

June 3, 2014

The BOE Recap

Dear Parents/Guardians, Staff, and Community Members

The Board of Education held a board meeting on May 19, here are the highlights.

Track Resurfacing Initiative

Clay Terry, Chairman of the EHS Resurfacing Task Force provided an update to the Board of Education on the Track Resurfacing Initiative. As mentioned previously, the EHS Track and Field Booster Club commissioned a task force comprised of parents, students, and community leaders to raise the necessary funds to resurface the track. The task force identified potential donors including area businesses and/or individual business leaders who have a vested interest in the community or who have ties to economic development in the Elizabeth and Elbert County area. Upon raising a minimum of \$65,000 by participating donors, the Elizabeth School District Board of Education approved the contribution of \$20,000 from district funds to resurface the Elizabeth High School Track. Any additional funds raised by this initiative will be applied toward other needed repairs of the track and for the purchase of track equipment including:

- Pole vault, long jump, triple jump runways repositioning and reconstruction
- Pole assortment for athletes' use
- Timing Equipment, starting blocks, hurdles, and assorted track equipment

On behalf of the District and Board of Education we would like to thank the Track and Field Booster Club, the Task Force, and the Community Members for support of this initiative.

Preliminary Budget for 2014-2015

Ron Patera, Chief Financial Officer, presented the preliminary budget for the 2014-2015 school year. Many districts in the state, and across the nation, are still working with inadequate funding to meet appropriately higher education expectations. Budgetary challenges for our district still remain as the state slowly starts to restore funding that was dramatically reduced by the negative factor. As the district entered the 2014-2015 budget process the board articulated its values of educational excellence, a financially responsible plan, and to put students at the heart of everything we do.

Mr. Patera explained that the preliminary budget includes three main components that comprise the additional expenditures; selected increases to salaries for employees most impacted by previous pay freezes, mandatory PERA increases, and increases for health insurance. The preliminary budget also included increasing athletic fees, increasing food prices at the schools, and eliminating eight employment positions. Increasing the technology fee was also discussed but the board did not approve a tech fee increase at this time.

The preliminary budget included Capital Improvements recommended by district administration for board consideration:

- Additional fuel storage tank – This project will allow transportation the ability to take advantage of lower fuel costs because they will be able to make larger purchases, which will reduce the cost of fuel per gallon.
- Replace Hoods in Kitchens – The current setups for the hoods in the kitchens are not compliant with the fire code. The hoods must be connected with the fire system in the buildings so that the alarms are triggered if there is a fire near the hood. Our current setup was grandfathered until 2015, we now must comply with these regulations.
- Replace Water Heaters in FHS and EMS – Both water heaters are starting to see signs of problems and the district recommends they both be replaced.
- Replace Intercom at RCE – The intercom at RCE has failed several times over the past year and replacement parts are becoming difficult to obtain due to the age of the system.
- Copier Leases and Technology necessities and improvements.

There are additional capital expenditures that were considered but due to the district's limited funding the list has been significantly pared down. However the capital expenditure list is still work in process. The preliminary budget is posted to the district website. Approval of the 2014-2015 budget is scheduled for the June 9 Board Meeting.

Topics from the Board of Education

The Board of Education discussed the possibility of going to our voters this November election for a Bond Initiative and/or a Mill Levy Override.

The school board is very intent on mobilizing people and resources to support the success of our students and schools. The future of Elizabeth Schools is their common concern. Throughout the summer the board and their community partners will continue to develop and refine ideas for improving our capital infrastructure and our operating budget. Our facilities need repairs and improvements, our students and staff need additional technology resources and support, and most importantly, we need to attract and retain the very best educators. We also need to continually invest in systems and staff to keep our schools safe.

At this point, after tremendous effort to improve funding from the state, but with limited results, we need to turn to our community and ask for their ideas and their support.

The task will be even more challenging than last year. Because of severely limited state allocations to capital needs, the district was not awarded a BEST matching grant for the roof replacements at Singing Hills Elementary and Elizabeth High School. The BEST Capital Construction Assistance Board received 47 applications totaling over \$70 million in projects, yet only awarded 25 grants totaling \$14.4 million.

To assist the Board of Education in making a final decision to go to voters with a bond measure and/or a mill levy override question the board is in the process of executing a polling project to survey our voters. The survey will assist the board in understanding what the community values in terms of Elizabeth Schools, and the voters' receptivity to a question on the ballot this November. Over the next couple of weeks the board will be reviewing proposals from various Banking and Investment Firms that provide services with Bond and Mill Levy Initiatives should the board decide to pursue that course of action.

The board will make a final decision on a bond measure and/or a mill levy override question by the August timeframe.

The next regular board meeting will be held on June 9.

The board meeting scheduled for June 23 is cancelled.

The board is considering another Town Hall Meeting for the July/August timeframe. More information will be provided as the board finalizes these plans.

Regards,
Michele McCarron
Elizabeth Schools

