

Special Community Forum on Budget Meeting
South Orange-Maplewood
Board of Education
March 11, 2014

A Special Community Forum to discuss the 2014-15 Budget of the Board of Education of South Orange-Maplewood was held in the District Meeting Room at the Administration Building, 525 Academy Street, Maplewood, New Jersey, on March 11, 2014.

President Beth Daugherty called the meeting to order at 7:33 p.m. in the District Meeting Room.

Adequate written notice of this meeting of the South Orange-Maplewood Board of Education was sent to the Township and Village Clerks, the Libraries, The Star Ledger, the News Record and all schools.

ROLL CALL: Present: Mr. Bennett, Mrs. Daugherty, Mr. Eastman,
Ms. Karriem, Ms. Kritzberg, Mrs. Lawson-Muhammad,
Ms. Pai, Mrs. Wren-Hardin, Mrs. Wright

Absent: Dr. Gaudelli

8 MEMBERS AND ONE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE PRESENT

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

PRESENTATION

Dr. Osborne introduced the budget and commented that it includes keeping a 2% cap with no cuts to programs, no increase in class size policy and an expansion of programs such as the after school enrichment program.

2014-15 Preliminary Budget - Mrs. Schneider

Mrs. Schneider presented the powerpoint from the last meeting highlighting items that had changed in the past week.

The budget is a planning tool and specifics may change as it continues to be developed. Based on comments and discussions from last week, the administration has continued to review the budget. The proposed budget has been adjusted to add back three positions for a total reduction of 15.50 FTE's. The three positions added back in are two special education positions and one high school position. Continued discussions on scheduling in light of increasing enrollments led to the decision to scale back. The suggestion of giving physical education credit for athletic participation will take longer to initialize than September.

[presentation is on file in Board Secretary's office and on district website]

<u>Name</u>	<u>Topic</u>
Judy LoBianco PE Supervisor	Introduced physical education staff who came in support. Appreciate the decision to take

time to look at the student athletic exemption.

Lisa DelliSanti
CHS PE Teacher

Commented that PE motivates both athletic and non-athletic students in a state-mandated course that teaches life skills.

Mike Donoghue
Marshall/Jefferson
Parent

Expressed his concern that special education is being reduced again and that cuts are being planned before District Management Council (DMC) finalizes their proposal.

Jane Bleasdale
President of SEPAC
(Special Ed Parent
Advisory Committee)

Asked the Board to consider the reductions to the special education budget in past years and shared her concern about the impact additional cuts will have on the children. Would have liked the SEPAC to have been included in discussions.

Dionne Williams
Maplewood Resident

Thanked the Board for holding tonight's forum. Asked questions about the budget relative to the International Baccalaureate Programme and IB training for staff.

Ann Dwyer
English Teacher

Expressed her concern about the budget cuts to the English Department and class size.

Barbara Cokorinos
Maplewood Resident

Spoke in support of Fine Arts in our district and her hopes of not having a reduction to the elementary music program.

Bob Thiemer
Maplewood Resident

Commented on employee health benefits and suggested the district look into a self-insured option with the continued increases in the cost of the State Health Benefits Plan.

Janis Zaveri
South Orange CBAC

Commented that South Orange Village is working with Seton Hall in an effort to find alternatives for employee health insurance and invited the district to participate.

Steve Latz,
Elizabeth Baker
Maplewood CBAC

Expressed concerns about increasing class size while appreciating keeping budget increase to 2%. Cautioned not to compromise on delivery of curriculum as new initiatives are introduced and gave several suggestions to consider.

A discussion among Board members included the following comments and questions:

- Special Education staffing had increased significantly and have been restructuring the program to make more fiscally sustainable and more beneficial for students.
- Reduction in elementary specials affects the scheduling, not the program – music program is not being cut.
- Recommendations from CBAC are appreciated and will be reviewed.

- Suggest that budget cycle start earlier. Budget cycle actually begins in the summer through the Finance & Facilities Committee and baseline data is updated in November which is the start of the budget process. Budget is also discussed through the district goals development process.
- It would be useful to get the District Management Council's findings out as soon as possible with regards to special education. These will be presented at the March 17th Regular Board Meeting.
- So far, student opinions on athletic exemption are mixed. Will follow up later with more data.
- Cost drivers of special education and health benefits are reviewed more than others because they are areas that increase faster than other areas. We have a benefits advisor who checks on a regular basis. The experience in other districts is that they realize a savings the first year and then see a spike in premium the next year. Have done research on self-insured programs in the past and the options were not favorable at that time but will discuss in Finance & Facilities Committee to review alternatives currently available.
- State aid issue needs to be discussed at the state level and thanks to Mr. Bennett for addressing this issue.

HEARING OF INDIVIDUALS AND DELEGATIONS

<u>Name</u>	<u>Topic</u>
Sharon Huetz CPAC Member	Looks forward to hearing District Management Council's report and urged cooperation and communication among district staff members and parents.

Dr. Osborne noted that timeline challenges are very real and we need to budget before scheduling both for special education and regular education, but we make adjustments in staff as needed. The Reading Specialist program has led to reduced referral rates which may lower the number of special education students in the future.

NEW BUSINESS

The Board of Education will meet in Closed Session on Monday, March 17, 2014, at 6:30 pm in the Superintendent's Office to discuss personnel and legal issues, negotiations and other matters to be announced at a later date. Immediately following the Closed Session, the Board of Education will meet in Public Session at 7:30 pm in the District Meeting Room, 525 Academy Street, Maplewood, NJ. Action will be taken.

The Board of Education will meet in Closed Session on Monday, April 28, 2014, at 6:30 pm in the Superintendent's Office to discuss personnel and legal issues, negotiations and other matters to be announced at a later date. Immediately following the Closed Session, the Board of Education will meet in Public Session at 7:30 pm in the District Meeting Room, 525 Academy Street, Maplewood, NJ. Action will be taken.

The Board of Education will meet in Closed Session on Thursday, May 15 at 6:30 pm in the Superintendent's Office to discuss personnel and

legal issues, negotiations and other matters to be announced at a later date. Immediately following the Closed Session, the Board of Education will meet in Public Session at 7:30 pm in the District Meeting Room, 525 Academy Street, Maplewood, NJ. Action will be taken.

The Board of Education will meet in Closed Session on Monday, May 19, 2014, at 6:30 pm in the Superintendent's Office to discuss personnel and legal issues, negotiations and other matters to be announced at a later date. Immediately following the Closed Session, the Board of Education will meet in Public Session at 7:30 pm in the District Meeting Room, 525 Academy Street, Maplewood, NJ. Action will be taken.

The Board of Education will meet in Closed Session on Monday, June 16, 2014, at 6:30 pm in the Superintendent's Office to discuss personnel and legal issues, negotiations and other matters to be announced at a later date. Immediately following the Closed Session, the Board of Education will meet in Public Session at 7:30 pm in the District Meeting Room, 525 Academy Street, Maplewood, NJ. Action will be taken.

MOTION made by Mrs. Wren-Hardin, seconded by Ms. Karriem, that the Board of Education meet in Executive Session prior to the March 17, 2014 Public Meeting to discuss personnel, legal and Special Education matters, and negotiations, the nature of which will be made public at a future date. Motion unanimously approved.

MOTION made by Ms. Karriem, seconded by Mr. Bennett, that the Board of Education adjourn. Motion unanimously approved at 9:16 p.m.

Cheryl Schneider, Board Secretary