

Frequently Asked Questions: EI Budget Vote – May 21, 2013

Question: Why is the district's calculated tax levy cap at 3.86 percent and not at the 2 percent cap that I have heard about?

Answer: The district's 3.86 percent tax levy cap is calculated through a complex formula provided by the state for use in its calculation. There is no hard "2 percent cap" that you may have read about in media reports. The "2 percent cap" referred to is actually a 2 percent *growth factor* that is part of this complex formula. In fact, the average tax levy increase for Long Island school districts this year is 3.27 percent, with some district's caps in excess of 4 percent.

Every school must submit its calculated tax cap to the New York State Comptroller's Office by March 1 for its review and validation that it meets the formula requirements. If not, the Comptroller's Office provides direction to the individual district on a revised cap calculation.

Question: Why was the voting location moved to the Early Childhood Center (ECC)?

Answer: The voting location was moved to the ECC for the security and safety of our students and staff at the elementary schools, along with the convenience of all voters. The district has implemented tighter security measures at each of its schools following the Sandy Hook tragedy in December 2012, and because of other incidents around the country. Visitors are now required to show their ID prior to being buzzed into the building, and they are then escorted to their destination. We believe it would be logistically difficult and disruptive to maintain our security procedures in accommodating community members who come to cast their votes. By holding the vote in a building where there are no students and there is no active learning, there is no need to check IDs, thereby streamlining the voting process. In addition, there is a small cost savings in security costs by using the ECC.

Question: Under a contingency budget, why would the district have to eliminate all sports, all kindergarten, and nonmandated music? Aren't there other expense categories to choose from?

Answer: Under a contingency budget the district would have to cut \$2,567,189 from the 2013-14 tax levy to be compliant with the tax cap law of a \$0 increase over the 2012-13 tax levy. To achieve this reduction, nonmandated major programs with high projected expenses have to be impacted, and these include athletics, kindergarten and nonmandated music. Practically speaking, there are no other areas of the budget where this level of expense reduction can be found (though many smaller reductions of nonmandated expenses will also be included in a \$2.5 million reduction if it is required).

Question: Why would the district have to go to an eight-period day at the middle school if the budget fails and nonmandated music is eliminated?

Answer: The nine-period day middle school schedule is not sustainable without music instruction. Filling nine periods would simply mean the district would need to establish study halls for students not participating in the music program. There is no instructional value to adding additional study halls; therefore, we would be unnecessarily utilizing educational resources in order to maintain a nine-period day.

Question: What programs were eliminated in the consolidation of sections at the high school, and how are student being accommodated with alternative program selections?

Answer: No programs were eliminated. The reduction of five teachers at the high school level resulted from the elimination of elective classes which do not have sufficient student registration to meet district course enrollment minimums. Students wishing to take such courses will be placed in their second or third choice. We are able to offer students the courses they require for graduation by compressing the master schedule and maximizing capacity of course enrollment across departments. Therefore, five teachers (English, social studies, science, physical education/health and art) have been reduced in next year's budget.

Question: What is the status of negotiations with the teachers union?

Answer: The negotiating parties (the Board of Education and the Teachers' Union) have mutually declared impasse. This is a formal procedural declaration in which the parties represent that their negotiations have stalled. The Declaration of Impasse is registered with the Public Employee Relations Board, and a PERB mediator is assigned to assist the parties in resolving the impasse. Both the Board of Education and the Teachers' Union have agreed that the use of the mediator at this time provides the best opportunity to resolve our negotiations challenges in a timely and productive manner.