



BEVERLY HILLS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Educational Employees Working Together

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CONSENSUS

A Newsletter for BHEA Members
February 24, 2008



Board Study Session on Budget Unveils \$3.7 Million in Cuts

- Board majority votes to move forward with \$3.7 million in cuts and \$1 million of new spending and reserves. Approval set for Feb. 26.
- Only minor revisions made to 63-page budget-cut document. Foreign language program, librarians consume much of discussion.
- Board members align along 3-2 rift.

Here are the highlights from the Feb. 20 Board study session on the district budget, attended by a standing-room only crowd at BHHS:

- The district administration said that they expect a 600-student decline in resident enrollment between now and 2010-2011.
- The administration recommended freeing up enough money to cover a \$2.6 million projected deficit for 08-09.
- Board member Myra Lurie said that with the administration's proposal, "cuts are kept away from classrooms."
- Board member Brian Goldberg said that the scheduled Feb. 26 vote on the budget cuts will be the "most important" vote the Board takes this year. He suggested forming a Blue Ribbon commission to meet over the next two months to take in-depth look at how BHUSD could be restructured. He said he did not agree with the procedure being used at this study session to determine where cuts should be made, arguing that there was not enough time to do a deliberate analysis. Board member Steve Fenton agreed with Goldberg. Board Pres. Myra Demeter, Board Vice-Pres. Nooshin Meshkaty, and Lurie all disagreed with Goldberg.
- Fenton said that he had not yet received answers to all of his questions to the administration on the size of the

district office administration a few years ago compared to today.

- Meshkaty said that the district office should become leaner before cutting into the classroom.
- Asst. Supt. of Ed. Services Ilene Straus cautioned against reduction of support staff in her department.
- Meshkaty suggested consolidating clerical services and asked if more cuts to the Business Services Dept. could be made. She compared our district to La Cañada, saying that La Cañada is "very lean."
- Lurie asked about the programmatic impact of cuts at the HS. She said she does not want to "deprive" students of opportunities to take Advanced Placement classes, adding that more students should be "encouraged" to take AP classes. She also said that newly created "fledgling" classes need protection. Straus responded that HS cuts may affect the viability of smaller AP classes.
- Supt. Kari McVeigh said that our district should "staff to contract" and also have a cushion.
- Meshkaty said that she is against cutting middle school French because it could lead to the loss of AP French at the HS. McVeigh said that some middle school students are being "forced" to take French. HAW Prin. Alex Cherniss said that it's not possible for just one French teacher to service all four K-8 sites. Straus said that our district is looking at adding Chinese and American Sign Language. Lurie said that "some kids get shoved into French." She noted that Hebrew and Latin are offered at the high school but not at the middle schools. Meshkaty said that French students excel more than Spanish students as they proceed through their respective middle school and high

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Member Poll: Should Superintendent Give Back Her \$12,000 Raise?

BHEA is asking its members to answer the following question between now and Tuesday, Feb. 26 at 1:00 p.m.:

- "Given that our superintendent has proposed over \$3 million in personnel cuts and given that no other employee in the district except for our superintendent has received a pay raise this year, do you believe that Supt. Kari McVeigh should return her \$12,000 raise to the district general fund?"

Site representatives are tallying responses as you read this. Please let your representative know **no later than 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 26.**

Background information: On Nov. 26, 2007, the outgoing Board of Education approved a retroactive 6% increase to Supt. McVeigh's compensation in the form of a tax-deferred annuity worth \$12,000 over the time period Oct. '07 through Sep. '08.

Rep. Council Highlights

Highlights from the Feb. 14 BHEA Representative Council meeting:

- Certified election results. RC welcomes newest members: Treas. Odysseus Bostick, IA Vice-Pres. Carol Courneya, BV Rep. Susie Pastor, ER Reps. Amy Arebalo and Will Aardappel, HS Rep. Chris King, and OTBS HS Rep. Eddie Deguia.
- Approved the scheduling of Executive Board meetings to occur on same day as RC meetings when appropriate.
- Discussed the controversy over district's expansion of intervention programs and current BHEA litigation on this subject.
- Discussed the lack of uniformity at K-8 sites with regard to *when* during the school year each site committee meets to allocate the 17 annual extra pay units.
- Reminded members that layoff notices must be contested within 7 days of receipt and to contact BHEA immediately.

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- school foreign language classes. By the end of the meeting, the Board majority agreed to keep two "Period 0" French classes at two K-8 sites.
- Fenton suggested cutting the entire \$29,000 budget for the five Board members. He said it's the right thing to do because "people in this room [teachers in the audience] will be joining the unemployment line." Goldberg agreed, saying that Board members need to "lead by example." Demeter disagreed, but said she was open to reductions. Eventually, the budget was reduced to \$16,000.
 - Lurie said that our district will need to invest in more technological support to deal with the proposed loss of reading specialists.
 - McVeigh said talks between BHUSD and the City of BH on having our district connect to the city's Internet infrastructure have "slowed."
 - Demeter said that BHUSD has made a commitment to "embed" professional development into the classrooms in the form of teachers on special assignment (TOSAs). Lurie said that most TOSAs are categorically funded and that sending teachers to conferences is not the best use of professional development money. McVeigh clarified, "We're not saying conferences are bad."
 - Demeter said, "I support librarians." She asked why library technicians can't be cut instead of librarians. She said librarians are important because they "conduct lessons in research methodology." Meshkaty said that classroom teachers could provide the services that K-8 librarians currently provide. Straus said that a Library Coordinator position could be created to replace librarians. Lurie said that the money saved from eliminating librarians could be invested in technology.
 - Goldberg asked a question about the general approach to solving problems in our district. He asked, "What can we do differently?" Fenton, agreeing with Goldberg, said, "We can't keep doing the same thing and expect a different result."
 - Both Goldberg and Fenton floated the idea of reducing the number of administrative assistants in the superintendent's office from two to one. This was not supported by the other three Board members.
 - Demeter said that the Joint Power Agreement negotiations with the City now requires the district to commit a fresh \$600,000 toward athletic field maintenance. Goldberg took issue with this allocation, saying it doesn't keep resources in the classroom. Demeter's recommendation for the use of this money was ultimately supported by Lurie and Meshkaty.
 - McVeigh said that, based on the magnitude of the cuts being proposed, there will be layoff notices issued. She said that the number of notices actually acted upon will be reduced if a proposed early retirement incentive plan garners enough participants. She said that, based on current financial projections, the Board will have to convene again in the next couple of years to cut *another* \$3.2 million out of the budget. She jokingly referred to this as "another opportunity to have fun together."
 - Lurie said, "I want to make sure we're not reducing services in interventions."
 - Demeter said that it's "unusual" to have a middle school teacher teaching just one grade level as opposed to teaching across multiple grade levels.
 - By the end of the study session, the Board accepted the entire package of proposed cuts with the following changes: cut an extra \$10,000 out of the Maple Counseling service agreement; cut an additional \$13,000 out of the Board members' budget; retained two periods of middle school French; retained the position of Ed. Tech. TOSA; committed \$600,000 to athletic field maintenance.
 - The end result of the Feb. 20 discussion was to propose \$3.7 million in cuts offset by \$1 million in new spending (\$600,000 toward field maintenance and \$410,000 toward a new reserve fund). This resulted in freeing up \$2.7 million to close the projected 08-09 deficit.

Administration Cancels Three Meetings with Teachers

Communication between district administrators and BHEA members has been harder to come by lately as the administration has cancelled no less than three scheduled meetings with teachers in the last two months. Below is a list of the cancelled meetings along with the reason given by the administration for each cancellation:

- Jan. "Conversation with Kari" at BHHS. Reason given: none.
- Feb. meeting between BHEA Pres. Chris Bushée and Asst. Supt. of Human Res. Sal Gumina. Reason given: Mr. Gumina had to meet with Supt. Kari McVeigh.
- Feb. meeting between Bushée and McVeigh. Reason given: none.

BRIEFS AND UPDATES

- Assuming approval on Feb. 26 by our Board of Education, details of an early retirement incentive plan should be available for distribution by our district on Feb. 27. BHEA attended a presentation by Keenan to get an overview of the plan. It is a supplemental employee retirement plan. It is a 401(a) whose distributions are taxable unless they are swept into an IRA. Eligible employees must be 55 years old by June 30, 2008 and must commit to resignation in BHUSD by April 16. The plan is supplemental to and completely separate from CalSTRS.
- The K-8 Flexible Schedule Committee met on Feb. 6. Several issues were discussed at length. Several teacher members said that it would be more productive to use more of the Wed. morning slots for district-wide collaboration by grade level or by middle school department. District administration representatives said that site-based collaboration is also important. Eventually, it was agreed to look into making more district-wide grade level/subject area collaboration time available on all-day staff development days as well as on some remaining Wed. mornings this school year. Concerns were brought forth by some teachers members that meeting agendas were too rigid on Wed. mornings and that restricted opportunities for specialist scheduling have created problems. Administration representatives shared that it takes time to get used to the meeting "protocols." It was agreed to deal with the "15-minute" issue for grades 1-5 by shaving two minutes of instructional time off of the end of the school day and adding one minute to the duty-free lunch. Before the change can take effect, total annual instructional minutes will be reviewed to make sure the minimum would still be met.

IMPORTANT DATES

- Feb. 26: Board of Ed. meeting. Big decisions on cuts!
- Feb. 28: Exec. Board mtg.
- Mar. 6: Rep. Council mtg., BHHS, Room 118.
- Mar. 11: Certificated bargaining.
- Mar. 11: Board of Ed. mtg.
- Mar. 14: First day of Spring Break.
- Mar. 24: First day of work after Spring Break.