Hello Hampshire Students and Families,

Given the heightened concerns and awareness regarding the budget situation, I would like to share with you the current status of the HRHS budget and clarify some misconceptions. The purpose of this message is simply to provide factual information about the budget process and the scenarios that have been discussed so far.

Below is a timeline of the various budget scenarios that have been presented and discussed so far, information about what will be presented on March 16, and information about budget cuts that have occurred over the past few years.

- **At the February 9 preliminary budget hearing**, I, along with Superintendent Perrone and Business Administrator Scaparotti, presented two budget scenarios for next year.
    - The first budget scenario presented was a level services budget--under a level services budget, we maintain all programs and services that we currently have at Hampshire. Because of rising health insurance costs, increased special education costs, contractual increases, transportation increases, and utility increases, a level services budget would be over a 9% increase, even without any actual additions to our programs or services.
    - The second budget scenario presented was a budget that was below level services and included approximately $600,000 worth of cuts to the current programs and services we offer at HRHS. This was presented at the directive of the finance subcommittee. This scenario would result in reductions to our staffing in almost every department, the elimination of JV sports, reduction of some AP and honors courses, elimination of courses in a variety of departments, elimination of most academic interventions, increase to class sizes, and a change in graduation requirements.
    - The school committee ultimately voted to approve a preliminary budget with a 5.66% increase. A 5.66% increase is below level services and essentially includes $400,000 worth of cuts to our current programming.
- **Since the February 9 preliminary budget hearing**, the finance subcommittee has met to prepare a budget with a 5.66% increase. School and district administration has worked to prepare this budget in a way that has the least possible impact on students.
- **At the March 16 budget meeting**, we will be presenting the 5.66% increase budget that was voted on at the preliminary hearing. The impact of a 5.66% increase (or in other words, cutting $400,000 from level services) includes:
    - Reduction of numerous supply and textbook lines
    - Change to our laptop program at the middle school level
    - Elimination of an administrative assistant, a wellness teacher, a school adjustment counselor, and a music teacher
    - Elimination of five teacher leader stipended positions
    - Elimination of late buses
    - Increase to athletic user fees (to offset the cost of JV sports)

    - AP exams to be paid by families instead of covered by the school (to maintain our Advanced Placement programming)
- For the sake of clarity and transparency, these are the reductions to our budget that have occurred **over the past three fiscal years**:
    - FY24: Eliminated 2 teaching positions: math teacher and academic interventionist
    - FY25: Eliminated 2 teaching positions: wellness teacher and another academic interventionist
    - FY26: Eliminated 2.5 teaching positions: school librarian, art teacher, and .5 of a business teacher
    - In all three of these years, cuts have also been made to other lines in the budget including staff professional development, supplies, textbook and curriculum materials, and virtual programming.

As the budget process continues, I want to emphasize that these types of meetings and discussions are part of the annual budgeting process for our district. The School Committee will review and deliberate on the proposed budget at the March 16 meeting before making final decisions. Whatever budget the school committee approves on March 16 will then go to the town meetings in May and June for final approval from the towns.

My goal in sharing this information is simply to keep families informed about the process and the potential impacts on programs and services at HRHS, as well as to clarify any misperceptions. I care deeply not only about Hampshire Regional High School, but about our entire district, including the important work happening in our elementary schools. I recognize that these decisions affect all of our communities. As always, I remain committed to supporting all of our students and working together to maintain a strong and connected school district.

Sincerely,
Lauren Hotz, Principal