

Plainville Citizen Op-Ed, December 2013

Board of Education Budget Development for 2014-15: Providing Quality for our Students and Value for the Community

Each December, along with the school district's administration, I begin to develop the Superintendent's Budget Proposal for the following school year. That proposal is then presented to the Board of Education in early January for their review and continued work to develop a final 2014-2015 Board of Education Budget for the Plainville Community Schools. As was done last year, the budget is being developed through a process of ***Reprioritizing, Reallocating, and Reinvesting***. First, we conduct an extensive review of all current programs and initiatives. This process allows us to reprioritize our needs based upon the Board's Strategic Plan, our focus on STUDENTS, TEACHING and LEARNING, and the critical goals and objectives needed to move our school system forward. Then, all possible resources and available funding sources are reviewed so that wherever possible, resources can be reallocated to those educational needs the Board and administration feel are top priorities. Finally, decisions must be made on the need to reinvest those reallocated funds, and if necessary, community tax dollars, into those programs and initiatives that are critical to the success of our students. Using this process, the Board and administration have been able to provide the high quality education our students deserve, while being sensitive to the economic situation within our community. In short, we are providing quality for our students and parents, as well as value to the community.

As this work begins there are a number of items that will have an impact or influence on the overall budget. First, the Board of Education must plan to

meet the legal and contractual obligations for items such as salary for current staff, health insurance and other contractual benefits, and costs associated with tuitions for students with special needs and students attending magnet schools. In addition, we feel strongly that the district must continue implementing its plan for the replacement and updating of technology. Our technology planning allows us to maintain a consistent annual budget commitment of approximately \$250,000 for replacing outdated equipment and upgrading our infrastructure. This helps the community avoid much larger, intermittent investments that can result in millions of dollars in expenses. Finally, it is imperative that the Plainville Board of Education continues to implement and support changes that help us align our teaching and learning with the Common Core State Standards, 21st Century skill development in our graduates, and the requirements of State mandated changes in teacher support and evaluation.

We also anticipate a number of factors that will have a positive impact on the 2014-2015 budget and our efforts toward reallocating and reinvesting to meet the needs of our school district. The Board of Education and the administration will continue to experience budget savings as a result of our energy conservation program, through our partnership with Cenergistic, which has dramatically reduced district energy consumption and utilities cost. Last year, the Connecticut General Assembly increased the amount of funding that suburban Hartford school districts receive for hosting Choice students, which will also have a positive influence on the overall budget. Our efforts to provide a wider range of programs and services here within our schools for our students with significant

special needs will once again result in a decrease in the need for more expensive outside placements, and more importantly, better serve those students.

During their November meeting, the Board of Education also approved a ten-year plan for capital projects to present to the Town Council. The plan includes a number of projects related to the Middle School and Wheeler School that are designed to replace aging roofs, outdated HVAC and fire safety systems and other items in those two schools that are at the end of their useful life. The Capital Plan also includes projects for the high school that will address roadway, parking lot and grounds repairs.

The Board will receive a presentation on the Superintendent's Proposed Budget on January 21, at 7:00 PM, in the Plainville High School Library. The Board will then devote two work sessions to reviewing all aspects of the budget; those sessions are scheduled for January 28 and 30, both at 7:00 PM and also in the Plainville High School Library. The Board is then scheduled to vote on the approval of a final 2014-2015 Board of Education Budget at their regular meeting on February 10, 7:00 PM, in the Middle School of Plainville Auditorium. The Board Budget then goes to the Town Council for review and action as they prepare the municipal budget during the month of March. Finally, the entire community will have an opportunity to decide on both the Board of Education and Town budgets at the town's All-Day Vote on April 29, 2014.

I hope this explanation of our budget development practices and some of the factors that will influence next year's budget help you better understand the process. I encourage you to become involved in the process by attending any of

the budget development sessions. In addition, should you have any questions regarding information you see or hear during our budget development process, please don't hesitate to contact my office. I would be happy to discuss your questions or concerns.