

BOE Budget Committee

Minutes. Meetings of 8/11/09, 9/23/09, 10/02/09, 10/9/09, 10/27/09, 11/3/09, 11/19/09, 12/7/09.

By Peter Meyer

8/11. Dan Barrett and I met in Dan's office (1:30) to discuss a few organizational strategies for the Committee. ... We were going to consider who else could be on the Committee.... We agreed that the consensus of the board was that we start budget workshop earlier than we usually do – in February. We thought we could get started in September.... We agreed that we'd solicit public input earlier as well, whether as part of the workshops or in separate meetings. Meeting adjourned at 1:50.

####

9/23: Jack Howe, Emil Meister, Dan Barrett and I met in Jack's office, 1:30.... Peter went over the discussion from the 8/11 meeting. I mentioned that I had thought of asking Janet Marsh, Steve Hickey and Vince Wallace to join the Committee. Dan said he had no one in mind. No one else did either. Everyone was fine with inviting Janet, Steve, and Vince... Jack had a list of his suggestions and thoughts: he's working with the master schedule to keep costs down; cutting back in central office and administration costs by, for instance, by having no overnight conferences for professional development and using Questar whenever possible; getting public meetings on the budget going; do the website survey again.

There was some discussion about whether to have public meetings separate from the workshops and the the consensus was that we should start – in October – with workshops that invited more public input and discussion and, by February, the board would hunker down so that that the meetings would be more work and less input from the public.

We agreed that the first workshop would be very basic and informational and be about what a school budget is, and basic terms, like what "roll-up" is. We would have copies of past budgets on hand.

We discussed the possibility that the Special Education presentation, scheduled for sometime this fall, be folded into a budget workshop, either in November or December. Jack/Dan were going to check with Barbara Boyce on this.

We did not decide on our next meeting date.

Meeting adjourned at 2:30.

--Peter Meyer

####

10/02/09: Jeff Otty, Jack Howe, Dan Barrett, Janet Marsh Ebel, Peter Meyer. We discussed the “goal” of the budget-making process and decided that it should be to get a good budget and not just pass one because it was passable. We recognize that we have large financial constraints – with state budget – looming and we have to keep our eyes on that. We agreed that the Budget Committee should oversee the budget-making process, but not be in the business of making a budget.

We want to do a Budget Workshop in October, with the tentative theme of, “Anatomy of a School Budget.” For the first workshops, we want to emphasize public education (about the budget) and public input.

We also want to try to enlist members of the public (the larger community) who have some expertise in budget-making -- e.g. business people, bankers – to come to these workshops and participate.

We discussed getting more dollars-and-cents information into the various department reports for the workshops. And we discussed having different approaches to the presentation of the material. Instructional salaries, for instance, might be a presentation all of its own.

We did not decide on a date/time for next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 10:00am.

####

10/9/09. 8:45am. Jack Howe’s office. Present: Emil Meister, Dan Barrett, Peter Meyer, Jeffy Otty, Jack Howe. We spent most of the time discussing the first budget workshop and decided to call it a Public Meeting instead of a “workshop.” Emil will encourage board members to attend, but it’s not required; it’s not a workshop. We decided on having it at JLE on November 5, 6:30pm. Subject: School Budget 101 or The Anatomy of a School Budget.

Jack and Dan will work up a draft of a powerpoint presentation for the public meeting and circulate to the BC. They’ll try to get us a copy by the end of next week for our input.

We discussed getting input on the planning of the public meeting from various local organizations, including the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, Church groups, Senior Citizen groups, Parent groups, etc. Everyone is encouraged to send in names of groups or people who could help in this effort; not just planning the public meeting, but getting the word out. Once we get a good list of community groups, Jack and Emil can make calls to their representatives.

Peter will work on a press release as we progress.

Next Budget Committee meeting should be the week of 10/19. Let me know if you have bad days/times that week. Emil can’t make 20th or the 22nd in the afternoon. I can not make the 19th (11—12) or the 23rd.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15am.

--Peter Meyer

####

10/27/09. 5:45pm. Administrative Conference room. Present: Jack Howe, Dan Barrett, Peter Rice, Jr., Peter Meyer, Steve Hickey. Peter M. brought Steve and Peter R. up to date on the Committee's work and the budget process.... In response to Governor Paterson's recent statement about school districts having "fund balances" to compensate for contemplated mid-year loss of State Aid, Jack Howe handed out copies of State Ed reports summarizing the district's "fund balance" situation -- Hudson has \$892,850, 2.17% of our budget (the legal allowable proportion devoted to the fund balance is 4% -- and the amount of money might lose, called the GAP Elimination Adjustment -- \$520,718.... Dan Barrett handed out a copy of the District's "2009-2010 Budget Development Timeline" and a copy of State Ed's "Budgeting Handbook"....

Jack Howe went through his PowerPoint draft for the Budget Public meeting and the consensus was that we divide the Budget 101 presentation into three parts and have three public meetings, per the following schedule:

--Public Meeting 1: What is a School Budget and How is it Made? November 16, 6:30—7:30pm, John L. Edwards.

--Public Meeting 2: Where Does the Money Come From? November 23, 6:30—7:30pm, John L. Edwards.

--Public Meeting 3: Where Does the Money Go? November 30, 6:30—7:30pm, John L. Edwards.

All these meeting dates and times are tentative until we consult with Board President Emil Meister. Jack will talk to Mr. Meister about the 11/23 date, since the scheduled BOE meeting would have to be postponed until 7:30.

Next Budget Committee (BC) meeting: 11/3, 5:45pm, Administrative Conference Room

Jack will contact Andrew Amelinckx at the Register Star and invite him to attend the next BC meeting and here about our Budget Development process and the public meetings.

We deferred Agenda items 4, 6, and 7 to the next BC meeting.

We adjourned at 7:00pm

####

11/3/09. 5:45pm. Administrative Conference room. Present: Jack Howe, Dan Barrett, Peter Rice, Jr., Jeff Otty, Peter Meyer, Steve Hickey, Elizabeth Fout. Peter M. brought Jeff up to date.... We corrected last meeting's minutes to reflect the fact that Public Meeting 1 was scheduled for November 16 (not the 11th). (So corrected, above.)

We reviewed the plans for the public meetings. Jeff suggested moving the 11/23 BOE to JLE, so those who attend the Public meeting don't have to run to the High School. Jack will take that up with Emil Meister....

Jack will get in touch with Richard Colby of the Chamber of Commerce about getting the word out about the Public meetings.... He will arrange a meeting with Andrew Amelinckx at the Register Star, including John Mason (our website manager), Peter M., Jeff Otty, and Mr. Colby, to discuss the public meetings.

Jack will solicit input from this group his PowerPoint in advance of the Public Meetings..... We will have handouts at the meetings that will include: An agenda for the meeting, copies of last year's Budget Book, the budget Timeline, and a Suggestion/Question sheet. Steve wanted to make sure that we asked for public input at the end of the last meeting. It was agreed that getting public input should be part of each of the meetings.

We discussed the Transportation budget and the problem of the full year's already being "spent." Dan suggested that this was normal, in that the "encumbered" budget funds are rarely all used. We budget \$1 million for 180 days of Special Ed transportation, for instance, but rarely are the 180 days used. (We budget another \$1 million on regular transportation.) Thus, the "spent" money is still just on paper.

There was still concern about transportation costs, however, especially in light of the recession and fiscal crisis. And suggestions were made to make our transportation efforts more efficient and cost conscious:

- For Special Ed transportation, work with schools in Albany to try to adjust their schedules so we can put more than one student on a bus to get them to their schools;
- Work with other local districts to share buses whenever possible. Dan suggested this was already being done, but agreed we could keep talking with other districts;
- Can we make sure that the CSE (Committee on Special Education) is aware of transportation issues.
- We should encourage inter-district communication between special ed directors.

The State Budget. Governor Paterson continues to warn of mid-year state aid cuts. We discussed our options should that happen. Dipping into the Fund Balance was one of those options. Staff cuts are another option. Peter M. made the point that staff cuts should be done in conjunction with what would have the least impact on student academic performance. Steve asked if we'd ever "touched" the Fund Balance. Dan said, "a long time ago."

Peter asked about funds for Board of Education Committees; specifically, he wanted to know whether there were funds for the Board's Task Force on Student Academic Performance to defray the costs of guest speakers and a study group trip to the Elmsford school district in Westchester. Jack worried that this would open up a Pandora's Box of committees asking for money. Dan said that the Board of Ed had a budget line and usually didn't spend all of the money. Peter suggested that he propose to the board two separate questions: 1) Approve funds for the TFSAP on a one-time, pre-approved basis; 2) Should board committees have budgets? The latter question could be part of a BOE policy.

Elizabeth asked about the status of the District's 501(c)3, which has been proposed as a way to make it easier (and more beneficial) to donate money to the district. Jack said he was still waiting to hear from Richard Koweek.

Meeting adjourned: 6:45.

####

11/19/09. 5:15 pm, Administrative Conference Room. Jack Howe, Emil Meister, Dan Barrett, Janet Marsh Ebel, Yvonne Rice, Peter Meyer. Steve Hickey arrived at 5:30. The group agreed that we would have two public meetings (on 11/30 and 12/7), instead of the three previously planned. And rather than divide the meetings by theme, we would present the same program at each of the two meetings. That program would consist of Jack and Dan presenting a PowerPoint – 10 to 15 minutes in length -- that would cover the basics of the school budget: How the budget is created, where the money comes from and where it goes. We would have handouts, as previously discussed, adding "question cards" for people who wanted to submit questions in writing. It was agreed that the meetings would be no longer than an hour in length; the first one, on 11/30, would begin at 6:30 and be held at John L. Edwards school; the second, on 12/7, would also begin at 6:30 and be held at the main cafeteria at the high school.

Jack would arrange a meeting with David Colby and Bob Weiman, Peter Meyer, Jeff Otty and Dan Barrett, to discuss getting the business community interested in the public meetings. Andrew Amelinckx of the Register Star would also be invited to the meeting. He tentatively scheduled it for the afternoon of 11/23.

Jack would also circulate to the Committee a draft of the PowerPoint before the public meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:45pm.

####

12/07/09. 7:45pm. Hudson Junior High Library. Emil Meister, Peter Meyer, Jack Howe, Dan Barrett.

This meeting followed the Public Forum, which was held in the Junior High Library and sparsely attended: just 2 members of the public, Carol Gans, Pam Kline, and the folks listed above. It was suggested that we get some enrollment projections. It was also suggested that we find out how many home-school and private school students live in the District – Dan estimated the number at 100 to 150. State Aid pays approximately \$5,000 per student, based on attendance. Peter suggested a recruitment campaign. It was suggested that we charge entry fee at sporting events. It was suggested that we look into a proactive program for renting our facilities to outside vendors. We discussed adding Grant “revenue” as an appendix to the Budget Book. End of public forum.

At the Committee meeting Jack pointed out that it might be more cost-effective for the district to continue to lease the Claverack building to Questar rather than sell it.

We discussed the schedule and topics for the Board Budget Workshops and will recommend this to the Board of Ed at the next Board meeting (12/14):

February 22, 2010: Budget Workshop Topic: Staffing, K—6, Administration. This includes salaries and employee benefits.
March 2, 2010: Budget Workshop Topic: Staffing 7—12, Administration. This includes salaries and employee benefits
March 8, 2010: Budget Workshop Topic: Operations, Transportation, Materials/Supplies, Contractual, Textbooks, Equipment
March 15, 2010: Budget Workshop Topic: Special Education, Debt Service, Questar III, Fund Balance, Revenue booster ideas.

Jack and Dan will refine these topics. We agreed that the presentation to the Board on each topic at the Workshop will include 2 to 3 revenue/expense scenarios, from serious cutbacks/savings to normal expenditures, for each major category of spending. Peter relayed a request by Jeff Otty that everyone focus on cutting costs.

We’ll present this Workshop plan to the BOE at its 12/14 meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15pm.