Virtual Board of Education Meeting

**Q(uestions) & A(nswers)**

April 28, 2020

The following document reflects the Questions posed by members of the public during the Board of Education’s April 28, 2020 virtual meeting and the Answers as provided by District leadership.

Questions Received on the Proposed 2020-2021 School Budget

**Q1:** Since we didn't go to 2%, what was cut out of the original budget to lower the percent? Since decreasing the percent, what is the difference in savings for the average homeowner vs. the original 2%?

Will students in 2nd grade be 1-1 with Chromebooks next year as once discussed? If not, what will be the approximate student/Chromebook ratio for grade 2?

**A1:** The original spending plan was maintained. The board chose to use additional surplus to reduce the tax levy to reflect an overall increase of less than 1% (.85%). As a result, the savings to the taxpayer of the average assessed home is $28 per year.

**A2:** As we continue to plan for next year, and pending any unforeseen budget impacts, there should be Chromebooks available for grade 2 as a result of the LVMS 1:1 initiative. However, due to the Distance Learning Model, we will need to re-evaluate the condition of all of the Chromebooks once they are returned to the district and make adjustments to restore grades 3 through 8 to a 1:1 (student:device) as the first priority. Exact ratios will be determined after that happens for grade 2.

**Q2:** Why are taxes being increased 1% or .85% when we pay such an exorbitant amount in taxes already (some of the highest in the COUNTRY)

$45 Million dollar is an incredibly big operating budget (bigger than some countries GDP) for 3 elementary, 1 middle and a regional high school, how much of this money is actually being used for supplies and resources needed for the children’s education? (I do not consider salaries as
supplies or resources) Please provide out of the $45 million how much is paid for salaries, bonuses, etc to active and retired staff, teachers, admins, etc.

What is the breakdown of the following salaries? Teacher, Secretary, Assistant, Administrative staff, superintendents and any other position that is receiving money from this annual budget?

How much is being paid out to people that are not actively in the workplace (retired, etc)?

With such a big operating budget, why do we need to have fund raisers? Many other schools around the country do more with less money.

A2: The budget contains approximately 850k for supplies to support the educational programs of the Washington Township Schools. Salaries and benefits comprise approximately 34 million of the total budget and there are no benefits paid by the District to retirees.

Q3: Is cutting a resource program at BAC part of preserving the current array of educational programs and services for students? Is this a district initiative or just recommended for BAC?

A3: There is no district initiative or recommendation to “cut” a program at BAC or any other of the District’s schools. Educational placements are based on the educational needs of students. The Child Study Team (CST) case managers in each building review student programs and progress annually, prior to proposing Individual Education Programs (IEP). The CST considers the academic, developmental and functional needs of the student. Program proposals are based on the individual needs of each student and always consider the least restrictive environment for instruction.

Questions Received on Board Meeting Agenda Items

There were no comments from members of the public.

Questions Received on Any Topic

Q1: Are efforts underway to plan accordingly to provide every child and staff member with a CDC approved mask?

A1: Not at the moment ... Although the reopening of school buildings this school year appears unlikely, Governor Murphy noted on Monday morning (April 27th) that it is still possible. The District will be issuing a survey to parents and staff in the coming days regarding the reopening of school. The survey will address concerns, challenges, and supplies (ie: parents accessibility to multi-layered, cloth, washable face masks for their children). Even if schools do not reopen this
school year, the District will use the information gleaned from the survey in planning for the new school year.

Q2: Today, the Kossmann kindergarten has 4 classes. I am asking if a 5th 1st grade class for the 2020-2021 school year is being budgeted for and added to accommodate the large class size.

A2: The 2020-2021 School Budget provides for a fifth section of first grade at the Flocktown-Kossmann School.

Q3:

3a. Will the grade portal be turned back on before the end of the school year?

3b. What is happening with 8th grade promotion?

3c. I will have a Kindergartener in the Fall, what happens if the evaluations can not be done? Since my child will be on the younger side of the grade has any thought gone into what happens if evaluations aren't done and you get children that come to school not ready in the fall?

A3:

3a. The Long Valley Middle School Grade Portal remains “open” for students/parents. As we await determinations from Trenton about possible return dates and/or the fate for the close of the present school year, all LVMS Students will show a “DL” (distance learning) indicator as their “grade.” By clicking on this “DL” grade, students can review performance on individual activities and learning assignments, keep track of work owed and submitted, and receive feedback on their work submissions. If it is later determined that returning to “traditional grades” is warranted, the “distance learning override” code can be removed and gradebooks will look as they have previously. We are employing the “DL” placeholder to allow us to make a more thoughtful decision about performance reporting once we have factual information about the remainder of this current school year.

Additionally, the DL placeholder allows us to more flexibly attend to student and family needs in this unprecedented time, without worrying students unnecessarily about their “Marking Period Grade.” Instead, the LVMS Professional Staff is hopeful our students will simply give their best possible effort (under these circumstances) to assignments and learning experiences.

3b. WTS is committed to celebrating Long Valley Middle School’s Class of 2020 and is currently planning various scenarios against a backdrop of uncertainty. We cannot make any definitive announcements at this time as the pandemic is a crisis situation with so many variables and moving parts.

3c. If our kindergarten screenings do not take place, another format to gather information will occur and will be communicated at a later date. It’s important to note that we will continue to meet the needs of young learners and work with families to make the best decisions for the children. If
you have specific concerns about your child’s readiness to learn in kindergarten, please reach out to the principal and/or your child’s preschool teacher if he/she attends a preschool.

Q4: Will you be able to completely answer the first public question that was read during this meeting, and if so, when and how will you provide the answer?

A4: This Q&A document addresses this particular question (which we realize was posed prior to the Q&A being announced at the April 28th meeting).

Q5: Can the questions and answers be posted on the web site since the public would be interested in knowing the answers?

A5: Yes, the Q&A document will be posted to the District web site.

Q6: Will everyone get the responses or will you only respond to those who asked the question?

A6: The Q&A document noted during the April 28th meeting will be a public document and posted to the District website.

Q7: While I can appreciate altering the budget and not going to the 2% cap are you not afraid of losing more State aid since their budget hasn’t been passed yet and now not going to the 2% cap will cause more loss in aid. What would the District do then?

A7: The district tax levy was reduced by utilizing surplus generated during the current school year. This did not affect proposed programs and services. Should State aid be further reduced by the State’s government once the State budget is finalized, the District will need to re-examine the 2020-21 budget and adjust accordingly.