

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

MINUTES

Present: Marilyn Boerke, Terry Cavender, Helen Charneski, Ina Evers-Martin, Jennifer Gurule, Amy Holmes, Tanis Knight, Carol Kohler, Steve Marshall, Brian McClatchie, Bryan McGeachy, Mike Nerland, Casey O'Dell, Rita Pakenen, Diana Rennie, Cathy Sork, John Spender, Mary Tipton; Doreen McKercher, Public Relations; Anne Guard, Recording Secretary.

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

- Mike Nerland gave an update on current legislative activities. The legislature is still in session. The next budget update should be out March 19. A version of the Senate budget should follow soon (within 3-4 days), and the House budget will emerge 3-4 days after that.

The bill to repeal unfunded mandates impacting schools passed the Senate on March 10. It now goes to the House.

There is a School Finance Bill pending in the Senate that calls for no new programs to be legislated unless funding is made available.

There were some state levies and bonds being considered by the voters recently. In March, 7 of the 14 districts seeking approval of bonds were successful. Longview and Kalama both passed levies their levies. This is encouraging considering that both districts are also anticipating some serious budget cuts.

- Tanis handed out and reviewed the list of objectives and tasks for today's meeting. They were:
 - Discuss compiled lists of cost saving recommendations and edit, clarify and adjust these options.
 - Give time for feedback from each sub-committee and from individual committee members.
 - Allow time for group exploration and involvement in building a couple of hypothetical budget "packages."
 - Committee examination and input on possible survey formats for staff and community.
 - Review and discuss community forum opportunities.
 - Re-examination of budget timeline, next steps, and contingency planning
 - Last call and adjourn.

Tanis asked for questions from the group. The following questions from the group were discussed:

- Why would "pay for play" not appear as a possible reduction affecting the budget? Ina explained that this would actually be a revenue item. While "pay for play" could "offset" other expenses, it would, nevertheless, remain as revenue on the books. Fees for athletes, etc. would go to the ASB, and more athletic expenses might be paid from the ASB. However, this would not affect the General Fund budget expenditures. "Pay to play" could still be considered as an overall budget option down the road.
- A question was posed about charging for other services—like a registration fee for certain specialty classes, etc. Ina explained that we cannot charge parents for anything that is considered Basic Education by the state. Most instructional programs fall into this definition.

- One member pointed out that the drug and alcohol counselors at the secondary schools are very valuable, and she would hate to see them cut as the needs obviously exist.
- Would cutting coaches mean cutting sports programs? Terry Cavender explained that cutting some assistant coaches would not necessarily eliminate a particular sports program because the head coach (and possibly some other assistant coaches) would remain. However, If “B” and “C” teams are eliminated, or some middle school teams, then program offerings would definitely be affected.
- Tanis had the group break into their sub-committees and work on a “budget packaging” exercise. Each group had to propose cuts to reach a 2% budget reduction and then a 5% budget reduction. By doing this simulation, all members could see how difficult it is to reach these large dollar cuts.
- The group then discussed a variety of possible budget surveys which could be distributed to staff and community members in order to gain input about priorities. Tanis handed out samples of possible surveys for review. The group agreed that a more detailed survey would be appropriate for the internal staff, while a shorter, more generic survey would be best to gauge public funding priorities. Methods of distribution were discussed. The Board would have the final decision on the actual surveys disseminated.

The group did agree that the surveys should be out for comment between March 24 and April 15.

- Mike discussed the community forums the Board plans to hold in the near future to address the budget. They would be held using a “listening post” type format. Board members, administrators, and staff members would be available to listen to comments and concerns from community members. These forums would begin after spring break and run through the end of April.
- Mike is meeting with all union groups the week of March 16 to discuss budget issues, some across-the-board cost saving ideas as well as concerns from each of the groups.
- Tanis opened the floor for other comments and/or questions.
 - It is possible that the Board could call this committee back together if they needed more information or input.
 - The group asked that the results of the surveys be released to the committee. Perhaps the group could reconvene after the surveys have come back in to look at the results and review recommendations.

The committee will meet again on Wednesday, April 29, 2009 at 4:00 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.