



**Town of Amherst
Town Council Meeting - Four Towns Meeting
December 5, 2020
9:00 a.m.
Virtual Meeting
Minutes**

Councilors participating remotely: Brewer, DuMont, Griesemer, Hanneke, Pam, Ryan, Schoen, Steinberg

Councilors absent: Bahl-Milne, DeAngelis, Ross, Schreiber, Swartz

Others participating remotely: Members of the Amherst School Committee, Town Manager Paul Bockelman, Finance Director Sean Mangano, Comptroller Sonia Aldrich

The meeting was called to order at 9:08 a.m. by Regional School Committee Chair Alison McDonald.

Superintendent of Schools Mike Morris stated that this was the first of multiple Four-Town meetings. Superintendent Morris and School Finance Director Douglas Slaughter presented a series of slides outlining the Regional School Department's finances, budget, and projections under various scenarios.

They noted the many challenges of managing a school district in a COVID-19 pandemic year. And added that while cost of supplies for schools may be down due to remote learning, costs for special education services has increased.

One Town Councilor from Amherst asked if the School District was considering the installation of solar canopies on the Regional School District parking lots. The Superintendent stated that they had looked into it on a District wide basis but no plans were in place at this time.

At 10:30 a.m., the four towns entered into separate breakout rooms, and the Amherst Town Council engaged in a discussion.

Councilor Steinberg emphasized the difference between a level-funding and level services budget. It was noted that there were built in increases – step increases under existing collective bargaining agreements – that would drive an increase in the School District's budget. It was also noted that the reliance on remote teaching may reduce the number of students interested in attending the Regional School District. This, in turn, will result in a higher per-student cost of education.

There was discussion of the challenges the School District would face with a level funded budget. These were put into the context that all Town departments were being asked to develop level funded budgets and all departments in the Town would have adverse impacts as a result.

At 10:50, the four towns returned to meeting together. Councilor Steinberg reported on the discussion as did representatives from the other three towns.

Superintendent thanked all for being at the meeting and said the next Four Towns meeting was likely to be in late January.

The meeting adjourned at 11:02 a.m.

Record of Agenda Packet Materials and Documents Presented

12-05-2020 FINAL Special Town Council Agenda - Four Towns Meeting
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