

# **DRAFT Minutes of the Joint City Council/School Board Finance Committee Meeting**

**Date: Wednesday March 10, 2021**

**Time: 5:30 PM**

**Place: FHS cafeteria**

## **Committee Members:**

**Jo Brown Chair:** City Council Finance Committee Ward 1

**Deborah Brown Chair:** School Board Finance Committee

**Scott Clarenbach:** City Councilor, Ward 3

**April Bunker:** City Councilor, Ward 3

**Tim Dow:** Chair, SAU 18 School Board, Ward 3

**Delaney Carrier:** School Board Member, Ward 1

## **Attendees:**

**Judie Milner:** City Manager, City of Franklin

**Esaundra "Pessy" Gaudette:** Finance Director, City of Franklin

**Dan LeGallo:** Superintendent SAU 18

**Jule Finley:** Curriculum Director SAU 18

**Jefferson Braman:** Business Administrator

1. City Manager Judie Milner started the meeting with a brief history of the impact of Covid-19 on the city:
  - a. The city was mostly closed throughout the summer and fall, although the summer recreation program was fairly robust.
  - b. A lot of overtime in several departments as absences due to the virus occurred
  - c. Plexiglass windows were installed in public areas.
  - d. There have been revenue losses throughout the municipal departments and the city economic development slowed down as the virus worsened.
  - e. Some downtown businesses received PPP and SBA Loans which have helped keep them afloat.
  - f. Outdoor recreation has been good but shoppers generally have fallen off as restaurants had to contend with limited accessibility or resort to just a takeout service.
  - g. A bright note has been the real estate market with homes selling very quickly, above their asking price and in as little as five days.

- h. Tax-wise the city is in a pretty good place but we are about \$400K down
  - i. This year the state budget will be a challenge as most of our state revenues are based on prior years numbers – Rooms and Meals and Gas Tax, etc.,
  - j. Our state Rooms & Meals revenue is currently at 16% not at 40 %.
    - i. Our biggest concern is the NH Retirement increase – huge impact for city employees and teachers - 176K increase.
    - ii. We are expecting less than ½ of our Highway block grant monies which goes into our roads budget.
  - k. It will be hard to get under the tax cap this year.
2. Superintendent Dan LeGallo provided an update on the impact to the SAU.
- a. With the quick shut down last spring, the SAU had to move quickly to transition to remote learning.
  - b. One on one chrome books really helped with the remote learning.
  - c. Administration used the summer to develop a reopening plan and a more robust remote learning plan.
  - d. Time Dow commented that the Superintendent made it much easier for transparency and communication for all SAU employees.
  - e. A hybrid model was adopted that allowed students to physically attend school a couple days a week.
  - f. Keeping a mask on was easier than was thought and the 6 ft distancing allowed students to take mask breaks when seated at their desks.
  - g. Students started school Sept 15 but due to the virus, the SAU has had to shut down several times. Here is where the hybrid system has helped.
  - h. Biggest challenge is the learning loss – and this is not just for our SAU – it is nationwide.
  - i. We are anticipating long term issues to deal with as the hybrid model has been difficult for a lot of the younger kids.
    - i. Parents have to stay home adding stress on the families.
  - j. Councilor Bunker asked how the Special Ed children were doing
  - k. Superintendent LeGallo replied that those most at risk were brought into the school four days a week. This included students at all 3 schools.
    - i. The Spec Ed Teams worked together to broaden their approach to student support.
    - ii. If a child was really struggling, he/she was brought in to the school if possible.
    - iii. The challenge will be when they come back and have to readjust to another new “normal.”
    - iv. The SAU is planning a robust summer program to help mitigate the learning loss issue across the board.

- l. Federal ESSER funding has helped the Spec Ed students as well as providing funds for the purchase of PPE supplies.
- m. Teachers will be vaccinated at Franklin Hospital in late March/early April.
- n. Free and reduced lunch program provided a seamless summer option and the SAU Food Service staff worked throughout the summer to provide meals to over-250 kids - looking for reimbursement from the state as currently the SAU is \$1.3M behind.
- o. SAU starting budget will be \$1.3M behind because of 1-time revenues expiring.
- p. Tim Dow mentioned that legislation allowing private or charter school vouchers to parents at the expense of public education could take out about 50M from public schools.
- q. HB633 would restore lost adequacy that would provide 1.3 M back to the school.
- r. Deborah Brown stated that the School Finance Committee is working on the 2021-2022 budget and will be ready to present it in May.
  - i. They are working to put together a tax-cap budget.

Respectively Submitted

Jo Brown, City Councilor, Ward 1

Franklin NH 03235