BOE Regular Session Thursday, December 12, 2024 7:00 PM Pacific Ashland City Council Chamber 1175 East Main Street Ashland, OR 97520

#### **MINUTES**

#### 1. Call to Order and Roll Check

Chair Dyson called the meeting to order and a roll check confirmed all five directors were present.

#### 2. Land Acknowledgment

Director Skuratowicz read the Land Acknowledgment.

3. Adoption of Agenda Director Franko moved and Director Skuratowicz seconded the adoption of the December 12, 2024, agenda as proposed. The motion carried by unanimous vote of the members present.

4. **Consent Agenda** (*All items may be adopted by a single motion unless pulled for special consideration.*)

4.A. Personnel Report for December 2024

4.B. Enrollment Report for December 3, 2024

Director Ruby noted that the enrollment snapshot showed that the district currently has 461 fewer students than it did in December 2016. This represents a revenue loss of nearly \$5 million over 8 years. Director Skuratowicz moved and Director Hatch seconded the adoption of the consent agenda items 4A and 4B. The motion carried by unanimous vote of the members present.

#### 5. School Report - Ashland Middle School (AMS)

Assistant Principal Rebecca Gyarmathy presented with two 7<sup>th</sup> grade students as guest speakers. To rebuild socialization among students and strengthen school culture, AMS started a student council with a small group of students last year. This year two staff specialists have helped build the student council with various activities.

Mondays and Fridays historically have the lowest student attendance. Recently, while attending a meeting of the Oregon Association of Student Councils, they learned about the idea of doing a Monday morning raffle with prizes. Students must be present to win. This has increased Monday attendance. About 25-30 students serve on the student council now They plan and run lunch time activities like fun Friday with trivia games, crafts, board games, and sports tournaments hosted in the AMS skate park. Blue and Gold awards are given to highlight students who have done positive or unusual things during the week. AMS just held a successful Winter Candyland dance. The fundraiser raised money to support the student council and student unions. Students could only attend the dance if they had had zero referrals for the week and had attended school every day during the week.

The Council met weekly to plan for the dance, mapped the gym, and located places for sets and props. They made a candy house out of cardboard and blew up lots of balloons. Students signed up for different activities during the week of the dance.

Assistant Principal Gyarmathy asked the students what they learned putting on the dance and said that it worked well to encourage good attendance and reduce referrals. Students described a "balloon crisis" and learned how to manage too many balloons. They received a lesson on procrastination when they had to scramble to finish in the last days. Overall students had a good time and they made \$1,500 for a student trip to Seaside. The student unions raised about \$200 for their activities. Students also held a penny drive to support the survivors of the Ashville, North Carolina, flood that raised \$1,200.

Mrs. Gyarmathy praised the AMS staff Kylie Peterman, Jennifer Gonzales, and Abdi Guled for supporting the students. She reported that AMS has a 7% decrease in chronic absences among students as a result of this increased student engagement. They do much better now on Mondays, but are still working on reducing absences on Fridays.

#### 6. Recurring Reports

#### 6.A. AHS Student Report

AHS co-president Ella Robinson was unable to attend and Student Representative Azaleah Davis-Powell reported that a recent blood drive went well, with AHS having more donors than Grants Pass. The Winter Fine Arts Festival will be held on Friday. AHS Co-president Owen Taylor said that the high school is hosting dueling donation drives. Students are gathering donated items for dogs and cats at the Jackson County Animal Shelter and other students are running a winter clothing and food drive for local residents in need. Both girls and boys basketball teams are playing. Students are becoming enthused about the coming Winter Break. Mr. Taylor said that all donations for either drive are welcome from 4:00-5:00 pm Friday at the high school office or library. The clothing drive is happening in collaboration with the Ashland Police Department.

#### 6.B. AEA Report

AEA representative Alan Parowski reported that members are working hard, and despite the uncertain future educators show up every day for children. He read highlight reports from individual school sites.

#### 6.C. OSEA Report

OSEA Chapter President Steven Essig reported on the annual student scavenger hunt. Member James Johnson was an advisor to the AMS TRAILS team, requiring students to research answers to 45 questions after receiving clues, and give sources for their answers. That team won second place. He commented on students being asked to list a favorite poem and the impact of losing school librarians. The AHS Truth to Power student club is doing another supply drive to gather clothing supplies and hygiene products for homeless families. TRAILS students had an awesome concert at the AHS theater.

OSEA requested information from the district on the current fiscal situation and the labor management team is working with the district on ideas for addressing the budget. Director

Franko asked Mr. Essig to convey the board's best wishes to former chapter president Lisa March who left to take on a new role as a union representative working for OSEA. She will be missed.

#### 7. Board Reports

Board Vice Chair Jill Franko reported on the history of the Sunstone Housing Collaborative, formed with the goal of creating attainable housing for the Ashland community and school district staff. Growing out of conversations within the innovation enrollment committee about how best to ensure family housing for younger families with children, they did extensive research on actions that had been taken by school districts in Oregon and other states. After Sunstone formed, they set out with several goals and principles:

1. A commitment to design with a purpose and design for families. They set a goal of having colocated child care services, bike storage, community gardens, and other amenities.

2. Desired unit sizes to have two- and three-bedrooms units with deed restrictions for occupants. They set the intention to meet HUD family income requirements for affordability and a 60-year restriction on sales before units were released to open market pricing.

3. They sought development partners who are qualified, experienced affordable housing developers.

4. They committed to community engagement. SOU has 100 families on a wait list for housing. Oregon Child Development Center, a low-income child care provider, expressed interest in partnering.

5. Aligning with a local community land trust undergirds affordability because the land upon which housing is built remains in the public trust.

6. A goal was mission alignment to meet needs of the school district and produce affordable housing for families.

Detailed information can be found on the Sunstone web site: www.sunstonehc.org

Director Ruby described listening to people in conversations, reading emails, and attending community listening sessions. He credited former board member Sabrina Prud'homme, Director Eva Skuratowicz, and former superintendent Samuel Bogdanove for their advocacy on this. The district felt a need for creative new ideas and it doesn't have great sums of money to do them. The district cannot be sustainable if we don't have the enrollment, and it has been in decline for decades. The goal of innovation is to build for the long-term.

Director Skuratowicz attended two recent budget listening sessions, and has been reading all of the emails coming from community members and staff. She went to Pinehurst school for a Christmas tree from their annual holiday fair and noted that many of the Pinehurst K-6 students come to ASD for their upper grades. She is doing research with the county on chronic absenteeism, defined as students for whom more than 10% of a school year is missed. These levels of absence do damage to the students and also teachers. All districts throughout Jackson County are seeing the highest rates they have ever experienced.

Director Hatch attended the first public budget listening session at AHS. He Admired this model of communication, with 2-way sharing and open conversations about difficult subjects. He expressed thanks to Dr. Hattrick for convening them. He also met personally this week with Dr. Hattrick about the budget and appreciated the level of work that is happening, as well as the transparency from the district. Recently, he has heard a lot about both our budget situation and the Sunstone project in community conversations he has had. People have expressed concerns both about the project fulfilling its promise and about its impact on kids and athletics. His interactions have been positive. People are asking hard questions that need to be answered and some residents are very focused on solutions as well. We don't have all the answers but the Board should always be open to vigorous questions and he encourages it to continue. He attended the Willow Wind 6<sup>th</sup> grade performance today and it was fantastic.

Chair Dyson attended three of the budget listening sessions and was impressed with the open conversations and positive engagement. She met with the AHS OBOB (Oregon Battle of the Books) team, which is a great program. Our schools are looking for parents and volunteers to help. If interested, please reach out to your child's principal or school office. Information about volunteering can be found on the District web site. AHS had its annual Winter Fine Arts Festival featuring student work across all art forms, including live performances. Dinner is provided by the AHS culinary students.

#### 8. Report from Student Board Representatives

Student Representative Owen Taylor reported that he met with Dr. Hattrick to get informed about the budget situation and he appreciated the open dialog about possible solutions. Representative Azaleah Davis-Powell reported that she is working on a newsletter overview about the budget challenges for the student newspaper. She said it is important to help educate AHS students about the basics.

#### 9. Hear Public Comments

(*The Ashland School District Board of Directors reserves this time for individuals to relay comments in writing to the Board regarding topics that are not on the printed agenda.*) Josie Christensen, an Ashland student, spoke about the proposed sale of the Lincoln field and the impact on soccer players.

Brett Lütz, an Ashland parent and soccer coach, spoke about the proposed sale of Lincoln field and the impact on soccer players.

Tia McLean, a teacher and an Ashland resident, spoke to the budget shortfall and the proposed sale of Lincoln Field's impact on soccer players.

#### 10. District Staff Updates

#### 10.A. Superintendent Report

Dr. Hattrick clarified an inadvertent comment at a recent meeting that may have been interpreted as critical about reporter Holly Dillemuth from the Ashland News and wanted to express his appreciation and support of both her work and the online publication.

He had the pleasure of attending the Walker winter concert, which as fantastic, and expressed kudos to teacher Emily Jeffs.

Dr. Hattrick reported that the district and AEA members are close completing their work on a new Collective Bargaining Agreement for certified staff. He attended the Winter Fine Arts Festival and appreciated the excellent work displayed by AHS students. He reported on the Ashland Rotary Student of the Month for November, 12<sup>th</sup> grade student Ivy Clason. He read from her presentation: "Ivy excels at soccer and softball. She is admired for her dedication and positive attitude. Others describe her as a kind person with a great work ethic who maintains a balance between academic and athletic endeavors, and is a natural leader." Our AHS "students of the month" will be featured in <u>Ashland Living</u>, a local online magazine.

#### 10.B. Capital Bond

#### 10.B.1) Monthly Bond Report - November 2024

Executive Director of Operations Steve Mitzel and HMK Program Director Mike Freeman reported that bond construction only has about four weeks to go towards the finish line on upgrades and renovations of most AHS classrooms. Several classes will be moved back in during Winter Break. There will still be a few projects coming in the spring, including installation of some HVAC controls.

At the Humanities Building, the seismic upgrade is completed and the south tower rest room addition is almost ready. Most of this should be wrapped up by the end of December. The new elevator installation is finishing.

Seismic work on the Science building will begin in the summer of 2025, and may extend into 2026 before it is finished. We still have another solar project to complete and the team is submitting a seismic grant for the Helman cafeteria building.

#### 10.C. December Financial Report

Director of Business Services Scott Whitman presented the November financial report in the new format recommended by OASBO consultant Jackie Olsen. The report covers the General Fund #100 only, not special revenue funds. Total estimated revenues remain essentially unchanged, though the district did collect most of the November property taxes of close to \$15 million. The Youth Academic and Activity Levy (YAAL) funds are also coming in. Total revenues are close to \$38 million. Expenses show little changes apart from the addition of the November payroll. The total is just under \$39 million. Items highlighted in yellow are projected to be over budget and the team is working to control costs in those areas.

Mr. Whitman reviewed the appropriation report comparing expenditures with projections from all combined accounts. We are mostly under budget with regard to actual expenditures. The report shows the budget as it currently exists, before any reductions are made, and indicates a deficit of about \$1 million.

Director Franko asked about the employee health insurance fund. This is an internal service fund that gets revenue from internal assessments based on payroll and expenditures are payments for health care services. Director Hatch asked about the difference in the property tax estimate compared to actual. We have received \$15.2 million, but we projected this revenue at a higher level. This may be a timing issue with recent increases in property tax

assessments combined with fewer weeks for payments remitted in this November compared to last. At this point we still expect the final total to be close to our original estimate.

Director Hatch inquired about a deficit in a line item for assessment and testing? That line item paid for a required student assessment program previously paid for with ESSER funds during COVID. When that ended, the expense was transferred to the General Fund. However, there was a failure to account for the revenue loss that had supported it previously.

Director Hatch also asked about \$677,000 reported as unappropriated? Mr. Whitman explained that Oregon budget law does not allow for negative balances that are unappropriated. These dollars came from cash in special revenue funds to cover expenses while awaiting other revenues and they are working on a corrective action plan to properly reflect this. Encumbrances for capital project funds also reflect the same problem. There will be a proposed resolution coming to the January 2025 meeting to correct this.

Mr. Whitman also stated that the Health Insurance Fund does have a healthy cash balance. Again, the appropriation difference reflects the special service fund cash balances that helped the district get through the period before we received state school funds, delayed because our previous auditing firm failed to complete the FY2022-2023 audit on time.

Director Hatch inquired about all of the yellow lines in support services? Mr. Whitman said that the projected activity December-June is based on payroll expenses added to spending patterns from last year during the same time period. As our actual spending decreases with current reductions being made, the projected amounts will reflect the current reductions and the numbers will come down. The summary is that the district has been overspending for several years relative to its actual revenue.

#### 11. Unfinished Business

11.A. ACTION ITEM: English Language Arts (ELA) Curriculum Adoption

Bellview Principle Christine McCollom is leading a committee to make recommendations on a new English Language Arts curriculum. The group met in September. This year the focus is on K-5 and costs are covered by Student Success Act grant funding to start the process. Thirteen elementary site representatives met to set the committee's purpose, looked at the state curriculum rubric, and reviewed Oregon's state approved materials. Reading League, an organization of nonprofit reading specialists, also has a rubric the group reviewed called *Reading Ways* that may be better suited to our needs. However, the State rubric articulated equity goals more clearly, so the committee pulled that piece into the Reading League model. Members reviewed the equity work done during the recent selection of the Math Curriculum. They liked the practicality of the approach with both community and family pieces. It also articulated a realistic amount of substance to be done in a year. They are keeping an eye on future alignment with Oregon social studies standards, as we will need to do a future adoption there.

In October the committee began putting together its rubric, and reviewed state approved materials to select those best suited to our needs. They narrowed choices to 4-5 publishers.

Next week they will get presentations from two companies. Publishers are taking different approaches. Some are doing a combined approach with the science of reading. The two companies are named Foundations and 95%. They will hear a third company in January. She asked if the Board had any concerns or questions about the rubric. The team believes it is important to use the same criteria across different curricula. Director Skuratowicz commented on the attention paid to both equity and the alignment across our different subject curricula with best practices.

The team expected to deliver a final recommendation Board in March. They are considering how we would scaffold selected products in areas where they may be weak.

Director Skuratowicz moved and Director Franko seconded the Board's approval for the committee to initiate the formal search and review for new ELA curriculum as proposed. The motion carried by unanimous vote of the members present.

#### 12. New Business

#### 12.A. Budget Action Plan

Superintendent Hattrick presented his Budget Reduction Proposal. He thanked the community for engaging in listening sessions. He also thanked the cabinet for spending countless hours driving towards solutions, the leadership team for problem solving, and the staff giving support and ideas. He thanked the school board.

Dr. Hattrick outlined the steps of research and review that led to the current findings. He recommended the recording of the November 21, 2024 special board meeting for those interested in more details about that research. Those recordings can be found <u>HERE</u>.

To reframe problem, Dr. Hattrick stated that the district must eliminate a total deficit of \$7 million over time and in a phased approach.

- Phase 1 \$2.2 million reduction is the target. This is the FY24-2025 need to cure a projected negative fund balance \$1.037 million and reduce an additional \$182 million to achieve an ending fund balance reserve of \$2,2 million or a 2.5% reserve.
- Phase 2 Identify a plan to save \$3.5 million cash to carry the district through November 2025 and develop a balanced budget for school year 2025/26 with an ending reserve of about 4%.
- Phase 3 Develop a 3-year plan to eliminate all negative fund balances in special revenue funds and return to an 8% fund balance contingency in 2027-28.

The first steps are a top down action plan. Urgency drives the fast response with input less than optimal. However, the district did seek input through listening sessions, surveys, and other communications. The district is still working on FAQ pages in response to about 250-300 questions that the district has received. There were 241 responses to a survey, approximately 177 parent/guardian members, 57 staff, and 7 community members.

Results from staff inquiries reveal that employees prefer a combination of furlough days to staff layoffs. Forecasting a sequence of actions include reducing projected expenditures across

all line items, a spending freeze on discretionary expenses, restricted travel, and a combination of staff furloughs and reductions of extra duty spending.

Recently an incredibly generous anonymous donor has made a gift of \$890,000 towards deficit reduction through the good efforts of the Ashland Schools Foundation. Dr. Hattrick invited all listening to submit thank you cards and letters to express our gratitude. This is a short pause that will give us breathing room in the difficult, continuing work to stop and reverse overspending. Much work remains ahead.

Dr. Hattrick outlined the details of furlough days for both certified and classified employees, including targeting these to days when many would not be working because they are non-student days.

All employees, including administrators and the superintendent, will be on furlough and the district will be closed.

#### You will find the completed Budget Reduction Plan attached to this document.

12.B. Public Comment Period related to the District budget presentation

Ann Gaffney, an Ashland resident and Budget Committee member, spoke to the budget crisis and possible ideas for addressing it.

Matt Norris, an Ashland resident, spoke to the budget shortfall and possible solutions that could come from the community.

ACTION ITEM: Director Hatch moved approval of the Budget Reduction Plan as submitted by Dr. Hattrick and Director Skuratowicz seconded. Chair Dyson cautioned that as the Board approves this short-term action plan, there is much work that remains to be done in order to get the District on a sound financial footing. The motion carried by unanimous vote of the members present.

Director Skuratowicz and Chair Dyson expressed the appreciation of the Board and the community for his hard work in addressing this problem. Dr. Hattrick commended the district staff and community supporters.

Director Ruby mentioned that the Ashland Schools Foundation would stand ready to accept contributions in support of the school District. Anyone interested should reach out to Superintendent Hattrick or ASF Executive Director Erica Thompson. Dr. Hattrick asked for thank you cards and letters to the anonymous donor who is helping with a very generous donation.

#### 13. Announcements and Appointments

Chair Dyson read the announcements of upcoming meetings.

#### 14. Adjourn

There being no further business, Chair Dyson adjourned the meeting at 9:30 pm.

Submitted by: Jackie Schad, Board Secretary

Dated for Board Approval: January 9, 2024

Board Chair Rebecca Dyson

Superintendent Joseph Hattrick

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# **BUDGET REDUCTION PROPOSAL**



**Prop** 

A. F.

# AGENDA

CURRENT BUDGET OVERVIEW

> IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM

DATA REVIEW

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SHORT-TERM FINANCIAL RECOVERY
 RATIONALE
 EXPECTED IMPACTS

> ALTERNATIVE MEASURES CONSIDERED

A. F.

>NEXT STEPS

### **CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION** (WITHOUT INTERVENTION IN 2024/25)

PHASE 1 - ASHLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT HAS AN ANTICIPATED <u>NEGATIVE</u> FUND BALANCE FOR FY24/25 TOTALING \$1,037,182 (GENERAL FUND). GOAL OF \$2,200,000 REDUCTION TO ALLOW FOR UNANTICIPATED COSTS WHICH WOULD BE EQUIVALENT TO 2.5% RESERVES.

PHASE 2 – IDENTIFY A PLAN TO SAVE ~\$3,500,000 CASH TO CARRY THE DISTRICT TO NOVEMBER 2025 AND DEVELOP A BALANCED BUDGET FOR FY25/26 THAT INCLUDES A CONTINGENCY (~\$4%).

PHASE 3 - DEVELOP A 3-YEAR PLAN TO ELIMINATE ALL NEGATIVE FUND BALANCES IN THE SPECIAL REVENUE FUNDS (~\$2,290,548) AND RETURN TO AN 8% CONTINGENCY BY 2027-28.

### DATA REVIEW

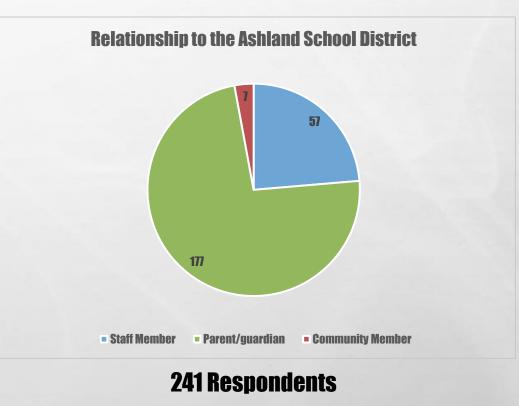
#### DATA REVIEWED

LISTENING SESSION NOTES
 LISTENING SESSION QUESTIONS
 SURVEY RESPONSES

#### LISTENING SESSIONS:

- NOVEMBER 25, 2024 AHS FOR STAFF
- 2. DECEMBER 2, 2024 AHS FOR ALL
- 3. DECEMBER 3, 2024 WALKER FOR ALL
- 4. DECEMBER 4, 2024 AMS FOR ALL

5. DECEMBER 5, 2024 - HELMAN FOR ALL





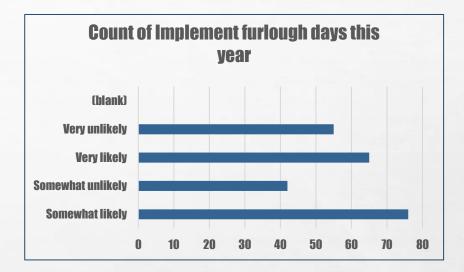
59% OF RESPONDENTS WOULD SUPPORT FURLOUGH DAYS.

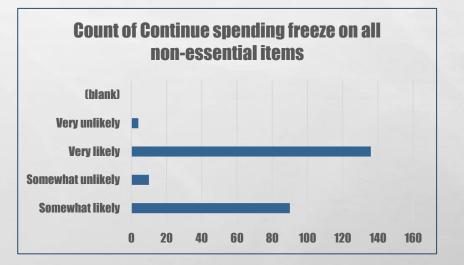
OREGON SCHOOL EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION CHAPTER 42 PREFERRED FURLOUGH OVER REDUCTION OF STAFF AND 53% OF MEMBERS REPORT 1-3 DAYS TO BE LESS OF A STRAIN.

81% OF STAFF WHO COMPLETED THE SURVEY WOULD SUPPORT FURLOUGH DAYS.

94% OF RESPONDENTS SUPPORT SPENDING FREEZE ON NON-ESSENTIAL ITEMS.

SUPPORT FOR MID-YEAR STAFF REDUCTIONS WAS 36% FROM STAFF AND 38% FROM FAMILIES.





Reductions (12/20/2024-6/30/2025)	
Furlough 6 days	-\$824,000
Fields trips cost neutral	-\$30,000
Contracted Service Reduction due to service level needs (1.0 FTE).	-\$85,000
Extra-duty contract reductions	-\$100,000
<ul> <li>Sem. 2 Staff Reductions (attrition)</li> <li>1.0 licensed</li> <li>2.75 FTE</li> <li>Continue hiring freeze/pause</li> </ul>	-\$50,000 -\$120,000
Spending freeze/discretionary	-\$100,000
Admin Professional Development & Travel	-\$30,000
TOTAL REDUCTIONS	\$1,339,000

6.5

### **ACTION PLAN PROPOSAL**

SAVINGS GOAL: \$2,200,000		
Revenues		
Anonymous donor	+\$890,000	
TOTAL PROJECTED SAVINGS FOR 2024-25		
\$2,229,000		

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## **EXPECTED IMPACTS**

### **FURLOUGH DAYS**

- ADMIN AND LICENSED STAFF WOULD HAVE A REDUCTION OF ~6 DAYS SALARY
- CLASSIFIED WOULD HAVE A REDUCTION OF ~ 3-4 DAYS
- WE WILL ATTEMPT TO MINIMIZE INTERRUPTIONS TO FAMILIES SCHEDULES BY ATTACHING DAYS TO HOLIDAYS AND UTILIZING NON-SCHOOL DAYS WHEN POSSIBLE.
- WE PLAN TO WORK WITH CHILDCARE PROVIDERS TO SEE IF ANY SOLUTIONS CAN BE PROVIDED TO OUR FAMILIES AS WELL.

E. F.

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### TRANSPORTATION

#### FIELD TRIPS WILL BE COST NEUTRAL RESULTING IN NO COSTS TO THE GENERAL FUND.

FUNDRAISING AND FEES ARE THE PREFERRED SOLUTION. FIELD TRIPS WITHIN COUNTY ARE PRIORITIZED.

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## **ALTERNATE MEASURES CONSIDERED**

- FURLOUGH A TOTAL OF 10-13 SCHOOL DAYS THIS YEAR
- MID-YEAR REDUCTION IN STAFF (RIF) FOR A REDUCTION OF ~\$900,000 DEPENDING ON OTHER COST MITIGATION STRATEGIES.
- MINIMIZE EXTRA DUTY STIPENDS
- LIMITING STUDENT CLUBS AND ACTIVITIES
- ELIMINATING MIDDLE SCHOOL SPORTS PROGRAM (THIS YEAR ONLY)
- ELIMINATING ALL FIELD TRIPS

# **NEXT STEPS**

### **ENGAGEMENT**

- LABOR UNIONS
  - DETERMINE FURLOUGH DAYS
  - CONTINUE TO COLLABORATE
     ON LONG-TERM PLAN
- COMMITTEES
  - PARENT/STAFF/STUDENT ADVISORY
  - LONG-RANGE PLANNING TEAM
  - BUDGET COMMITTEE
- COMMUNICATE PROGRESS
  - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
  - REGULAR UPDATES



- RESEARCH AND ANSWER QUESTIONS BROUGHT UP IN SURVEY AND LISTENING SESSIONS
- RESEARCH INTERNAL/EXTERNAL DATA:
  - ENROLLMENT
  - STAFFING (CLASSIFIED, CERTIFIED, ADMIN)
  - CLASS SIZE
  - ETC.
- BEST PRACTICES/EFFICIENCIES AND MODELS TO EXPLORE IN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS



- PHASE 2 OPTIONS
  - RESEARCH TAX ANTICIPATION NOTE
  - OTHER COST-SAVINGS MEASURES
- REDUCTION-IN-FORCE (RIF) OPTIONS FOR PHASE 2 & 3
  - NOTIFY LABOR UNIONS AND ENGAGE IN PROBLEM-SOLVING PROCESS
- DEVELOP STAFFING ALLOCATION MODEL FOR PREDICTABLE/SUSTAINABLE STAFFING AND BUDGETING

### **QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION**



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