

RSU 18 Rome Director's May update
June 12 2018/19 school budget referendum
Please Vote – town hall!

6/3/18

Everyone,

As always I hope you will reach out to me by phone, in person or email to share your thoughts and perspectives. (397-5332 acook@rsu18.org). The weather is just beautiful – hurrah and at last!

The big thing for us all is the June 12 BUDGET vote:

Some Information that may help you in your voting decision.

1. Get a copy of the 2018/19 budget report the Superintendent created. I will work to get twenty to town hall on Monday. It is well worth the read. Most importantly the front page says **“Striving for Academic Excellence.”**
2. This is great! Educating our young men and women for their lives is what it is all about! I have a sense that the RSU is renewing its focus on its critical mission – **educational excellence.**
3. The school tax to Rome is going up 3.8%. That sounds like a lot but consider the following.
4. Last November all five towns, with a majority in each town (including Rome), approved a \$13.9M bond. That bond is to finance school fire safety upgrades, school infrastructure maintenance (roofs, drop off areas, etc.) and the high school track and field improvements.
5. The bond payment alone increases Rome tax by about 7.2%.
6. However the Superintendent, his staff, & School Board found cost savings, plus the State has come through with additional funds. So the next result is an increase of only 3.8%. *
7. In fact, with the bond payments taken out, the school budget increased only 0.65%.
8. So the budget is very reasonable.
9. And the decision to support the \$13.9M bond was made last November by us all.
10. I am seeing increased focus by the Superintendent, the chief academic officer on academic excellence. They did just release the “RSU 18 comprehensive needs assessment” report. This is a start to having a long range plan to drive up academic performance.**
11. So, I voted for this budget. I support the efforts that are underway.
12. We are not there yet, we are not where we want to be in terms of academics and implementing the critical capital plan. But I do see progress occurring.
13. I hope you will come out and vote. And if you endorse the facts above, **please vote FOR the budget.**

Yours in helping our students by helping RSU 18 set the standard for academic excellence for public schools in Maine.

Rome – a great place to live, and a great place to grow up!

Dr. Andrew Cook
397-5332

* Our tax figure could have been lower had the reconvened RSU 18 cost sharing committee voted to endorse a very fair proposal made by the China delegation. Their proposal would have reduced the “cost sharing” tax component to Rome and Belgrade. Regrettably, and for reason I still cannot understand, two members of the Belgrade delegation voted to leave things as is. That meant Belgrade and Rome lost the opportunity to reduce our school tax. It’s a shame. Becky Seel, the Belgrade Schoolboard Director, did vote for the change, as did the Rome and China delegations. She deserves our full support. It is the other two Belgrade members who voted in a most curious way. AGC

** Curiously the conclusion of the report is that the most important thing to improve academic performance is to get the students to school. Reducing absenteeism and tardiness are the two key areas for focus to help all student improve academically. The message: let’s get our children to school - it well worth it for us all!