

**BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING  
FEBRUARY 11, 2009**

**MINUTES**

**Present:** Mary Tipton, School Board; Diana Rennie, CEA; Carol Kohler, CAEOP; Jennifer Gurule, PSE; Helen Charneski, District Office representative; Terry Cavender, Athletics; Roland Minder, Coaches; John Spencer, CAC (Citizens Advisory Committee); Cathy Sork, Elementary Principals; Marilyn Boerke, Middle School Principals; Amy Holmes & Steve Marshall, Secondary Principals; Mike Nerland, Tanis Knight, Rita Pakenen, Ina Evers-Martin, Administrative Cabinet Representatives; Ralph Pruitt, Special Services; Bryan McGeachy, Operations/ Transportation; Brian McClatchie, Community Representative; Doreen McKercher, Public Relations; Anne Guard, Recording Secretary. There were also two visitors present.

Tanis Knight opened the meeting at 4:00 p.m.

- Tanis reviewed the objectives of today's meeting. These include:
  - a. Review of related updates regarding the legislature; activities in districts around us; recent budget presentations.
  - b. Hone in on the specific types of information and feedback needed from each budget sub-committee.
  - c. Provide time for sub-committee planning.
  - d. Group discussion of prioritization process and feedback from stakeholders.
  - e. Revisit timeline and necessary next steps in advance of the March meeting.
- Mike Nerland reported that he and Casey O'Dell had gone to Olympia to a WSSDA conference and met with local legislators. He indicated that the expected \$6 billion budget deficit is now closer to \$8 billion. The House and Senate have not yet presented their budgets. Currently, there are also about 150 education-related bills in committee.
- Mike handed out information related to Senate Bill 5607 and Senate Bill 5444, which are two education bills in committee that relate to the revamping of school financing. In this time of resource shortage, it is unclear how these bills will fare. Many of the proposals for other improvements or mandates for education also emerge as unfunded requirements. Since 2003, there have been 230 unfunded mandates for education. Some legislators have promised to ease up on any new unfunded mandates.
- Ina Evers-Martin reported that the federal stimulus package had been signed by the U.S. Senate. It included additional resources for Title I, federal IDEA and some additional education money for the states. We will keep the committee informed once the details of any final stimulus bill becomes available.
- Ina reported that the cabinet group has done about fifteen (15) budget presentations to staff, the City of Camas, and some parent groups. The presentation team is using a PowerPoint presentation—the same one shared with building staffs and the board.

- Tanis Knight reviewed some common questions the presenters have been receiving from various audiences:
  - a. There is a misunderstanding about the funds available for bond projects versus the funds we receive from the state for basic education. Presenters have had to clarify that bond dollars cannot be diverted to pay for staffing or materials or instructional services. They can only be used for new capital construction.
  - b. Why not delay opening of the new elementary schools? (Schools are already at capacity or beyond now. We need these new schools to house students.)
  - c. Can we help? What can we do? -- (Parent groups in particular seem to be realizing the gravity of the budget situation and are asking how they can help. They have been encouraged to contact their legislators and to provide input to the budget committee when asked in the future.)
  - d. Why don't we stop building the two new schools? Although they are replacement schools, both Grass Valley and Helen Baller will net additional, needed capacity. Ina pointed out that if the bond dollars are not spent on the construction in a timely manner, the district is penalized by paying arbitrage. Additionally, the bid climate now is good for proceeding as scheduled with the building projects—one possible silver lining of the economic downturn.

There are plans to host some budget-related community forums, and the presentation team will speak to more parent groups in the near future. Overall, the budget update presentations have been well received and good questions have been posed.

- Tanis & Mike reviewed information received from other districts concerning their budget processes to date:
  - a. Vancouver: Mike handed out a packet of information from VSD. Vancouver has a committee of staff and parents addressing budget issues. They have not taken any specific budget actions yet, but are waiting for more budget details to come from the legislature. Vancouver has launched a very broad, open-ended feedback form where patrons can make cost-saving suggestions and ask budget-related questions.
  - b. Evergreen: Informational articles from the Columbian were handed out concerning Evergreen School District's budget plans. Evergreen has shared a list of possible specific budget cuts with their building staffs. Input is being collected about these proposals in a global format. Not surprisingly, various constituencies are lobbying to maintain their particular programs.
  - c. Kelso: This school district is ahead of Camas in the process in the sense that they have already proposed very specific budget cuts for review. The Kelso School District is having public forums to collect input on these proposals. Additionally, they have a fairly specific survey on their web site to gather data about funding priorities. At this point, Kelso is also dealing with declining enrollment.
  - d. LaCenter: They are starting the budgeting process in March.
  - e. Woodland: This district seems to feel their budget standing is fine for now. They are using their Fund Balance to meet budget needs and will do most of the budget work later.
  - f. Yakima, Northshore, Federal Way: articles and attachments were handed out to show budget scenarios and process ideas from these other school districts.

- The group broke into sub-committees to work for 20 minutes. The five standing sub-committees include: Certificated Staffing; Classified Staffing; Maintenance and Operations; Special Education Programs; Athletics and Activities.

- Sub-Committee status reports followed:

Ralph Pruitt – Special Services: The group is working on a program review. They are investigating cost savings for programs and expenses, for example: sharing expenses with Washougal or providing services to students within the district rather than out-of-district placement. This committee is also looking into the program costs per student for various special services programs across the district. The group is close to having a range of possible cost saving options developed.

Terry Cavender – Athletics: This group will be asking for community input on some issues. They are working on a tiered proposal with percentages of cost savings ranging from lower impact to significant impact. Terry is also collecting information from other athletic directors in the area as decisions made in other districts will obviously have bearing on our situation. Sub-committee work is nearing completion.

Steve Marshall – Activities: Like athletics, this group will have a tiered proposal for cost savings developed soon. They are working on three options that have savings attached.

Bryan McGeachy – Operations/Transportation: The group has examined a wide range of possibilities for cost savings for transportation. They have analyzed district walk zones, the use of walking school buses, a 4-day work week, elimination of ½ day kindergarten every day (use 2 or 3 full days per week instead). All of this discussion will bear on their final recommendations. In Operations, there are five to six areas where trimming could occur. These include but are not limited to custodial, grounds, maintenance, warehouse, etc.

Rita Pakenen – Classified Employees: Their group is working on a list of possible savings, which have been prioritized. The final proposals would be dependent on district program needs, community input and priorities, contractual obligations and state revenue forecasts. This sub-committee is well along with their work and has been meeting frequently.

Mike Nerland – Certified Employees: This sub-committee looked at possible reduction areas, including full and part-time positions, full-day kindergarten every other day, nursing costs, extended days, and more. The group is making good progress and will meet timeline expectations that have been presented.

- Tanis indicated that the group would be developing an initial list of budget considerations to share with the school board. Some questions the committee will want to resolve include:
  - a. When should the initial submissions from the sub-committees be collected and reported?
  - b. How will the master list be pared down and edited?
  - c. What will be the process for the full Budget Committee to review the first draft? Options may include:
    - Take sub-committee drafts and eliminate any duplication.
    - Put all the high and medium ranking recommendations on one list.
    - Share all recommendations with the full budget committee once completed.
    - Take an edited and refined draft to the School Board once the full budget committee has finalized its work.

- Solicit input from the school board about how they would like to capture community and staff input on priorities for budget reductions and program impact.

- Some comments/questions came from the group:

Bryan McGeachy: What would happen if funding was lost, i.e. I-728. Would we eliminate 28 teachers or spread the loss among all program?

John Spencer: His group would still like to see the list of low priorities in case there are some that are actually more important in another member's eyes.

Mary Tipton: Would like to see feedback and prioritization feedback related to cuts in broad categories—not necessarily very specific items.

The group also felt a list of frequently asked questions/answers should be put on our web page related to the budget.

- Tanis indicated the staff will collect the sub-committee lists of possible cuts and priorities and share a master draft with the committee as a whole. Next steps for the committee will include:

\*\*\* All lists should be to Ina by February 27, 2009.

\*\*\* The lists will be compiled and then submitted to the budget committee at their March 11, 2009 meeting for further discussion and consideration.

\*\*\* Hopefully, the committee will have some preliminary information to share with the school board at its March 23<sup>rd</sup> board meeting. It is the committee's desire that we utilize some process to solicit community and staff input on funding priorities shortly thereafter.

Mike thanked everyone for coming, and for all the valuable input and the participation.

The meeting adjourned at 5:25 p.m.

Again, next meeting is March 11, 2009 at 4:00 p.m.