-23 school year. Explained further as not having any carry over to start a new budget. It is a gamble if you end up with a new student with special needs. Fund balance from 20-21 is estimated at \$250-275. An additional \$100,000 would drop the taxpayer impact to an increase of 12% not 18%. Confirmed that enrollment is expected to stay steady or increase but not decline. KC will look to get a better free/reduced head count to 21-22 as this impacted our subsidy along with an increase in housing evaluation. This is now done with a separate form due to two free meals a day due to Covid-19 funds. Can the select board explain if the state evaluation matches the towns. The town has not done a reassessment recently.

Line 82 & Line 304 were reviewed again as they overlap. Do we need both lines? Can they both be reduced? Just a thought. If you can shuffle funds across lines do we need either of them, especially if this is a tough year? Statute reads the amount of 5% of any cost center without voter approval.

Line 24 & 42 is this increase for contract negotiations? For three years? Do you expect a 6% increase for each of the three years of the contract? Only once according to KC. What happens if we budget 4% and negotiations are at 6%? Find it elsewhere in budget. What would the increase be the other 2 years of the contract? It is negotiations, so unknown. Turnover in staff makes it challenging. Comment that Appleton is lucky to have the school team it does have. Benefits pays 80% of family health insurance. Do other towns do this? Most surrounding towns pay higher % of health insurance. Comment was made that in the real world nobody gets 80% of family health insurance paid. This is about \$15,000 per teacher. SS commented that with the lack of applicants it is important. New contract starts September 1, 2021. School committee does negotiations along with Superintendent.

April 8th is the deadline to have warrants approved and ballots printed. Town would like a March 29th deadline.

Public comment offered, no comment.

Next Budget Committee meeting Thursday 3/18 6pm to recommend town budget.

School budget Monday 3/22 6pm.

Motion to adjourn at 8:43 unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Kate Moody

