



**Budget Advisory Committee
MINUTES
Thursday, December 8, 2022
VIA ZOOM**

In Attendance:

Board of Education:

Trustees Nicole Duncan, Karin Kwan, Natalie Baillaut, Angela Carmichael, Derek Gagnon, Emily Mahbobi and Rob Paynter

Staff:

Deb Whitten, Superintendent

Harold Caldwell, Deputy Superintendent

Tom Aerts, Associate Superintendent

Katrina Stride, Acting Secretary-Treasurer

Julie Lutner, Director of Finance, Budgets and Financial Reporting

Marni Vistisen-Harwood, Director of Facilities Services

Connor McCoy, Past President, Greater Victoria Principals Vice-Principals Association

Gautam Khosla, Executive Member, Greater Victoria Principals Vice-Principals Association

Stakeholders:

Paula Marchese, VCPAC

Rachel McLellan, VCPAC

Ilda Turcotte, GVTA

Jane Massy, CUPE 947

Trina Legge, CUPE 382

Darren Reed, CUPE 382

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 pm.

Acknowledgement

Committee Chair Gagnon recognized and acknowledged the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations on whose traditional territories we live, we learn, and we do our work.

Approval of Minutes

By consensus, the Committee approved the minutes from the November 10, 2022 meeting.

Values and Guiding Principles

Values and Guiding Principles with the following revisions were presented to the Committee:

- Changed budget year in heading from 2022-2023 to 2023-2024
- Changed date under Timelines from April 11, 2021 to April 6, 2023

The Committee broke into small groups to discuss the following question regarding the values and guiding principles:

- Does the latest draft of the Values and Guiding Principles meet our needs?

Groups reported back highlighting the following:

- Meets the needs of the group
- Nothing else to be addressed
- Solid document
- Need to incorporate values and guiding principles in the work
- Put together well last year; still relevant
- Meets needs
- April 6, 2023 deadline is tight; need enough feedback before decisions are made
- Good document
- Okay with changes
- Sound document as long as we are sticking to it
- Remember the values when designing the process
- Remember the students throughout the process
- Liked the date changes

Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference with the following revisions were presented to the Committee:

- Under Composition and Operations:
 - Removed pluralization of Associate Superintendent
 - Added the word Services following Director of Facilities
 - Removed 'as the conduit to and from the Four Houses' following the position of Director of Indigenous Education (addressed in subsequent paragraph in TOR)
 - Added Director of Human Resource Services
 - Added Director of Information Technology for Learning
 - Added Director of International Education
 - Added that student voice will be heard through the Student Symposium and the Representative Advisory Council of Students
- Under Duties and Responsibilities:
 - Changed date to make recommendations to Board from March 10, 2022 to March 2, 2023

The Committee broke into small groups to discuss the following question regarding the Terms of Reference:

- Does the latest draft of the Terms of Reference meet our needs?

Groups reported back highlighting the following:

- Students at centre, but play smallest part in budget process
- Only high school students included
- Determine how to bring all student voices to table
- Find ways to reach out to students; bring student voice
- Asking students to attend all of the budget meetings is too much
- More opportunities to engage with students the better
- Suggestion box; anonymity, possibly available online
- Difficult for students to attend meetings
- Fan of symposium; allows opportunity for students to work together

- Support obtaining student voice through the Student Symposium and Representative Advisory Council of Students
- Replace 'one representative' for each First Nations with 'representatives'
- How to include Elementary and Middle School students?
- If Elementary students, how to include in a way that is relevant and not scripted; could be a guided conversation tied back to budget context
- Need to provide background knowledge and budget information to students before Student Symposium
- Group focused on changes to how student feedback will be gathered, good to see reference in Terms of Reference
- Obtain big ideas and themes from kids
- Housekeeping items are okay
- Figure out how to gather feedback from students
- Difficult to include students in Committee
- Anonymous comment cards
- Student engagement; actively and directly involved in discussion
- Forthcoming proposals, e.g. music, with expectation to discuss with students who have direct experience
- Would like clarity around process with First Nations; too many and/or references; we should be available on their schedule and in their time and place
- Provide definitions for administrative and operational
- Define appropriate management of risk
- Clarity on concept of risk in terms of budget discussion
- Difficulty with protecting reserves and contingency when looking at reduction of services to students

The following comment was included in the chat:

- I would also like to add a few points about student representation: The student advisory group only represents high school students not middle school or elementary students. Also, VCPAC would like to see if is at all possible for students to have the opportunity to directly engage with trustees either at budget meetings or other forums. Can the student symposium be a hybrid event so that all students have the opportunity to participate? There may be some students who may find that the location of the symposium is not accessible to them.

Budget Change Report – June 2022

The Committee reviewed the Budget Change Report from June 2022. The Monthly Financial Report for June 2022 will be placed on the January agenda.

Status Quo Budget – What Does it Mean?

The Committee was provided with the steps included in building a status quo budget. Alternate budgeting methods and the time commitment required to implement were discussed. If the Committee was looking to explore other budgeting options, it was suggested to include on the agenda of the final debrief meeting.

Enrolment and Operating Grant Overview

The Committee received an overview of Enrolment and Operating Grants including enrolment trends, factors that impact enrolment projections, and factors that impact operating grants.

Structural Deficit

The Committee was provided with the definition of a structural deficit, the surplus historically used to balance the budget, and the estimated structural deficit for 2023-2024. It was noted that the estimated structural deficit is preliminary and will continue to change as new information becomes available.

Surplus Philosophy and Strategy

The Committee reviewed Board Policy 3170 – Operating Surplus in which an unrestricted operating surplus of 2-4% of the prior year's operating revenues is recommended, the breakdown of the 2021-2022 surplus and comparison to projections and the prior year, and the history of total surplus balances.

The Committee broke into small groups to discuss the following questions regarding the surplus philosophy and strategy:

- For the 2023-2024 Budget, should the Board:
 - continue to balance the budget with prior year surplus?
or
 - work toward matching revenues and expenses so that there is no structural deficit? If so, should this be done in one year or over time?
 - hold an unallocated surplus for contingency? If so, how much?

Groups reported back highlighting the following:

- Stick to what we know and balance the budget with prior year surplus
- At debrief meeting, look at other budgeting alternatives to see if they would work for the District
- Last year's budget is not meeting our current needs
- Not enough funding; don't want to build contingency when the funds could be spent on students
- Look through equitable lens
- Reduce using the surplus over time
- Identify needs versus wants
- Dependent on Province; the way resources are allocated impacts planning and changes throughout the year
- Not responsible/reasonable to make changes in a significant way in one year
- Will result in unintended consequences and unaccounted costs
- Spend in year the funding is received; can be difficult with unit rate changes and lump sums
- Can't use the funding in the right way, if it is not planned
- Allow time to come out of structural deficit; impact of pandemic
- Budget to actuals; take this into account when budgeting; low percentage of surplus to overall budget
- Impacts of one-time costs, such as the election
- How much of a risk are we willing to take?
- Need to be careful because stuff happens, e.g. COVID-19; if spending all contingency, there is nothing left for unexpected items
- Would be difficult to overhaul system
- Mindful of how International Education revenue factors into budget; impacts of pandemic were

unforeseen

- Depends on if there is any surplus - risky

Work Plan

The Committee reviewed a draft work plan for each upcoming meeting including topics of interest, department reviews, and consensus building towards making recommendations to the Board.

The Committee broke into small groups to discuss the following questions regarding the work plan:

- Does the sequencing of topics, department overviews, and consensus building for recommendations to the Board work? Any suggestions for improvement?
- What information would you find useful to be presented on the chosen topics?
- Are there other topics you want to explore?
- Should some of the meetings be in person instead of alternating to Zoom?

Groups reported back highlighting the following:

- Like having alternating meetings, e.g. in-person and online
- Can be intimidating for parents to attend Talking Tables event
- Want to be engaged and have discussions
- What if we did the department overviews as recordings ahead of time? Committee members could read or listen in advance of the meeting and come into the meeting for discussion.
- Need to get into schools to see what is going on – go into classrooms, how to get full picture of what we really need at the school
- Hear from people in schools; talk to PVP and teachers in classrooms
- Hear from partners and Rightsholders
- Engage in open dialogue and discussions
- Create templated department profiles, e.g. staff, salary budgeted, year over year expenditures, one-time project proposals
- Department presentations are informative, but prevented dialogue
- Goal to have budget proposals raised early on, no last minute surprises
- Need to understand impact
- Opportunity for stakeholders to provide input and priorities
- Build in time for stakeholders to get feedback from representatives
- Board not operating in silo
- Understand impacts
- Cutting admin time or custodial – needed more discussion of impacts, know what we are getting into
- Make sure we are talking to partners to get full picture
- Really listen; the more opportunities the better
- Giving people time to react
- Balance of online and in-person meetings is good, but would like more in-person
- Ensure enough time to consider impacts
- Don't want to see a list of reductions without more time and context
- More feedback from people in schools and on the ground
- Provide plans and proposals earlier to get feedback
- Opportunity for stakeholders to present topics of interest in a more informative way – priorities, shortfalls, opportunities
- Hear from school-based teams; a way to get input and hear common concerns; team of professionals in a unique position; inclusive education

- Department overviews informative, but want to view ahead of meeting and then ask questions in meeting
- A lot of information was provided last year; it was overwhelming
- Prefer in-person meetings to have conversations

Take Away

Committee members were asked to post in the chat their biggest takeaway from the meeting.

Responses were:

- Some fabulous discussion tonight - really appreciate everyone's input! Thank you all!
- Can you give us some info of the Talking Tables event? What will that look like? What is the involvement of the stakeholders?
- My takeaway is that I heard a desire for meetings to be used for discourse/engagement rather than presentations. Also, no late stage surprises.
- Great meeting! Thank you -- such great discussions!
- The more opportunities for people to be heard, the more likely we are to get opinions from various voices
- Hard question, but largest take away is for people to be heard in a respectful manner. Great discussions.

Next Meeting: January 19, 2022 at 6pm In-person

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:12 pm.