

MINUTES

School District 4J Budget Committee
Education Center—200 North Monroe Street—Eugene, Oregon

March 15, 2010
7 p.m.

PRESENT: Jennifer Geller, Chair; Carla Gary, Vice Chair; Betsy Boyd, Shirley Clark, Beth Gerot, Tim Gleason, Pete Gribskov, Alicia Hays, Wendy Laing, Ann Marie Levis, Craig Smith, Debra Smith, Jim Torrey, Mary Walston, members; George Russell, Superintendent of Schools; Carl Hermanns, Barb Bellamy, Susan Fahey, Caroline Passerotti, Sara Cramer, John Lauch, John Ewing, School District 4J staff; Jane Waite, Raquel Wells, 4J Equity Committee.

1. Roll Call

Ms. Geller called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m. and called the roll.

2. Items Raised by the Audience

Paul Duchin (Eugene Education Association Co-President) commented on items from the Budget Committee's previous meeting. He noted that the EEA strongly opposed the proposed cuts to School District 4J physical education programs and alternatively encouraged the District to utilize reserves or other sources in order to compensate for the budget shortfall. Mr. Duchin addressed the District's proposed math adoption and noted that while the EEA neither supported nor opposed the proposed math curriculum adoption, it was recommending that the District implement an expanded pilot curriculum for the next academic year. He further noted that the EEA was willing to provide the District and the Budget Committee with more detailed information regarding their concerns about the math adoption. He further characterized the proposed math curriculum as unproven and maintained that it did not seem prudent to adopt it given the current financial state of the District. It was his recommendation that the District choose teachers over the math adoption. He also recommended that the District use reserves to hire teachers and reduce class size at all levels, as he believed it unlikely that the district would experience the deficit in 2011-2012 that was currently being forecasted.

Stephanie Cannon (4JA) noted the concerns of 4JA regarding proposed District budget cuts to the central office. She noted that in order to maintain the viability of the District's administrative sections it was essential to maintain a minimum of central office staff and support services. She noted that 4JA had recommended equitable reductions across the board and maintained that such a strategy would be less damaging to the District in the long run.

Paul Brown spoke in his capacity as the PE instructor for the Adams and Fox Hollow elementary schools and advocated for the continued support of District PE programs. Mr. Brown cited several health, social, and educational benefits of the District PE programs.

Ms. Hays arrived to the meeting at 7:13 p.m.

Theresa Schlessinger spoke in her capacity as a School District 4J parent and advocated against the

proposed cuts to District PE programs. She noted that she had been very impressed with the quality of instruction provided by PE teachers in the District's middle and elementary schools.

Rachel Farkas stated that she had taught elementary physical education courses for School District 4J for the last ten years and currently served as the grant coordinator for the District's Physical Education for Progress (PEP) program which had been funded by a \$1.2 million federal grant. She noted that the PEP program would be difficult to effectively implement should the proposed PE cuts be adopted. She read portions of a letter from Alejandro Qeral, the Director of Government Relations for the American Heart Association that had been sent to District staff reminding them of the importance of PE programs.

Daniel Bellisimo stated that he was a junior at South Eugene High School and advocated against cuts to the District's PE programs. He noted that many of the values he practiced as a student were the direct result of his experiences with District PE programs.

Rob Horden spoke regarding the proposed math curriculum adoption and hoped to see School District 4J implement a single unified math curriculum for its elementary and middle schools. He encouraged the Budget Committee to recommend that the District's instruction department be funded at a level where such a curriculum could be adopted correctly and to its fullest extent.

3. Items for Information and Discussion

A. Receive a Report from the Equity Committee

George introduced 4J Equity Committee members Jane Waite and Raquel Wells and noted that the Equity Committee had been requested by the Budget Committee to prioritize certain areas of the District with respect to budgetary matters.

Ms. Waite described the two-meeting process that the Equity Committee had used to prioritize the District areas listed in their report. Ms. Waite and Ms. Wells distributed copies of the report for the benefit of those present and read the recommendations contained therein.

B. Review 2009-2010 Financial Projection

Financial Analysis and Budget Manager Caroline Passerotti provided the 2009-2010 financial projection data for the benefit and education of the Budget Committee members.

Ms. Passerotti believed that the expenditures listed in the financial projections indicated that budgets would be tighter for the foreseeable future.

Ms. Passerotti noted that further updates regarding the financial projections would be provided as they became available.

C. Debrief Budget Forums

Ms. Bellamy listed the budget forum questions for the Committee and presented the response data to the survey questions that had been posed during the forums.

Ms. Bellamy noted that the proposed PE cuts had been heavily discussed during the budget forum sessions and that Superintendent Russell had attempted to solicit alternative strategies to those cuts from

those in attendance.

Ms. Bellamy noted from the response data that the members of the Superintendent's Student Advisory Committee (SSAC) had been more sensitive to the proposal to reduce extra staffing at District high schools with larger enrollment declines.

Ms. Bellamy noted from the response data that the members of the SSAC had considered providing extra support for students not meeting benchmarks as the most necessary element to increase student achievement. She believed this was due to the students' general awareness that graduation requirements were increasing in many areas.

Ms. Bellamy recognized that the budget forum question regarding equity and diversity had not reflected all of the District's equity policies but had focused on those equity elements that had dedicated budget resources attached to them.

Ms. Bellamy noted the four budget forum questions that had only been presented to the SSAC and recalled from that session that the improved elementary and middle school math instruction and additional high school level math support strategies had been the two issues that had been particularly emphasized in that forum discussion.

Ms. Bellamy briefly discussed the themes that had been discussed during the budget forum sessions and noted that the District's elementary school level PE programs, reduced school calendar, and proposed central office cuts had been areas of significant concern.

Ms. Levis observed from the budget forum sessions that a significant number of 4J staff had participated in the surveys conducted therein.

Ms. Gerot noted she had attended the SSAC meeting and was impressed that that group had been strongly focused on equity issues and had also shown a high level of support for students who were struggling.

Ms. Walston noted the SSAC response to a question that had been presented during the budget forum session which had indicated a high level of opposition to a one-to-one laptop initiative for students. Ms. Bellamy believed that the students who had responded in opposition to such an initiative were conscious of the impacts of such expenditures on other areas of District schools. Ms. Gerot added that students were often concerned about their teachers not having the necessary professional development tools necessary to make full and effective use of some technologies. Superintendent Russell referenced the minutes of the SSAC meeting and recognized a clear belief on the part of the students that their relationship with their teachers was not necessarily improved by the addition of new technologies.

Ms. Bellamy noted that the math curriculum adoption had been a topic of significant concern during the budget forum discussions.

Ms. Bellamy, responding to a question from Ms. Boyd noted that the survey question regarding the new math graduation requirements had been asked in response to previous public comments and had indicated a belief that students did not have accurate feedback mechanisms for meeting those requirements. Superintendent Russell agreed with Ms. Bellamy's assessment.

D. Review Status of Reserve Accounts

Ms. Fahey presented data regarding the status of the District's reserve accounts and briefly described the

manner in which such funds were allowed to be used.

Ms. Fahey reported that the District's general risk insurance reserve fund is used to meet the District's annual insurance and risk management obligations.

Mr. Lauch presented data regarding the District's capital reserve funds and noted that no data would be presented regarding the District's bond funds as they were scheduled to be spent out by the end of June 2010.

Mr. Lauch briefly described the District's Capital Repairs Fund and noted those funds primarily came from an annual \$500,000 general fund transfer and were directed toward non-bond eligible capital repair projects.

Mr. Lauch discussed the Capital Repairs Fund (CRF) for FY2009-2010 and noted that the unusually high revenue reflected therein came primarily from the City of Eugene's reimbursement to the District. He proceeded to outline several projects that had been funded by the CRF during the current academic year.

Mr. Lauch outlined the projected uses for the CRF for FY2010-2011 and FY2011-2012 and further noted that the technology upgrades referenced therein had previously been paid for by bond funds. He reported that by the end of FY2011-2012 the CRF was expected under current projections to show a deficit of approximately \$925,000.

Mr. Lauch provided information regarding the Sale of Surplus Property Fund (SPF) for FY2009-2010 through FY2011-2012. Mr. Lauch noted that the SPF would earn revenues in FY2009-2010 from the value added tax set aside from the District's sale of its Santa Clara property (\$1.38 million) and a projected net revenue after demolition expenses from the District's fire insurance claim on The Willard School (\$500,000). He reported that the SPF by the end of FY2011-2012 was expected under current projections to show a deficit of approximately \$1,919,000.

Mr. Lauch averred that, should the District intend to carry forward with the capital needs of its schools, it would need to seriously consider a bond measure in the very near future.

Mr. Lauch noted there were currently no plans to sell the demolished portion of the Willard building as a District surplus property.

Ms. Fahey, responding to a question from Ms. Geller, noted that the fleet and equipment reserve fund accounts were higher than they had been in recent years due to the recent postponement of the District's textbook adoption.

Ms. Fahey, responding to a question from Mr. Gleason, noted that staff was particularly concerned about the negative balance projected for the capital funds.

Ms. Geller asked if the fleet and equipment funds were statutorily limited. Ms. Fahey responded that those funds were no longer statutorily limited as of January 2010.

Mr. Lauch noted that staff had performed a three year projection of the District's critical needs with respect to its capital reserves and determined that it would cost approximately \$20 million to address those needs over the next three years.

E. Review General Financial Information regarding School Consolidations

Ms. Fahey presented updated information regarding the District's projected savings resulting from school consolidations. She also noted the one-time general fund and capital fund costs associated with the school consolidations.

Ms. Fahey, responding to a question from Ms. Walston, noted that the cost of one bus route is approximately \$13,000, net of the state reimbursement for transportation costs.

Mr. Torrey believed that the District would make a serious mistake if it did not begin the process of reducing the number of schools within the District immediately. He suggested that Mr. Lauch and the District staff consider using the fleet funds to pay for the one-time school consolidation costs with the understanding that the District would eventually replenish the fleet funds from the projected savings from the school consolidations. Mr. Torrey expressed his understanding that people in the community were having fewer children and that significant drops in the student population statistics could be expected.

Ms. Smith agreed with Mr. Torrey's comments and recognized the significant impacts on the District's quality of education represented by the school consolidations. She noted that her compassion for those members of the community who were worried about the consolidation of their neighborhood school was diminished when considered in relation to the greater needs of the District and the quality of education provided by the District.

Ms. Clark agreed with Mr. Torrey and Ms. Smith's comments and agreed that careful consolidation strategies were needed in order to maximize the benefits of larger, more efficient schools. She believed that larger District schools had the potential to be more effective and house richer curriculums.

Ms. Walston agreed with the previous three speakers and noted that elementary schools might regrettably need to be targeted for consolidation. She strongly advocated that the budget committee be involved in the Board's school consolidation processes sooner rather than later. She further noted from her recent conversations with various District middle school principals that the idea of a consolidated kindergarten through eighth grade school was intriguing.

Superintendent Russell asked the Budget Committee members to clarify their desired direction from the present discussions.

Mr. Torrey hoped that the Budget Committee's direction would bring to the Board a process by which to identify schools that were primary considerations for consolidation. He restated his suggestion that fleet funds be used to pay the one-time consolidation costs and believed that the cost savings provided by the consolidation would replenish those fund amounts.

Mr. Torrey hoped that School District 4J would not find itself in a situation similar to school districts in Kansas City, Missouri which had ultimately been forced to close half of their schools.

Superintendent Russell pointed out that a portion of the Surplus Property Fund reserves had been committed to the school consolidation efforts. Mr. Torrey responded that the fleet reserve funds would only be used for short-term transition costs associated with the school consolidations.

Ms. Laing assumed that the one-time costs associated with District school consolidations and closures presented in the powerpoint had only applied to elementary schools. Ms. Fahey confirmed Ms. Laing's assumption that those were historical elementary consolidation costs.

The Budget Committee members and staff briefly discussed the manner in which fleet reserves and the Surplus Property Fund reserves might be applied to school consolidation costs.

Superintendent Russell noted the Board and the Budget Committee's request to him to begin consideration of the FY2011-2012 budget and the projected shortfalls projected therein. He noted the Board's goal to identify steps to a sustainable budget strategy by the fall of 2010. Superintendent Russell stated he did not see any way for the District to adopt a sustainable budget process without school closures and consolidations.

Ms. Gerot did not see how the District could close a school in the next year.

Ms. Gary believed that school closures and consolidations were an inevitable process for the District and asked if there had been any statistical population formulas used to determine which schools might be closed.

Ms. Gary noted her concern that certain growing communities in the District might be disproportionately impacted by the school consolidation strategies.

Ms. Gary responded to Mr. Torrey's earlier comments regarding Kansas City school districts and believed that a similar situation could not occur in School District 4J. She hoped that any efforts to consolidate schools and resources would be done with an eye toward the specific needs of communities that might be disproportionately impacted.

Mr. Torrey briefly commented on the static nature of the urban growth boundary in Eugene and how such a situation might ultimately affect the number of smaller, younger families who lived in the area and sent their children to 4J schools.

Mr. Torrey and Ms. Gary briefly discussed their respective positions and beliefs regarding the future of District enrollment.

Superintendent Russell, responding to Ms. Gary's previous comment, noted that there were certain District formulas and criteria for determining school closure and consolidation strategies. He noted that some of the criteria and data considered in that regard might be in conflict with itself.

Superintendent Russell commented that the District's projected budget shortfalls could not be accommodated simply by closing schools and that further instructional criteria would most likely need to be considered as the consolidation process moved forward.

Ms. Smith responded to Superintendent Russell's comment and noted that the District would also not be able to deal with projected budget shortfalls by cutting its PE programs or sections of the District's central office.

Ms. Geller maintained it was important for the Budget Committee members to consider what they wanted the District to look like in the future as their discussions progressed. She stressed the importance of allowing adequate discussion and planning time in that regard.

Ms. Boyd agreed with Ms. Geller's comment and believed that the District had not paid enough attention to the elementary schools that had exacerbated the achievement gap.

4. Items for Action

A. Provide Feedback on Proposed 2010-11 Budget Strategies

Ms. Fahey reviewed the budget balancing strategies for FY2009-2010 for the benefit of the Committee.

Superintendent Russell commented on the budget process for the current year and noted that employee compensation adjustments had indeed been made. He noted that the EEA and 4JA employee groups had stepped forward to help the District make collaborative adjustments in order to balance the budget for the current year.

Ms. Fahey stated that the projected budget deficit of \$5.9 million for FY2010-2011 was primarily due to a decrease in state revenues, declining enrollment figures, and the expenditure of reserves for FY2009-2010. Ms. Fahey proceeded to outline more detailed information regarding the manner in which the reserve funds had been applied.

Ms. Fahey presented information on the District's budget strategies with respect to the \$5.9 million deficit for FY2010-2011.

Ms. Bellamy conducted a clicker exercise survey similar to those that had been conducted at the previous budget forum sessions and the recent SSAC meeting.

Ms. Geller asked the Budget Committee members to provide additional feedback regarding the budget strategies to Superintendent Russell.

Ms. Levis asked if data was available regarding the costs of the initiatives and programs recommended in the Equity Committee's report. Superintendent Russell responded that funds for those recommendations might come from central service cuts and certain instructional areas. He further noted that any funds redirected toward the Equity Committee's recommendation might take funding away from other priority items such as the math curriculum adoption or the District's PE programs.

Superintendent Russell recognized from the Committee's responses to the budget forum questions that the District's PE programs were not a high priority for them to retain.

Superintendent Russell referenced the Budget Committee's responses to the budget forum questions and noted that further Committee discussion regarding those budget strategies the members did not support would be helpful.

Ms. Geller reminded the Budget Committee that the School District 4J Board would be voting on the math curriculum adoption on March 17, 2010.

Mr. Hermanns noted he was available to answer any Committee questions regarding the proposed math curriculum adoption.

Ms. Boyd asked why the District had not considered eliminating one school day during the current year and maintained that it was a strategy that would allow the District to preserve staff and benefits. She further suggested that more effective District strategies for identifying free or reduced lunch (FRL) students at the middle and high school levels would be helpful in securing additional State funding assistance. Ms. Fahey responded that the District's new nutrition services management team had been working to identify additional FRL students at the secondary level. She further clarified elements of the State funding process for FRL students.

Superintendent Russell responded to suggestions that the District eliminate an additional school day rather than cut elements of its PE programs. He noted that such a strategy would involve certain labor negotiations and that further Budget Committee discussion regarding the matter would be helpful.

Mr. Smith reminded the Committee that the Board was scheduled to vote on the math curriculum adoption on March 17, 2010 and that the current meeting was the Budget Committee's last opportunity to offer feedback regarding the matter.

Ms. Smith supported the math curriculum adoption. She further noted that she would rather see the District cut additional school days rather than make cuts to its PE programs.

Ms. Clark noted she had heard a significant amount of community support regarding the math curriculum adoption. She believed that the overall performance of the District curricula could be improved. Ms. Laing agreed with Ms. Clark's comments.

Mr. Gribskov asked if the Committee needed to raise and vote on a motion regarding the math curriculum adoption. Mr. Smith noted that such an action was not necessary.

Ms. Gary supported the math curriculum adoption and noted that it had several long range implications for District students as they transitioned to the university level.

Ms. Boyd supported the math curriculum adoption and appreciated that the Budget Committee had been involved with the discussions surrounding it. She hoped that the adoption of the math curriculum could be executed in conjunction with District strategies to preserve staff.

Ms. Geller recognized there were no further Committee comments regarding the math curriculum adoption and opened the meeting to a more general discussion of the District's budget strategies that had been put forth.

Mr. Torrey supported the maintenance of current District PE program staffing levels and believed that there were various equity concerns that might be adversely affected should the District choose to implement cuts to its PE programs.

Mr. Smith reminded the Committee that the District had augmented its PE programs two to three years ago and that the current question regarding proposed cuts to those programs essentially concerned whether or not the District would maintain the current augmented levels. He noted that the proposed cuts to the District's PE programs did not entirely eliminate physical education from District schools.

Ms. Hays recognized that all of the Budget Committee members and staff recognized the enormous value of physical education within the District but also recognized that there were serious funding and budget problems within the District that needed to be addressed.

Mr. Gleason responded to Ms. Hays' comment and further noted that with respect to suggestions that the District cut additional school days that the District's students were not in school enough already. He hoped that the Budget Committee would consider the larger framework of the proposed budget strategies rather than simply eliminating line items in order to deal with the current and projected budget shortfalls.

Ms. Walston asked for information regarding the effects of the budget strategy to eliminate the 9.6 licensed FTE stability staffing pool. Superintendent Russell noted that those FTE positions represented the remainder of the District's stability staffing pool. Mr. Hermanns briefly discussed how the stability staffing pool had historically been funded and operated within the District.

Mr. Hermanns elaborated on the proposed cuts to the stability staffing pool and the District's PE programs and recognized that any form of cuts to District programs were difficult to make and would significantly affect the quality and scope of education provided by the District.

Mr. Hermanns reminded the Committee members that the proposed PE program cuts did not entirely eliminate physical education from District school but rather scaled down those programs to 2007 levels. He noted that the current augmented PE program staffing levels were not sustainable given current budget conditions.

Mr. Hermanns briefly discussed the District's anticipated budget gaps for the next two years and noted that the central office would soon initiate a series of conversations with school principals that were designed to develop efficient and innovative budget strategies.

Ms. Boyd was unsettled by the discussion regarding the elimination of the stability staffing pool and recalled how the pool had been used by the District's central administration to even out vagaries in staffing throughout the District. She asked Mr. Hermanns to more carefully consider the historical narrative regarding the impact and usefulness of the stability staffing pool. Mr. Hermanns was appreciative of Ms. Boyd's comments and offered to meet with her to discuss her comments regarding the stability staffing pool.

Mr. Torrey recalled a School District 4J serial levy that had once been passed by the people of the City of Eugene and felt it was important for the Budget Committee, the Board and the 4J staff to hold more detailed and in-depth discussions regarding the District's approaches to the basic education needs of its students.

Ms. Levis responded to Mr. Torrey's comments and noted that there did not seem to be any other alternative strategies on the table other than the elimination of another school day from the District calendar.

Ms. Geller stated that the Budget Committee needed to provide guidance to the 4J Board and understood from the Committee discussion that there did not seem to be a consensus regarding any of the line item cuts represented in the proposed budget strategies.

Ms. Levis was concerned that she did not know what the alternatives to cuts to the District's PE programs were with respect to the budget strategies. Ms. Geller responded that the basic alternative strategies were for the District to cut additional school days from its calendar, an increased utilization of reserve funds, or cuts to other District program areas.

Ms. Clark asked for information regarding the District's PE programs should the proposals to cut the PE staffing down from its current augmented levels be adopted. Ms. Cramer responded that there was no District-wide way to interpret Ms. Clark's question and that the precise form of PE classes without the current augmentations would be determined by each individual school. Ms. Cramer further expressed that, when considered in relation to the amount of FTE positions in elementary and middle schools that might be eliminated by the PE program cuts, it would not be overly burdensome for those twenty-four schools to compensate for their PE classes using available resources.

Ms. Cramer briefly discussed the difficult staffing choices represented by the proposed budget strategies and wished to dispel a prevailing notion that District elementary schools had dedicated librarians.

Superintendent Russell responded to Ms. Cramer's comments and clarified that the proposed PE program cuts would eliminate program staffing for physical education at District elementary and middle schools.

He further noted that those schools would subsequently need to make individual staffing determinations regarding the nature of the physical education classes and activities.

Ms. Fahey clarified that the four FTE augmented PE staff positions was made up of 2.58 FTE for the District's elementary schools and 1.41 for the middle schools. She further noted that all of the District middle and elementary schools had been served by the augmented PE staffing FTE positions.

Mr. Smith noted that alternative strategies for maintaining the current augmented PE program staffing levels might be discussed with Superintendent Russell at a future Budget Committee meeting.

Ms. Walston noted it would be important to consider the timelines and any associated union negotiations that might be involved with the elimination of additional school days or any other strategies that might affect District staffing.

Ms. Gerot noted her concern that the District might not be able to enact further cuts to its program areas and accommodate increased graduation requirements without the support systems of the District's central administration office.

Ms. Levis asked if after listening to the Budget Committee's testimony Superintendent Russell could consider any more feasible program areas to cut other than those that had already been discussed. Superintendent Russell responded that the proposed cuts represented the best thinking of the staff and the best available budget strategy for the District. He stated that other elements that had been suggested for possible cuts had been determined to be even less viable than the current items under discussion. Superintendent Russell noted his concern that there were still unknown variables with regard to the proposed cuts and those cuts might still not allow the District to develop and maintain a sustainable budget.

Ms. Levis recognized that the current discussions represented the tough decisions that needed to be made in order to ensure the continued viability of the District.

Mr. Gleason believed it had become increasingly difficult to determine how to best utilize the District's reserve funds and felt it would be useful for the Budget Committee to consider other choices.

Ms. Smith stated that it would be short-sighted for the District to utilize reserve funds without a concurrent strategy for rebuilding those funds. She felt that the District was at a "game-changing moment" where the current funding model was unsustainable. She further stated that the District needed to scale back many elements in order to provide basic education strategies that would benefit the students.

Ms. Geller recognized from the discussions that the Budget Committee was generally supportive of the staff-recommended strategies but had also expressed a desire for alternative strategies to be investigated in greater detail.

Superintendent Russell sensed that there was not enough support from the Budget Committee to warrant further investigation of alternative budget strategies.

Ms. Levis wanted to see more data regarding the use of the District's reserve funding options to address budget shortfalls. Superintendent Russell responded that without the use of the reserve funds the only remaining strategies would be to increase student to teacher staffing ratios and cuts to the central administration office.

Superintendent Russell responded that if the District was not going to utilize reserve funds the only remaining options would be areas that had already been identified as off-limits by the Budget Committee members such as increased student/teacher ratios, cuts to the central administration office, and eliminations of various District initiatives.

Mr. Torrey did not know for certain that the Budget Committee had ever definitively and collectively identified the District's PE programs as an area that would be acceptable to cut or reduce. Mr. Torrey suggested he would be willing to make a motion in order to definitely determine the Committee's position in that regard.

Ms. Gerot understood that the citizen members of the Budget Committee had collectively supported the proposed cuts to the District's PE programs.

Superintendent Russell asked Mr. Torrey if he wished to conduct a straw poll in order to gauge the Committee's collective position regarding the proposed cuts to District's PE programs

The Budget Committee members briefly discussed how they wished Superintendent Russell to return to the School District 4J board with the Committee's recommendations and input with particular emphasis on the Committee's consideration of cuts to the District's PE programs.

Ms. Geller called for an informal vote regarding the Committee's collective position regarding the proposed cuts to District PE programs and as reflected in Mr. Torrey's earlier comments. Six members of the Budget Committee responded affirmatively that they would like to look at other options.

Ms. Smith hoped that the Budget Committee would pursue the notion of the elimination of an additional day from the District calendar. Superintendent Russell responded that the timing of the negotiations that would be involved in that course of action might be difficult in relation to the District's budget processes.

Ms. Walston noted that District students had almost unanimously voted to reduce funding for high school athletics programs in order to accommodate the District's budget shortfalls and asked if such a strategy had been investigated in any further detail by staff. Superintendent Russell reminded Ms. Walston that the District had already made cuts to certain areas of its athletics programs during FY2009-2010 and that much of the money for those programs came from parent and booster club fundraising.

Ms. Geller understood from the meeting discussion that the Committee wanted Superintendent Russell and District staff to explore the elimination of an additional school day. Ms. Hays asked Superintendent Russell if an informal straw poll vote would be helpful to in order to provide Superintendent Russell with clearer direction in that regard. Superintendent Russell responded that the timing of the District's budget process in relation to any of the required negotiations for an additional eliminated school day would make any such straw poll vote superfluous.

Ms. Boyd asked for further clarification from Superintendent Russell regarding the timing of the required negotiation process that would be necessary with any budget strategies that involved District staffing. She further noted that during the previous year certain staffing negotiations had been conducted that had allowed reallocations of staff days and revisions to student ratios. Superintendent Russell replied that during the previous year the District had asked the employee groups to voluntarily open their contracts for discussions. He noted that formal negotiations with the teachers unions were expected to begin soon.

Ms. Geller recognized that the choices faced by the Budget Committee members had been difficult and appreciated the thoughtful and articulate comments that had been offered.

B. Set Date for Next Budget Committee Meeting

Superintendent Russell asked the Budget Committee members if they wanted to meet any earlier than their next scheduled meeting in May of 2010. He noted that if the Budget Committee members did indeed want Superintendent Russell to investigate additional alternative budget strategies in the interim it might be worthwhile to meet and discuss those strategies in greater detail before the May meeting.

Ms. Fahey believed that based on the discussions from the meeting that it would not be necessary for the Budget Committee to meet again before May.

Ms. Geller confirmed that the next regular Budget Committee meeting had been scheduled for May 10, 2010 at 7:00 p.m. and asked for a motion regarding the same.

Ms. Hays, seconded by Mr. Smith moved to set the next meeting of the School District 4J Budget Committee for May 10, 2010. The motion passed unanimously, 14:0.

5. Items Raised by Members of the Budget Committee

Ms. Geller noted that before she had joined the 4J Board she had served on a gubernatorial task force on comprehensive revenue restructuring. She noted from her experience on that task force the importance of economic forecasting as well as the importance of developing a sustainable rainy day fund for the District. She agreed that there were structural budget problems within the District and encouraged the Budget Committee members and staff to work together in order to solve them.

6. Adjournment

Ms. Geller adjourned the meeting at 9:54 p.m.

(Recorded by *Wade Hicks*)