Caesar Rodney School District
Citizen Budget Oversight Committee Meeting
Meeting Minutes
5:00 p.m. at the District Office
January 14, 2026

I. Opening

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. at the District Office. The following committee members were present: Julie Lavender, Nicole Hill, Melissa Rapp, Shannon Wolfe, and Heath Chasanov. Also in attendance were Meaghan Brennan, Director of Finance, and Nicole Polite, Supervisor of Finance, representing the Caesar Rodney School District (CRSD).

II. Discussion Items

A. November Monthly Financial Report

Mrs. Brennan presented the November Monthly Financial Report to the committee. As of November 30, approximately 40% of funds had been obligated, trending slightly below projections. Additionally, 95% of anticipated tax revenue had been received by the end of November.

In terms of revenue, CRSD received an additional $10 million in state funding, including base contract funding and transportation funds. Local revenues increased by $3.4 million, primarily due to interest income, cafeteria receipts, and other local sources. No changes were reported in federal funding.

The financial position report remains consistent with projections from the previous June, with CRSD expected to end the fiscal year with approximately $10 million in local funds. Internal discussions are ongoing regarding the establishment of a “set-aside” account, distinct from a reserve fund, to support planned expenditures such as turf field replacements (estimated at $1.5 million for two fields), playground upgrades, technology improvements over the next five years, and upcoming HVAC projects.

Mrs. Brennan also noted that Inclusive Education has experienced deficit spending despite ongoing budget increases, largely due to contracted services. A joint review by the Finance and Inclusive Education departments resulted in the recoding of certain student costs for those eligible for tuition billing, which will help offset pressures on the local Inclusive Education budget.

A revised final budget will be presented to the Board in January. This revision will include an increase to Minor Capital Improvement (MCI) funding, including enhanced MCI, as well as an adjustment to reflect the transfer of athletic funds from Magnolia MS to Fifer MS.

In response to a question from Mr. Chasanov regarding tuition expenses, Mrs. Brennan confirmed that while such expenses are increasing, the growth is not exponential.

B. Final Budget – FY 2026

Mrs. Brennan reviewed enrollment and unit count trends over the past five years and noted that the midyear unit count process will begin the following week.

Revenue projections were adjusted to reflect areas impacted by unit count. Mrs. Brennan explained that carryover balance estimates developed in June are updated with final figures in the revised budget. The alternative reduction plan, totaling approximately $1.4 million (including $220,000 from John S. Charlton School), was also discussed, with adjustments made to reflect reduced revenue.

Additional updates included revisions for school choice and charter-related figures, which are finalized by December. The John S. Charlton School budget was updated to reflect tuition billing and increased transportation costs. Federal funding amounts were revised based on final consolidated grant allocations from the Department of Education, and a budget was established for TSI/CSI initiatives. Child Nutrition projections were finalized based on meal counts and staffing requirements.

Mrs. Brennan outlined several expenditure adjustments, including a $2.1 million increase in state salary expenditures, a $56,000 increase in competitive state grants, and higher transportation costs due to contractor route returns and anticipated deficits. Child Nutrition funding increased due to additional state support. District expenditures rose by $204,000 to address substitute costs, and operations and utilities increased by $200,000. Athletic budgets were also increased to account for rising officiating costs, and school-level budgets were adjusted based on the September 30 unit count.

Mrs. Brennan also reviewed the components of the alternative reduction plan, including staffing reductions, child safety awareness funding, and energy-related savings.

Finally, it was noted that the base budget aligns with the federal contract amount with the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA). Mrs. Brennan reviewed updated requirements for accessing base contract funds, noting that full funding is contingent upon enrollment levels and services provided.

C. Open Discussion

1. Mrs. Brennan reported that the unit count has been finalized.

2. Mrs. Brennan reported that CREA has been supportive of the referendum efforts. Beginning January 14, advertisements will run in the newspaper, and signage has already been distributed. Absentee ballots are available at all front offices, and CRSD is developing strategies to further mobilize community support. Mrs. Brennan invited

feedback and suggestions from the committee regarding referendum planning and outreach.

Mr. Chasanov inquired whether it would be possible to identify households that experienced tax reductions as a result of reassessment.

Ms. Wolfe noted that she has been asked, “What would I lose if I vote no?” and suggested there may be value in clearly communicating the potential consequences if the referendum does not pass. Ms. Rapp agreed, adding that outlining potential impacts could motivate those directly affected. Mr. Chasanov referenced Woodbridge School District, noting that in 2019 the district did not initially specify potential cuts and failed its first referendum; however, after including this information in a subsequent effort, the referendum passed.

Mrs. Brennan shared that, during the principals’ cabinet meeting, staff were informed they could reach out to families and encourage participation in the vote. Ms. Rapp asked whether outreach had been extended to graduates from prior years. Mr. Chasanov suggested obtaining legal guidance regarding permissible methods of communication and access to contact information.

Ms. Hill asked whether the ballot is finalized; Mrs. Brennan confirmed that it is, and voting should be available through Elections. At this time, there has been no confirmation regarding receipt of absentee ballots. Mr. Chasanov noted that if “Vote Yes” signage is displayed, equal allowance must be made for “Vote No” signage. Ms. Hill also inquired about plans for volunteer presence at polling locations, and Mrs. Brennan confirmed that volunteer coordination is still in progress.

I. Adjournment