

Budget Committee Meeting (Tuesday, January 16, 2024)

Generated by Minnie Kamarata on Monday, January 19, 2024

1. Meeting Agenda

1.1 Call to Order

Dr. Monroe, Superintendent, called the Budget Committee Meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

1.2 Welcome and Introductions

Dr. Monroe, Superintendent, welcomed everyone, wished everyone a Happy New Year and mentioned keeping our meeting to an hour if possible, honoring everyone's time and having one more Budget Committee Meeting scheduled. Committee members present were: Beth Strickler, Minnie Kamarata, Peter Smith, Stephanie McCorkle, Lynzee Booras, America Yurgayev, Connie Crowley, Stephanie Mohorne, Holly Murray, Sara Schaefer, Sue Matteson, Julie Haut, Natasha Camp, Kay Hamrick, Ashley Brune, Robert Reinhard, Crystal Mosher, Bob Young. Dr. Monroe thanked Board President Michael Todd, Mr. Bogart and Amanda Loveless from Westar for being present. He also mentioned this meeting is a public meeting governed by Open Meeting Law where the public is welcomed to attend thus this meeting is open and transparent.

1.3 Peer Districts and Five-Year Maintenance and Operations (M&O) Forecast for Growth

Beth Strickler, Executive Director of Business Services, mentioned the first document being a comparison between other peer districts pulling the comparisons off the Arizona Auditor General's website (comparison to other districts of our size). A description of the School District Spending Analysis and a review of the peer districts spending analysis for FY2022 were presented, along with a review of the established 5-year M&O forecast for growth (first developed for FY2021-2022). Spending Analysis presentation included, Classroom Spending included: Instruction, Student Support, Instruction Support; Non-classroom Spending included: Administration, Plant Operations, Food Services, Transportation; Nonoperational Spending included: Land and Buildings, Equipment, Interest. Leaving Liberty Elementary School District right in the middle of seventeen school districts. The M & O presentation included ADE salary and benefits and expenditures, which is a total of our M&O budget at 82.32%. Dr. Monroe, Superintendent, mentioned that a majority of our M&O budget, 82% is wrapped up into benefits and salaries for employees. Beth also provided a 5yr M&O forecast that the Governing Board requested in FY21-22. Mentioned these are strictly projections but according to the recent presentation by Applied Economics, they estimated what our growth was going to be. We are looking at 1% growth therefore Beth backed the numbers up a little. Dr. Monroe mentioned our primary driver for our budget is student enrollment. He also mentioned that this does not include capital items such as chairs, buildings, school buses, shade structures, etc. This includes benefits, salaries and programs through M&O. Beth also mentioned that after this year school #9 will be added to the budget and will be populated.

1.4 ESSER (I, II, and III) Budget vs. Expenses

Dr. Monroe mentioned that during the pandemic school districts were given ESSER money, a one time infusion of money was given to public school districts, ESSER I (funded March 2020 - September 2022), ESSER II (funded March 2020 - September 2023), and ESSER III (funded July 2021 - September 2024) with different amounts. Use of these funds are available through September. If you remember, Reading Interventionist funded through ESSER, and other positions, we would need to find other funds to possibly pay these positions. Beth Strickler presented how the ESSER funding had been budgeted, expensed and gave the balance remaining for each ESSER fund. She mentioned the link to the public website for grants management was added at the bottom of the presentation. Dr. Monroe mentioned that a lot of the ESSER funds were used as a one-time purchase in technology because kids were at home learning. Julie Haut asked if the ESSER funds were Governing Board approved or if it was administration controlled? Beth mentioned not knowing that answer and that she would find out and would look through BoardDocs. Beth asked Board President Michael Todd from the audience if he was on the Board and he briefly answered Julie's question. Julie thanked President Todd for his answer and she mentioned that's what she had thought. Peter Smith asked if there were plans to renew the chromebooks to maintain 1:1 or are we relying on ESSER funds for that? Beth mentioned that it would be up to the district to make sure that it gets into our budget moving forward. What we have is a line item for maintenance repair. Dr. Monroe mentioned that we would have to find a long-term solution for chromebooks and that we would repair them as long as we can and eventually have to go out for a bond. Natasha Camp, Assistant Superintendent for Educational Services, mentioned that ESSER III funds, permanent guest teachers were also added. Julie Haut asked if we knew how much was spent for the Reading Interventionist through all

three ESSER funds? Beth mentioned adding up the balances from all three funds. Dr. Monroe explained how and where funds can be used and spent, bringing them back to the Board for approval and the Board having the final say, how the district is growing, taking into consideration our enrollment, etc. We'll take a look at the 42 priorities and what was submitted and package this with a final budget approval.

1.5 Draft Budget Interests

Beth Strickler presented and explained the prioritization survey results of the LESD FY25 Budget Interest Form Responses. A breakdown was presented by the responses given. A discussion was held according to the results. Julie Haut asked how students are needing the support of a Reading Interventionist? And also asked how many students are not at proficiency level? How many Reading Interventionists do we need? Can we look at anyone below proficiency to see what that need is? We also need to do the same with Math Specialists. Natasha Camp mentioned needing to also pay attention to the comparability report of our Title schools and stated that our Title schools would require more than one position in this role. Natasha Camp directed to Dr. Monroe according to their conversation earlier that district-wide numbers being, Kinder 107 students, 1st Grade 206, 2nd Grade 177, 3rd Grade 197. Mentioned that 687 students that are not at benchmark or above in grades K-3. And these numbers are numbers that our Reading Interventionist already supports. Further discussion was held. Julie Haut also asked to look at numbers in grades 4-8 and to see what that looks like? Sara Schaefer asked maybe adding more paraprofessionals and they come at a much cheaper cost. Julie Haut mentioned the possibility of adding a paraprofessional in each classroom and setting the foundation for these students and front load these services. She also mentioned that charters have two teachers in the classroom and parents loving that. Peter Smith mentioned also liking the idea of having more paras but being concerned of having them properly trained. Lynzee Booras mentioned seeing an impact in 4-8 and frontloading services is very important. Dr. Monroe mentioned a high priority of Reading Interventionists is what he is hearing. Julie Haut mentioned needing 8.5 Reading Interventionists. Crystal Mosher mentioned maintaining what we have right now which is already at 8.5 positions. Beth mentioned and reminded the group that we can not go above the pupil amount. Further discussion was held in regards to Title I vs non-Title I schools. Reading Paraprofessionals are at Title I schools and are funded out of Title funding. Dr. Monroe mentioned a salary study that is taking place by an independent accounting firm. It will tell us how positions are funded in Liberty in comparison to the market/neighborhood school districts. Using this tool will help us drive potential increases/raises in the future for employee groups. Julie Haut mentioned 301 funds and how this district just gives to teachers. Can these funds be used for something else especially if they are unearned? Beth mentioned these classroom site funds are only for instructional staff and student support services. Julie mentioned in her opinion that teachers should not just get these funds if they don't earn it. They're not effective and use 301 to incentivize those effective teachers. Peter Smith gave his thoughts. Julie Haut mentioned these meetings not being long enough. Would also like Math Interventionists added to funding. She also asked about the breakdown for SpEd. Kay Hamrick mentioned breaking it down.

1.6 Next Steps

Beth mentioned her and Crystal would be working on this and would create one excel document and will be shared with the group, then have the committee prioritize by having conversations back at their school sites. A deadline will be given once shared. Possibly the Wednesday before the next meeting.

1.7 Committee Schedule

The Budget Committee and Members will meet on the following date: Tuesday, February 6, 2024, 4:30 pm start time. Tentative to go to the Board on February 12 but more time can always be taken.

1.8 Adjournment of Meeting

Dr. Monroe thanked everyone for attending. Beth Strickler thanked everyone and adjourned the Budget Committee Meeting at 5:31 p.m.