

March 15, 2021

The Board of Education of the County of Kanawha met in Statutory Session on Monday, March 15, 2021 at the Board of Education Building, Charleston, West Virginia. The meeting was called to order by Board President Becky J. Jordon at 3:05 p.m.

PRESENT

Becky J. Jordon, President

Tracy White, President Pro Tem

Ric Cavender

Jim J. Crawford, Sr.

Ryan White

Thomas E. Williams, Secretary

Debra J. Lewis, Recording Secretary

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Paula Potter, Deputy Superintendent

Leah Sparks, Executive Director, Technology

Briana Warner, Communications Director

Melanie Meadows, Treasurer, Budget & Finance

BUDGET WORKSHOP (Discussion on Budget)

Melanie Meadows-For the FY 21-22 the preliminary budget for the current expense fund is currently at \$295,546,358. The State has not yet provided us with final comps so this is preliminary. This is about an \$8 million decrease from last year.

BUDGET WORKSHOP (Discussion on Budget) (continued)

Today's workshop will focus on the General current expense fund. The detailed budget including all funds will be discussed further during our Public Hearing in April. Today's meeting is our required workshop. Immediately before this meeting I presented to you our proposed levy rates. These will be published in the paper on or around March 18th and March 24th. The regular levy rates are set by state code and the excess levy rates are set by the taxpayers when voting on the ballot. The rates are the same as they were in the prior year. Notice of the Public Hearing and the proposed budget document will be published during the month of April. The detailed budget, including all funds will be discussed further during the Public Hearing in April. We will have a proposed budget document on our website for interested parties 10 days prior to the hearing. We will officially record our levy rates in the meeting on April 20th at 12 Noon. Board approval is scheduled for May 18th. Revisions are allowed and submitted to the Board monthly.

I think we all expected to take a hit this year with loss of enrollment due to the pandemic. We did have a large increase compared with last year. I spoke with Eddie Ivy and Valerie Harper and 762 students switched to homeschool. So when you factor that in with our loss we actually would have had an enrollment increase if it weren't for the switch to homeschool due to the COVID pandemic, so that makes us hopeful for next year and the year after that that our enrollment may actually increase. Another big hit to the headcount were Pre-K students going with the mindset that if I don't have to send my kids this year I won't, so all those kids next year most likely will be coming in for Kindergarten. I think we will be going back in the right direction next year and the year after. I know that through Dr. Williams and Mrs. Harper we have been contacting families of homeschool students and several, at least 70 as of today, have switched back to in-person for next year, so things are looking up in terms of our head count. Mr. White-Was there a drastic decrease in Kindergarten as well? Melanie Meadows-Kindergarten was up slightly we increased by 32. The biggest hit was Pre-K and switching to homeschool. Mr. White-What was the amount decrease in Pre-K? Melanie Meadows-209. Mr. White-You said some grades were up. Melanie Meadows-Yes, Kindergarten 3rd, 7th and 10th and 11th grades were all up. Mr. White-Do you know what percentage of the homeschool students have been contacted? Dr. Williams-They are working on that on a daily basis, so I can't tell you how many they have contacted. Mr. White-As far as homeschool are there a lot more in certain grades? Melanie Meadows-He didn't give me the detailed information. Paula Potter-It has been across the board. Principals have been calling students in their attendance areas as well and talking to them about the possibility of returning to school. Dr. Williams-They are in the middle of scheduling now and they have to have an idea of how many kids they are going to have.

BUDGET WORKSHOP (Discussion on Budget) (continued)

Mr. Jordon-Has that bill been voted on in the Senate yet where they will get paid to stay home? Mrs. White-Not yet. Mr. Crawford-I think we need to do a better job selling what we are doing here in Kanawha County Schools in order to keep them from going to homeschool or virtual and publicize how well we are doing. Mrs. Jordon-We have a body of Government up there working against public education. Mr. Cavender-This year we have seen an influx of people buying homes here and they need to know we have good schools. Mrs. White-Do we have any indication about next year if eLearning will be a thing? I know we have had virtual for several years. Dr. Williams-The Department of Education is trying to back away from virtual is my understanding. Dr. Harper is on one of their committees. The thinking is right now it will just be for a school that can't for example offer Algebra I, so the kids could get virtual Algebra like it was initially. That's all still in the works. Mr. White-I would hope that we are letting the Department of Education know since this bill that passed allows for virtual charter schools they should allow us to do virtual as well because we are the experts. Why would we send our kids to the charter schools when the public schools are doing virtual right now? Dr. Williams-Along those same lines, why would you have a charter school with no rules? Why don't you loosen the rules on the public schools and make those rules the same? Dr. Harper is on that committee and she is voicing our concerns. Mr. White-We need to push that we can have vibrant virtual schools so we don't lose more students. We don't want a virtual charter school to be the only option for virtual. Dr. Williams-Correct.

Melanie Meadows-Obviously when we have a decline in enrollment we have to decrease our positions. We have to make necessary position cuts due to enrollment declines in order to maintain a balanced budget. Based on the decline in enrollment and the preliminary comps from the WVDE, around 58 cuts needed to be made. This consisted of approximately 37 professionals and 21 service. However, there is a little bit of good news. With the announcement of our second ESSERF grant came the news that county boards of education would be allowed to cover the cost of staff who may have otherwise been cut if they were considered essential to the current learning environment resulting from the COVID 19 Pandemic, so as a result of that we will be charging 10 professionals and 2 service employees to our ESSERF grant. The remaining staff cuts needed have been handled through a combination of attrition, early retirement notifications and transfers to positions with other funding sources available. Mr. Cavender-Is the 10 the maximum of the funds we have available or what we deemed essential? Melanie Meadows-It's what we were able to deem essential to COVID and we were cautioned not to use the ESSERF grant as a band-aid to prolong a situation. If we coded everyone to that grant and we lost more due to enrollment we would have had a much bigger cut.

BUDGET WORKSHOP (Discussion on Budget (continued))

Mr. White-Were we able to get the staff that we need in order to help get these kids caught up? Melanie Meadows-Yes, our second ESSERF grant was around \$34 million and a big portion of that is being devoted to the academic achievement of students. We will be getting another summer grant that is specific for summer programs. We have all kinds of things that we will be able to provide through this grant. The first ESSERF grant we had to use primarily for PPE and the absolute necessary items we had to provide to the schools.

For the first time in several years Kanawha County has experienced a decline in assessed values of property so as a result our projected levy revenue is about \$2.3 million. Mr. White-Is any of that due to uncollectable? Melanie Meadows-No, we automatically calculate a 5% uncollectable when we calculate our rates. This is actually what assessed values told us. It sounds like it's more related to industry than small personal property tax accounts. Mr. White-Do they expect that to continue? Melanie Meadows-He actually thinks next year will be worse because that's when they will start feeling the effects of COVID. He feels like more businesses closed this year that they will be trying to assess next year and that property value will be less. Mr. White-You mentioned closures in the Town Center affects us. Melanie Meadows-They have lost those tax revenues that they could have passed on to us. He said specifically downtown Charleston businesses and he specifically said the Town Center. Mr. White-Does it affect us more because it's in a TIF district? Melanie Meadows-I contacted him because I wanted to make sure there wasn't an error in the assessed values because I was so shocked by how much less they were than the prior year. He assured me those were correct and he gave me the list of reasons that I read to you. The Legislature has established the Public Utility Tax Loss Restoration Fund and I spoke to the Office of School Finance and they said it will be a one year fix and the proceeds will be distributed on a proportional basis. So we will be getting some relief. Mrs. White-Why is there an increase in utilities? Melanie Meadows-We increased those slightly because of the rumors we are hearing that AEP and WV American Water are both requesting potential increases, so we took the average of our higher bills and increased it a little.

The WVDE recently announced the Summer SOLE (Student Opportunities for Learning and Engagement) Grant program. This will provide funding to offer comprehensive in-person summer learning experiences and help address academic and social-emotional needs.

BUDGET WORKSHOP (Discussion on Budget (continued))

Mr. White-How are we going to get the kids into that program? Dr. Williams-We sent out a survey and got around 1,500-2,000 responses back. The three assistants are finalizing the plan to submit it to the State Department to get it approved. We will be doing June 7-July 1. Four days a week will be the academics and the 5th day will be something like going to the Clay Center, Kanawha State Forest etc. Some of that money can be used next year to provide some after-school services. We will have something in each attendance area but not every school. They will be fed and transported. I think it will be a good program and the kids will enjoy it. Our principals have been working diligently to get the word out, I have been on Metro News talking about it. Mrs. Jordon-What if they are being homeschooled but have committed for next year, are we reaching out to those 700 parents to let them know? Dr. Williams-Everyone who wants to will be able to come. I need to talk to Valery about that because I hadn't thought about that. Mrs. Jordon-Parents are pleased that this is going to happen.

Melanie Meadows-In FY 2021-2022 for FY 2022-2023, a \$3,700,000 mandated unfunded textbook adoption for Science is required. This adoption will be paid for using a combination of excess levy funds and anticipated FY 2020-2021 carryover. The QZAB was for the Edgewood Elementary School for \$2,000,000 at a zero percent interest rate for a term of 15 years, ending in July of 2027. As stipulated by our current excess levy ballot, the following items are included in this budget: 12 elementary art teachers, 12 custodians and maintenance personnel, and 8 counselors; \$239,195 for safety and security needs; \$21,724,769 for HVAC improvements (part of a current lease financing agreement); \$2,053,500 for roofing improvements (part of a current lease financing agreement); \$3,704,536 for turf (part of a current lease financing agreement).

The other funds that will be part of our final proposed budget consist of the Permanent Improvement Fund, the Special Revenue Fund, the Public Library Excess Levy Fund and the new Federal Stimulus & Stabilization Fund. No significant changes are anticipated in any of these funds.

Any changes made in the final comps will be reflected in the budget document once received from the WVDE. Unless there are changes made to WV Code regarding the state aid funding formula, final comps should be similar to the figures on which this preliminary summary is based.

QUESTIONS/ANSWERS

None

ESTABLISHMENT OF MEETING DATES

- A. Monday, March 15, 2021, 3:05 p.m. Budget Workshop-Statutory Session
- B. Tuesday, March 16, 2021, 12:00 Noon-Statutory Session (Approval of the Schedule of Proposed Levy Rates)
- C. Tuesday, March 16, 2021, 6:00 p.m.-Special Session (Closure Hearing for Cedar Grove Middle School at Cedar Grove Middle School)
- D. Thursday, March 18, 2021, 6:00 p.m.-Regular Session
- E. Monday, April 5, 2021, 4:00 p.m.-Special Session
- F. Thursday, April 15, 2021, 6:00 p.m.-Regular Session
- G. Tuesday, April 20, 2021, 12:00 Noon-Statutory Session (Reconvening of March 16, 2021, Meeting to Enter all Levies)
- H. Monday, April 26, 2021, 6:00 p.m.-Statutory Session (Public Hearing on Proposed Budget)

NOTE: The above meetings of the Kanawha County Board of Education, unless otherwise indicated, will be held in the Board of Education Building, 200 Elizabeth Street, Charleston, WV.

ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Tracy White moved: That the Statutory Session of the Board be adjourned. Motion was seconded by Mr. Jim J. Crawford and unanimously carried. The Statutory Session was declared adjourned by Board President Becky J. Jordon at 3:55 p.m.

President

Secretary

djl

3/19/2021