

FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION
FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

Work Session

MINUTES

March 11, 2015

President Haas called the work session to order at 6:00 p.m. in the board room of the FNSBSD Administrative Center at 520 Fifth Avenue to hear public testimony and discuss the district's 2015-2016 Proposed Budget.

President Haas read the district's mission statement: *"Our mission is to provide an excellent and equitable education in a safe, supportive environment so all students can become productive members of a diverse and changing society."*

Present:

Heidi Haas, President
Wendy Dominique, Vice President
Allyson Lambert, Treasurer
Lisa Gentry, Clerk
Sue Hull, Member
Michael O'Brien, Member
Sean Rice, Member

Absent:

None

Staff Present:

Dr. Karen Gaborik, Superintendent
Lisa Pearce, Chief Financial Officer
Shaun Kraska, Interim Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education
Sandra Kowalski, Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Education
Tracie Gatewood, Executive Director of Human Resources
Dave Norum, Executive Director of Facilities Management
Kathie Wassmann, Executive Director of Special Education
Peggy Carlson, Executive Director of Curriculum & Instruction
Janet Cobb, Executive Director of Technology
Johanna Carson, Director of Public Relations
Melanie Hadaway, Director of Alternative Instruction
Jennifer Glorioso, Director of Nursing
Daniel Domke, Director of Career Technical Education
Heather Rauenhorst, Director of Grants & Special Projects
Helen Clark, Director of Federal Programs
Katherine Sanders, Director of Library Media
Mario Gatto, Principal on Special Assignment
Sandy Weaver, Budget Specialist
Sharon Tuttle, Executive Assistant to the Board

Administration's 2015-16 Proposed Budget [0:00:32]

Board members thanked the Citizen Budget Review Committee and staff for its work on the budget, as well as the public who had been following the board's work on the budget. Board members also thanked all the school staff members who took the time to meet with board members during their school visits to provide comments, input, and suggestions.

Due to a prior commitment, Mrs. Hull noted she would need to leave the meeting early. She apologized for having to leave early.

Public Testimony on the Proposed 2015-2016 Budget [0:03:20]

President Haas called for public testimony. Testimony was limited to two minutes per person, to allow enough time for everyone to have the opportunity to speak.

Chief Randall Aragon, 911 Cushman Street, Fairbanks Police Chief, testified in support of student and school safety. Chief Aragon spoke to the need for officers in the schools. He encouraged the board to continue the resource officer program.

Robin Feinman, 4680 Old Nenana Highway, Lathrop teacher, spoke in support of class size. Ms. Feinman appreciated the board's focus on students and their education. She applauded the board's goal to make cuts that would impact classrooms the least.

Larry Ehnert, PO Box 74918, Lathrop teacher, understood the board's goal to keep cuts from classrooms and meet the individual needs of students. He suggested many options to reduce costs, noting the reductions might be important in securing additional funding from the borough assembly.

Maggie Samson, 168 Shenandoah Drive, North Pole Middle counselor, spoke in support of school counselors and the increase of a counselor to North Pole Middle School. Today's counselors were not the guidance counselors of yesterday. Counselors were critical to student success and effective in decreasing the dropout rate, increasing the graduation rate, and more.

Annie Sartz, 1280 Sundance Loop, North Pole Middle counselor, spoke in support of school counselors and the work they did for students. The expectations and job requirements of a school counselor were expansive. Ms. Sartz appreciated the addition of a third counselor for North Pole Middle School; it would help with the caseload.

Kathy Port, 1392 Joliet Drive, instructional technology teacher (ITT) coordinator, spoke to the vital role of technology in education. Ms. Port supported maintaining the ITTs. She provided several examples of how ITTs supported teachers, including with the upcoming AMP testing.

Mariko Kinikin, 6685 Coho Avenue, ITT teacher, spoke in support of maintaining ITTs. Ms. Kinikin shared how she supported teachers and spoke to the important aspect of technology in the school district.

Chris Carlson, 2024 Weston Drive, ITT teacher, supported maintaining ITTs. With technology changing so rapidly, ITTs were an important aspect in supporting the whole student by assisting teachers in the classroom and with assessments. ITTs provided much needed assistance and resources to teachers.

David Dyer, 2402 Nelson Road, ITT teacher, spoke to the essential role of ITTs. All students should have the opportunity to hone their technology skills. With state online assessments, technology was more important than ever. ITTs supported and helped the district and teachers when the district rolled out new programs.

Christina Hum, 1274 Sunny Slope Road, ITT teacher, spoke in support of ITT teachers. Ms. Hum's position was slated to be one of the ITTs reductions. ITTs provided support to teachers and students. They helped with technology hardware, modeled lessons, and assisted greatly with distance delivery. Distance delivery would be affected dramatically if ITTs were cut.

Melanie Linton, 3779 Mitchell Avenue, Ticasuk Brown music teacher, spoke in support of the district's music programs. Ms. Linton shared several comments from a petition supporting the district's music programs and how music helped students throughout the community. Music was an integral part of a student's education. Music was not a luxury; it was a necessity.

Public Testimony on the Proposed 2015-2016 Budget (continued)

Margaret Salisbury, 1375 Garay Street, interim secondary curriculum coordinator and previous content coach, spoke in support of content coaches. Ms. Salisbury shared many of her interactions with teachers. Content coaches helped teachers with engaging strategies, modeling lessons, and supporting teachers in all disciplines. Content coaches worked with new teachers. Content coaches made a significant difference that both teachers and principals recognized.

Liz Hursh, 2690 Bald Eagle Court, Ben Eielson teacher and a K-12 product of the school district, spoke to the limited courses and scheduling conflicts almost all students faced at a small school. Ms. Hursh supported student activities and activity directors. In contacting the legislature, she was told by one legislator the district had received a modest increase of \$690,000 in funding over the past three years; which made her question the justification for the dramatic personnel and program cuts. The administrative center continued to grow and she wondered if the growth was worth the increase in class size and decrease in course options.

Renee Parsley, 613 Gold Mine Trail, Lathrop science teacher, spoke in support of class size. Safety was the number one concern for Ms. Parsley in the classroom. Large enrollments could be unsafe in classrooms and labs and could lead to more accidents. The other issue was the availability to get teacher assistance in large classrooms. Teachers needed time to assess, provide feedback, and then provide more instruction. Ms. Parsley asked the board to consider the impact of class size on student safety and learning.

Peggy Carlson, 688 Senate Drive, executive director of curriculum, spoke in support of content coaches. She spoke to the responsibilities of the content coaches. Content coaches worked an altered work calendar that had them beginning before teachers returned in the fall, so they were ready to help teachers the minute teachers returned. Content coaches provided vital support to teachers by teaching new programs, helping with assessments, and much more.

Chris Greenfield-Pastro, 3516 Krieb Drive, Randy Smith extended learning program teacher, spoke in support of content coaches and ITTs. Both positions helped classroom teachers save time by providing information, support, professional development, modeling lessons, etc. Both positions made a huge difference for teachers. Ms. Greenfield-Pastro also valued the district's art and music programs and how they helped students.

Ben Bragonier, PO Box 110, districtwide art teacher, provided a condensed hour and half art lesson into two minutes. He provided board members with the art supplies necessary to complete the lesson and asked board members to return the project back to him. Mr. Bragonier spoke to how art integrated with most all other subjects.

Connie Oba, 3505 Mink Lane, Denali music teacher, Lathrop parent, and president-elect to the Music Association, spoke in support of the district's music programs. Music taught many skills necessary to succeed in life. Students showed higher math proficiency, were better readers, had better test scores, and more. Investing in music provided large dividends. The district needed strong elementary and secondary music programs. Students needed music; the community needed music; society needed music.

Mrs. Hull left at 6:50 p.m.

Carolyn Soderlund, 540 Mount Vista Drive, Lathrop choir director, long time music teacher, and parent, spoke in support of music. Ms. Soderlund believed very much in what she did. She asked the board to seriously consider how it spent its money. The value of money was in how it was spent. She encouraged the board to take the extra time to determine the best value in spending education funds.

Public Testimony on the Proposed 2015-2016 Budget (continued)

Vanessa Jackson, 3947 Boysenberry Avenue, Pearl Creek teacher and district parent, implored the school board to keep teachers in the classrooms as much as possible. As a military wife, Ms. Jackson had worked in other states and it seemed when it came time for cuts, the arts were on the table. The arts promoted critical thinking skills that businesses really looked for in employees. Ms. Jackson asked the board to keep teachers in the classroom.

Tristan Hovest, 4619 Stanford Drive, UAF graduate and Lathrop first year teacher, spoke to his concern regarding the human resources processes. Teachers were afraid for their jobs when they were called to the administrative center. In looking at the budget, he saw positions in human resources added and music and art cut. He spoke to the importance of music and art in helping students stay on track and out of trouble. Mr. Hovest asked the board not to cut elementary band and orchestra.

Michele Robinson, PO Box 71873, Lathrop teacher, advocated for teaching positions and students. Nothing was more important in the budget than PTR. Nothing affected students more than PTR. Increasing the PTR would affect students and they would not get the personal and individual attention they needed. As a parent with a student starting kindergarten in the fall, Ms. Robinson wanted small classes for her son.

Jimmy Fox, 560 Yak Road, Watershed parent, voiced his concern with the proposed budget. During a recent visit to Juneau, he was asked what he would cut from the budget. In looking at the district's mission statement, he would start with activities. Mr. Fox encouraged the board to look at reducing activities and to consider funding to address indoor air quality.

Allison Mullison, representing University of Alaska Fairbanks faculty Dr. Karen Gustafson and Dr. James Bicigo, read a letter in support of the district's music programs. Dr. Gustafson and Dr. Bicigo's letter spoke to the importance of music education. Music supported higher level thinking and everyday learning that promoted growth. Dr. Gustafson and Dr. Bicigo supported maintaining the district's music programs.

Erika Burr, PO Box 81543, Lathrop teacher, spoke in support of PTR. When a class was too large, it negatively affected student learning and teachers were not able to meet the individual needs of students. It was important for teachers to know his or her students. Not knowing the students meant there would be missed opportunities. Students needed to know teachers knew them and cared about them. Decreasing teachers did not hurt teachers as much as students. Ms. Burr felt large classes intimidated some students which might keep them from asking questions.

Molly Sherman, 3467 Shanly, content coach, spoke in support of content coaches and ITTs. Ms. Sherman shared how content coaches affected hundreds of teachers and students across the district. Content coaches worked directly with teachers and students, and provided much needed mentoring to new teachers. It frightened her to think about what would happen to first year teachers without the mentoring provided by content coaches.

Alison Gryga, 528 W. 4th Avenue, district ITT, spoke in support of ITTs. Cuts to the ITTs would affect all schools across the district. ITTs supported teachers by modeling lessons, providing professional development, assisting with AMP testing, and more. As a parent, Ms. Gryga wanted her children in classrooms with teachers who knew technology.

Heidi Collins, 1504 22nd Avenue, districtwide art specialist and president of the Art Education Association, spoke in support of the arts. Research supported the importance of the arts in education. Students in four years of art environment stayed in schools, tested higher, and did better at graduating from college and finding fulfilling and gainful employment. Ms. Collins encouraged board members to visit the Up with Art display at Pioneer Park. Arts were a big part of the Fairbanks community.

Public Testimony on the Proposed 2015-2016 Budget (continued)

Kellen Baker, 1545 Crestline Drive, a recent UAF music graduate, spoke in support of art and music. Mr. Baker heard the testimony of how music helped students achieve more. Children needed to know they were being prepared for the future. Cutting arts and music would show students they were not valued.

Sandy Clark, 2941 Goldhill Road, retired music teacher, spoke in support of the district's music program. Ms. Clark spoke to the value and many benefits of music and art education. The benefits were the result of sequential, standards-based, and comprehensive instruction. Ms. Clark asked the board to consider how thin the music and art programs were already stretched when making their budget decisions. As a property owner who paid taxes, she had never resented paying for education through her property taxes. Ms. Clark asked the board to look at reductions in administration rather than PTR and the arts.

Deann Moore, 1307 Garay Street, districtwide art specialist, spoke in support of the arts. Ms. Moore did not want her silence to indicate she condoned the proposed cuts. She was passionate about the arts and spoke to how being exposed to music and art helped students. Ms. Moore could not stress the importance of the arts enough.

Leslie Conner, 4494 Melan Drive North, Lathrop English teacher, understood the board's daunting task. Ms. Conner spoke to the reduction of staff at Lathrop over the past several years. Student enrollment was decreasing, but not to the degree teachers were being cut. More adults were needed in the schools – teachers, counselors, administrators, etc. Ms. Connor did not think the PTRs were reflective of true class sizes. Her classes were packed. Ms. Connor encouraged the board to think about those who really worked with students when making their budget decisions.

Karen Pryor, 2151 Last Frontier Circle, Ben Eielson parent, spoke to how the budget cuts had affected her daughter. Ms. Pryor wanted the board to know cuts really affected students. Her daughter was unable to get the courses she needed; it was unfair and affected her future. Ms. Pryor wanted the board to consider how budget cuts affected students.

Kendi Lesley, PO Box 73974, Hunter and Anne Wien Elementary band instructor, spoke to the importance of music in the schools. Ms. Lesley was testifying on behalf of students; they deserved a music education. Band and orchestra classes could allow for large classrooms, thus providing for other smaller classrooms. Some students would not be able to participate in band and orchestra without the district providing instruments. To educate the whole child, students deserved the opportunity to participate in music and art.

Jeff Hebard, 1192 Bemis Court, Lathrop physical education teacher, parent, and Lathrop graduate, spoke in support of class size. The research demonstrating the detrimental effects of increased class size was abundant and undeniable. The primary loser when class size was increased was the student. The definition of small class size, used in most research, referred to early education classrooms of less than 20. The district was not really advocating for smaller class sizes, but rather not to allow any additional increase to current class sizes. The district was already well above the optimum class size. Mr. Hebard spoke to the effectiveness of successful charter schools – they kept everything outside the classroom lean. Mr. Hebard asked the board to make maintaining class size their number one priority.

Tim Parker, 1716 Reed Circle, Lathrop teacher and a representative on the NEA board of directors, spoke to the need to get the messages being heard throughout the evening to Juneau. He wished he could funnel all the energy from the room to Juneau. It was important to get the information to the people who needed to hear it. Mr. Parker knew board members were and would be lobbying in Juneau. He also knew the board would do the right thing for students.

Public Testimony on the Proposed 2015-2016 Budget (continued)

Kate Morrison, PO Box 71513, concerned citizen, taxpayer, and musician, spoke in support of music. No one wanted to cut the district's music programs. In hearing some of the earlier testimony, some teachers were worried for their jobs, which probably made it difficult for them to focus on teaching and children. Schools needed administrators to run the schools, but Ms. Morrison urged the board to keep teachers in the classrooms. She heard testimony about larger sized electives which might help maintain class size in other classes.

Calling for additional public testimony and hearing none, President Haas closed public testimony at 7:38 p.m.

Board Comments [1:38:19]

Board members thanked everyone in attendance and those who testified at both the board meetings and at the Citizen Budget Review Committee meetings. The board noted and appreciated the professionalism of staff and those in attendance. The district was facing some very difficult times. Board members urged people to advocate to their legislators and assembly members. All board members had children and/or grandchildren who had attended or were attending district schools and they all had a vested interest in the school district. A board member apologized for having to balance the budget on the backs of students; the classrooms were the Alamo in the budget fight.

District's Request for an Extension Regarding Noticing FEA Staff [1:51:46]

Tammy Smith, FEA president, spoke to the school district's request for an extension regarding noticing staff. Ms. Smith thanked the FEA board for meeting and considering the extension request. After thoughtful discussion and consideration, the FEA board took the position of allowing for Notification of Doubtful Status, as of March 13, 2015, and Notification of Non-Renewal of Contract by April 10, 2015. The FEA board agreed to move the dates back; similar to what it did last year. Ms. Smith thanked the FEA board for their thoughtful discussion and being able to provide an opportunity so that teachers were not over notified. The FEA board wanted everyone to recognize the seriousness of the budget the district was facing.

The district was facing a different financial landscape this year from last year. Ms. Smith stated FEA's decision was a heartfelt and ethical decision and what was most appropriate for teachers. It provided teachers the opportunity to attend the Alaska Teacher Recruitment Fair in March. Given the different financial landscape this year, the FEA board voted to push back the noticing dates, to allow the board a little more flexibility.

President Haas, on behalf of the entire board, thanked the FEA board for their decision.

A question was asked regarding clarification of the notification dates. Ms. Smith clarified the contract indicated that by March 16, all tenured teachers must be given Notice of Non-Renewal of Contract. In order for the tenured teachers to be given notification of non-renewal, it affected all non-tenured teachers. If the board was looking to cut positions in art, music, or counseling, as per the board's discussion the previous evening, due to contract language, there would have been more of a blanket notification of all of those positions. By the FEA board allowing for the Notification of Doubtful Status, that was more of an indication that a position could be at risk, but it was not a non-renewal, which was significantly different.

Traci Gatewood, human resources executive director, further clarified that prior to FEA's decision, the district would have been issuing lay-off notices on Friday to well over a 100 teachers. The district would still be issuing notices on Friday, but the notices would be Notice of Doubtful Status. The Notice of Doubtful Status served to warn people their position might not be available next year, however, it did not have the full impact of a lay-off notification. Mrs. Gatewood thought it was a very good compromise and thanked FEA and the board for considering all the options. All the options were poor options, but

District's Request for an Extension Regarding Noticing FEA Staff

the doubtful status notification was a fair method to allow the board the flexibility they needed to provide the notifications to the employees who may be impacted without providing the final notice. April 10 was now the date for lay-off notices. The district expected significantly fewer lay-off notices would be issued in April, then there would have been on Friday – if the district had had to do the blanket notification to counselors, art, and music.

President Haas again reiterated the board's appreciation to the FEA board and Mrs. Gatewood for their efforts in granting the extension.

Administration's 2015-16 Proposed Budget [1:59:09]

President Haas clarified the budget proposals before the board did not eliminate art, music, or counselors districtwide. At the current time, there was no discussion around eliminating any of those programs. She did not think the board was leaning in that direction. The Citizen Budget Review Committee did not make any recommendations to eliminate those programs.

Board members discussed and had questions for the administration regarding music and art teachers, districtwide art specialists, activities, class size, the lapse fund, counselors, content coaches, ITTs, human resources, and district insurance rates.

President Haas asked board members to review all the budget information that had been provided. The board wanted to maintain education in the community. The only way to meet the needs of every student was with a whole student approach; students did not all fit in the same box.

Board members expressed their enjoyment over their recent school visits. The district had amazing employees. Each school had their own community wherein they fostered education. The board hoped to be able to make decisions giving schools some flexibility regarding implementation. The board was working on a strategic plan that would meet the needs of students; not have the students meet the needs or parameters of the district.

Board members encouraged staff and community members to continue to submit input. The strategic plan's community survey had launched and everyone was encouraged to participate. The survey would be open the entire month of March.

The board encouraged the public to attend the assembly meeting on Thursday, March 26, when the assembly would be discussing and taking public testimony on the lapse fund waiver ordinance.

The next budget work session was scheduled for the following evening, beginning at 6:00 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

Submitted by Sharon Tuttle, executive assistant to the Board of Education.