

Budget Workshop and Community Forum

Summary

March 7, 2018 - 6:19 p.m.

Present: Sandy Anzalone, Laura Feldman, Paul Shephard, Cheryl Carpenter, Jack Cuddihy, Marlene Grunder, Jennifer Horschel, Ellen Kindley, Don Sutfin, Mary Banko, Loran Carter, Jeff Cervoni, Shawn Johnson & Lucinda Karstedt. David Martin arrived at 7:45 p.m.

Next Forum: Jr./Sr. High School Cafeteria

I. Budget Workshop / Community Forum

II. Introduction

- ⇒ Mrs. Anzalone stated that after Mrs. Feldman's brief budget status report, the audience present will sit with board members and administrators for about 20 minutes to discuss what is important to them. After that, each group will be asked to share the things they felt were important.

A. Agenda

- ⇒ Mrs. Feldman reported that the agenda topics for the evening include District objectives, uncertainties, obstacles, good news, group conversations and group sharing.

B. District Objectives

- ⇒ District Objectives include programming and safety/security.
- ⇒ Maintain and enhance programming PK-12 with no staff reductions, teacher increases (4.69 FTE's), programs for all PK-12 students, appropriate class sizes, new initiatives and staffing.
- ⇒ Safety/Security objectives include a 1.0 FTE School Resource Officer, mental health training initiatives, school monitors in the MS/HS (2 FTE's), Bus cameras and GPS system, secure front entrance in the MS/HS with a Greeter/Attendance Clerk (1 FTE), a Groundskeeper (increase to 1.0 FTE), and the installation of digital security and phone systems.
 - Mrs. Anzalone reported that she met with Missy Hartman, the Eden Town Supervisor regarding sharing the expenses for a full-time School Resource Officer. The SRO would work in all of the District buildings with a varied schedule.
 - Mrs. Feldman stated that mental health training would be for all District employees.
 - Mrs. Anzalone said school monitors would be helpful in getting the younger students to class on time. There would be after school supervision until about 4:00 or 4:30.
 - The GPS system will allow parents to track their child's school bus securely in real time.
 - The front entrance will have a greeter/attendance clerk for added security.
 - The increase to 1.0 FTE of the Groundskeeper will help with safety on the grounds, as an extra person to be aware of the outside area.
 - New building digital security and phone system will also enhance safety.
 - There may be bullet aid available to cover some of the costs.

C. Uncertainties

- ⇒ There are potential reductions in Title I and Title IIA grants.
- ⇒ Enrollment projections include cohort increases and decreases.
- ⇒ Bargaining contracts of three units are expiring June 30, 2018.
- ⇒ Final State Aid numbers will not be available until at least April 1st.

D. Obstacles – Unknown at the time of the Rollover Budget in December

- ⇒ Health insurance rates are projected to increase by double digits.
- ⇒ Employee Retirement System rates will increase.
- ⇒ Teacher Retirement System rates will increase.
- ⇒ The property tax cap calculation:
 - Consumer Price Index – 2.13%.
 - Maximum tax cap increase – 2%.
 - Maximum allowable unit calculated by the District - .46%.

E. Good News

- ⇒ Program:
 - Eden’s graduation rate is the 4th highest in Western New York – 97%.
 - At Risk student graduation rate has increased.
 - Academic enhancement offerings.
 - Afterschool programs.
 - Academic support programs.
 - AEP, ELA and Math clubs.
 - 1:1 Technology initiative K-8.
 - Smart Schools Bond.
- ⇒ Community - Maximizing Facility Use:
 - New fitness center.
 - Town Recreation.
 - Boys & Girls Club.
 - Raiders morning program at Eden Elementary.
 - Continuing education.
 - Athletic programs – Little Loop, Hamburg Swimming, etc.
- ⇒ Grants:
 - Bullet Aid from Senator Gallivan – Ag in the Classroom grant, Staffing increase – MS/HS Technology, and Community Garden K-8.
 - Farm to School Grant secured for 2017-2018.
 - NYS Kids to Parks field trips.
 - Fitness award from Independent Health.
 - Continued staff efforts to secure new grant opportunities.
 - Parents and students turn in box tops for additional perks. Teachers seek grants for things like flexible furniture.
 - Mr. R. Pierce asked what could be done to bring in more State Aid. Mrs. Anzalone stated that an increase in the Free & Reduced lunch numbers would increase aid. If everyone would complete the forms, our aid would increase in relation to eligibility. Eden is considered an affluent community, which skews our rankings. Mrs. Feldman stated that it is a combined wealth ratio – the wealth of paycheck and property. It is out of our control. Mrs. Anzalone added that there is a large portion of tax exempt property – mostly agricultural, which lowers our tax base. Eden lacks retail, so the homes are paying for those things.
- ⇒ State Aid:
 - Expense driven aid covers prior year expenditures; it is not available to cover new initiative costs.
 - Foundation aid increases are available for use at the district’s discretion. The Governor’s budget run shows \$133,738.
 - Legislative runs are historically higher than the amount proposed by the Governor. The State budget is supposed to be approved by April 1st each year.

F. State Aid Reality

- ⇒ State Aid increases do not cover the program initiatives. Only about 38-39% of the budget is from State Aid. Mrs. Anzalone stated that there is a big push to go back to the time of 50% reimbursement from the State, back when districts were in good shape.

G. Group Conversations

- ⇒ Board members and administrators joined community members and teachers to discuss budgetary ideas. Mrs. Anzalone told the groups to talk about things that concerned them, so they could leave without questions and/or concerns. Mrs. Farrell asked where the District stood in relation to the GEA cuts over the past several years. Mrs. Feldman said there is little to no hope of recouping any of the money the District lost. Mrs. Anzalone added that there is no more money coming in, and she doesn't expect any.

H. Group Sharing

- ⇒ Mr. R. Pierce said his group did not feel that going out at 2% was enough. They would like to see 2.2%. Going above the tax cap would require a super majority vote. They didn't feel that .2 over the cap would be detrimental. For several years, the District did not go up by 2%, which has hurt us. The District has been starting below the table.
- ⇒ Mr. Millson said there are 244 NYSUT members in the community. If they could be convinced to vote, along with their spouses, parents and children who live in the District, it would get us over 60%.
- ⇒ Mrs. Feldman said if the budget failed, a revote would be scheduled for the third Tuesday in June. It could go out at .46%. If that failed, the District would have to adopt a contingency budget. Everyone who uses facilities would have to pay for use.
- ⇒ Mrs. Anzalone said statistics show the District has a 62-63% success rate. Last year's vote was about 51% yes. Mr. Pierce thought people were hung up on last year's vote due to the capital project and some teacher issues. He didn't feel it would happen again this year.
- ⇒ Mrs. Anzalone is thrilled that there are no staffing cuts recommended, unless we have to go to contingency.
- ⇒ Mr. Sutfin added that most sports teams were away during the vote last year because of the capital project.
- ⇒ Mr. Pierce suggested a kids' day event on the day of the vote. Younger kids could be brought in to play sports with some of the varsity kids. Food trucks or food from the concession stand could be available. Mr. Cuddihy said the more people there were on campus, the better the opportunity would be. Mr. Pierce will talk about it with Mrs. Dougherty (Fallacaro) and Mrs. Porter.
- ⇒ Mrs. Horschel asked how much we missed from being under the tax cap for the past several years. She is excited about the possibility of a School Resource Officer. They discussed teachers and guns; some of her group were in favor. Mrs. Anzalone said that the only people in New York State who could carry firearms on school grounds were police officers.
- ⇒ Mrs. Horschel suggested robo calls and the parent portal to reach residents about free and reduced lunch applications. She inquired if there was a way to link it right to the State web-site. Mrs. Johnson said the form was sent to all households with children in school. The response was poor. Many of the people who return it are not eligible. There is nothing that can be done about anyone who is eligible but doesn't want it. Mrs. Carter said many parents write "NA" on the form, because they don't want to complete it. Mrs. Johnson said if a family is not eligible when school starts, but their situation changes, they can reapply for temporary help.
- ⇒ Mr. Pierce said people react to bullet points. He suggested putting something out using bullet points - *Did you know... because some people may not understand the implications affecting their taxes.
- ⇒ Mrs. Horschel said they also discussed a desire for more electives and more sections for kids who have 2-3 study halls. Several electives have very few students registered. Mrs. Farrell added that AP classes have high enrollments with up to 31 students, while studies show the best learning environment would have about 17 students.
- ⇒ Mrs. Anzalone said in March 2013, the tax levy was 1.99%, but the cap was 2.99%. The Board then was concerned about going out at over 2%. Mrs. Horschel said we would not have to talk about it if the State gave us 50%.
- ⇒ Mr. Pierce asked if there was a generic letter on our web-site to send to local politicians. Mrs. Horschel said there has been. The Music & Arts Boosters are working on a letter. At the January legislative meeting, ECASB demanded a 50% partnership with the State. She will forward the letter. Mr. Pierce suggested using Twitter with the legislators.

- ⇒ Mrs. Anzalone said she is willing to give up a teacher for a full time Resource Officer for safety. If a grant comes through for the SRO, the District will not have to pay for one. The Senate has passed the safety bill. The House needs to vote on it. The District is looking into a grant for mental health training.
- ⇒ Mrs. Horschel said contact information for Senator Gallivan and Assemblyman DiPietro is on our web-site. She can add their Twitter accounts. She will reach out to Karen Hall, so we do the same thing the Music and Arts Boosters are doing. Mr. Pierce said Twitter is like a bully pulpit. He suggested using Facebook, as well. Mrs. Horschel said she can put something on her personal Facebook page. Mr. Pierce said the money is there. Mrs. Feldman said Free and Reduced lunch participation opens up grants.

III. The Community Forum ended at 7:45 p.m.