

Budget Committee
Minutes
June 14, 2010

Present: T. Beard, B. Boyd, J. Burk, E. Coburn, B. Cummings, S. Heinrich, G. Markwell, M. Publicover, A. Schneider and School Board liaison alternate R. Swonger
Excused: C. Underhill
Absent: M. Beck, R. Buckley
Also Present: School Board Chair Jody Vaillancourt

S. Heinrich called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Welcome and Introductions

S. Heinrich welcomed everyone present. He requested that everyone review the member listing and give corrections to the secretary. He explained that, by statute, four unexcused absences constitutes in automatic removal from the Committee. He further explained the right-to-know law and reminded everyone that no one should "Reply all" to emails as that might be considered a conversation. S. Heinrich introduced Bill Boyd, Emily Coburn and George Markwell as new members to the Committee. He asked the rest of the members to introduce themselves.

Recognition of Prior Members

S. Heinrich recognized three former members: Andy Sylvia, who chose not to run for re-election, Chris Ortega who ran for School Board and is now the School Board liaison to the Committee and Carol Lang, a long term member who also chose not to run for re-election.

Budget Committee Training

S. Heinrich told the members that the Local Government Center Budget & Finance Training would be held on Tuesday, September 21st. He said this was an all-day training, for which further details, including cost, would not be available until sometime in August. He said the District pays the cost for this training and those interested should let the Committee secretary know. He also told the Committee that it is also possible to request that someone from the Department of Revenue Administration come to a Committee meeting and give an evening training program. He said there would be no cost for this training, but that it would need to be scheduled for early fall.

Ideas on how to proceed

Budget Committee Liaison

A. Schneider told the Committee that at the end of the last budget cycle, members seemed to feel that it would be good to meet shortly after elections to brainstorm how the Committee would proceed during the new budget cycle. He suggested that the Committee request that the School Board allow a member of the Committee to be a seated, but non-voting, liaison to the School Board.

Discussion included the following:

- This could result in the Committee having a better understanding of the School Board process and rationale for decisions.
- This is unnecessary as there is already a School Board liaison to the Committee.
- The School Board may not have statutory authority to agree to this proposal.
- A Committee liaison could not offer a Budget Committee opinion without there having been Budget Committee meeting and vote on whatever issue was being discussed.
- Members can attend and take notes at all School Board meetings when budgetary issues (current budget year and new budget proposal) are discussed.
- The Committee could request advanced notice of meetings where budget issues are discussed.
- Possibly there could be joint School Board – Budget Committee meetings for budget presentations by department heads so that members of both could ask questions and hear the answers as well as any discussions.
- Possibly a Budget Committee non-voting liaison could attend and participate only in discussions and actions on proposed monetary decisions, including the proposed 2011-2012 budget.
- If this liaison position became a reality, members had the following concerns:
 - Should there be a team rather than just one member in case the liaison was unable to attend a given School Board meeting?
 - How would the liaison be notified that a budget issue was on the agenda?
 - What would be the responsibility of such a liaison?
 - Would the liaison communicate with the rest of the members only at meetings or send an email report to all members immediately after attending a School Board meeting?
- Maybe instead of a liaison, the real key is the ability to interact with the School Board.
- Some of last year's problems occurred because people came to the Budget Committee instead of going to the School Board.

S. Heinrich asked School Board chair, Jody Vaillancourt for her opinion. J. Vaillancourt said she supported improved communication but would need to research procedures.

Other Ideas

S. Heinrich told the Committee that in many towns throughout the state, the budget committee actually creates the school budget, working directly with the school administrators.

R. Swonger told the Committee that in other towns, the budget committee gives a top-and bottom-line number to the Administration. Then the Administration prepares a budget within those parameters for the budget committee to review and fine-tune.

M. Publicover asked when the School Board gave budget parameters to the Administration and suggested that the Budget Committee might have some ideas and suggestions that could or should be considered. As an example, he said he would like to see capital expenses, teacher ratios and some other things in the budget. He said he wanted the Committee to have a pro-active role in budget development, rather than the role of simply critiquing the budget. He wants the Committee to be involved in the budget process much earlier.

A. Schneider reminded the members that it had been suggested both at the Committee's Public Hearing on the proposed 2010-11 budget and at the Deliberative Session that the Committee should look at, discuss and consider revenue during the budget process.

M. Publicover suggested that the liaison teams for each department should meet together before meeting with the department head so that each team is better prepared to discuss budget issues and ask questions.

A. Schneider said that last year many members thought that quarterly budget reports might be a good way of spotting "red flag" issues: budget lines that seem to be out of line with prior years' experience.

Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman

Chair

S. Heinrich announced that nominations do not have to be seconded and called for nominations for Chair.

S. Heinrich nominated A. Schneider for the position of Chair. A. Schneider accepted the nomination. G. Markwell nominated B. Boyd, who declined the nomination. There was no other nomination. S. Heinrich made a MOTION to close nominations. Second: B. Cummings. MOTION PASSED unanimously.

S. Heinrich called for a vote on the nomination. A. Schneider was unanimously elected Chair.

Vice Chair

E. Coburn nominated S. Heinrich for the position of Vice Chair. S. Heinrich accepted the nomination. B. Cummings nominated T. Beard, who declined the nomination. G. Markwell nominated B. Cummings, who accepted the nomination. B. Boyd made a MOTION to close nominations. Second: M. Publicover. MOTION PASSED unanimously.

A roll call vote was held on the nomination:

Cummings (6 votes): B. Boyd, J. Burk, B. Cummings, G. Markwell, M. Publicover, R. Swonger

Heinrich (4 votes): T. Beard, E. Coburn, S. Heinrich, A. Schneider

B. Cummings was elected Vice Chair.

Other

A. Schneider thanked the members for his election as chair and asked the members to recognize the outgoing chair for his long years of service.

Next Meeting

Members were polled for summer availability.

By consensus, members agreed to meeting in July and possibly also in August, to discuss options, brainstorm questions and develop a plan for the upcoming budget year.

S. Heinrich told the Committee that meeting in a school location during the summer would entail Maintenance overtime so alternate locations, such as town hall and the library, were discussed.

A. Schneider told the Committee he would meet with B. Cummings to review possible locations and dates and then notify the Committee when he had arranged for a meeting.

S. Heinrich made a MOTION to adjourn. Second: B. Cummings.

MOTION PASSED unanimously.

S. Heinrich adjourned the meeting at 8:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Pat Heinrich