

Horry County Board of Education
Minutes
February 17, 2014
Regular Board Meeting; District Office

The following persons were present:

Board Members:

Joe DeFeo, Chairman	Neil James
Harvey Eisner	Kay Loftus
Jeffery Garland	Janice Morreale
Janet Graham	

Superintendent:

Cindy Elsberry

District Office Staff:

Velna Allen	Carolyn Chestnut	H.T. Lee Rick Maxey
Cindy Ambrose	Edi Cox	Boone Myrick
Mary Anderson	Kenny Generette	Judy Stall
Edward Boyd	John Gardner	Addie Swinney
Teal Britton	Leann Hill	Jim Wright
Dottie Brown	Traci Hogan	

Media:

Heather Gale, Horry Independent	AJ Janavel, TV13
Vicki Grooms, Sun News	

Opening

The meeting was called to order at 5:45 p.m.

ACTION: Upon motion by Mr. Eisner, second by Mr. James, the Board unanimously approved the agenda.

General Fund Budget Development

Mr. John Gardner reviewed each budget document presented to the Board. (See attached)

There was brief discussion regarding the payroll increase. Several members of the Board asked for clarification on the number of employees eligible for step increases and those eligible for a 2% increase. Mr. Gardner explained that these numbers reflect a 2% increase for all employees; some would obtain the increase through step increases and those not eligible for step would get 2%. Mr. DeFeo asked that Mr. Gardner provide a breakdown of those eligible for each type of increase. Mr. James proposed looking into a bonus system instead of salary increases. Concern of the impact a bonus system would have on retirement was discussed briefly.

Cindy Ambrose then reviewed the instructional side of the budget and the impact of sequestration. Mrs. Ambrose explained that federal money comes as a supplement and is not intended to cover the cost of a whole program like Title I, Title II or IDEA. Gradually those funds will be eliminated. There was

a cut last year but Mrs. Ambrose does not anticipate a cut this year. She emphasized that any cut in funds impacts students regardless of the source of the cut. She noted that supplemental services do not have to be offered anymore.

Mr. Poston asked if the school choice parameter would be removed next year. Mrs. Ambrose answered yes, and further explained that although some will be grandfathered in, we would no longer be required to provide transportation as in prior years.

Mr. Poston asked if the district was still maintaining a higher threshold of poverty as established about 2 to 3 years ago. Dr. Elsberry answered that we went from 75% to 70% and are maintaining that level. Mrs. Ambrose added that we are able to service more students by making that change. There was brief discussion on the impact of changing the level of funding per school and spreading the dollars too thin. Mr. Poston asked if Title I Funding data from the past few years could be reported to the Board.

Ms. Ambrose then reviewed requests for her budget. The first is a one-time only request for teacher training on assessments. The second involved Personalized Digital Learning (PDL), which Edi Cox was asked to present to the Board. Ms. Cox reviewed that last year six positions were approved for working with the middle schools, however, only three were filled. Ms. Cox requested that the three remaining positions be filled for 2014/15. PDL will be moving into the next phase and projections are on track.

Mr. Poston noted that he would like to see reporting on middle school results provided to the Board after enough time to gather data. Dr. Elsberry explained that the results for Achieve 3000 have already started to come in and the data was quite positive. Ms. Cox added that the State may begin to reimburse for approved digital content.

Dr. Maxey then presented transportation budget information including historical data and projections. He noted that factors impacting costs include transportation from base schools to special programs and transportation of students within 1.5 miles of schools as the State does not provide for these situations. Mr. James asked for clarification regarding cost of Early College High School and Scholars Academy being higher. Dr. Elsberry explained that district buses have to be used rather than subsidized State buses.

Dr. Maxey discussed the recent review of the mid-day bus driver program and that consideration is being given to a half hour reduction for most of those positions to help offset transportation costs. Mr. James asked if transportation costs are factored in when the per-pupil cost is determined. Mr. Gardner answered that allocations are made at year-end based on average daily membership (ADM).

Dr. Maxey reviewed the need to purchase eight new buses per year for the next five years. Mrs. Graham asked what the life expectancy of a bus is. Mr. Wright answered that on average a bus will remain in the pool for 15 years. Mrs. Graham questioned what happens to the bus when it is retired. Dr. Maxey answered that, depending on the condition of the bus, it would either be used as a spare or used for parts. Dr. Elsberry noted that in Alabama the State would not fund a bus that was over 10 years old. Mr. Eisner asked how many State buses we currently have. Mr. Wright answered that we currently have about 30-40 routes using State buses.

A concern was raised by Mr. James about reductions to activity buses for smaller schools. Mr. Wright noted that areas can share buses and that it is very rare to need more than three at a certain time. Activity buses will function more like a “pool” that each school can draw from as needed. Dr. Elsberry asked if there has ever been a need for an activity bus that has not been filled. Mr. Wright answered no.

Mr. Boyd presented budget information on PDL and E-Rate Reimbursement. There were no questions.

Dr. Swinney then presented budget information for Human Resources. There was a brief discussion on substitute worker eligibility for health insurance. Chairman DeFeo asked if there should be a few permanent positions created as floaters that would cover absences. Dr. Swinney said that she would review the option. Mr. Garland raised a concern about the use of a temp agency and the potential loss of control in selecting quality employees, as well as the cost. Dr. Swinney will provide cost comparisons. Chairman DeFeo asked Attorney Generette if liability changed based on employee versus contractor. Mr. Generette answered that the liability would be on the agency, but nothing would preclude a lawsuit.

Dr. Swinney then reviewed the need for a salary study on all positions as the last one had been completed about 10 years ago. Chairman DeFeo asked if the comparison would be against other specific districts or state wide. Dr. Swinney will provide information as it becomes available. Mr. Eisner suggested that there should be ranges as opposed to steps to accommodate past experience as well as current duties, especially for school administrators.

That concluded the Budget Presentation. Mr. Gardner asked the Board to complete an exit slip to evaluate the information and presentation.

Mr. James addressed the next agenda item: Governance Commitments. The members were given a checklist of items to select from for inclusion on a Board Governance Self-Assessment document.

ACTION: Upon motion by Mr. Eisner, second by Ms. Morreale, the Board unanimously approved to adjourn at 7:16 p.m.