

UNADOPTED MINUTES

SPECIAL MEETING - The special meeting of the Board of Education was held on the date and place mentioned above.

CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE- The meeting was called to order by President McMahon at 6:44 PM, who led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENT: Jensen, McMahon, Mooney, Spencer, Tam

ABSENT: None

PUBLIC SESSION ITEM

Master Plan Topics: *Master Plan Strategies Update & Other Traditional Cost-Savings Strategies*

Questions/Answers

Q: There is zero penalty for going 29:1?

A: We can go up to 24.95; anything over would mean no apportionments for the program – no money coming in. The savings would only be represented by FTE.

Q: Has there been an analysis on the impact of increasing class sizes in certain grades?

A: We have not done the analysis yet. We do have an average in our teachers' contract that we cannot go over, districtwide. This is an item that would need to be negotiated.

Q: Did you look at all grades, not just K-3?

A: That is something we could look at.

Q: What about year-round school?

A: Offering a multi-track ends up with cost savings, however, there is a huge educational downside. One group of kids is always stuck with a non-optimal schedule, and it becomes an equity issue.

Q: Was there an efficiency analysis done with school site operations and the copy center?

A: It's something we are looking at – are we getting as much as we can out of that particular strategy? Part of the process is doing customer interviews and understanding the “pain points” from the site perspective in looking at linkages between the sites and the district office. This is work we are doing with all of our employee union groups.

Q: How much does an efficiency expert cost?

A: The contract estimate is \$20K - \$27K. With an \$80M budget, it is well worth it to see if there are efficiencies we can implement.

Q: The community wants small, neighborhood elementary schools. Even if we go 22:1 or have a loss of 20 classrooms – that's an entire elementary school. Doesn't that present a conflict?

A: This may be something we need to wrestle with – this is why we have these community forums; to

hear your feedback and concerns.

Q: Are all schools filled to capacity? How many are running lower than 20:1? Is there impact from school-to-school?

A: There are moments we don't have a seat in an entire grade level across the District, or maybe only 1 or 2 seats. We have such a tight budget, almost all of our seats are filled. There is almost no space for new students in some grades. If we were to use every available space for classroom space, then the tradeoff would be not having specialized rooms for computer labs, media centers, music, etc.

Q: How does CSR work?

A: We get money to keep classes small, however, there may be a cost savings in loading classes at a higher ratio. You end up staffing with less teachers so there's a salary savings. We look at the difference between the amount of money that comes in and the difference in the cost savings. The bottom line, for 22.95, it's about \$700K.

Q: Are there any guarantees that the state will continue funding CSR?

A: The rules change; nothing is a guarantee.

Q: Regarding MOF work orders, is there a way perhaps to let volunteers at school sites tackle certain things?

A: That's something we would need to work out with CSEA 860. We want to be cautious about taking away work from union employees. There may be suggested improvements based on our efficiency expert's analysis.

Q: Is there more information about the demographic study and facilities report in light of what the reality/myth between small/big schools and class size are?

A: The studies are being done right now – can we think about how to use space differently? The demographic report looks at enrollment trends over the next 5-10 years in Alameda. Is there even a trend? We need to understand this information boundary-by-boundary.

Q: What about lengthening the school day so instructional minutes are met in fewer days?

A: We cannot discuss potential bargaining items.

Q: Knowing we've had 2 parcel taxes that had CSR as major components, and how hard it is going to be to pass another parcel tax, what's the plan to articulate what CSR looks like? When can the public give feedback?

A: We have a parcel tax advisory committee meeting in October and November to make recommendations. We have a workshop scheduled for November 3. Please sign up on the district website to get up-to-date information about everything going on. There are many opportunities to give feedback as the Board wrestles around what to do.

Q: Have we looked at alternative ways to bring in income? What about corporate sponsorships and different revenue streams?

A: Corporations don't fund ongoing costs, and funders consider innovations. We're talking about ongoing costs. It's hard to get corporations and funders to cover these types of things. Schools don't have any other option than a parcel tax, although the City may have options and could do a pass-through to the District.

- Q: How are we going to community the benefits the parcel tax will provide to people who don't have kids in our schools? Personal stories make it real. I can't imagine furloughs would work – teachers put so much of their own time in as it is.
- A: We are not making any suggestions or recommendations, just sharing information and soliciting feedback.
- Q: How does our funding compare to other districts?
- A: Alameda receives a low allocation. When the Navy base closed, our allocation was never recalculated. In the news, there is some talk that CSBA is looking at suing the state around the equity of funding formulas.
- Q: How does our parcel tax compare to other communities?
- A: Piedmont has parcel taxes from \$1200 - \$4000. Oakland has a few taxes, the parcel tax being around \$600. Other communities haven't been able to pass parcel taxes.
- Q: As a taxpayer and property owner, we have been hit many, many times. Something needs to change so property owners don't bear the brunt. If San Francisco can charge a tax on cigarettes, why couldn't we do something like that here so everybody pays?
- A: The committee will be exploring all opportunities.
- Q: Why can't we get a group of dedicated people together to form a 501(c)3 to raise money?
- A: We do have the Alameda Education Foundation that supports the schools.
- Q: What is the cost savings in terms of closing schools?
- A: Between \$300K - \$500K for elementary, \$900K - \$1.3M for high school. At a certain point, if you close schools and we lose families, there is no cost savings due to the loss in enrollment; this is something we need to think about.
- Q: Would cuts still be necessary if a new parcel tax passed?
- A: It depends on the amount of the parcel tax. If it is enough to cover us, then no further cuts would be needed.

Comments

- The furlough option would create equity issues for certain parents in terms of being able to cover that time for their children. This could be a huge fiscal impact on these families.
- As much as we value neighborhood elementary schools, we shouldn't eliminate the idea of one of them closing if it's possible to reorganize and close an entire building. We would reduce staff, operating costs, etc. It could be the most significant savings we could see without necessarily having to do CSR and chip away at our teachers' prep time and benefits. It should still be on the table as a possibility.

Board Discussion

- Thanks to all of you for your feedback; this is the biggest crowd we've had recently and communication is improving. Please make sure you go to the district website and complete the magnet survey and spread the word about the upcoming PEV training.
- Education is the most important business out there. We need to use that critical eye to implement methods to help keep the cuts away from our students.
- We all recognize we are receiving less money from the state. We have parcel taxes expiring in 2012. We are working with the business community to reduce the pressures they're feeling from the current

Measure H. However, a new/replacement parcel tax may not pass; then what do we do?

- The district is doing everything it can – the efficiency expert is helping us look from within to see where it is we can save every last dollar.
- We know we have students from outside the district attending our schools; is it the residents' responsibility to pay for these students? We need to see solid numbers so we know whether or not we're maximizing our facilities. That will help us determine whether or not we need to touch CSR as much.
- I don't like the idea of furloughs; what would the educational impact be? Already, when kids come back to school in the fall, a good portion of the first month is spent refreshing their memories on what they learned previously. This would be going in the wrong direction and have an impact on our teachers, who are already underpaid compared to their peers elsewhere.
- Could we look at grade configurations differently to close smaller schools? K-8, 7-9, 10-12?
- At the start of the school year, the district was supposed to receive \$5776 per student. A year ago, our economy tanked. As a result, the revenues from the state dropped and education is receiving less money. We have been reduced to \$5600 per student.
- When we talk about deficit numbers, we're talking about ongoing revenues and expenses. We're already in deficit mode, but we have money leftover from Measure H and categorical flexibility. Categorical flexibility allowed for one-time shuffling to keep balance in order to get us through these years.
- The state created a \$5M hole for us. The legislature cannot pass a revenue system to support the investment in education. The ugly reality is that it comes down to the community supporting the schools on the local level.
- Districts have very limited ways to raise funds. The City cannot pass a tax for us; the County could – increase sales tax, maybe, but we already have one of the highest sales tax rates in the state. There is even talk of districts banding together to try to create a parcel tax.
- The whole education code and funding formulas for education in California need to be redone.
- People comment to us to “live within our means”; it would be nice to know what number that is ahead of time, and have it be consistent instead of changing throughout the year.
- All is not lost; we have good schools in Alameda! Let's figure out how to keep them good so we don't have people fleeing.
- How do we build and sustain the programs we identify as effective? How can we leverage resources to make sure these programs continue? How do we build relationships with the larger community?
- Bottom line, it's going to come down to the amount of trust community members place in the Board.
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ADJOURNMENT

President McMahon adjourned the meeting at 8:38 PM.