

# State of the Budget Town Hall Summary

Jan. 24, 2025

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The event was held from 6:30-8 p.m. at Armstrong High School's auditorium

- Dr. Teri Staloch, Superintendent and Kristen Hoheisel, Chief Financial Officer
- 209 attendees
- 15 speakers

## Key Themes and Community Concerns

### 1. Student Safety and School Environment

- Concern over student safety, particularly beyond elementary school, was a major issue. A parent shared a personal account of their child suffering a permanent concussion from an assault at Plymouth Middle School.
- Many linked safety concerns to families choosing to leave the district, emphasizing the need for a more secure and supportive learning environment.
- Calls for schools to foster not just academic achievement but also joy, inclusion, and a sense of belonging.

### 2. Long-Term Planning and Facilities Use

- Community members sought clarity on how school closures and facilities decisions would be made.
- Questions arose about when the district would present enrollment and building capacity data in a straightforward manner.
- Calls for transparency in how decisions are made regarding school utilization and closures, with a focus on balancing student programming, facility conditions, and financial responsibility.

### 3. Academic Models and Learning Experiences

- Several attendees voiced support for alternative educational models, referencing Finland's approach of prioritizing play-based and group learning over standardized testing.
- Concerns about workload at the end of semesters and whether students are learning effectively or just rushing to complete tasks.
- Calls to expand experiential and project-based learning opportunities, such as STEM, immersion programs, and hands-on arts education.
- Requests for more student-centered approaches that reflect diverse learning needs.

#### **4. Trust and Decision-Making**

- Some attendees expressed frustration over a perceived decline in the district, calling for greater trust and clearer lines of responsibility in decision-making.
- Questions about who makes final decisions, particularly in areas such as school closures and curriculum changes.
- Concerns about the school board's role, effectiveness, and how it interacts with district leadership.

#### **5. Enrollment and Program Growth**

- Community members stressed the need to better define and celebrate district successes to attract and retain families.
- Interest in expanding high-demand programs such as Spanish Immersion, STEM education, and literacy-focused initiatives.
- Acknowledgment that enrollment retention is critical for financial stability, with a call to increase the percentage of resident families choosing Robbinsdale schools.
- Emphasis on reading proficiency and foundational academic skills as core measures of district success.

#### **6. Equity and Representation**

- Attendees highlighted the importance of ensuring that all community voices are represented, particularly communities of color.
- Concerns that district meetings and feedback opportunities are not reaching all demographics.
- Calls for intentional efforts to engage underrepresented groups through targeted outreach and accessible communication.

#### **7. Budget, Funding, and Resource Allocation**

- Some questioned how the district's tax base compares to other districts and whether additional funding sources should be pursued.
- Interest in exploring new revenue streams, such as corporate sponsorships, donation campaigns, and large-scale grants.
- Concerns about budget shortfalls and the impact on student services, with a call for balancing fiscal responsibility with the need to invest in students.
- Desire for clearer public communication about the budget deficit, its causes, and how the district plans to address it.

#### **8. Community Engagement and the Path Forward**

- Strong emphasis on the need for a broad, community-driven process to shape the district's future.

- Calls for more visibility into best practices from other successful school districts.
- Recognition that meaningful change will require community participation and shared responsibility.
- Encouragement for continued engagement, with the understanding that the process will be challenging but necessary for meaningful progress.

#### **9. Commitment to Public Education and Optimism for Change**

- Several community members emphasized their commitment to public education, rejecting the idea of leaving the district as a solution.
- Desire for transformative change rather than short-term fixes, with recognition that Robbinsdale has the potential to be a model for success.
- Hope for leadership stability and a collective effort to reimagine the district in a way that meets the needs of all students.