

BUDGET ADVISORY COUNCIL
Meeting Minutes - Monday, March 24, 2025

Members Present: Andrea Catena, Steve DeSantis, Holly Evans, Joanne Fusare, Dan Hentschel, Paul Hoak, Brian Landi, Jessica Mattice, Bao Nguyen, Pamela Reinhardt, Millie Sefranek, Diana Sheffer, Katy Smith, Geraldo Torres

Members Absent: Chuck Allan, Karen Arthmann, Courtney Betancourt, Maria Bevacqua, Tiffany Brodner, Brian Hill, Carl Kirchgessner, Nichole LaPlaca, Brandon Lindsay, Bob Logel, Diane McBride, Ken Nelson, Vinny Rau, Dina Stathopoulos

Ex-Officio Members: Dr. Barbara Mullen, Suzanne Bennett, Kimberly DeLardge, Mary Ann Exler, Andy Whitmore

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

INTRODUCTION

Dr. Barbara Mullen, Superintendent of Schools, welcomed the members of the council to the last meeting of the council for this budget development cycle. She mentioned several upcoming events where community members can receive information regarding the budget and get their questions answered.

BUDGET OVERVIEW

Barbara reviewed the budget goals and their relation to the district's goals and priorities. She connected the budget goals to the budget principles specifically highlighting the need for the Special Education redesign to be both functional and fiscally responsible.

Andy Whitmore, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations, stated the Superintendent will be recommending a budget of \$179,134,741 to the Board of Education, an increase of \$8,896,848 or 5.2% over the 2024-25 budget. The main drivers of the growth are: additional positions, contractual wage increases, rollout of a new ELA curriculum, new threat assessment software, rising costs for utilities and health insurance, and increases employee benefit costs related to the increases in wages. Barbara added that staffing will be driven by student enrollment and course mandates which may result in reassignments but, no force reduction is planned outside of attrition and retirements. She also mentioned new expenditures will be offset by reductions in the purchase of ELA supplies and the curtailing of a service used for home visits.

Andy presented the district's current Revenue Projection of \$179,134,741. The projection includes @\$66 in state education aid, @\$107 million from local sales/property taxes, \$3.3 million of reserves and @2.8 million from miscellaneous other sources. In addition to the budget, the budget propositions include \$4.6 million for purchasing replacement buses and the establishment of a new \$25 million capital reserve. A capital project vote to cover items identified in the district's building condition survey is planned for a separate vote to be scheduled in the future. The budget, as recommended by the Superintendent, is estimated to increase the taxes on a home valued at \$200,000 by @\$71 per year. The Five-Year Budget Projection, which is a best estimate at this time, includes the continued usage of reserves to balance the budget for the next three years. The Reserve Utilization Plan projects the current reserves will cover the funding gap for the same number of years. Monitoring of growth in spending will continue to be necessary in light of the projected funding gaps.

REVIEW OF BUDGET DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Andy asked for input from the council regarding the Budget Development process. No changes were suggested.

TOPICS FROM THE COUNCIL

Members of the council brought up the following topics during the meeting:

- Current status of the electric bus mandate and options if voters do not approve bus purchases
- Utilization rates of district transportation services and how to encourage an increase
- Planned rate of increase in salary for Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent
- Plan to address increasing costs and make decisions about needed expenditures
- How members can address questions from the community regarding the budget increase
- Factors driving the budget increase

- Benchmarking of salaries
- Inclusion of administrative costs in calculation of excess cost aid reimbursement (not included)
- Evaluation of employee benefit costs related to consortium participation
- Reassessments in Rush & Henrietta potential effect on voter sentiment
- Need for clear and increased communication of budget to community especially parents and eligible students

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Mary Ann Exler, Budget Technician