

CROSBY-IRONTON SCHOOLS
FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY
February 26, 2025

Item 7.2a

The finance committee met in the Forum Room on February 26, 2025 at 6:30 p.m. with the following present: Beth Hautala, Mark Taylor and Hannah Wesner. Jamie Skjeveland and Bill Tollefson were also present.

Committee Meeting Duration and Materials – The committee reviewed concerns about the committee meeting process, including the duration of meetings and the materials presented. The committee was assured that committee meetings will last as long or be done as quickly as committee members on the committee want them to be. Materials and the information presented often change daily, with distribution of materials that change creating the need to backtrack and reprogram, as well as the administrative desire to work through the materials to unpack them with the committee to create better understanding. A compromise was to try to distribute the committee meeting agenda to committee members no later than the morning of the meeting so committee members have time to think about agenda items in advance.

2024-2025 Enrollment/Information on Student Enrollment and Withdrawal – The committee reviewed the year-to-date enrollment and changes since the last enrollment report to the School Board and the detail provided at the last finance committee meeting in January. Enrollment continues to decline. Also, following comments at the February regular School Board meeting, information had been collected regarding the reason for student withdrawals since the first of January, 2025, as well as development of a draft exit interview form that parents will be asked to complete as students withdraw mid-year. A reasons report will be provided to the finance committee and the exit survey document will be implemented in a process that starts immediately.

Closing of Healthy Kids Before- and After-School Program and Exploration of Options – The School District has tried multiple approaches to providing before- and after-school childcare over the last several years. The School Board had made a conscious decision to get out of providing that service and most recently explored allowing an outside childcare provider to use space in the school building. Healthy Kids was the provider and announced in January that they would no longer be providing those services locally. If the Board wishes to get back into childcare, it will need to take action to do so. The committee discussed that, if it was done again in the future, a plan with a business model, would need to be developed and presented. This is not practical at this time. The purpose of the discussion was to try to determine why Healthy Kids had not worked out, so that those pitfalls can be avoided in any potential future plans.

Procedures for Fundraising and Donation Requests/Board Thank You Notes – The committee was updated on the process that staff are supposed to follow in planning and executing fundraising and donation requests. The activities director maintains a calendar of fundraising activities and staff are to work with the activities director to develop and get approval for fundraising activities and donation requests prior to engaging in such activities. The purpose of this procedure is to avoid inundating the committee with multiple requests by controlling the timing of requests and the nature of the fundraising efforts. At the February regular School Board meeting, a discussion took place regarding the Board sending thank you letters to donors. The District Office will implement a procedure for writing letters and obtaining Board member signatures monthly. A member of the teaching staff who was in attendance suggested that it might also be a helpful gesture for students to prepare thank you notes, as well. This process will be explored for potential implementation.

Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) and Pathways II Funding Applications – The committee was updated that an application to the Minnesota Department of Children, Youth and Families had been completed for potential funding under the VPK program. Currently no new seats are available statewide, but the application may be helpful if additional seats are funded by the State legislature or if school districts with funded seats release them due to lack of need so that they can be granted to other school districts. The Pathways II application, which provides funding for scholarships to low-income families for preschool tuition has now changed from a two-year application to a four-year application and administration is working to complete and submit that application by the deadline. This will allow for continuation of this funding stream and is not new funding.

Proposed Budget Reductions – The committee continued their work on a budget reduction list. The concept of adopting a two-year budget reduction plan was discussed, with the thought being favorable. Currently, the one-year plan of budget adjustments for 2025-2026 will be approved, with the goal of adopting the second year of the plan at the September 2025 regular School Board meeting.

Modifications were proposed to the 2025-2026 budget adjustment list, including reducing the target for extra-curricular adjustments down from \$200,000 to \$140,000; change the plan from charging the average cost of \$360 per activity fee due to concerns about inequity for students and families, to defunding junior high schools at an estimate of \$40,000 budget savings and having the Activities Director assemble a list of \$100,000 in additional budgetary reductions. An elementary teacher combination classroom, likely for 1st and 2nd grade, will remain on the list. Part-time social studies will be renamed to restructuring high school positions and will involve a plan to use a staff person anticipated to be obtaining a qualifying license for Student Support Aid use to allow for reallocation of staff between social studies and Student Support Aid (which is presently not being utilized due to rules outlined in the statute). Reworking the ACT Prep reduction so that this service is still provided, but done in conjunction with the homeschool community who may be able to provide resources and the School District providing facility space. Removing National Honor Society from the list. Adding defunding of field trip transportation, with the goal of finding other funding sources for field trip transportation, including the CRES PTO. Adding a reduction of \$25,000 to the school supply budgets, split between the two buildings.

Other items being investigated for potential savings but not on the list, include custodial operating overhead, with a hope of reducing custodial and building use-related supplies by some dollar amount up to \$25,000; and ongoing review of software and subscription renewals to make sure that software and subscriptions with a cost are being used at a sufficient level to justify the cost.

There was a discussion about the need for a change in organizational culture that departments live within their budget and that there be a move away from what may be seen as the current automatic “you need it; we buy it” approach to purchasing. This would include a reframing of expectations.

Items from the year two plan were reviewed, with explanation of what the items mean. Further work will be needed in year two plans, to commence as soon as the year one plan is adopted, in order to meet the September goal date.

Concepts related to a potential restructuring of Community Education will be discussed at a Board workshop in late March.

The meeting adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

Respectfully prepared and submitted by William Tollefson