

MEETING MINUTES
SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD MEETING
June 15, 2009

PRESENT:

Board	Elona Street-Stewart, John Brodrick, Keith Hardy, Kazoua Kong-Thao, Anne Carroll Tom Goldstein
Staff	Suzanne Kelly, Michael Bauman, Christine Wroblewski, Joe Raasch, Teresa Rogers, Jeremiah Ellis, Michele Walker, Valeria Silva, Hitesh Haria, Kathy Brown, Kate Wilcox-Harris, Tim Hausker, Cecilia Dodge
Other	Greg Patterson, Doug Belden, Ellen Peck, Jeff Peck, Jessica Chiasson, Jessica Maxa, Mary Turek, Jeff Fowler

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:40 p.m.

II. AGENDA

1. Budget Discussion

The chair stated the purpose of the meeting was to address questions or concerns Board members have relative to the budget. There was no formal presentation prepared. Board members received a packet of e-mail information in answer to questions raised at the previous COB and in subsequent communications from Board members.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- The layoff of the CDT's, is there a way to rehire them as trainers or specialists under the ARRA? Administration responded it sees the following issues (1) a supplanting issue and (2) employees facing layoff are being encouraged to apply (if eligible) for new positions being established under ARRA funding. There is a current training model that exists. The last CDT was hired in 1995. Since then there has been on-going uniform training for all employees who are doing the type of work that is done by CDTs as well as EAs and TAs. Under the current structure there may be a training component that would be needed to continue this model. Administration would be willing to go back and review this.
- As a follow-up, also the intervention services employees might fall within this area and CDT's might be able to move into that area. Include that in the options administration is pursuing.
- A board member indicated that if the total budget package is voted on and approve it will formalize a lot of layoffs in the district. He would like some assurance that there is a possibility of tailoring the ARRA programs so they allow the hiring back of some of the laid off individuals.
- A caution was expressed that the Board needs to be careful about conversations that would be explicitly looking for ways to supplant which is absolutely prohibited under ARRA. The impression should not be created for anyone that that would happen. The Board wants people to advocate, to come to them directly, but it is also important to remember in budget deliberations the other large group of people who are being impacted but who, for whatever reason, do not advocate for themselves or their areas. In this situation everyone is important in this because everyone will be impacted to some degree.
- It was noted the Board has already gone down the path of favoritism when it made preferential cuts for the itinerant music teachers.

- Clarification was provided on the points being discussed (1) Question raised about the application of ARRA dollars to positions (CDT's), (2) keeping in mind it is not possible to supplant nor is it possible to remove people from one position to be created in another position for the sole purpose of being eligible and (3) regarding best practices, is there something about the training that is available to keep the positions within special ed.?
- Administration responded to clarify that to hire back some of the positions being laid off would clearly be supplanting and the District would not be able to do that at all under ARRA. The question of creating a coaching/training type of position which would allow Special Education to retain the five individuals would require Special Education cutting an equal amount from some other portion of their budget; there is no flexibility within the budget. Administration will do as the Board directs with regard to that issue. Administration believes it has identified the best way to manage the Special Education budget.
- If the District were, under ARRA, to create a program within the field of Special Education and in this particular area of child development and that created new jobs would there be a potential for reapplication by the laid off employees? It was stated that under ARRA the burden of proof lies with the District to prove the positions were not supplanted. The fact the Board is having a conversation on record beforehand regarding laid off position puts it in a difficult position relative to that proof. Administration responded it is sending a strong message that as positions are posted using ARRA dollars, all the 267 people facing lay off would be encouraged to apply for positions for which they are qualified. Fair Labor Practices will be followed in all hiring. Any change in position would require being hire into that new position and it is currently planning to follow the Special Education model which has been planned for under the current budget.
- The Board was cautioned to avoid special considerations, any suggestion of favoritism its decision should be made on the basis of what is in the best interest of the kids and the Board should not lose sight of unintended consequences/impacts of proposed changes. The decisions need to be made based on data or an organizational plan. It also needs to be conscious of how changes made from the proposed plan will need to be funded from somewhere else within the plan which will also have consequences and impacts.
- Relative to the return of funds to music, that was viewed as a legitimate attempt to solve some legitimate problems which seemed to disproportionately impact the kids least able recoup from the loss of that portion of the program.
- It was stated there is a \$25 million budget cut facing the Board, all the money is in play. If the Board were to say cuts to ELL and Special Ed. are too damaging as currently laid out and the impacts too grave, how much room is there to look, over the next quarter, at how save any of the 267 jobs If the Board approves the budget, does not preserve individual jobs but looks for ways to recover some of the jobs which need to be cut on a rationale basis focused on kids, could that be done? Admin responded the budget projection is based on several issues and there is some level of flexibility. Estimate/projections in budget areas start the budget process; allocations based on those budget projections are then made to the various areas, which creates actual financial plans which are synthesized into the overall budget. It is clear there is a cause/effect relationship, as plans are made, action occurs, some reversible, some not. The 09-10 budget has the least amount of flexibility in the last decade. There is very little flexibility and the budget must be (1) balanced and (2) passed by June 30.
- The Board was reminded that cuts in the centrally administered funds were not the only cut made, schools have made cuts as well.
- The fairness piece has got to be kept under consideration at all times as the Board considers the budget.
- The Chair stated the Board needs to be very conscious it has an obligation to approve a budget and administration would prefer to have it approved by the 16th. The caution was issued that in making fixes to today's issues there is still the long-term impact over time if those changes are made and the Board is going to be in this same position in a year's time as the next wave of the structural deficit comes in 10-11..
- The question was asked about the specific impact of ELL cuts. Administration responded it is 11 FTEs reduced with savings to general fund of \$803,000.

- Negotiations with the bargaining units might go to the end of year. If the Board approves the budget will it need to make further cuts in fall? Response: Possibly depending on a number of factors.
- A Board member stated with regard to the proposed cuts to athletics, look at where to find money to address that and he proposed the district-funded content coaches be reduced by \$400,000. He stated he viewed the numbers of students involved in athletic programs as potential loss of revenue if the athletic options were not available. Administration responded that cuts to athletics was done with athletics input and was considered line by line to find the reductions. The reductions are one athletic director who will be reassigned between two buildings; cutting \$25,000 from transportation to provide additional transport for special ed. Students; there are a significant number of assistant coaches some of whom will be cut. An additional transportation savings was found by reducing one game participated in. Another Board member responded there is irrefutable evidence of the value of content coaches in helping to create better teachers through job embedded development which directly impact the students in all schools.

MOTION: Ms. Carroll moved the meeting recess to later in the evening following the Board meeting. Mr. Brodrick seconded the motion.

Motion passed.

- An additional request for information was made prior to moving to the next meeting; that more information on the impact of the athletic cuts be provided and information on the dance team proposal.

Meeting reconvened at 7:15 p.m.

MOTION: Mr. Conlon moved \$400,000 be restored to the athletic budget and that the monies come out of the centrally funded content coach budget. Mr. Hardy seconded the motion.

- Additional information was provided regarding the content coaches. The 14.4 content coaches identified on the contingency reduction sheet are assigned to schools based on AYP status, district accountability status, etc. A reduction in this line item would mean fewer direct services to those schools and would significantly impact the academic reform efforts in the following ways: National research indicates, and early indications from SPPS also suggest, that an intensive job-embedded coaching model is significantly more effective than stand-alone training or coop models. . A reduction in this line item would weaken the District's capacity to provide high quality professional development that is effective for both teachers and students. The SPPS content coaching model provides on-site support to teachers in real time which keeps teachers in the classroom and students do not lose instructional time. The proposed ARRA program design assumes that the District is building on a certain level of existing capacity so a cut to content coaching would require a re-design to the plan and would impact the District's ability to significantly accelerate the current instructional reform efforts. Content coaches are TOSAs which are teaching positions, part of the St. Paul Federation of Teachers bargaining unit. Cutting these positions will mean cutting some teachers to save other teacher positions and would lead to further system bumping. With respect to preliminary GRAD results and the impact of content coaching, the district is just finishing its second year of a systemic job-embedded coaching model. 3-5 years are needed to demonstrate results, though early indicated show it is working when done well and implemented with fidelity.
- It was requested that the studies cited in the athletics discussion be provided for Board review.
- The District and Board commitment should be to the children in the classroom – do no harm to the classroom.

- Do Title 1 schools have funding to cover content coaches so the district funding would be for buildings that don't receive Title I funding? Administration responded, the district funds 14 FTEs, they are allocated to buildings. They are allocated to 25 different schools; some receive .5 and some receive 1.0. In those schools with .5 FTE the schools took the key element for a full-time position which results in coaches having to coach half-time and teach half-time or split into different buildings. By cutting from the content coach budget line it will be affecting 25 schools who are counting on having staff in building. The allocations have been given only to Title 1 schools and schools not making AYP.
- The Chief Financial Officer noted an average for an FTE is \$81,000.
- A Board member stated the district is using best practices in the district and nothing is as powerfully demonstrated and proven through data than the direct result of content coaches. Coaches help teachers get better at teaching which in turn translates to getting students to be better at learning and creates a culture of learning within the building. Leaving the athletic budget as is does not preclude children from participating in athletics.
- District funded content coaches are listed with a potential cut of \$1.4 million in the centrally funded budget. What is the total budget district-wide for content coaches? The content coaches have been 'held harmless' through the entire budget process so how much does the \$1.4 million represent as a cut to the entire content coach budget?
- The District funded coaches does this represent the people working out of 345 Plate? Administration responded the number represents those coaches that are centrally funded and are assigned out to the buildings because that is where the coaches do their work directly with teachers. Is there a difference in job description from a district funded content coach assigned to a building and the district funded content coaches who are assigned to 345 Plate? The money is simply an accounting assignment carried on from the one-time money received in 07-08; the funding account assignment is different but the job description is the same. The coaches are targeted where the need is greatest.
- The content coaches really represent the District's best effort to make sure that in front of all students there are the highest quality teachers possible. Improving teacher quality is the most important thing in improving student achievement. This is a fundamental aspect to achieving the end goals of the strategic plan.
- To resolve the impasse of content coaches vs. athletics, it was suggested it be made obvious that the Board/District values restoration of programming to students by equalizing the pain across the entire district at all levels by moving forward on negotiating a one or two day closing. Administration stated these would need to be non-student contact days.
- Administration provided a handout on the rationale for revised athletic budget cuts to Board members.
- Administration responded to the question on GPA for students participating in athletics. For participation in 08-09 (without Highland Senior) the average GPA is 2.67; the weighted GPA is 2.87. The total number of students participating in high school athletics is 3,976. 7,500 students will be impacted by content coaching reductions.
- The Chair cautioned the Board is thinking of the budget for the 09-10 school year, however much of this could/will be repeated in coming years. The Board was instructed to think in terms of the decisions made now because if the economic forecast is as projected (or worse) the rationale on the table now may not be relevant because it was not sustainable. Recognize these things are not things which will save the district and make a turn around, this is what is being done this year for next year but the district will still have students being impacted, fewer resources available to it as the structural deficit continues on over the next several years.
- It was stated coaches are teachers and athletics do have an impact on where parents send their children.
- Discussion then moved to utilizing the fund balance. The Chief Financial Officer strongly recommended against using any portion of the fund balance.
- Mr. Brodrick offered an amendment to Mr. Conlon's motion. That the cut be \$250,000 leaving \$200,000 to be restored to the athletic budget. Mr. Conlon agreed to the

amendment as did Mr. Hardy with the proviso that the money be obtained from content coach area.

AMENDED MOTION: Mr. Conlon moved \$200,000 be restored to the athletic budget and that the monies come out of the centrally funded content coach budget. Mr. Hardy seconded the motion.

Motion Failed (Yes-3 / 4-No)

MOTION: Mr. Brodrick moved \$200,000 be restored to the athletic budget and that the money be taken from the fund balance. Mr. Hardy seconded the motion.

Motion Failed (1-Yes / 5-No / 1-Absention)

- It was stated the fund has been touched in the past. Response was made this was under extremely controlled occasions in which it was assured the amount was restorable. It was stated the individual could not (1) support using the fund balance and (2) if restorations are made it should be people before athletics.
- It was stated the Board needs to be stewards of district resources and touching the fund balance does not do that.
- Administration was asked if it had any recommendations on how to help various areas. Administration responded it has offered its best recommendation in the budget before the Board; if cuts are made in one area that money will come from another area.
- The District is counting on negotiations to gain COLA and health insurance reductions. What about a two day closure that does not affect bargaining units? The response was that is only the Superintendent plus 4 employees. The Chief of Staff stated the Board could direct administration to implement such an action.
- The question was asked how many bargaining units are there. Response: 29. The number provided for COLA and health care would be those bargaining units (9) coming up for negotiations this year plus the Superintendent.
- It was stated the Board's will could be stated such that the COLA and health insurance negotiation would apply to upcoming negotiations as the contracts come due as well. That way everyone would be impacted.
- The question was raised what individual board member priorities were for this budget? He stated he was upset that so much has to be cut at the building level. Another Board member stated his priorities were irrelevant because the legislature has taken them away. If per pupil formula not adequate. It should be researched to find what it actually does cost to provide a world class education. The legislature should be made to realize what the real impacts to education are if the State doesn't step up.
- The Board's and administration's budget priorities are established on an annual basis, revisions are provided throughout year. In the Board's monitoring function there should be more information on academic performance available to the Board based on the actions taken on this budget and academic success of the kids. Such things as is academic performance improved through athletics, etc. The Board should begin thinking now about what its priorities will be next year.

MOTION: Mr. Conlon moved the District explore the two day closure with bargaining units as negotiations come up. Mr. Hardy seconded the motion.

Motion Failed (2-Yes / 5-No)

- Share the pain, save programs less painful alternative.
- Strategically the Board needs to be realistic; it is presuming it will be successful in obtaining the \$6.5 million in concessions from the bargaining units. It is not wise to go beyond those reductions at this time. Asking for those concessions is essentially asking people to take a pay cut.

- It was noted that should the attempt to negotiate COLA and health care benefit freeze fail, other cuts must reemerge and the Board will have to look at other options if that does occur.
- What would researching the two day closure option look like it?
- One thing to discuss this summer as everyone has completed their budget cycle for those of the Board who serve on other organization boards and committee are these type issues as they are statewide issues and school districts have all had to make their choices. This Board needs to know not only what did they do but how was it done and what is expected to change in the next couple of years.
- A request was made that prior to June 16 a reconciliation be made in the numbers on the dance teams, there are two handouts and the numbers are totally different on each.
- A request was made, as much as is possible, would administration provide information on the areas within central administration which have been eliminated or changed to help clarify the decision process. Administration indicated this would be difficult as the total impact will not be known until all employees have been notified and all domino effects have been completed. Discussion occurred on the difference between this request and the non-renewal action taken during the previous week and the action scheduled for the BOE meeting. Administration indicated there were an additional 125 positions remaining to be reduced and some bumping rights are involved and until the cascade effect occurs the final list of individuals will not be known. In total there will be 267.5 FTEs eliminated. Additionally, until the budget is approved some actions cannot be taken. It was suggested, that following the vote on the budget that administration provide the Board the changes in the org structure as a result of the budget action.
- The Board needs to begin to talk about governing and monitoring rules related to budget so they are established for next year's cycle.
- The Board members concurred they must monitor the impact of the cuts which will be made and asked administration to be aware of this need and begin to think about how to provide it..

MOTION: Ms. Carroll moved, seconded by Ms. Kong-Thao, that the Committee of the Board recommend the Board of Education thank our students, families, Site Councils, staff, and administration at school and district levels for spending so many hundreds of hours to think through and prepare recommendations on these terribly difficult budget cuts tied to enrollment and the economic downturn.

We would also like to thank the office of Community Relations for designing and co-hosting with community partners the series of nationally recognized opportunities to gather, compile and present thoughtful community input to the Board.

We listened to every person who participated in this challenging process and we are grateful to everyone for your help.

Motion passed.

- A request was made regarding the funding provided to schools not qualifying for Title I. The 80/20 or the compensatory education funds. This is detailed on pages 36 and 37 of the Proposed Budget Book. It is broken down by school.
- A request was made about where the specific funding for marketing efforts was located within the budget. It is primarily, what little there is, within the Office of Community Relations (page 46) and within the Student Placement Center budget (page 47). There is no major identified campaign budgeted for the district, there is simply no money for it. The possibility has been explored and there has been some pro bono work provided on the Belief Campaign. The cost for such a full-blown, multi-media campaign would be in the area of \$250,000-\$400,000 for a year. Services are provided through such things as the Parent Information Fair, the Student Placement Center services and some schools budget amounts for some of their efforts within their individual budgets.

- The Board must discuss the broad interest of its strategies for the coming year need to begin to be discussed particularly relative to other decisions it has made.
- A procedural question was asked, does the Board need to pass a budget out of committee? Yes, it was done at the June 9 COB meeting. This should be taken into consideration in the reporting out of the meetings.
- Concern was expressed that the public needs to understand in the report out that the Board has had extensive discussion about the budget.
- It was suggested that the report out should only be that the Board met for four hours and had extensive discussion about the budget. People will care about the action taken on June 16 not about the discussion that led up to it.

III. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Mr. Conlon moved the meeting adjourn. Motion seconded by Mr. Hardy.

Motion Passed.

The meeting adjourned at 9:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Polsfuss
Assistant Clerk