

Budget Hearing Notes

May 13, 2024 at 5:30pm

Meeting Location: Fort Edward Union Free School District - Library

This meeting was also live streamed as part of the Capital Project Information Session and Board of Education Meeting. The link for that stream is:

<https://www.youtube.com/live/IP0NsTSbCT4?feature=shared>

Christopher Rayder presented the Budget Hearing

1. Administrative / Program / Capital
2. Expenditures & Revenue Estimates
 - a. Decrease of almost \$200,000 due to bringing Business Office from FEH BOCES to Fort Edward Employees
 - b. Increase in Capital due to increase in maintenance expenses for the physical plant
 - i. Richard DeMallie noted that during the time/discussions of mergers, the physical plant had been being taken care of and there are items that need immediate fixes
 - ii. Richard DeMallie further noted that although we are looking for a capital project, that will not break ground for at least a year and a half so the increase in current capital budget will allow the immediate needs of the physical plant to be fixed in the inbetween
 - iii. Richard DeMallie further noted that we are now doing preventative maintenance
 - c. Increase for Instructional Program = due to expanded our special education program and adding a new classroom (including a teacher and Teaching Assistant)
 - i. Richard DeMallie noted that although there is an increase in the program (due to adding on a new special education classroom), there is an anticipated revenue for this program due to bringing in students from outside our district
3. School District Budget Notice
4. Estimated Fund Balance
 - a. Adjusted Fund Balance = \$2,609,989
 - b. Assigned Appropriated Fund Balance = \$501,113
 - c. Adjusted Unrestricted Fund Balance = \$588,876
 - d. Adjusted Unrestricted Fund Balance as Percentage of the Total Budget = 4.46%
 - i. Richard DeMallie noted that the Governor's message is to spend down fund balance and feels that the underlying message is that state aid is going to be cut in the future
5. Estimated Property Tax = based on house with a \$100,000 assessed value

- a. Estimated Tax increase No Ctar = \$44/year or \$3.67/month

There was some confusion around the time that the Budget Hearing started so the Budget Hearing was run through again after the Capital Project Information Session, at the request of the community members in attendance.

Questions

1. Stan Majeika, community member, noted that there is a projected decrease in state aid but that state aid for this year is not decreasing.
 - a. Christopher Rayder noted that when the budget was developed, the district had to take into account losing that state aid. Fortunately, the governor was able to keep Save Harmless this year and the district can now anticipate getting that state aid again for the 2024-25 school year.
 - b. Stan Majeika stated that since the District now knows that the state aid will remain the same, there should be no change in the budget and no increase to the taxpayer at all. Christopher Rayder noted that the tax cap is also based on exclusions.
2. Stan Majeika, community member, asked why the estimated expenditures for the board of education was approximately \$19,000.
 - a. Christopher Rayder responded that the board of education now uses BoardDocs to maintain their board agendas, minutes and policies. He also noted that this cost is to cover anticipated training and New York State School Board Association (NYSSBA) membership fees. He added that when Fort Edward joined NYSSBA, we were one of the last districts in the state not participating in the association. He further added that by being a member of NYSSBA, the school district was able to take advantage of the State Aid Specialists (SAS) that helped bring money back to the district that we would have lost, totaling \$200,000, due to special education STACing having been done improperly in the past. Chris Boucher, community member, inquired how much the NYSSBA membership cost and Richard DeMallie confirmed that it is approximately \$5,000. Richard DeMallie added that there are five open board seats and that new board members are required to attend governance and fiduciary training.
3. Stan Majeika, community member, inquired about the \$375,863 estimated expenditures for transportation.
 - a. Christopher Rayder noted that the district currently only offers transportation to special education students. He stated that there is a long range plan and hope of the district to bring transportation back for elementary students through third grade (as had been done in the past). It was noted that providing transportation would eliminate the need for many parents to pick up their children, which would decrease the lines of parents and cars outside of the school each day, and, in turn,

eliminate some of the safety concerns that the additional traffic can cause. It was further noted that the attendance rate may increase by providing transportation to students as some parents are facing difficulty with getting their children to school.

4. Stan Majeika, community member, inquired about the additional \$232,000 estimated expenditures for pupil services.
 - a. Richard DeMallie noted that this is for the new special education program for our continuum of service. He stated that, by adding programs, we are able to keep students in our school. He further noted that if we do not add on a program, the needs of these students will not be able to be met at Fort Edward and they would be sent to outside programming, which is expensive. Amanda Durkee, community member, added that this program has been opened to outside districts to apply for their students to attend, which would generate revenue. She further commented that the information about the availability of this program went out in a timely manner as many districts are currently holding annual reviews and discussing student placement for the 2024-25 school year and, now, they have the Fort Edward program in mind as they make their determinations.