

**ORANGE SOUTHWEST UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
(ORANGE SOUTHWEST SCHOOL DISTRICT)
SPECIAL BOARD BUDGET INFORMATIONAL MEETING
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26TH, 2026
RANDOLPH UNION HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM @ 6:00 PM**

[Click Here](#) to view a video recording of the meeting.

**IMPORTANT DISCUSSION BEFORE AUSTRALIAN BALLOT VOTE
ON TOWN MEETING DAY, TUESDAY MARCH 3, 2026**

Board Attendees: Aimil Parmelee, Anne Kaplan, Martha Hafner, Beverly Lauchner, Sam Hooper. **Administration Attendees:** Michael Clark, Kyle Southworth, ORCA Media. **Public:** Ken Hafner, Mimi Burstein.

Meeting called to order at 6:01 pm by Anne Kaplan, School Board Chair

Michael Clark discussed the budget as presented by the School Board to the voters, with a review of Article IX and X, explanation of cost per pupil and the amount of decrease from last year's homestead tax rate. Discussion of CLA with comments and explanations from Mimi Burstein, and review of restructuring within the district to reduce costs without having significant impact on students. (meeting notes attached)

Michael Clark reviewed information from previous board meetings such as the transformer work required at RUMHS and the environmental project at RES, and explained how surplus funds may be generated and why moving surplus to reserve funds is a healthier alternative than funding repairs through bonds (and paying interest).

Mimi Burstein points out that part of the problem with building budgets is that we are looking backward at historical financial data while working on a budget moving forward. Until the yield is announced by the legislature, projected taxes are just that. The school district and the town don't really have as much impact on the actual tax rate as it might seem, and they encourage voters to go to the legislature with questions and concerns.

Without further business, meeting is adjourned at 6:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kyle M Southworth

Kyle M Southworth, Administrative Assistant 2/27/2026

NOTES -- February 26 budget information meeting --

This year the OSSD Board and Administration focused on trying to maintain the services available to students while also minimizing the tax impact to the residents of Braintree, Brookfield, and Randolph.

I believe the budget the board has prepared to go to the voter does this.

The ballot language is:

Article IX: Shall the voters of the Orange Southwest School District approve the school board to expend \$29,159,606, which is the amount the school board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year? The Orange Southwest School District estimates that this proposed budget, if approved, will result in per pupil education spending of \$15,339.41, which is 1.22% lower than per pupil education spending for the current year.

Based on projections using the yield figure in the December Tax Commissioner's letter we make the following projections:

The OSSD equalized homestead tax rate is projected at \$1.7561, a decrease of 7.4 cents or 4.22% from last year's rate of \$1.8301.

However properties in Braintree, Brookfield, and Randolph have continued to sell for more than their appraised value, which has caused the Common Level of Appraisal to drop in each of the towns. The decrease in the OSSD equalized tax rate helps to offset the increase caused by the CLA but is not able to fully eliminate it as a result

Braintree's CLA adjusted Tax rate will increase by 4 cents from 1.9254 to 1.9644 which will increase the monthly tax bill on a \$250,000 home by \$8.13/month or \$97.50 for the year

Brookfield's CLA adjusted Tax rate will increase by 4 cents from 1.5723 to 1.6123 which will increase the monthly tax bill on a \$250,000 home by \$8.33/month or \$100.00 for the year

Randolph's CLA adjusted Tax rate will increase by 2 cents from 1.2842 to 1.301 which will increase the monthly tax bill on a \$250,000 home by \$3.50 /month or \$42.00 for the year

Again, it is important to remember these rates are dependent on what the legislature sets as the yield. There is some talk in the legislature about buying the rate down again this year however voters should be aware that any buy down this year creates a potential tax cliff in the 2027-2028 school year.

Voters should also be aware that in order to achieve this budget, cutting and or restructuring 3 positions in Administration and Transitioning Faculty and Staff from laptops to Chromebooks: While reductions inevitably have impacts on students, we

have determined these reductions will have the least negative impact on Students, Faculty, and Staff as possible. Further reductions would result in significant impacts to students.

The specific positions included:

- Eliminating the Assistant Superintendent position and replacing it with a Director of Curriculum and Student Achievement
- Eliminating the Associate Principal position at Randolph Union High School and restructuring responsibilities
- Eliminating the Assistant Director of Special Education position (0.5 FTE local / 0.5 FTE IDEA) and replacing it with an Inclusion Specialist funded through Medicaid surplus and IDEA funds (with sufficient surplus to sustain the position for approximately three years)

The Voters are also being asked to place \$1,887,000 in surplus funds from the 2024-2025 school year to the building reserve fund.

As a reminder this was a \$26,728,789 budget with federal funds and represents a positive 7% discrepancy between budget and actual you will also recall there was lots of confusion in the spring of 2025 when the federal government was threatening to withhold funds associated with Recovery, Title and IDEA Grants

This is the equivalent of planning to spend \$100 a week on groceries and only spending \$93 a week. At the end of the year, you would have a \$364 surplus

Doing this ensures there are resources available for building repairs and maintenance which exceed the amounts budgeted without the need for significant tax swings or requiring a bond.

The two most recent projects being considered for the use of Building Reserve Funds include the High School Transformer Project and RES Environment Controls Upgrade

Our Reserve Account Balances 6/30/2025:

Building Reserve \$1,422,863

Operational Reserve (stabilizes tax rate annually) \$1,378,304

Technology Reserve \$392,210

Transportation Reserve \$965,014

Legal Reserve \$140,000

Special Education \$515,697

I am happy to answer questions the board or voters may have and invite the board to highlight anything they think I might have left off this summary.