

SCHOOL BOARD  
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 15  
St. Francis, Minnesota  
Public Forum  
Issues, Analysis, and Planning Session  
May 20, 2008

The Public Forum was called to order by Chair Anderson at 7:06 p.m. with the following members present: Directors H. Grams, Haag, Kelly, Lipinski, Vogel and Superintendent Saxton. Absent Director S. Grams.

The purpose of the Public Forum is to listen to input from the public regarding the Operating Levy Referendum coming up on the November 2008 ballot. Speakers should complete a note card with name, address, and phone number. Mr. Saxton will read emails that were received from community members that are unable to attend. Each speaker will have three minutes to speak, and are asked to refrain from personal attack of School Board or District Staff. At the adjournment of the public meeting a recess will be taken before the Board meeting reconvenes for a work session.

Mr. Saxton will present information from the last Issues, Analysis work session on May 5. Ms. Hawkins will present a school finance presentation. Comments from the public will follow.

Ms. Hawkins provided a brief summary of District Finances. A handout of slides of the presentation was distributed. Ms. Hawkins also reviewed recent 2008 legislative changes. In the Governor's study that was completed, Independent School District No. 15 spends over 75% of expenditures in the classroom, the seventh highest percentage in the state.

Mr. Saxton reviewed the Operating Levy Referendum questions discussed at the work session held May 5. School Board members reviewed scenarios and assumptions to determine the potential questions for the referendum.

Mr. Saxton explained that emails sent will be read, throughout the meeting, however names will not be given. There are 23 emails that were received.

### **Community Members**

Ms. J. Bowman – The concern over reductions, however discouraged over pay raises at upper level administration. Director Kelly communicated that the District spends administratively approximately \$170 less per pupil than Districts of our size. A conscious effort is made during negotiations to ensure the money is spent in the classroom.

Ms. M. Jabas - Concern to have one question, with no reductions, not three questions, clarify.

Ms. S. Sauer - One question, have an additional question to add back programs.

Ms. L. Olafson - keep in mind what is best for the students; the Board is elected by the voters and a job to do what is right for the students, anything less than keeping the funding equal is not fair to students.

Ms. M. VanDenburgh – Question the numbers of what District is telling, with student numbers decreasing, however employee numbers have gone up. Teachers getting 7% increase. Mr. Saxton communicated that there are many things that affect staffing levels, such as combining schools,

and adding a program through receipt of a grant. There are variables that the District cannot predict.

Ms. Hawkins explained school funding and audits of Districts.

Mr. Saxton read emails.

Ms. T. Meyer – Echoed comments of others, response to comment made on percentage of increase to teachers, the bar graph is helpful showing if questions 1, 2 & 3 pass we would still be the lowest levied District in Anoka County, and try to reduce fees.

Mr. G. Day – Support the idea to have one question, and to add question 4 to add programs, enough teachers to avoid overcrowded classrooms, and maintain the current level of education.

Ms. A. Mickelburg – Having one question with zero cuts, support of modest increase to keep competitive and on top of education trends.

Mr. Saxton read emails.

Ms. Hawkins explained the wording of referendum questions is prescribed in law, the Board can only decide on the amount per student.

Ms. R. Carlson – Why vote for more money for the District when the tools to learn are not being provided currently.

Mr. J. Tradewell – The challenge for the Board is to educate the public, to continue to communicate so that people understand before going to the polls.

Over 90% of the emails received were in support of holding the referendum, make the questions clear and positive, and to maintain the quality of educations.

The Public Forum ended at 8:38 p.m.

Issues, Analysis, and Planning Session was called back to order by Chair Anderson, at 8:51 p.m.

Mr. Grams looked at numbers that were submitted at the forum either in person or by email. 12 of 23 prefer one question, and 6 would vote yes regardless of how the questions were stated.

Mr. Saxton communicated that one person recommended reversing the questions, with no reductions first. Another suggestion was no reductions, keeping tax at current level. Both are confusing. Tiering questions, reverse tiering, two questions, and even one question could create concern.

A copy of the ballot from Anoka Hennepin 2007 was reviewed.

School Board members deliberated which included the following. What was heard this evening, support is strong for one question with less confusion, verbiage (wording) is very structured, responsibility to get the understanding out to the public, clarification of language in new law, decision on how many years to run the referendum, making sure it is clear what reductions will be if the referendum fails, getting support from parent groups, continued communications with public and SMC's, with economics what will people do that are struggling, not knowing what the

public wants this forum is what the Board has to go by, and being committed to education the public.

Consensus from the School Board was to ask one question, with a possible second question to increase programming and to include an inflationary increase. It will be important to state at "0" projections from the state. The referendum will be for seven years.

The Board requested that Ms. Hawkins email the list from the Financial Planning Action Committee to consider as add back programming.

The resolution for the referendum will be on the Board agenda for May 27, so that the information is out to the public before the school year ends. Zero reductions, one question in 2009-10.

The meeting adjourned at 10:21 p.m.

---

Harry Grams, Clerk