

Proposed school budget focuses on stability amid uncertain state funding

By **HERB SWETT**
For the Keizertimes

Salem-Keizer Public Schools has a proposed 2019-20 budget of \$1,193,298,808, up 4 percent from the current budget of \$1,147,797,142.

Superintendent Christy Perry summarized the budget and the changes in its funds in the first of two meetings on Tuesday, April 23, in her budget message to the district budget committee. It was the first meeting of the committee, which elected Levi Herrera-Lopez chair and Jim Green vice chair.

Perry said the proposal is based on Gov. Kate Brown's recommendation of a state school fund of \$8.97 billion for the 2019-21 biennium. Passage of the fund now proposed in the Legislature would cut the

The proposed levels of funding for individual accounts are as follows:

- General fund, \$14,057,820.
- Fee-based programs fund, \$14,604,300.
- Food services fund, \$21,083,000.
- Asset replacement fund, \$5,563,300.
- Energy efficiency fund, \$1,355,000.
- Grants fund, \$50,522,936.
- Public Employees Retirement System debt service fund, \$49,300,000.
- General obligation debt service fund, \$62,254,700.

- Special capital projects fund, \$2,860,000.
- Preventive and deferred maintenance fund, \$2,081,236.
- 2018 bond capital projects fund, \$433,355,000.
- External customers fund, \$100,000.
- Charter schools services fund, \$5,215,000.
- Auxiliary services fund, \$8,340,000.
- Risk management fund, \$20,389,500.
- Small memorial trust fund, \$207,498.
- Loretta Isom scholarship fund, \$9,518.

district budget by \$3.5 million, she said.

She said the district proposal has the following priorities:

- Maintaining current service levels, including behavioral learning.
- Investing in full-time equivalent for enrollment growth, especially in special education.
- Converting limited-term

positions of special education assistants to full time.

- Providing transportation resources for boundary adjustments.

Perry said many factors, including key performance indicators, brought about proposed changes in some of the funds. "Reading and math aren't what we'd like," she said.

She noted that district drop-

out rates usually have been falling, with the 2017-18 rate 3.3 percent, below the state rate of 3.55 percent. Also noted was the 98 percent graduation rate in 2016-17 for students who attended career-technical education classes.

One budget disappointment, she said, is the apparent inability to hire one additional counselor at each comprehensive high school, student suicides being the main concern.

She observed that the district is in better shape than Portland Public Schools.

After the first meeting, the school board met to fill a vacancy on the budget committee, caused by the resignation of Adam Kohler. The board named Cynthia Stinson, who recently missed being appointed by a coin flip that followed a tie vote in favor of Tyson Pruett.

In the second meeting, which took place on Monday, April 29, Perry acknowledged that adding one counselor at each comprehensive high school is what administra-

tors in Salem-Keizer Public Schools still want.

The main concern there is suicides among adolescents, she told the budget committee at its second meeting. At the committee's first meeting April 23, she said no one had found a way.

Much of the committee's discussion involved what expenditures would go under what budget headings. Perry and Michael Wolfe, chief operating officer, said several questions required further study.

Perry and Wolfe added several figures in the budget documents were still estimates and that some take more than a year to answer.

Asked how Salem-Keizer compares to the state of Oregon in spending averages, Perry said it was a "get back to you" question because the school would have to go back to 2018-19 for the answer.

She added that the counselor-student ratio is now 450 to 1 and that the national standard is about 250 to 1.

The next budget meeting will be May 20.

Teens: Fitness challenge could yield college money

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To sign up, teens must visit their local Planet Fitness in person, as online sign-ups are not available. Teens under 18 need to bring a parent/guardian to sign up, and can then workout alone.

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