

**Community Meeting
March 22, 2010**

SUMMARIES

“A Look at the District’s Budgetary Cuts and Reductions”

This session was facilitated by Board President Mark Dolan and Assistant Superintendent Rick Forney. An overview of the district’s current financial situation and the cuts and reductions in programming and services was provided during this session.

Following is a listing of the questions and answers from this session:

- *Has the district developed a plan showing the various stages of cuts in programming and services should a levy not pass?*

The district has released a listing of the cuts and reductions in teaching staff and in transportation services. Further the district has addressed and released a listing of the various programming areas impacted (i.e. gifted services). The district will be notifying support and administrative staff of reductions in those two areas in the very near future.

Next school year the district will provide course offerings above state minimum requirements; however if a levy does not pass the district will need to cut an additional \$6 million from the budget and this would further reduce programming and services. Most likely the district would be very close to or at state minimum requirements.

- *Rumors are circulating that if the community does not pass a levy, the state will take the district over. Is this true?*

If the school district does not get additional revenue after cutting the \$9.5 million from the budget, an additional \$6 million will be cut next year. If the district cannot balance the budget it could be declared to be in fiscal emergency. If this should happen, the state would lend the school district money which the district would need to pay back. The state would also require that the district cut all programming and services to state minimum requirements. If a 5 or 6 mill levy passed it would cover the \$6 million deficit in fiscal years 2011 and 2012.

- *Does the current five year forecast include salary increases?*

For the 2011 year it does, as it is based on the current contract. FY 2012 is assumed to be at 0% and 2013 and beyond is assumed to be at 2%.

- *Can the union renegotiate the current contract so that the pay increase for 2011 does not need to be given?*

Yes, however both sides must agree to renegotiate.

- *Is the starting pay for teachers comparable to other school districts?*

The Medina City School District's starting pay for teachers in what is considered similar districts is comparable.

- *Do raises have any component based on merit?*

No, not at this time.

- *Who negotiated raises without additional money to support the raises?*

The Board of Education is responsible for the negotiated contracts. School districts do not receive increases in revenues without new levies therefore the Board must assume levy passage when negotiating contracts. This is the norm for all school districts throughout the state. If this was not a typical practice, the Board would not be able to offer staff increases in negotiations and it would be very difficult to retain staff.

- *Is the school district self-insured and if so, how does this work?*

Yes the school district is self-insured. The school district assumes the risk up to a certain cap at which time the district's stop loss insurance would take effect. This allows the district to provide insurance benefits at a lower cost being that the district is not profit motivated like insurance companies.

- *Will benefits be discussed during the upcoming negotiations?*

All areas of the contract will be reviewed and discussed. Currently administrative staff voluntarily contribute 15% to their benefits. Cost savings measures will certainly be considered and discussed during negotiations.

- *What is the criteria for which staff members are laid off?*

The criteria per labor contracts, is based on seniority, certification and tenure.

- *How much money was saved by the reduction in transportation cuts?*

\$400,000

- *Is there enough money in future sales tax revenue to build a new middle school?*

No, there is not enough revenue for this purpose.

- *Can state law be changed so that sales tax revenue can be used for operating expenses?*

Only the state legislature has the authority to do that.

- *Will foreign languages be grandfathered so that students currently taking them can complete them?*

French and German will not be offered any longer. There will be options for students to further their studies in these areas through flex credit and online courses.

- *Can the school district advertise on busses to generate additional revenue?*

State law does not allow advertising nor does it allow the district to charge for bussing.

- *Has the district realized a profit with the increased pay-to-participate fees?*

Pay-to-participate is not meant to generate a profit, it simply covers the costs of the various activities. This year it will not cover all costs because staff co-curriculars and staffing levels for the various activities were already in place. Next year, staffing levels will be less than they currently are and will only be added as student participation increases.

- *Can the school district begin an electronic school and allow participation from students outside of the school district?*

The school district does have an electronic school and there are plans to solicit students from outside of the district in the future as a revenue stream.

- *Is the school district considering grade level buildings instead of neighborhood schools?*

The school district has discussed grade level buildings. The cost of bussing would be a factor however grade level buildings would be less cost than neighborhood schools. If the district went to grade level buildings it would most likely only be a temporary measure. There are certain disadvantages to grade level buildings (i.e. lack of continuity from grade to grade; less ability to develop relationships with both parents and students).

- *What is Flex Credit?*

This option allows students to earn credit toward graduation in non-traditional ways. Parents would have to pay for the classes unless they are part of the post-secondary option.

- *Why is the school district offering Chinese?*

China is now a superpower. In a global economy, it will be wise for our students to learn Chinese to be able to compete in a competitive market.

“Where Do We Go From Here”

This session was facilitated by Superintendent Randy Stepp. The session provided attendees the opportunity to give their input as to the future direction of the school district, how they would like it to look in five to ten years, and what is most valued about the school district.

Following is a listing of the questions and answers from this session:

1. What made you feel that the District was at its best (what was happening)?

- Two-three years ago
- Stability and security of prior levy passage
- Special needs improvements
- Overall needs met for students
- 2001-2005: progressing better and peaked with the passage of the levy
- Extra co-curriculars/funding
- Staff and teachers know kids
- Active parents
- Tremendous opportunity/academics, extra-curriculars, sports
- Smaller system
- Kids mature as normal kids
- Teachers trying their best for students
- Eliminating elementary trailers/making equitable learning environment

2. Who made you feel this way?

- Many felt parents and staff were more nurturing
- Community support
- Randy Stepp
- Community/teachers feeling of coming together – ‘we did it’
- Community had respect for services being offered

- Teachers and staff
- Principals

3. *What was the environment within the district like at this time?*

- Financial situation was better/economy was better
- Community and school system were on the same page
- Positive and Proud! Academics and extras were excelling
- Respect
- Small town feel to schools
- Simple school structure
- More connected at elementary level with staff/PTO

4. *What were you doing at this time that may have contributed to this feeling?*

- In school
- Busily involved with family/schools as a priority
- Community seemed to prioritize for the children
- Being a partner in the process
- Having kids in school

5. *What do you think was the one thing that made this time the most meaningful?*

- Children were in elementary school
- Environment was friendlier
- As you move to the high school the teachers are less communicative
- Proud to live in Medina
- Children proud to be part and represent Medina well
- Kids received a good education
- Sense of community; simple comfort level
- Small groups; high school had larger groups and sports were more competitive
- The entire staff/parents working together towards a common goal

In the future 2015 (looking ahead)

1. *What we do and why.*

- Corporate sponsorships
- E-schools/less staff/fewer students
- Union contracts/staff commitment
- Consolidated with other districts

- Academically well-rounded district/able to compete in a global economy
- Strive for excellence for all children at all levels
- Develop strategy to provide quality at a reasonable price
- Educators act professionally and do not hide behind union rules
- We reward excellence
- We have participative parents/both educationally and extra-curricular
- Our students accomplish their goals
- Reasonable class sizes
- Enrichment programs
- Clubs for high school students
- Continue with current level of music and sports/have competitive teams with tryouts and then 'intramural' teams for those who want to participate
- Current set-up at high school for academics and more level classes that offer challenges
- Offer academics to students who want to complete high school and start college at a younger age = AP/Honors to be technology based
- Two high schools and/or Medina Consolidated High School with other districts = shared students and programs

2. *The way we do what we do and why (the secrets of our success).*

- We have the best schools with many options – academics, sports, arts and technology
- Priorities – academics, sports and extra-curricular
- Principals know their students
- More opportunities at different levels
- Guidance counselors and support staff
- We have a common voice and a common vision
- We work collaboratively with employers and other educational institutions (vocational, college, universities)
- We stay in constant communication and have open communication between school/community/administration/teachers
- Able to achieve realistic levy/support
- Community turns out to participate and share innovative ideas for growth/improvement
- Supportive community/parent involvement welcome and expected and appreciated (all aspects of education need this support)
- Support with no sense of entitlement
- Community service/scouts, service hours
- We like the vision our school has
- Bussing is gone

3. *As an employee, the benefits of working in this environment where exceptional achievement at all levels is pervasive and instinctive.*

- The challenge is part of something bigger than self and is why teachers do it
- Level of new knowledge equals variety of subjects that teachers will be specialized in teaching
- Be a part of a unique group
- Appreciated and encouraged to improve
- Think outside of the box/ownership stakeholder
- Pride in your work and in the community
- Stable environment
- Supportive parents
- Great kids
- Touch lives positively

Two years down the road

1. *What should be the goal for next year?*

- Break idea of brick/mortar school
- Connection/flex/online courses
- Variety of teaching methods for children via technology
- Get the budget more in-line (financial stability)

“What Does a Junior High Look Like”

This session was facilitated by A. I. Root Middle School Principal Chad Wise. This session provided an explanation of what a junior high model is and how the current middle schools will transition to junior high schools next school year. Topics included in the discussion were teaming, staffing, electives, and how the district intends to meet the needs of the adolescent enrollment.

Mr. Wise provided an overview of the differences between a middle school model and a junior high. Following is a listing of questions and answers developed from this session.

Q-What will the main differences be between a middle school and junior high school?

A-Instead of being assigned to “teams”, students will move from period to period with a different teacher and different students each block. A common team period for staff is the key element in teaming, and with the staffing reductions that had to be made, this period was eliminated.

Q-Will the philosophy of middle school change for next year?

A-As we have stated many times, even though our buildings will be structured differently next year, our philosophy on working with pre-teens will not change! This age group is very unique, and we will do our best to meet their social, emotional, physical, and academic needs.

Q-With teams, communication is usually made through the team leader. How will that change for next year?

A-Without teams, parents will need to communicate with individual teachers regarding issues that arise, grades, etc. Teachers will have individual websites (instead of team sites), that will include contact information and assignments.

Q-Will all kids have a study hall?

A-With the reduction of course offerings, many students may have study hall periods. These will mostly be held in the cafeteria and will allow students a free period to read, study, or complete homework. We are working on programs to set up, such as peer tutoring, to make the most of this free period.

Q-What will a student's day look like next year?

A-The day will consist of 8 blocks of approximately 45 minutes each. All students in grades 6-8 will have one block of language arts, math, science, social studies, a lunch block, a unified arts block (gym, art, informational technology, modular technology, health, etc...), and 2 blocks of possible electives, such as foreign language, band, choir, orchestra, general music, or study hall. Students will have different teachers each block and will be with different kids each block as well, but all within the same grade level.

Q-If a levy passes this year, will the "team approach" return for next year?

A-No, the middle school concept, based on teaming, will not return for the foreseeable future, as it does cost more money to operate, as more staff is required to keep the integrity of the teaming model.

"Moving the School District Forward"

This session was facilitated by Communications Coordinator Jeanne Hurt. This session offered attendees the opportunity to express interest in local and state level lobbying efforts and to voice their concerns in regard to the state funding formula, unfunded mandates, achievement testing, and inequities in education across the state. Communication efforts for the district were also discussed and a sharing of ideas to further enhance communications.

Following are comments and questions from attendees in this session:

- Medina grew too fast, can we change the law that does not allow impact fees?
- It might be best to combine lobbying efforts with other school districts
- In regard to funding issues, begin with community education – “School Funding 101”
- Look at other states to gain an understanding of how they fund their school districts
- We need to mobilize at the local level to gain community support for the district’s needs and long range lobby at the state level
- It is imperative to continuously communicate the district’s needs to the community (pockets that can be difficult to reach are the younger segment who do not have children, individuals new to Medina, senior citizens)
- Attendees expressed frustration with the lack of local control in regard to areas such as unfunded mandates
- Attendees stated that they want more information, they want to understand the district’s funding issues, they want to lobby for local support and lobby to impact long-range issues at the state level

“How Gifted Education will be Addressed in the Medina City Schools”

This session was facilitated by Gifted Education Coordinator Mitch Keller and Co-president of P.A.C.E. Andrea Lyons. With the cuts in gifted education programming there are many questions regarding how students will be served. This session will begin to address parent concerns and will share information about the P.A.C.E. team and their planning efforts to provide support and advocacy for gifted students.

- There is discrimination among states regarding gifted education services. Twenty-six states have some mandate to serve gifted students. It was explained that the state of Ohio uses an evidence based model and that the funding formula for the state does not cover the expenses of the program.
- With the district’s current model there has been a lot of professional development among classroom teachers. They are implementing higher level learning strategies and compacting.
- Next year will be a transitional time. Resources will be available to teachers and parents. Teachers will use differentiation in the classroom addressing the needs of gifted students.
- A new course that will be offered next year is one section of accelerated language arts at the seventh grade level and one section of accelerated language arts at the eighth grade level.
- High school AP course offerings will be determined by the number of students who register for these courses.

- High school students will be able to take online courses however they will need to pay for these.
- There was discussion and explanation of the current model versus pull-out/magnet school models.
- Flex credit will begin next year and will provide opportunities for students.
- P.A.C.E. is hosting a meeting on April 8 to discuss funding both nationally and locally and addressing the history of gifted education in MCS.