

MEMBERS PRESENT: **DEIRDRE BURNS**
 MARK FLEISCHHAUER
 DIANE KANTAROS
 DIANE LYONS
 LAURA SCHULKIND
 DEIRDRE d'ALBERTIS
 LISA ROSENTHAL

OTHERS PRESENT: **JOSEPH PHELAN, TOM BURNELL,**
 ED DAVENPORT, JOHN KEMNITZER, BRETT
 KING, MARVIN KREPS, RICHARD ZIPP, MARC
 BURG, FERN LOX, STEVE JENSEN, BILL
 WORRELL, JEN HAMMOUD, GABE HAMMOUD

1.0 Call to Order

President Burns called the workshop to order at 9:10 am.

Motion by Fleischhauer, seconded by Rosenthal, the Board voted to appoint Meg Todisco as Clerk Pro Tempore.

VOTE: 7 AYE (Burns, Fleischhauer, d'Albertis, Kantaros, Lyons, Rosenthal, Schulkind; 0 NAY; 0 ABSTAIN; 0 ABSENT)

MOTION CARRIED

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Workshop Process and Ground Rules

President Burns thanked the administrators and all those present for forgoing time with family and weekend activities to be present for the workshop as the District works towards developing the best budget possible for the 2014-15 school year.

Mr. Phelan reviewed the budget development process and noted that the Budget is scheduled for adoption at the April 8 Board meeting, but that in the past, the adoption was often put off until the next meeting when information, particularly concerning state aid, became available and thereby allowed for adjustments as the Board might see fit.

2.2 Content and Format of the Budget

Mr. Phelan reviewed the three-part format for presenting the budget to the public. This is the format required by State Ed. The Budget presented in the Budget Hearing will be the same budget, but will appear in a different format.

2.3 New York State Tax Levy Cap

Mr. Burnell reviewed the operation of the Tax Cap and discussed the new information just received concerning the mechanism for factoring in the prior year tax levy. The State has changed the interpretation of carryover and has determined

that the carryover the District had previously reserved for use this year, \$162,000, is no longer available. If this interpretation had been provided last year, the District would have crafted the budget differently. The difference hinges on the Tax Cap Levy before exemptions are applied. Last year those exemptions were for TRS contributions exceeding a 2% rate increase and the Capital exclusion, and the Tax Cap Levy before the current exemptions. In the prior year, the carryover was based on the Tax Cap Levy after exemptions. RCSD was audited by the Comptroller's Office the previous year and was allowed a carryover from the previous year.

RCSD used this carryover provision last year in order to provide a savings to the taxpayers. Now the Comptroller's Office has ruled that such anomalies cannot be recognized and the \$162,000 designated carryover, representing 0.7% of the budget that could have been, but was not, included in the tax levy for 13-14, has been eliminated.

For this year, the allowable growth factor is 1.46%. The District has filed a form with the Comptroller's Office indicating it does not plan to exceed the tax cap. At present, the budget is at a point that exceeds the tax cap but more information is due from DEHIC regarding insurance rates and from the State regarding State Aid and both will have an impact. Therefore, the position of the budget in terms of the tax cap will be changing.

Discussion followed about the serious adverse impact of the State changing its rules without telling school districts ahead of time, and it is an issue that will be brought to the attention of our State legislators.

Mr. Burnell then reviewed the status of the fund balance and the factors that are affecting the likely increase in the fund balance by the end of this school year. Mr. Burnell reviewed some of this year's expenses, including the significant rise in electricity rates, changes to the Workers Compensation program, the Health Insurance premium holiday in December, savings from improvements to the HVAC systems, and savings from the lighting project. Discussion followed concerning the plans for the use of fund balance in crafting the budget for 2014-15. The Finance Committee will be taking up the question of how to use the fund balance.

3.0 Public Comment

There was no public comment.

4.0 Expenditure Projections To Date

4.1 Rollover budget with fixed costs

Mr. Phelan noted that current deletions and additions under consideration had been discussed at prior Board meetings.

4.2 First-Second Draft Budgets

Mr. Phelan noted the Drafts that had been discussed during recent Board meetings.

4.3 Third Draft Budget

Mr. Burnell reviewed a number of adjustments, resulting in the 3rd Draft, including coverage for the cost of AP exams; Library Automation software provided by Follett Library Automation, which represents a cost-savings over the current BOCES service; the decreased Workers Comp expense; and the DEHIC insurance expense, which is not yet known.

5.0 Revenue Projections To Date

5.1 State Aid

Mr. Phelan noted that the State Aid figures have not been finalized yet.

5.2 Other Revenues

Discussion returned to the topic of the use of fund balance and then moved to the adverse impact of the State's Gap Elimination Adjustment on school budgets and the need for the State to dial back, if not abolish, the measure given that there is no longer a gap.

Additional discussion addressed the proposal for a Smart Schools Technology initiative, which would require a State referendum but, if approved, would treat all districts equally and produce an inequitable result.

Mr. Burnell continued with his review of items in the 3rd Draft Budget, including, on the revenue side, the steep decline over the years in interest income. He noted that when he arrived in the District there was approximately \$350,000 in revenue from interest income. It is now down to approximately \$40,000. The MTA payroll tax has been eliminated for school districts. Also on the plus side, Medicaid reimbursements are once again being processed.

President Burns adjourned the meeting at 10:30 am for a short break.

President Burns recalled the meeting to order at 10:38 am.

6.0 Discussion and Review of Current Budget Proposal and Potential Adjustments

The discussion opened with a question to Mr. Jensen as to whether he believes the proposed funding for the technology enhancements that have been in development for some time will be adequate to the purpose.

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Mr. Jensen noted that infusing a large amount of funding all at once, across the board, involving all the components, would likely lead to a challenge in sustainability down the road. With an incremental introduction of the various upgrades, covering not just equipment and infrastructure, but staff training as well, there is a greater assurance that the District will not eventually face a huge bill when many or all components would need to be addressed to avoid widespread failure. It is better to build on a cycle that addresses each component in turn, which becomes a case of doing fewer things at a time but doing them well.

Mr. Jensen reviewed the necessary upgrades and replacements, including computers at the Elementary School for which support is no longer provided given their software; getting WiFi across the District; possibly developing an enterprise email system; and addressing problems with the network, which would need replacement of wiring, switches and hubs. Improvements to the technology-related systems will provide teachers with the reliability they need to have confidence in incorporating technology into their instruction.

Discussion turned to whether the funding was available for the approach Mr. Jensen outlined. Mr. Phelan noted that money in this year's budget for technology had not been expended so that he would have funds available when he came on board in mid-year and had time to assess what needed to be done. So there is money available now for equipment, along with a comparable amount for 2014-15. The funds from a Technology Grant are available for the wireless work and that should be done this summer, with Mr. Jensen now available to provide leadership.

Discussion then turned to athletics and the total cost to the District for crew, swimming and lacrosse. Interest was expressed in moving in the direction of fully supporting the three sports, but this would involve assessing continued and sustained participation. Transportation would be a big issue. It was decided that the participation numbers for sports would be made available to the Board members at the next Board meeting.

The Board members then opened a discussion on facilities needs, in particular the plan for asbestos tile replacement. Most areas do not present an issue given that the floor tiles are secure. However, going forward, it would be advisable to address the tile replacement, but a determination would need to be made as to whether to do so on an incremental basis or as part of a larger capital project. The Finance Committee will take up the discussion.

Further discussion touched on equipment for the physical education program and software for the Guidance program.

The Board members discussed with Mr. Kemnitzer whether an expanded foreign language program would be possible at the Middle School. Mr. Kemnitzer noted that the conversation continues, but the master schedule is very tight and if the program were to

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run in 7th grade every day rather than every other day, some other component would have to fall by the wayside.

The Board members then discussed with Mr. King his visit, along with Mr. Kreps and Mr. Jensen, to the Lake Avenue School in Saratoga to observe the Project Lead the Way program in operation in that school. Mr. King described the School as being of a size similar to CLS. The program utilizes a Lead Teacher who attends multi-day training on the modules and who then works with the grade level teachers in implementation. The discussion then focused on how this program might operate at CLS, how a full time teacher might fit in some configuration, and the need to maintain the current Science Lab program as a valuable hands-on learning experience. The space is available for operating this program but implementation would have to be planned well and would likely be best introduced one grade at a time.

Mr. Kreps was asked about the reasoning behind his request for a Curriculum Governance Council, the concept of incentivizing faculty participation, and whether the proposed professional development budget amount would be adequate for what is needed.

Mr. Kreps reviewed the evolution of curriculum governance programs and the effects of NCLB. The current structure puts pressure on teachers by pulling them out of the classroom to participate in the governance teams, but this requires reliance on substitute teachers to adequately follow the lesson plans and advance student learning as desired. Cross-building communication presents a difficulty. The intrusion of outsiders with no knowledge of the District or its resources has now become a new hurdle. All this has made the need for a local filter apparent. Through a District Curriculum Governance Council, CLS, BMS and RHS will determine what our schools look like. The Council may develop programs more challenging than what are now imposed, but also may shift material from one place to another as developmentally appropriate. This would provide a means to do our own research and develop careful academic planning, the kind of planning that does not come out of quick conversations. We would then be using the knowledge of the people we have hired in their own content areas, showing them professional respect, and allowing them to dig into something they have a passion about. The work would take place outside the contractual day. The number has not yet been negotiated with the RTA, but would need to be.

The budget for professional development was increased for this year, which resulted in much summer curriculum work and likely we would need to do the same again for this year. The current budgeted amount should meet that need. Going forward, as we have newer teachers coming in, the budgeted amount may need to rise.

A brief discussion followed concerning the Social Science elective. Dr. Davenport believes there is sufficient student interest and noted that there are still a number of students who are not taking advantage of electives as they could, particularly in Period 1

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and Period 9. There is thought being given to exploring the possibility of expanding to a year-long electives class in Psychology which would involve partnering with Dutchess Community College and for which students would earn college credit.

7.0 Public Comment

President Burns asked if there was anyone from the public who wished to comment. There was no comment.

Mr. Phelan noted that the Principals would be giving their monthly reports at the March 25th Board meeting. If the Board members wished for any of the administrators to come back to discuss any matters with the Board, he was sure they would return.

President Burns commented that this process in developing the budget and considering potential programs and services is very helpful in navigating and balancing the various needs.

8.0 Adjournment

Motion by Fleischhauer, seconded by Rosenthal, the Board voted to adjourn at 11:55 am.

VOTE: 7 AYE (Burns, Fleischhauer, d'Albertis, Kantaros, Lyons, Rosenthal, Schulkind; 0 NAY; 0 ABSTAIN; 0 ABSENT)

MOTION CARRIED

Respectfully submitted,

Meg Todisco
Clerk Pro Tempore