

Budget Committee Update

February 04, 2009

There were numerous guests in the audience section of the meeting today. The committee was provided with a ranked list of proposed budget reductions. The committee believed that an explanation of how the rankings were calculated should be included. The committee was also asked to provide the facilitator with any comments on any of the suggestions by Monday, February 9, 2009.

Three ideas were brought to the committee:

1. Benefits Adjustments: Lee Nicolls presented information on the current costs of OCPS insurance. Currently the district provides insurance for 33,371 members and 1,800 retirees at a premium of \$5,218 for 2008-2009. The school board has charged that the premium for 2009-2010 **must** remain at the same level. With rising health costs and state mandates for insuring children with Autism the district anticipates that it will need to compensate for a 7.2 million dollars deficit. The proposal was to increase co-payments, and/or out of pocket costs. The effect would be a 6.6% increase which is equal to an **average** of \$17.25 per pay check. This amount would be determined by the number of people that are covered by an employee. Some examples of increases were given: Cigna out of pocket costs could raise from \$1500 to \$2,250, co-pay for primary care visits would raise from \$15 to \$25, specialist co pay costs would go from \$25 to \$55, pharmacy costs for generic, and non-generic drugs would also increase. Using the rubric the committee decided this would affect all OCPS staff the impact would be moderate and it would not affect the strategic plan.

2. The elimination of elementary and middle school media specialists: Nan Palermo presented that there are currently 123 elementary school media specialists at a cost of \$8,412,654 and 33 middle school media specialists at a cost of \$2,211,264. If these positions were eliminated the savings would be \$10,624,218. High Schools must have a certified media specialist in order to be accredited. Nan presented the functions of the media specialist and the support they provide to the students. There was a lengthy discussion about the impact this would have on literacy, and some members believe that this would be devastating to the students. I reminded the group that you can't cut 102 million dollars and not feel the effects. As principals we focus on the student and those programs (and people) that directly influences their learning on a day to day basis. The further 'away' from students you are the more you susceptible you and/or your program is. Other parents indicated that we are not talking about closing the media center or denying students access to books, but it would mean more work for other personnel. Using the rubric the committee said it would affect some staff and all students. The impact would be significant and it would have a moderate impact on the strategic plan.

3. Eliminating Social Workers: Ana Diaz presented to the committee that the district currently has 44 social workers. Each social worker serves 4-5 schools. Eliminating their position would save the district \$3,036,250. Ana presented the various functions and

responsibilities of the social worker. The group discussed that these staff members would probably be even more needed with the difficult economic times ahead. Their involvement with truancy was also discussed. Using the rubric the committee decided that it would affect some staff and students and the impact would be severe. The group also decided it would affect some of the community and that affect would be significant. It would have a severe impact on the strategic plan.

Respectfully submitted

Judy Frank

OCASA President