

**Finance Committee Meeting Notes
Crescent Lake School
November 14, 2024 6:00pm**

PRESENT

GWRSB Finance Committee: Brodie Deshaies – Team Leader, Guy Pike, James Pittman, Dr. Beth Sheckler (6:19)

Administration: Superintendent Caroline Arakelian, Business Administrator Kathy O’Blenes, Paul Michalski, Dr. Katey Hills, Dr. Kelly Mask, Heather Cummings

Other: Tom Bickford, Mary Schillereff, community members

SUBJECT MATTER

Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2026 – General Fund

BUDGET OVERVIEW/DISCUSSION

- Director of Technology, Paul Michalski, presented the proposed budget for Technology with a 14% decrease, due largely to ERATE rebates, the reduction of a computer technician, and the reduction in replacement equipment. He explained the savings that are realized by building chromebooks in house, ERATE rebate benefits, ongoing replacement of switches in buildings, summer reimaging of District computers, an additional server in the District, the cyclical nature of technology expenses, and the anticipated need to begin replacing interactive Promethean boards in buildings. Mr. Michalski answered questions from the committee.
- Director of Curriculum & Instruction, Dr. Katey Hills, presented the proposed budget for Curriculum & Instruction with an overall increase of 1.51% (\$27,244) to include 2 proposals. She requested \$16,000 to purchase printable decodable texts for grades K-3, aligned to The Science of Reading, to save the expense of copying these materials otherwise. She also requested \$20,000 to purchase a district-wide writing program to replace the current program that was purchased in 2013. These two requests are offset by decreases in spending on other materials, resulting in a net increase of \$27,244 for the budget. Dr. Hills answered questions from the committee.
- Director of Special Education & Counseling Services, Dr. Kelly Mask, presented the proposed budget for Special Education with an increase of 26.43% due largely to increased tuition, contracted transportation, and professional services. Dr. Mask reported that the District services 354 eligible school aged students, approximately 17% of the GWRSD student enrollment, in addition to 47 preschool aged students who receive special education services due to a disability. There is currently one open special education teacher position at OCS in addition to open paraprofessional positions across the District. Dr. Mask explained the three budget drivers, noting that unspent funds will return to the taxpayers as a credit the following year. She requested a 100% full-time DPT for the preschool program, one 100% DPT for EES and TCS, and to increase the Special Education Administrative Assistant at KRMS by 3.5 hours per week plus ten days in the summer. Dr. Mask requested the addition of a Student Wellness Coordinator for the District, to oversee nursing, mental

and behavioral health initiatives, and to build relationships with community partners to support overall wellness. Dr. Mask answered questions from the committee.

- Business Administrator, Kathy O’Blenes, presented the proposed budget for the School Board and SAU with an increase of 15.43%, driven largely by contract negotiations, personnel matters, and Right-to-Know matters. Discussion included increasing postage, printing, dues & fees, and utilities expenses. Ms. O’Blenes answered questions from the committee.
- The committee reviewed the proposed general fund budget and discussed recommended cuts. Mr. Pittman reminded the committee that last year he warned against artificially decreasing the budget in order to present a minimal increase as it would prove to be challenging in the future.

Motion: To move the 2025-2026 proposed budget, as edited, to the full Board.

Moved: Mr. Pike – **Second:** Dr. Sheckler

Vote: All in favor

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: At 8:40 pm a motion was made to adjourn the meeting.

Moved: Mr. Pike – **Second:** Mr. Pittman

Vote: All in favor

Recorded by,



Kathy Lagace

School Board Secretary

Approved by School Board: **12/02/2024**