

CROSBY-IRONTON SCHOOLS  
FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY  
January 11, 2021

Item 7.2a

The finance committee met in the Forum Room on January 11, 2021 at 4:30 p.m. with the following present: Abby Geotz, Kim Coughlin and Mike Domin. Jamie Skjeveland and Bill Tollefson were also present.

2020-2021 Budget and Personnel Items – The committee reviewed several personnel items related to the 2020-2021 school year.

Medical Leave of Absence – Char Saley, secondary math teacher, has requested a medical leave of absence starting January 19, 2021 through the end of the school year or the return of the teacher, whichever is earlier. With the return of students to in-person school starting on January 20, 2021, this will mean that a math teacher will need to be present in the school building. The District has advertised for a long-term substitute on EdPost, with no results.

Filling Position During Medical Leave – With no leads on a long-term substitute math teacher generated by the EdPost advertisement, the District Office and the High School Principal have been brainstorming ways to fill the math teacher vacancy during the medical leave. One solution involves the use of three (3) overloads. The Board has been reluctant to allow overloads as a normal operating procedure. There was also an option to look at attempting to get a temporary license for someone in the community who has a bachelors degree in mathematics. In this case, and due to the timing of the need to fill the position, the finance committee consensus was to proceed with overloads if no other solution was available. If overloads are used, they would be approved by the School Board at the January regular Board meeting with a start of January 19, 2021 through the end of the 2020-2021 school year or the return of the teacher from leave, whichever occurred sooner.

Extension of Expired Federal FFCRA Leave – In March of 2020, federal legislation called Families First Coronavirus Relief Act became law. This law provided for ten (10) days of additional paid sick leave (beyond what the employer normally provides as paid sick leave) and expanded Family Medical Leave for several narrowly defined uses associated with COVID-19. This legislation expired on December 31, 2020 and was not extended by recent federal COVID relief legislation. The only extension was a credit for voluntarily providing the leave through the end of the first quarter of 2021 (March 31, 2021). This is a tax credit that is not applicable to governmental entities which do not file tax returns. As a means of providing encouragement for making the best choices when faced with staying home if not feeling well and waiting for COVID test results versus coming to work and potentially spreading COVID, the committee consensus was to forward a resolution to the full Board at the January regular Board meeting to extend the leave under the same conditions as the original federal law (including no additional leave granted to employees who had already used the 10 additional days) until March 31, 2021.

Other Personnel Issues – The committee was updated on several other personnel issues relating to obtaining boiler licenses and reassignment of personnel to different time schedules to accommodate the return of students to in-person learning in January 2021.

2021-2022 Planning

Financial Consultant for Budget Reductions - The committee received additional information regarding the concept of contracting with a financial consultant to assist with benchmarking against other comparative school districts, development of potential budget reductions, and communications assistance through the budget reduction process. Two potential consultants provided feedback to-date. For one, the scope of work was beyond what they would normally do. For the other, they would be able to move through the process and could have a deliverable product by mid- to late-March 2021, but noted that this would be a tighter timeframe than they would normally prefer. The cost estimate was \$13,000 to \$15,000 for this service and to provide a

deliverable report in sufficient detail to meet budget reduction objectives. The committee questioned if this was rushing the process and if it would not be more prudent to take more time and allow for a more thorough study? Discussion included doing something similar internally to help guide the budget reduction discussion through a different lens, the potential benefits of an outside review and perspective to the process and operation, and the concept of investing in something, such as this study, to make something better – in this case better budget reduction decisions. Consensus was to use more immediately available benchmarking tools, to explore other consultants who might be able to offer a similar deliverable product, and to reassess whether this process is something that the Board would find helpful by revisiting this potential service in the summer of 2021 for use in developing budget reduction strategies for the 2022-2023 school year.

Update on Compensatory Revenue Projections – The committee was updated on the positive results obtained by the recent outreach to parents to complete the free and reduced meal benefit applications. With food service meal applications not needed this year due to a modified federal child nutrition funding program, the number of parents who completed the application was down significantly from prior years (not only at C-I, but statewide). This resulted in a lower than historically normal free and reduced student count. This count, based on the students enrolled on October 1, provides formula components for a variety of funding programs, including Compensatory or Basic Skills revenue, Title I, and e-Rate. With low initial results following early Fall MARSS submissions, the School District reached out to families to consider completing and submitting an application. The November report included 217 free and 82 reduced student counts which generated \$294,362 in Compensatory Revenue. The most recent figures following the final Fall MARSS submission on January 6, 2021 reflect an increased count of 241 free and 92 reduced and Compensatory revenue increased to an estimate of \$359,203. This is still down from the Compensatory revenue for 2020-2021 of \$480,121. With the spend-off of the previously existing Reserved Fund Balance for Compensatory Revenue and no reductions to this point in the expenditures that were made on staffing, a combination of the reduced revenue and the continuing expenditure level will shift and add deficit spending to the General Fund Unreserved Fund Balance.

2021-2022 Staffing – The committee reviewed the 2020-2021 high school schedule with student enrollment data for each class period. The enrollment for first semester was complete, but the enrollment for second semester is not accurate, pending completion of registration of approximately 60 students who need second semester schedule modifications. This data allows for classes with low enrollments to be assessed for ongoing viability.

The committee also reviewed a list of potential staff retirements and looked at what staffing adjustments might be made if those retirees were not replaced, allowing for a budget reduction by attrition. There are a number of potential scenarios that were identified. The next step would be for District administration to dialogue with a number of high school staff about what they might be interested in doing to pursue additional college coursework to add academic fields to their existing teaching licenses. Skjeveland received committee approval to notify the rest of the School Board about the scheduling of these discussions with staff, and to proceed with those meetings as quickly as possible.

Abby Geotz left the meeting at 6:45 p.m.

The issue of non-tenured staff non-renewals was also discussed. In the event that there are non-renewals this year, the committee discussed notification of staff earlier than normal to give those individuals more time to plan where they go after Crosby-Ironton.

Work will also continue on development of potential budget reductions beyond attrition or if existing staff do not wish to obtain additional licensure to allow for a more efficient staffing in a secondary building that has enrollment that is substantially reduced from the time the current staffing was provided.

The meeting adjourned at 7:09 p.m.

Respectfully prepared and submitted by William Tollefson