

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

Work Session

MINUTES

March 12, 2015

President Haas called the work session to order at 6:02 p.m. in the boardroom of the FNSBSD Administrative Center at 520 Fifth Avenue to 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 (phone)  
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  
Kathie Wassmann, Executive Director of Special Education  
Dave Norum, Executive Director of Facilities Management  
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 & Accountability  
Jennifer Glorioso, Director of Nursing  
Helen Clark, Director of Federal Programs  
Daniel Domke, Director of Career Technical Education  
Katherine Sanders, Director of Library Media  
Mario Gatto, Principal on Special Assignment  
Sandy Weaver, Budget Specialist  
Sharon Tuttle, Executive Assistant to the Board

**2015-2016 Proposed Budget** [0:00:39]

The work session was called for the board to work on its 2015-16 Recommended Budget. The board was faced with the challenge of balancing a budget which included approximately \$11 million in reductions. President Haas stated the board would not be making any final decisions during the work session and had another work session scheduled for March 23 where the board would continue their work. The board was scheduled to approve the budget on March 25.

During the work session, board members would consider and work through the reductions proposed by the Citizen Budget Review Committee (CBRC), the administration, and board members. The board began by reviewing the CBRC's recommendations and the feasibility and effect they would have on the 2015-16 budget. A few of the committee's recommendations had already been included in the superintendent's proposed budget and amendments, such as reducing and freezing staff travel, reducing supply accounts, and seeking the lapse fund monies from the borough.

## **2015-2016 Proposed Budget (continued)**

Mrs. Dominique arrived at 6:16 p.m.

The CBRC, like the board, supported class size and provided personnel and program cuts to help maintain class size. Recommendations for consideration included eliminating department head stipends, cutting an additional six elementary counselors, cutting four elementary secretary positions, reducing the human resources budget, instituting a pay to play system, increasing meal prices, and restructuring special education to provide one extended learning program teacher to each school, which would be an increase. Some of the recommendations, while thoughtful and reasonable were not recommended by administration. The administration did not endorse the committee's recommendation to have middle and high school assistant principals teach a class, as administrators were in a different bargaining group and certification.

Principals had reluctantly created a list of places to look for restructuring, reducing, or as a last resort, cutting to help balance the district's budget. Superintendent Dr. Gaborik provided the board with a brief overview of principal suggested reductions at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels. Suggestions were different based on school and grade level, but ranged from art specialists, music, attendance secretaries, RTI assistants, supplies, SAS contracts, counselors, nurses, and more.

Board members requested a copy of the principals' feedback. Dr. Gaborik would ask the FPA president to provide a statement for the board.

Mrs. Gentry suggested freezing staff salaries and steps, as other government agencies were proposing. Freezing salaries would save jobs and programs. Lisa Pearce, chief financial officer, stated the proposed budget reflected approximately \$3.9 million in salary increases and step movement.

Board members considered the pros and cons of increasing meal prices; cutting department heads at the high schools; and the possibility of the borough waiving the lapse fund requirement for the year. Board members touched on the amount of borough revenue, including the lapse amount. Discussion continued on class size, activity coordinators, human resources positions, nurses, counselors, and behavior intervention specialists. Board members were not in favor of cutting counselors, outside of reallocating counselors to even out caseloads and combining Anderson and Crawford to share one position. In regards to human resources, the administration asked the board to consider providing a dollar figure reduction and allowing the administration the flexibility to determine where to make the reductions.

There was board consensus to accept the CBRC recommendations to freeze staff travel at current year levels, eliminate department heads, and to increase the reductions to supply budgets, for a total reduction of 15 percent. If the district received additional funding, the reduction to supply budgets could be pushed back to 10 percent.

Mr. Rice and Mrs. Gentry left the meeting at 7:06 p.m.

Board discussion continued on the reduction of four elementary secretary positions. There was some concern voiced about the schools that would be affected. Dr. Gaborik knew of two principals who stated they could operate with half time secretaries. A board member suggested principals be asked if they would rather have a secretary or a behavior intervention specialist. Dr. Gaborik would follow up with principals before the next work session.

A board member suggested if it was the board's direction to have each school reduce a position, that it be left to the administration and principals to determine the actual position, as the suggestions provided by principals were unique to almost every individual building. Board members asked Dr. Gaborik for her preference in how the board framed their suggested reductions. Dr. Gaborik valued the board's conversations and wanted clear direction from the board about their priorities, such as class size. If there was a reduction in the Administrative Center, she preferred the board leave the actual cuts to her and her administration.

## **2015-2016 Proposed Budget (continued)**

Board members and the CBRC received a substantial amount of input and public comments on the Teen OPTIONS program. There was a lot of discussion on the cost of the program, daycare options, and enrollment. Board members were generally not in favor of eliminating the program; it served an important purpose. After some discussion, there was consensus to reduce the program to two staff members and maintain the program secretary.

There was extensive discussion regarding school nurses, both sharing nurses between schools and reducing positions. Currently Two Rivers had a half-time nurse and Salcha had a full-time nurse. Board members asked about the ability to utilize medical assistants or if RNs were required. Dr. Gaborik stated the administration was researching options. Board members voiced concern about cutting nurses and discussed the pros and cons of cutting or reducing nurses at different schools throughout the district. After a lengthy discussion, board members were split on which schools to reduce or cut nurses. President Haas made an executive decision and asked the administration to reduce nurses by 2.5 – Anderson and Crawford would share one position (-1); with a reduction to a half-time nurse at Salcha (-.5), Nordale (-.5), and Hutchison (-.5). The board could consider reinstating nurses if the district received funding from the lapse ordinance or an increase in other state or local funding.

Four instructional technology teacher (ITT) positions were slated to be cut. Board members discussed the possibility of cutting all positions and offering a stipend to one teacher at every school for technology. The administration stressed the importance of keeping some of the ITTs, especially as the district moved to online student assessments. After some discussion, a majority of the board reached consensus to reduce ITTs by four.

The proposed budget included the reduction of one districtwide art specialist; there were currently five positions. The budget also proposed reducing music teachers by one, by combining Crawford and Anderson to one position. After board discussion, the consensus was to maintain the reduction of one districtwide art specialist and one music position.

There were some questions regarding proposed reductions to facilities management. Dave Norum, executive director of facilities management, reported they were working on restructuring the department and were trying to be proactive. There were several proposed reductions and work efficiencies the department was working on. The board voiced its appreciation for the department's proactive approach.

Board members reviewed the proposed reductions to the Administrative Center, including several miscellaneous non-personnel reductions including ChromeBooks and VOIP. After review, the board reached consensus to maintain the ChromeBook program.

Discussions regarding additional Administrative Center reductions included remodeling the mail room area to help monitor the front reception area; reducing the Response to Intervention program (RTI); eliminating the purchase curriculum and professional development tracking programs; the district's email program and the possibility of utilizing Google mail which was free; reducing extra curricular activities in low participating programs; merging the drug and alcohol intervention specialist and in-school suspension positions; reducing the amount of the increase to special education staffing; reducing or freezing curriculum material purchases; and freezing purchases for the remainder of the current school year. There was consensus to accept all the proposed reductions at the Administrative Center with the exception of ChromeBooks and the amount of increase to special education staffing. The board agreed to reduce the increase in special education staffing by 2.3 positions.

Board members considered the reduction of the activity coordinators. Dr. Gaborik recommended keeping one districtwide coordinator to oversee all secondary activities. There was consensus from the board to maintain one districtwide coordinator.

## **2015-2016 Proposed Budget (continued)**

Mrs. Dominique noted she would not be present for the March 23 work session and would hate to see sports/activities decreased more. Dr. Gaborik stated the intent was not to reduce full programs but rather an overall decrease in activities and with SAS and SDA contracts. Some reductions may come as a result of low enrollments.

All reductions included to the current point, the board had proposed approximately \$8.7 million in reductions, leaving approximately \$2.3 million to address at the next work session on March 23.

### **Board Comments** [3:04:25]

President Haas requested the board receive information, as much as possible, for the March 23 work session in advance of the meeting.

The board would consider the revenue side of the budget at the March 23 work session.

The board had made some progress on balancing the budget, but there was still a lot of work left to do. The board requested the administration look at additional restructuring and efficiencies that could be made in the Administrative Center. Dr. Gaborik stated she would work on additional reductions within the Administrative Center.

President Haas encouraged board members to get questions to the administration prior to the March 23 meeting. The board was scheduled to vote on the budget at a special meeting on March 25.

President Haas suggested providing an interactive document on Google documents next year so board members could see the working budget document in real-time on their devices.

The meeting adjourned at 9:09 p.m.

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