

VALLEY STREAM UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT THIRTY

Administrative Offices

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Superintendent of Schools

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March 10, 2011

Dear Valley Stream 30 Community,

Budget Update

The proposed draft 3% budget-to-budget is now available on the website, as is the following memorandum, which I will also share with you here.

As you know, if we were to continue all the programs we had this year in exactly the same way next year, due to increased retirement system pension costs, contractual benefits and cuts to our state aid, the tax levy increase would be over 10%. Since that would be an impossible tax burden, the Board and the District held the community budget forum and provided other avenues for feedback, such as the website and email to gain ideas from the public on how to proceed. To date, the consensus appears to be that the community appreciates and values all of the District's programs and would not want to see any one program cut. Instead, what they recommend is that the District primarily keeps all programs, but modifies them in some way so that they could cost less. The presentation, feedback and other questions from the forum is also available on the website.

At subsequent Board of Education Work Sessions and Business meetings, the Board discussed a 3% budget-to-budget increase which would result in a tax levy increase of approximately 6.2% and would require the District to reduce over \$1.1 million in current expenditures. This budget would support maintaining almost all programs in the District, but includes cost efficiencies and some reorganization, which would allow the District to continue to offer them at a more affordable cost. The Board also explored what a 2% budget-to-budget increase would look like with a tax levy increase of approximately 4.9%. That budget would not be in keeping with the community's present direction of trying to maintain programs with some cost-saving modifications. A 2% budget-to-budget increase would mean deep program cuts, such as cuts in the instrumental and band programs and/or going to half-day kindergarten.

The most significant reductions and modifications included in the proposed 3% budget-to-budget increase are the relocation of the Washington Avenue Kindergarten Center (WAKC) students to Shaw Avenue and the reduction of staff. Due to the size of the existing sixth grade class and the elimination of the need for an "all purpose room", there is additional classroom space available at Shaw in 2011-12. Staff reductions include the elimination of five general education positions, two social workers, one nurse, as well as facilities' support and aides. The District, due to enrollment, would have seen a reduction of three classrooms and still maintained the K-2 classrooms of up to 25 students, and 3-6 classrooms of up to 28 students, which will still be in effect next year. One general education classroom will be eliminated through the movement of the WAKC students to Shaw Avenue and another assuming the integration of the specific area teacher for science into a general education setting. Through the implementation of the Strategic Plan, the District has been building capacity in science instruction in the instructional staff. The District will continue to build capacity and resources to implement a high-quality and rigorous science program. The closure of the WAKC allows the District the reduction of nursing and facilities support. The kindergarten students will continue to maintain their ties to Clear Stream, and the Clear Stream administration, PTA and instructional staff will all play a role in designing this location change, as well as ensuring a smooth transition to the Clear Stream building for first grade. Other reductions include, but are not limited to, expenditures related to new musical instruments, equipment, repairs, supplies and bussing for the Quest program.

(Superintendent's Newsletter continued on other side)

Based on present assessed values and current proposed state aid, the actual dollar cost to the taxpayer with a 3% budget-to-budget increase, which maintains programs, would be approximately \$90.00 a year, while a 2% budget-to-budget increase, which deeply cuts into programs or eliminates them, would be approximately \$60.00 a year. Though the Board and the District recognize what challenging economic times these are for our community members, the \$30.00 differential (a little more than \$2.50 a month), allows the District to maintain our programs in a somewhat modified form. When compared to the amount of money that families individually may need to pay to replace some of the District programs at their own expense, the cost to do so would be much higher than \$30.00. For example, \$30.00 would buy, perhaps, three private instrumental lessons for a child when paid for by an individual family, but that \$30.00 paid to support a 3% budget-to-budget increase provides a year of music lessons. Similarly, \$30.00 would, perhaps, pay for less than a week of childcare for kindergarten children who would now only attend half-day, but pays for full-time supervision and educational program for a year when it supports a 3% budget-to-budget increase.

The Board and the District are interested in providing you with all the information you need and continuing to receive your feedback, as the budget is intended to reflect community priorities. At the March 21st Work Session, the Board of Education will change its Work Session procedures to provide the opportunity for question and answer and public comments on the budget only. In addition, there is an opportunity for public comment at the March 28th meeting at which time the Board of Education will also adopt the budget.

As always, please contact the Assistant Superintendent for Business, Lisa Rutkoske, or me with any comments and suggestions on the budget for next year. In addition, we encourage you to revisit the recent Superintendent Newsletters for more information regarding the budget development process to date.

REMINDER

March 21, 2011, 8:00 p.m.
Board of Ed. Budget Work Session

There will be opportunity for questions/answers/comments on budget topic only.

March 28, 2011, 8:00 p.m.
Board of Ed. Business meeting

Budget will also be a topic on this date.

As always, please contact me at 516-285-9881, x222 or email ekanas@vs30.org with comments and suggestions on the topic of this newsletter or with suggestions or questions on other topics.

Sincerely,

Elaine Kanas

Elaine Kanas, Ed.D.