

Oct 30, 2025 | Budget Committee Meeting

1. Meeting Information

- **Topic:** District Budget Committee: Financial Review, Committee requested information Review.
- **Date & Time:** October 30th. Next meeting scheduled for November 20th.
- **Participants:** Morgan Dulan (Chair), Tim Doran, Danette Peterson (6:04pm), April Scott, Teresa Lesage, Bev O'Donnell, Kate LaPlaunt, Tobias Becker, Caroline Brown, Ben Loeffler, April Johnson, Andy DeGraw, Ms. Nilson. (Key decision-makers include Morgan Dulan as Chair and Andy DeGraw as the primary information provider from the administration). Members absent: Amy Bell, Jennifer Redmond, Melissa Charlie, Valerie Stansel.

2. Discussion Overview

- Agenda Item 1: Procedural Business & Communication Protocols
 - Key Points:
 - Morgan Dulan: Stated the committee's mission and initiated a discussion on communication protocols to comply with the Open Meetings Act. "everything we do is within the Open Meetings Act, and so we should not be necessarily opening the entire committee, emailing the entire committee as a whole."
 - Tim Doran: Advised on the correct procedure to avoid violations. "the cleanest path... is to send it to Michele directly and then let her... share. That's okay... it just avoids the situation."
 - Caroline Brown: Questioned the absence of a previously requested information item in the meeting notes. "I specifically asked for information about NorthStar County. It's not on there."
 - Andy DeGraw: Clarified that notes are not typically that detailed but confirmed the request was being tracked. "We have a list compiled, a quite lengthy list. We are working our way down the list. North Star College is on our list, and we should be able to get information out here in the next week or so before the next meeting."
 - Interim Conclusion: The agenda and previous meeting notes were approved. The committee was instructed to send all committee-wide communications through a designated administrator ("Michelle") to comply with the Open Meetings Act. The administration confirmed it is tracking all information requests separately.

- Agenda Item 2: Budget Document Tutorial & Financial Data Review
 - Key Points:
 - Andy DeGraw: Explained the methodology for estimating personnel costs, stating "an average certified cost for a position is \$127,000" and an average support staff cost is in the "\$60K to \$70K range".
 - Andy DeGraw: Clarified that for FY26, the final budget cuts were around [\$11 or \$12 million], not the initially projected [\$16 million] deficit, due to higher-than-anticipated revenue.
 - Andy DeGraw: Outlined the budget book's structure and noted that standard school personnel reports exclude "special ed staffing", "the custodian", "food service workers", and "any title one staff", which are found in other sections.
 - Andy DeGraw: Presented historical data on Pupil-to-Teacher Ratio (PTR), noting that in [2012], "kindergarten was at [22], at the same time grades four through six were [25.5]", and there has been a general "three or four to five student increase" since then.
 - Andy DeGraw: Detailed budget changes starting from [FY26], with specific reductions mentioned including "elementary, orchestra, and band", the "ELP program", and the closure of "Ben Eielson" in [FY25].
 - Committee Chair: Offered to arrange printed copies of the [400-page] budget document for any committee members, directing them to "please let Ms. Nilson know".
 - Interim Conclusion: The committee received a detailed overview of how to navigate the budget document, understand cost-calculation methodologies, and review historical financial data.
- Agenda Item 3: Analysis of Specific School Programs & Funding Models
 - Key Points:
 - Andy DeGraw: Explained that North Star College is a "school in the foundation formula, so it generates income based on the school size multiplier" but operates at a net cost to the district, which was "around half a million dollars total for the school" as of a couple of years ago. He clarified that revenue "goes into one big bucket that the district receives all of our revenue in, and then the district determines where to allocate those resources."
 - Ms. Peterson: Raised the possibility of Hutchison High School becoming a CTE-only building and questioned the impact: "Do we then lose the small school multiplier for that?"
 - Andy DeGraw: Stated that a school must have a minimum enrollment of [175] to remain in the funding formula. If Hutchison is removed, "there's a revenue loss there."
 - Mr. Becker asked & Andy DeGraw clarified that a [2.0 FTE] increase was to "reinstitute" swim programs at Ryan and North Pole Middle Schools, and that counselor reductions at North Pole High ([0.5 FTE]), West Valley ([1.0

families who have left the district to identify what changes might attract them back.

- Mrs Lesage: Reported a net gain of [eight to ten] students from homeschooling at one school, attributing it to "building a brand, being positive about your school, building that trust with the community."
- Ms. Peterson: Suggested engaging families through ESY (Extended School Year) participation and holding a town hall for the homeschool community.
- Recommended Actions:
 - Andy DeGraw: Posed the central question for the committee: "how do we get information from those who have withdrawn their kids from the district of reasons that would get them back, right?"
 - Requested data on before-and-after school programs, including "enrollment of those programs, how many students utilize those programs. If there's wait lists, I think that would be helpful, too, because that would gauge the demand."
 - It was recommended that the committee not plan for new charter school costs, as "the district would be coming up with contingency plans on how to pay for that" outside the regular budget process.

3. Decisions Made

- Confirmed Items:
 - ★ The meeting agenda and notes from the previous meeting were approved.
 - ★ An estimated total cost figure for each budget category per year will be provided.
 - ★ Printed copies of the [400-page] budget document will be made available to committee members upon request.
 - ★ The swim programs at Ryan Middle School and North Pole Middle School have been reinstated ([2.0 FTE]).
 - ★ Counselor positions were reduced at North Pole High, West Valley, and Lathrop due to declining enrollment.
 - ★ The committee will discuss strategies to increase student enrollment.
 - ★ The next committee meeting will be held on [November 20th].