MINUTES OF THE 4J BUDGET COMMITTEE
School District 4J, Lane County, Oregon
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

March 28, 2022
6:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Josh Burstein, Chair; Dakota Boulette, Gary Campbell, Tom Di Liberto, Anne Fifield, Ericka Thessen, Juan Carlos Valle, Appointed Committee members; Alicia Hays, Laural O'Rourke, Judy Newman, Maya Rabasa, Board Committee members; Cydney Vandercar, Andrea Belz, Brooke Wagner, Christine Nesbit, Holly Langan, Katherine Lange, staff.

I. Call to Order and Roll Call

Mr. Burstein called the 4J Budget Committee to order and reviewed the agenda.

II. Items for Action at this Meeting

II.a. Approval of Minutes for the February 28 and March 14, 2022, Budget Committee Meetings

This item was postponed to the next committee meeting.

III. Items Raised by the Audience

Mr. Burstein determined there was no one wishing to speak.

IV. Budget Committee Discussion.

IV.1. Development of the 4J Other Funds Budget for District Operations

Ms. Belz noted she had previously provided information on 4J's General Fund budget. She used a slide presentation to review the following federal, state, and local funds, including the dollars available in each fund, and explained how those funds would be allocated for programs and services:

- Elementary & Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) III Grant - $14.7 million
- Student Investment Account (SIA) - $13.3 million in 2022-23, plus possible carryover of $2.5 million
- Title Programs (I, II, III & IV) - $5.4 million
- High School Success Grant (Measure 98) - $4.4 million
- ESSER II Grant - $4.2
- Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) - $3.4 million
- IDEA American Rescue Plan (ARP) - $0.8 million

Ms. Rabasa asked if the funds would be used to support current staff positions and maintain programs at the same level, or would the positions be in addition to what was already in place. Ms. Belz said the SIA funds would support positions currently in place. There were some new positions to be funded through ESSER grants.

Ms. Rabasa asked how the human resource (HR) coordinator positions identified in the wraparound support teams related to those services rather than Human Resources. Ms. Wagner explained that the title HR coordinator was somewhat misleading. Those positions were classified employees working in wraparound services that conducted outreach to bilingual

families; similarly the equity coordinators worked with students, families and staff of color. She acknowledged that often the official job titles did not accurately reflect actual duties.

Ms. Rabasa asked if the translation workload might be too much for a single translation specialist and whether the District would consider adding staff next year. Ms. Wagner noted that there were line items in departments that also support translation services. The teachers' contract for next year included a stipend for licensed staff in the dual language immersion programs.

Mr. Valle asked if the ESSER II and III grants funds were restricted in their use or was there some flexibility to use as the District needed. He also asked about the allocation for summer school. Ms. Belz said the allocations were based on the budget the District submitted to the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) and allocating them to other purposes would require amending the budget and submitting it for approval. She said the summer school program was currently being developed. There were several funding sources for that program and staff was working to have it in place for the coming summer.

Mr. Valle asked about the number of mental health and suicide prevention counselors in the District. Ms. Wagner said more details would be provided later in the presentation. There were multiple mental health positions funded from different sources and three positions were being added, but it remained an ongoing challenge for the District and its community partners to find and hire qualified staff.

Mr. Valle asked why funds had been dedicated to the Fox Hollow campus and whether the Fox Hollow model would be replicated at other sites. Ms. Wagner said some positions to be funded at the campus were behavioral consultant and an additional mental health specialist because there were students with different needs who required an environment different from a mainstream school.

Ms. Fifield asked if the federal ESSER grant funds were passed to the District through the state and whether the funds were one-time or ongoing awards. Ms. Belz said the funds were federal and distributed through ODE; ESSER funds were one-time awards and SIA was ongoing depending on the state's economy.

Ms. Thessen asked if there had been an increase in IDEA funding. Ms. Belz said IDEA funding remained flat, but there was a one-time addition of IDEA ARP funding to support staffing next year.

Ms. Newman joined the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Regarding SIA funds, Ms. Rabasa asked about why Affinity Group support and Affinity Group coordinators were in separate budget items. Ms. Wagner explained the Affinity Group support was added later in the process so it was in its own line item. Some categories included a wide variety of activities and so similar positions might be in separate categories.

Mr. Di Liberto asked if the support for 504s would be throughout the District. Ms. Belz said each classified position would be assigned to a region and help to coordinate that effort. Ms. Wagner said the intent was to pilot an effort to offset some of the paperwork and case management from counselors, particularly at the secondary level.

Mr. Di Liberto and Ms. Newman were pleased to see the 504 pilot project. Ms. Newman asked how the District would determine if the pilot was effective and 504 plans were actually being implemented. Ms. Wagner said information on the effectiveness of the pilot would be obtained from counselors and other staff. She said 504 data had been analyzed and the plans, particularly at the secondary level, had risen and funds were allocated to improve the process. Staff would develop a feedback loop and evaluation process.

Ms. Thessen reiterated the importance of 504 plans and challenges of implementing them without support for staff. She was pleased to see the pilot project.

Mr. Campbell was concerned about the large amount of funding allocated to short-term staffing. He asked if there had been discussions about investing in infrastructure and resiliency for the future so the short-term funding could have the greatest impact. Ms. Belz said there were restrictions on use of the funds and in some cases the District did have the option of moving forward with capital purchases or construction. Anything of that nature had to be submitted to ODE for approval and go through a full and transparent review process. It was not something that could just be included in the budget.

Ms. Belz used a chart to demonstrate that federal funding had been relatively stable, but there had been a large increase in grant funds (SIA) in 2021. Ms. Belz continued with a review of Special Purpose Reserves. Those included District Operations, which were funds set aside for things like curriculum adoption and staff technology that could not be bonded. She noted that the District had been able to use ESSER and emergency grant funds to purchase laptops for all middle and high school students and teachers, which allowed the District to retain reserves for the next refresh. Capital Projects funds were reserved for equipment, bus fleet and student technology purchases. She briefly reviewed the remaining funds.

IV.2. Information Items Related to Questions Raised by Budget Committee Members

a. Elementary Librarians Pilot

Ms. Belz described a potential elementary librarians pilot project. She said the average cost of a librarian was $116,760 per year. There would be 13 Title I elementary schools next year and the top five based on need are Cesar Chavez, Howard, Bertha Holt, McCornack and Family School. Potential funding for the pilot would be ESSER III staff pool funds of $1.4 million which will be available for the next two years.

b. South Eugene High School Child Development Center

Ms. Belz said there had been some concern that a position in the South Eugene High School Child Development Center had been discontinued. She said the position had not been discontinued, but the District was having a difficult time hiring someone because the position required a CTE teaching designation for child development, which was not widely held by staff. The funding is available and efforts to fill the position are ongoing.

c. Kids Eat Free

Regarding free meals for students, Ms. Belz said the federal government would not continue the current program into next year. That program had allowed the District to feed all students without charge. At the current Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) participation level of 19 schools, it would cost approximately $650,000 next year to continue the program. Ms. Langan clarified that the $650,000 was to subsidize all 19 schools. She proposed continuing to subsidize elementary school breakfast at pre-pandemic levels, which would include six schools, because once the

CEP program was reduced to three or four schools in two years the District would require a huge investment to continue to cover all 19 schools.

Mr. Boulette encouraged subsidizing free meals for students, regardless of the cost. With 21 percent of Eugene's population facing food insecurity at home, the District needed to do better for its students.

Mr. Burstein agreed with Mr. Boulette.

d. Social/Emotional Health Support

Ms. Wagner described the social/emotional support staff currently in place at the District and the community organizations who partnered with 4J to provide those services. She said a variety of funding sources were used for social/emotional support services including the General Fund, SIA and ESSER. She said some of the current positions were not filled because recruitment efforts had not been successful; that problem was also being experienced by community partners. She said additional funding would be used to enhance services by adding staff or through third-party providers and urged flexibility in funding use.

Ms. O'Rourke commented that many of the District's community partners hired at low base wages for the work to be done. She said it was important to have enough funding to attract people to social/emotional support positions in the District. She requested job descriptions for the social/emotional support staff positions in order to understand who had responsibility for working with students and supporting teachers. She also asked to see the hours available for support services. She understood that most hours were not during the evening and hoped to understand what services were available that the District could assist in funding.

Ms. Rabasa also agreed with the need for free meals and felt that was inter-related with mental health support. She appreciated the recruitment efforts for social/emotional support staff and urged the District to also pay attention to the need for nurses. She asked for consideration of a pandemic-related bonus for nurses. The District was understaffed with nurses and a bonus would be in line with what had been done with other positions in terms of retention. It would also help with recruitment. She asked for a status report on that issue.

Ms. Rabasa asked if the District would receive any additional funding per student from ODE because of declining enrollments.

Mr. Di Liberto was pleased to see support for counselors with respect of 504s. He said scheduling was another time-consuming task that could be re-examined and those aspects of scheduling that did not require a counselor perhaps assigned to other staff. That also applied to other tasks performed by counselors such as bus and lunch supervision. He said those things took away from spending time with students where it was most needed addressing mental health. He suggesting asking those on the front line of mental health services how to make the best use of their time working with students in areas of the most need.

Ms. Thessen echoed Mr. Boulette's support for feeding as many students as possible for as long as possible. She asked for information on the number of nurses working in the District. She asked what qualifications were required for the Suicide Prevention Coordinator position. She stressed the importance of having a person with a trauma informed viewpoint who did not see things from a law enforcement or punitive perspective. Ms. Wagner said she would provide the resume of the person who was in that position.

Mr. Valle emphasized the importance of having kids ready to learn and food was an important part of that strategy. For many families school was the only source of food. He appreciated the recommendations from staff, but believed that if the District decided to fund meals for all students, a way to continue to fund that would be found. Ms. Langan said technically all students had access to meals under Oregon law and regardless of ability to pay they could have breakfast and lunch every day. The District covered all negative balances during the pandemic. Oregon also approved the extended income guidelines, allowing more families to qualify for free meals. Using those two mechanisms virtually every child that needed a meal would be fed without draining the General Fund or other sources. She agreed feeding students was an important part of preparing them to learn.

Mr. Valle was pleased to see changes in mental services. He noted there were 11 different categories of staff involved in social/emotional support and asked to see job descriptions for those positions and the hours worked. He said the greatest impact could be in providing services after hours as that could include families. He urged staff to assure there were no duplications or redundancies and all opportunities to collaborate and partner had been explored.

Responding to Mr. Di Liberto's suggestion to ask counselors what help they wanted, Ms. Hays said counselors had approached the School Board and discussed not working to the top of their licenses, which resulted in the addition of classified positions to social/emotional support services. She asked for information on the national average or standard for school nurses and how 4J compared as it had been significantly below the national standard in past years. She also asked about the District's partnership with Roseburg Therapy. Ms. Lange said the District had a referral system established with Roseburg Therapy and 4J staff and parents could refer a student for services. She said five sessions were available for a student or student and family. Co-pays were covered by Oregon Health Plan (OHP) or other insurance the family might have. If the family did not have insurance or other resources, 4J would pay the co-pay for up to five visits. Roseburg Therapy worked with students and families to connect them to resources for long-term counseling.

Mr. Campbell said that seeing the slide presentation prior a committee meeting could expedite the discussion. He said providing information on the eligible uses and restrictions on funds would also be helpful, such when funds could be used to supplant other funds or provide additional staffing. He asked that budget information about positions also include whether a new position was being added or an existing one being maintained. Regarding the difficulty of filling social/emotional support positions, he asked if the number of mental health specialist positions could be decreased in order to increase salaries and be more competitive in hiring.

Ms. Rabasa asked why the Suicide Prevention Coordinator and Behavioral Safety Assessment Coordinator positions were isolated under the category of Public Safety and appeared to be operating in a silo and not under the purview of student support services.

Ms. Newman stated that feeding students was something basic the District needed to do and there appeared to be a pathway to continuing to do that while keeping it as low barrier to families as possible. She agreed with the need for mental health services after hours and asked for more information on what was currently available and what need existed.

Mr. Valle asked staff to consider ways in which the list of community partners could be expanded. Some of those organizations were nonprofits and there could be opportunities for expansion through things such as creative job-sharing.

Mr. Burstein shared a moving story about a student's testimony to a legislative committee on free lunch programs and families that were not poor enough to qualify for free lunch, but too poor to buy food for the family.

Mr. Boulette said his family had experienced the same dilemma when he was a student.

V. Budget Committee Wrap-up

a. Items Raised by Committee Members

Mr. Burstein asked committee members to email any additional questions to budget_comm_leadership@4j.lane.edu.

b. Items for Next Meeting

Items for the next meeting would include responses to questions raised during the committee's discussion and approval of minutes from prior meetings.

VII. Adjourn

Mr. Burstein thanked everyone for their participation in the budget process and adjourned the meeting at 7:43 p.m.

(Recorded by Lynn Taylor)