

June 30, 2014

TO: Parents/Guardians, Staff, and Community Members

BOE Recap

The Elizabeth School District Board of Education held their board meeting on June 9, 2014, here are the highlights.

The Financial Report

Ron Patera, Chief Financial Officer presented the proposed budget for the school year 2014-2015. The Board of Education has a difficult job, recognizing the declining enrollment and modest revenue increases, while striving to meet the ever-increasing demands for student achievement. During the budgeting process the BOE stressed their desire to continue educational excellence, develop a financially responsible plan and to put students at the heart of everything we do. The board provided district administration with the following guidelines:

- Preserving or enhancing curricular and extra-curricular offerings to maintain or improve the quality of education for all students.
- Prudently increasing salary and benefit levels in order to retain reward and attract the highest quality educators and support staff.
- Continuing to adjust staffing levels in order to reflect changes in enrollment and take advantage of voluntary departures (retirements and resignations) as much as possible.
- Aligning resources for continued improvement in student success and improvement in organization effectiveness.
- Providing adequate resources to ensure safe and well maintained school facilities.
- Prudently using existing financial reserves to help offset past state and federal funding cuts to public education.

Ron Patera coordinated with the district-wide leadership to address the budget challenges. Salaries were increased for some employees who have experienced multiple years of pay freezes. Certified staffing levels were adjusted based on changes in enrollment. Staff support positions were further reduced due to the state's reduced funding from prior years' and three years of fund balance usage to balance the general fund budget. Funds were allocated within the capital budget to improve health and safety at the schools. The district budget for 2014-2015 reduces expenditures by \$504,000 and the impact will be felt throughout the organization. Our revenues have been below 2008 funding levels. Ron Patera indicated that the current business model is unsustainable and that within a few years our reserves will be exhausted. The district administration and its staff continue to be dedicated to providing an excellent education experience for our students.

Bond and Mill Levy Override

Community leaders, the Board of Education, and District Administration are actively working

together to consider going to voters to approve a mill levy override, a bond request or both. Our facilities need repairs and improvements, our students and staff needs additional technology resources and support, and we need to attract and retain the very best educators. Approximately 24 percent of the Elizabeth School District's teaching staff leaves each year, primarily for higher paying jobs in other districts. The district is in the bottom 5 percent of per pupil funding statewide when mill levy overrides are considered. The district has great needs and putting off a request for increased taxpayer funding is undesirable.

A professional polling firm was used to survey 100 households for the board of education in understanding what the community values in terms of Elizabeth Schools and the voters' receptivity to a question on the ballot this November. When read a number of needs that could be funded through ballot measures, attracting and retaining quality teachers, providing updated textbooks, as well as providing technology necessary for students to gain skills they will need in the modern workplace were the residents' top priorities. The backlog of needed repairs that this funding would address is a strong ancillary rationale. The community leaders and board of education will be looking deeper into the polling results. The BOE will be looking to our community leaders for guidance as they move closer in making a decision on a ballot question for this November election.

In reviewing proposals from various Banking and Investment Firms the Board of Education approved signing a letter of engagement with George K. Baum to provide services in connection with district's public policy efforts.

In Other News

A new district website will be launching in July in an effort to provide information that is easily accessible to our parents and community. We appreciate your patience as we work through this transition. As always your feedback is welcomed.

Save the date of September 12 at 4:00 for the 25th Anniversary Celebration of Running Creek Elementary.

The next Board of Education Meeting will be August 11, 2014.

Regards,
Michele McCarron