



SOUTHEAST ISLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Board Report 5-24-17

Schedule Change

Alan will review a schedule adjustment that is being proposed for next year. A decision would have to be made promptly if there is to be a change. We could schedule a June Board meeting to look at it more closely.

The initial issue was a request by my office to look at ways to offer more electives and make it possible for driving sites to participate. Alan has a plan that doubles the elective offerings in Thorne Bay with the opportunity for schools to drive students in for one day a week to take advantage of those elective opportunities that they never see in a small school. The first draft of the proposal suggests Spanish, Music Appreciation, Culinary Arts, Scuba, Outdoor Survival/PE, Wood Shop, Metal Works, Machine Design & Fabrication. The drawback is longer television courses. It will require staff training on how to engage students for longer periods of time without wasting precious contact time.

It appears to have widespread teacher support even at sites that would not participate in those electives as it offers a day not tied to the television schedule. Some teachers are fine either way. I have had no instructor contact me with negative feedback. The question is about the student impact of loading required classes into three days. It is not uncommon around the United States and schools have success with the model. I would agree to try it for a year.

Budget

We will have to allow for additional expenses or cuts necessary if the legislature makes further cuts to Education funding. As in recent years, we cannot predict what the legislature will do at the time we are required to submit a balanced budget. It is possible that we will have to make further reductions in some areas to adjust for further cuts or necessary additional costs.

Potential Additional Costs

Staffing

Whale Pass expects an increase in numbers and may surpass 20 students, which is expected to require a second teacher. We have a need for a secondary Math teacher and the site could use a special education teacher. A combination of those two skills would be ideal. \$120,000.00 including benefits.

Coffman Cove could have a boost in numbers that will have to be addressed. When we started our hiring season we expected about ten students. They may go over 20 students. \$120,000.00 including benefits.

Thorne Bay

Staffing changes are pushing us into another full time position to include registrar activities. The cost of insurance and other benefits increases expenses by \$30,000.00.

Lead Teacher Compensation

We had reduced this stipend but a review of our collective agreement resulted in additional expense. This may still need to be addressed in the budget.

AmeriCorps Positions

The program is changing and positions we get for free seem to be a thing of the past. We have the need in Hollis, Coffman Cove and Thorne Bay. We get a financial break if we hire multiple individuals. We evaluate each case to determine if the value exceeds the cost of about \$1200.00 a month.

Savings to the Budget

Vehicles and Trailers

We are eliminating vehicles as we can. There is no point in doing this too quickly as it saturates the market. There will be a savings on maintenance and insurance.

Site Charge for Vehicle Use

I propose charging individual sites \$250.00 a month for the use of a vehicle dedicated to the site. This a modest percentage of the actual costs of supplying vehicles for school use. At this date we have not taken steps to impact site budgets despite our financial position. This would not include district decisions to supply a spare vehicle to reduce bus wear in Hollis, a greenhouse manager in Coffman Cove or a vehicle to transport students who decide to attend classes full-time in a neighboring school.

It will not generate enough to even pay for one of the part-time support staff in the bus barn but it will help sites decide how important that vehicle is to their site and require adjustments in site expenditures or increase motivation to be involved in wood boiler supply.

Vehicle Damage

I am inclined to assess a site penalty for vehicle damage. People seem to drive their own vehicles for decades without damage while school vehicles continue to get dents, scrapes and find ditches at an alarming rate. Whether we repair the damage or not, it either reduces vehicle value or increases maintenance costs. My real goal is to get people to take care of our vehicles like they would their own car.

Replacement of Shop Supervisor with a Certified Mechanic

This has been a consideration for many years. There are many reasons to leave the position as it is. Institutional knowledge, bus driver training, exceptional vehicle and equipment purchasing skills will all be lost with the change. Reductions and efficiencies

have been instituted in every other area and this remains the last inefficient use of resources.

Currently we contract with a local mechanic for necessary work. We also have seasonal and part time workers that assist with vehicle maintenance and repair. The reduction in the fleet will reduce the need for these additional support workers and result in some modest savings. Fleet reductions will not eliminate the need for a certified mechanic. Buying new vehicles like the Forest Service does would eliminate the mechanic need but would increase costs exponentially.

We expect to save well in excess of \$75,000.00 with these reductions in vehicles and replacing the current position with a certified mechanic.

Support for Entrepreneurial Activities

The district has been generous with start up costs for these activities as we value student engagement. The intent was never to cover the costs indefinitely. As those activities generate income it needs to get back into the site account. The district cannot continue to provide start up costs.

Café

Nick feels he has a plan that can make the Café be self-sustaining over the summer. The issue is and has always been the number of employees. It will operate with a modest crew. We will review weekly and it will close promptly if they cannot pay their expenses. I do not believe we can sustain that during the school year. July, August and September have been sound. June is suspect. I am not prepared to liquidate the property and there are fixed costs even if it sits idle.

We will continue to support fundraising through the site and student project sales. Fundraiser night had some success this past year, but the model needs work. Locals do not pay \$15.00 each for a fundraising meal when you include children. It has to be cost effective in the winter for families **and** it has to include take out and maybe even delivery. One cannot seat enough people during a two-hour dinner to make it worth the trouble without additional income. Naukati did a pizza night that included delivery to Coffman Cove and Naukati and sold over 60 pizzas. The Café is available for fundraising events during the summer. I do not expect as much interest as students and staff scatter for the summer.

Aides

We plan to evaluate all aide job descriptions and hours. As positions have evolved our job descriptions have not kept up. Intensive aides, for instance, are paid at a higher rate and need to reflect what is needed for those students. Sped and regular education assistance with schoolwork needs to be attended by aides with those skills. We need to look hard at our commitment to hours. We have added teachers to sites and have not necessarily seen a corresponding reduction in aide support. In the last couple of brainstorming board reports I have suggested several positions that may have seasonal slumps requiring fewer hours. I am not the best one to make those decisions. The issue is much larger and due for a complete review position by position. We expect to do that this summer before aide hires in the fall.

9. B. 4th Reading, Draft FY2018 Budget

With Legislative paralysis we cannot know our exact budget. Budgets are under constant review. As I have suggested above we have expenses that could arise and we have additional savings that can be achieved. The best cut is always to someone else and I have had plenty of feedback on how to do that. Today we have a budget that has not cut into the needs of students. Unfortunately, it does affect individuals and I have tried to be as objective as possible. Staff cuts are very painful. We are affecting lives and careers. With this budget we avoid cuts that directly affect students for one more year.

I do not think there is any question that some in the legislature feel putting the pressure on rural districts can force us to eliminate schools while keeping their hands clean. They are exactly correct. As we eliminate any financial cushion we had, we risk catastrophe with system failures and can no longer survive a school not making count in October. We do not have the cushion to cover the costs of teachers should funding disappear for their site after they sign their teaching contract. Without some funding relief, succeeding years will see cuts to activities that make our district special and keep parents excited about our small schools. When we eliminate aide positions, cut sports, student travel, opportunities for other distance classes beyond what we can offer and the second teacher at rural sites we will indirectly be responsible for closing smaller sites.

I recommend approval of the proposed budget for 2017-18

9. C. 3rd Reading Curriculum Materials for Sex Education

I recommend tabling this item until we have reviewed and included staff and community input. There is so much going on that this item has not had an opportunity for adequate review before the summer break.

10. A. FY18 Professional Services Contract with IndySpuds

Janet is an exceptional value by any standard. She far exceeds expectations. Without reservation **I highly encourage the Board to approve this contract.**

10. B. FY18 Professional Services Contract with SERRC

We cannot provide all necessary Special Education services internally. We review this each year and are always looking for the most cost effective means of providing this service. Janet can speak to some adjustments we are trying this coming year in an effort to improve service and reduce costs. **I recommend approval of this contract.**

10. C. AmeriCorps Position in Hollis

While we would prefer to have these positions without any expense to the district, the program is moving away from offering the service for free. These positions do offer an inexpensive way to have a full-time year-round individual dedicated to our students working on site-specific goals. Not to put too fine a point to it, but Hollis helps support the district financially. Hollis is busting at the seams with student count in a very tired building. They serve more intensive students than any other site and do it all very well. I see this as an opportunity to improve service to these students at a site that is more

than supporting their site financially already. We wish to encourage that energy and excitement. **I recommend approval of the AmeriCorps position.**

Sincerely,

Lauren Burch
Superintendent
Southeast Island School District