

**MINUTES OF THE BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
ST. HELENS SCHOOL DISTRICT #502
ST. HELENS, OREGON**

The Budget Committee of St. Helens School District #502, Columbia County, Oregon convened in the Administrative Office of the District, County and State on May 7, 2008.

Present Were:

Dennis Minsent, Budget Committee Chair
Alan King, Budget Committee Vice Chair
Bill Crist, Budget Committee Member
Jana Mann, Budget Committee Member
Rebecca Wallace, Budget Committee Member
Terri Burns, Budget Committee Member
Patrick Loupin, Budget Committee Member
Carol Ford, Budget Committee Member
Nathan Helwig, Budget Committee Member
Patricia Adams, Superintendent
Adam Stewart, Director of Operations & Facilities
Judith Custy, Director of Curriculum & Instruction
Amanda Stuber, Executive Assistant

Dennis Minsent called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led the flag salute.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

After the committee reviewed the April 16, 2008 Budget Meeting minutes Alan King moved to approve the minutes as presented. Rebecca Wallace seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

PRESENTATION OF 2008-09 PROPOSED BUDGET & BUDGET MESSAGE

Prior to delivering the 2008-2009 Budget Message Superintendent Adams explained that even though the proposed 2008-2009 budget contains reductions, a great deal of effort has been made to protect the classroom teachers and to keep class sizes down. The Budget Message stated the proposed budget confirms the district's commitment to the students and the community of St. Helens School District and strengthens the district's ability to achieve the district's mission, beliefs, and goals. The document is a collective work of the school board and administrative team that sets direction and aligns resources for the future.

The Budget Message includes the 2008-2009 district goals; key statistics; and expenditures and commitments such as salaries and benefits, and an increase in the utilities budget. The proposed budget that follows the message reflects a \$900,000 decrease in revenue due to the decline in student enrollment that projects an approximate 150 student reduction. This cost was explained as being offset in the proposed budget through attrition, a reduction in staff, and the consolidation of programs.

In previous years budget allocations have restored the district's capacity to continue with an aggressive agenda to support the academic, social, and emotional needs of St. Helens School District students. These allocations have also reflected increased staffing in all areas and strengthened resources such as textbook materials and computers. The proposed 2008-2009 budget allows for the district to continue the support of curriculum work, textbooks, instructional materials, and supplies in reading, writing, and assessment.

DISCUSSION OF 2008-09 PROPOSED BUDGET

Mr. Stewart reviewed the list of highlighted additions and deletions in the proposed budget. Eliminations include a variety of staffing at all levels and attrition through retirements and resignations.

Terri Burns questioned the economic downfall to the state funding.

Mr. Stewart noted there is not a decrease in student funding. The shortfall is due to the decrease in enrollment. The decrease in enrollment creates a decrease in the state funding received.

Mr. Crist questioned the reduction of the bond preparation fund.

Mr. Stewart confirmed that there is a reduction to the fund but it is decreased.

Estimated class sizes for the 2008-2009 school year was reviewed and it was noted that if the over load assistants remain in the budget, then the elimination would have to come from another area. There is no putting back to this budget, if something is added back in something must come out.

Mr. King questioned the 16% health insurance increase and commented on the high rate.

Mr. Stewart gave a history of the insurance pool the district is mandated to be members of and a history of the increases. The 16% increase is a standard rate increase for the school district.

Mrs. Burns provided testing data and on Math and Reading. The data tracked the students who have completed the current configuration and the elementary classes that have had kindergarten and overload assistants. Mrs. Burns urged the Budget Committee to consider these results when looking at the budget. If administrative and teaching staff can close the achievement gap without the instructional assistants then they should eliminate the assistants, if they can not, the committee needs to look at alternative money to eliminate from the budget.

Mr. Crist questioned items in the board of education's budget such as out of district travel, conference expenditures, and advertising, and stated he was not comfortable with maintaining the Board's level of services when the district is looking to cut teachers and curriculum.

Mr. Minsent noted that in his view the reduction list reflects the classroom as the first to be hit.

Mr. Loupin reminded Mr. Minsent that there are fewer students to service so there is a legitimate need to reduce the level of services.

Mrs. Wallace recommended a reduction to the amount being placed in the capital reserve fund next year.

Superintendent Adams noted the level of FTE added was added to address the increase in enrollment. When you don't have the enrollment, you can't have the current level of support. The projected class sizes for the 2008-09 school year are lower than most neighboring districts and elementary classroom instructional assistants are only on an as needed basis at other districts. Superintendent Adams also recognized that McBride Elementary has taken the biggest hit in both enrollment and the budget, but the budget reductions are district wide K-12.

Mr. King requested a list of additions to the budget since the budget reductions several years ago. Mr. Stewart will provide this.

Mrs. Ford questioned the scheduling of additional meetings allowing the administrative team to review their proposed reductions. Mr. Minsent explained that they will be added following public input.

Jeri Deady provided a summary of the Special Education Department's budget revisions. It was explained that the budget does reflect a reduction, a shifting of staff, and budget coding changes.

PUBLIC INPUT

Heidi Green, McBride Elementary kindergarten teacher, addressed the Budget Committee and noted she felt the kindergarten classes are hit the hardest. The eliminations of a kindergarten teacher, an elementary PE, and elementary music teacher, and the kindergarten assistants greatly impact the kindergarten classrooms.

Mr. Stewart questioned kindergarten's preference: a kindergarten assistant or an additional kindergarten teacher.

Mrs. Green responded she personally would prefer an assistant.

Following discussion on how kindergarten teachers measure student readiness and how they could better help the next grade level teacher with getting their students to meet the state requirement Mrs. Burns questioned the option of decreasing an additional kindergarten FTE in exchange for the assistants.

Mrs. Green stated that staff wants to see cuts at the district office. Cuts such as The Chalkboard and the elimination of added positions before placing cuts in the classroom, and staff want to know and be reassured that a great deal of thought went into the process. McBride staff felt the information had not been communicated well enough.

Superintendent Adams apologized if staff felt that way and explained that she and Mr. Stewart met with staff at the buildings and they were upfront with the preliminary information.

Mr. King suggested looking at areas such as athletic coaching stipends and the committee seeks creative funding of programs.

Melody Biggs, McBride Elementary kindergarten teacher, shared comments on the kindergarten assistants the district provided to the kindergarten teachers five years ago. She also commented on the meetings held with staff and stated McBride staff should have been included in the reduction process at their building.

Mary McCartney, McBride Elementary kindergarten teacher, stated she too wished the staff would have been included in the reductions for their building. Staff could have possibly come up with alternative solutions to the budget reductions had they been given the opportunity.

Lorraine Coopersmith commented on classified staff often taking the brunt of budget reductions and noted the classified staff being eliminated are part-time staff with no benefits. Lorraine also commented on the high school losing their student classroom sweepers and what a mess the classrooms will be without them.

Shelly Minsent, McBride Elementary kindergarten assistant, reviewed what her day entails as a kindergarten assistant and entertained the idea of job sharing instead of a complete reduction. Mrs. Minsent asked the committee to consider the kids.

Lisa Rawlings, McBride Elementary School Principal, addressed the Budget Committee and commented on the wonderful and passionate kindergarten staff at McBride School. Mrs. Rawlings stressed she has advocated for the school and shared her confidence in her staff. If the reduction to the kindergarten classes does occur the building will come together and make it as they did in previous years before given the additional help.

Scott Curtis, Middle School Principal, stressed that the proposed reductions were developed by the administrative team and reflects K-12 representation. Mr. Curtis also deferred addressing his individual building eliminations until after meeting with his colleagues, the administrative team.

Mr. King asked if the budget committee was open to opening the budget elimination process to the staff. Mr. King stated he was not comfortable with the elimination of the kindergarten assistants and wanted the administrative team to take another look at what they could absolutely not live without.

Mr. Loupin questioned the process for accepting input for the staff and community.

Superintendent Adams explained that since there is a proposed budget and it has been presented to the Budget Committee it is a public document. The presented information can now be reviewed by the staff and staff can share their suggestions with their

building principal. The principal would then present the staff's findings with the Budget Committee.

Mrs. Wallace encouraged staff to review the proposed budget and provide creative alternatives to the needed budget reductions as they've asked to do. Please look at the district as a whole and consider the ripple effects when doing so. Mrs. Wallace also instructed staff to communicate their suggestions with their building principal.

SET DATES FOR FUTURE BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Prior to setting additional meeting dates, Mr. Minsent formally announced the Budget Committee has requested staff look at the budget and share their recommendations with their building administrator. The building administrator will then share the staff's recommendations with the Budget Committee.

Additional meetings were scheduled for May 21st and May 28th at 6:30 p.m. Input from grades 6-12 will be received at the meeting on the 21st and input from grades K-5 at the meeting on the 28th.

Mr. Stewart encouraged the budge committee to e-mail questions to him and he will respond to all with the question and answer.

Patrick Loupin requested receiving data prior to the meeting, if at all possible. Mr. Stewart noted that, when possible, he will make an attempt to do so.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Budget Committee Chair

Budget Committee Secretary