

Local

School Board focuses on 2015-2016 budget

• BUDGET COMMITTEE APPOINTED

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The Baker School District 5J Board of Directors held a meeting Tuesday, the focus of which was the proposed 2015-16 school year budget.

Present were Interim Superintendent Betty Palmer, 2015-16 Superintendent Mark Witty, Board Chair Andrew Bryan, Board Vice Chair Kevin Cassidy, CFQ Business Manager Doug Dalton, Acting Secretary Ellen Dentinger (Norma Nemece was absent), Board Members Melissa Irvine, Chris Hawkins and Richard McKim, and Budget Committee Members Autumn Swiger-Harell, Rusty Munn, Tom Hudson, Mike Rudi, and Rosemary Abell.

Guests included Baker Technical Institute (BTI) Director Jerry Peacock and Superintendent Walt Wegener.

Bryan called the meeting to order at 5 p.m., and the first item was the nomination of Swiger-Harell to the Budget Committee.

Bryan said there were recently two positions open, and one candidate withdrew their name, leaving Swiger-Harell. She was appointed to the position.

Irvine was then appointed as Chair of the Budget Committee, and Rud was appointed as Vice Chair.

Palmer read a budget statement she had prepared, which will be included on the cover of the budget document released to the public, she said. It read as follows:

“The 2015-16 Baker School District budget is based on the state’s revenue projections for K-12 education and fully supports Baker 5J guiding principles. This budget document reflects successes and challenges faced during these years of educational challenge. We can be proud of the opportunities our school district is able to offer students and families as we move ahead into the coming school year.

“The district will face challenges in 2015-16. These include adding full day kindergarten, maintaining aging facilities and grounds which are in constant use, supporting our charter schools and continuing to expand educational options through partnerships with local businesses, community colleges and Eastern Oregon State University. We are working corroboratively with local organizations and education partners to provide cradle-to-career

opportunities for students and families.

“Baker School District 5J is a good steward of the funding provided through local state and federal dollars. We have cultivated a practice of financial conservatism, using long-term forecasting to drive fiscal decisions. This model allows us to ‘right size’ operations based on revenue adjustments, and in so doing, provide a stable decision making platform.

“The current funding level established by State Legislators for the 2015-17 biennium is less than desirable, however our commitment to sustaining high quality K-12 instruction while expanding innovative programs through Baker Web Academy, Baker Early College, Baker Technical Institute and Eagle Cap Innovative High School remains solid.

Our 4 day student week fosters staff participation in professional development and collaborative planning. Students participate in Friday programs and activities, both on and off campus. We are predicting an enrollment of 1645 students with an additional 800-900 students enrolled in our charter schools. Enrollment in our rural locations is up; incoming student rate in kindergarten and Grade 1 programs has increased as well.

“Students enrolling in Baker 5J schools have unprecedented opportunities for a successful K-12 career. From full-day kindergarten with intervention supports to middle grade student learning plans to innovative college-career pathways, families can be confident their children will receive an educational value competitive with districts of a much larger size with personalized support that has always characterized our community values.

“Our School Board is committed to practicing fiscal responsibility and maintaining a system that fulfills this guiding principle: Baker 5J schools exist to be the center of community vitality, eliminating the barriers for gratifying individual educational experiences in order to have capable contributing citizens with character. We believe the proposed 2015-16 budget supports the aspirations this commitment reflects. Thank you.”

Irvine voiced concerns about the statement regarding a four-day school week, because there are mixed feelings in the community about it, she said. The group discussed this topic, including possible elaboration concerning Friday programs available to students.

Dalton presented a

slideshow, and discussed different budget topics, beginning with an overview, including the budget process, the role of the Budget Committee, budgeting basics, investment priorities, the state of education, and methods of investing.

The timeline of the budget process, according to the chart Dalton displayed, includes: around February, state funding is determined by the state, and fiscal planning begins; in March and April, the budget is developed; the Budget Committee meets weekly in May, and between May and June, approves the budget; and in June, the Board adopts the budget.

The role of the Budget Committee, according to Dalton, is to receive the budget document; receive the budget message; consider public comment; discuss and revise the budget as needed; approve the budget; and approve the property taxes.

Budgeting basics, Dalton said, includes a financial plan for one fiscal year, July 1 to June 30, based upon estimates of revenues and expenditures, and the State of Oregon requires a record of expenditures, in four ways: which fund is the source of the expenditures, what the purpose is, what is being purchased, and what location is associated with the expenditures.

According to the budget document, the General Fund, Fund 100 (the focus of the meeting), is the general school operating fund, proposed in the amount of \$22,684,143 for the 2015-16 fiscal year. Dalton said there are about 60 Special Revenue Funds, or Funds 200, dedicated to specific purposes, including title funds, special education funds, food service, and miscellaneous other funds, proposed in the amount of \$4,148,700. The Debt Service Fund, Fund 300, PERS bond payment, is proposed in the amount of \$782,742. The Capital Project Fund, Fund 400, is proposed in the amount of \$423,000. And, the Trust and Agency Funds, Fund 700, is proposed in the amount of \$952,755.

Dalton discussed budgeting details, including resources and expenditures, and explained that each fund must have a balanced budget.

On a national level, according to data, Dalton said there aren’t enough young people graduating and seeking additional training to succeed in the marketplace, and Oregon is falling behind.

Some solutions include early learning enhancements by kindergarten, every child reading at grade level by third grade, developing exceptional



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Doug Dalton addresses the School Board.

educators and administrators, preventing loss of students in transition, engaging students in careers and encouraging them to earn college credits, and involving the families.

Dalton shared the District goals, including effective literacy, support for students, family and the community, and fiscal stability.

He said that during former Governor Kitzhaber’s term, the Legislature set state educational goals as such: by 2025, 40% of young adults will have earned a bachelor’s degree or higher; 40% will have earned an associate’s or postsecondary credential; and 20% of adults will have earned at least a high school diploma. Dalton said that locally in the District, that ratio looks closer to 20%, 75% and 5%, respectively.

Dalton discussed investment analysis, and then talked about a District-wide focus on math improvements, including curriculum alignment and development efforts, a new math coach, an additional section of math at Baker Middle School (BMS), three sections of math added at Baker High School (BHS), a summer school offered with a certified math instructor, and technology added in secondary classrooms.

Wegener discussed the importance of a consistent math presentation throughout a student’s school career, with details about the curriculum and educational standards.

Charter school function/investment was discussed by Dalton, along with all-day kindergarten, including details about a playground enhancement project, bus lane construction, and new staff hired, three certified teachers and two paraprofessionals.

He discussed the need

for BTI, including the following: Baker County is lacking in a trained workforce; many career fields are lacking trained workers across the U.S.; the past 15 years of employment trends favor skilled workers; and Career Technical Education (CTE) in Oregon was cut in half during the same period. Because of this, Dalton said, BTI was created, providing pathways to success, in the areas of agricultural sciences, computer sciences, engineering, building trades, health services, and environmental sciences.

PERS issues and legislation were discussed, including Oregon Senate Bill (SB) 822, which is expected to cost the District \$720,000 a year, Dalton said.

Dalton gave the group school building updates, including Brooklyn Primary School: all-day kindergarten will be starting, three full-time certified staff and two paraprofessionals were added, a vice principal were added, cook and janitorial hours were added for additional students, a modular was added, the playground was expanded, and a bus lane was constructed.

South Baker School’s update included: two paraprofessionals were added for a large 4th grade class, a new principal was added, several new teachers were hired, and a new lot was purchased for additional parking.

Baker Middle School’s update included: a new principal and a new guidance secretary.

Baker High School’s update included: the Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) position converted to vice principal; a student resource officer (SRO) added via partnership on Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grant; three new sections

of math added; a new Special Education teacher, and a new English Language Arts (ELA) teacher; guidance retirement was partially filled; and HVAC system upgrades.

BTI’s update included: an engineering robotics course was added, with 74 students signed up; an introduction to environmental science was added; an information technology class will possibly be implemented, through Eastern Oregon University, depending on a grant; welding classes will be expanded, agricultural learning options will be expanded, a new agricultural teacher and a new welding instructor will be hired, there will be welding shop upgrades, and sustainable agricultural courses added; a second year course will be offered for building trades; and five more 3-D printers were purchased.

Haines Elementary School’s update included: the head teacher was removed, and a new principal hired; a 6th grade, half-time teacher and four paraprofessionals were added; one retiring teacher and one Special Education teacher were replaced; a modular was added for space; and there will be playground improvements.

Keating School’s update included: carpet was replaced; more music class hours were added; the building was painted; and water line work will be completed.

The budget discussion is expected to continue, as the 2015-16 budget was not yet approved. There is a work session/budget meeting scheduled for next Tuesday, May 19, at 5 p.m. in the North Conference Room of the Baker School District 5J office at 2090 4th Street, and a regular Board meeting at 6 p.m.

Hellman sentenced for theft from 86-year-old woman

On May 6, 2015, Kenny Lee Hellman (dob 01-05-1969) of 1723 Valley St. Baker City, Oregon, was sentenced to two years in prison.

Hellman pled guilty to two one count of Theft in the First Degree, a Class C Felony, and one count of Computer Crime, also a Class C Felony.

He also pled guilty to a Misdemeanor count of

Fraudulent Use of a Credit Card and another Misdemeanor count of Forgery in the Second Degree.

Hellman’s sentence was based on the Oregon Sentencing guidelines and he was eligible for prison on an “upward departure” due to the “vulnerable” status of the victim and his criminal history.

Hellman was providing care for the victim who

was 86 years of age.

He used her debit card and forged her checks to access nearly \$3,000 in cash between January and April of 2014.

Hellman will serve two years post prison supervision when he is released from prison and will be required to pay the victim restitution.

“Clay Stevens, detective for the Oregon State

Police, did a good job investigating the case. We felt it was important that Hellman receive prison time as elder abuse is a continuing problem in our community. Anyone who has information about possible exploitation of an elderly person should contact law enforcement,” said District Attorney Matt Shirlcliff in a press release.

Adler house opens doors

Adler House Museum, located at 2305 Main Street, opened for the 2015 season on Friday, May 15th. Visit the completely restored and renovated 1889 Victorian Italianate home which was the residence of Baker City philanthropist, Leo Adler, for 94 years. Adler House Museum will be open each weekend Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. through Labor Day weekend. Private showings at other times are available by special arrangement through the Baker Heritage Museum. Admission is only \$6 per adult for a guided tour, and group discounts are available. You can save by touring both museums for only \$10.