



**Budget Advisory Committee
MINUTES
Thursday, February 23, 2023
Via ZOOM**

In Attendance:

Board of Education:

Trustees Nicole Duncan (Committee Chair), Karin Kwan, Natalie Baillaut, Angela Carmichael, Emily Mahbobi, Rob Paynter

Staff:

Deb Whitten, Superintendent

Harold Caldwell, Deputy Superintendent

Tom Aerts, Associate Superintendent

Katrina Stride, Secretary-Treasurer

Julie Lutner, Associate Secretary-Treasurer

Marni Vistisen-Harwood, Director of Facilities Services

Andy Canty, Director of Information Technology for Learning (via Zoom)

Hervinder Parmar, Director of Finance, Budgets and Financial Reporting

Jim Vair, Director of Human Resource Services

Dr. Jeff Davis, Director of International Education

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

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

Mark Baggott, Manager, Building Operations

Dave Emerson, Assistant Manager, Building Operations

Stakeholders:

Paula Marchese, VCPAC

Rachel McLellan, VCPAC

Cindy Romphf, GVTA

Jane Massy, CUPE 947

Trina Legge, CUPE 382

Darren Reed, CUPE 382

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 pm.

Acknowledgement

Committee Chair Duncan 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 February 9, 2023 meeting.

Department Profile Discussion

Each of the following departments presented a brief overview of their area(s) of responsibility and responded to questions from the Committee regarding their presentation and department profiles.

- Andy Canty, Director, Information Technology for Learning
- Jim Vair, Director, Human Resource Services
- Julie Lutner, Associate Secretary-Treasurer

Custodial Services Options

Mark Baggott, Manager of Building Operations presented the Committee with an overview of the custodial services working group process, which included the composition of the working group and its objectives. The working group was made up of 2 day custodians, 1 evening custodian, CUPE 382 President (former custodian), Elementary and Middle Principal, and 2 Facilities Managers and Director. The objectives of the working group were: 1) brainstorm options to deploy 10.0 FTE back into custodial services, 2) compare benefits of day and evening custodial hours, and 3) investigate additional (cost-free) implementations to recommend.

The first set of recommendations included two options that would see the addition of 18 day custodians and the removal of 8 afternoon custodians (cleaning area assigned to day), but with a varied start time. The first option had a 6am start, and the second option had a 5 am start with 30 minutes of cleaning area reassigned from afternoon to day with no change to afternoon shift time. The cost of both options is \$669K. The working group also recommended both school-based and district-wide cost-free implementations that would create efficiencies in custodial workload. The final set of recommendations was based on the exploration of alternative options, particularly options that included less than 10.0 FTE being deployed back into custodial services. Options ranged from the addition of 3 afternoon custodians for \$208K to 5 afternoon custodians for \$347K to 7 afternoon custodians for \$486K. Full details on these options can be found in the presentation file posted on the District website.

Questions and comments following the presentation included:

- Could the options be implemented over multiple years, e.g. some now, more next year?
 - Have budget to hire up to 10 custodian to the end of the year, but difficult to hire.
- Could the custodial runs be reallocated with current staff?
 - Biggest square footage on island; won't have an impact on cleaning within schools
 - Not sustainable with hard runs
- Do you have a preference for the two options?
 - No preference
- Could there be a recruitment issue with 5am start?
 - Difficult to answer, some custodians prefer an earlier start
- Is there a recruitment issue for the spareboard?
 - Yes

2022-2023 Operating Surplus Estimate

The Committee was provided with information regarding the 2022-2023 Operating Surplus Estimate. The Operating Surplus is expected to be \$0, compared to \$2.3M in the prior year. Increased revenue in the current year has been completely offset by net increases in expenses. The Unrestricted Operating Surplus – Contingency is expected to remain at \$1.2M. The Unrestricted International Surplus – Contingency is expected to be \$0, as the \$.3M balance from the prior year is being used to balance the

budget in the current year.

Questions and comments related to this agenda item:

- Is the estimate based on part way through the year or to year-end?
 - Year-end
- Why is there less surplus this year compared to last year?
 - Many factors that contribute to this change, including a change in spending patterns (spend current year \$ on current year kids; not saving for a rainy day), less conservative budgeting, inflationary increases, etc.
- Can you provide any additional insight into the teacher hiring lag?
 - There are two parts to this: 1) medical leaves not being filled, and 2) average teacher salary calculation. A small variance in the average teacher salary can make a huge difference when extrapolated out across all teachers.
- Has there been any consideration of a spending freeze? How quickly could one be implemented?
 - This has been discussed and would require further conversation with schools and departments. A spending freeze can be implemented immediately, but we would need to consider the impact over the 4 months left in the school year. We would also need to define what spending could be frozen, as we cannot prevent costs from going through if they are not discretionary.

2023-2024 Structural Deficit Estimate

The Committee received an update on the projected 2023-2024 Structural Deficit. The structural deficit is expected to be \$4M, but there are still a number of outstanding variables that may impact this number.

Operating Capital Reserves

The Committee reviewed the various operating capital reserves, including the Childcare Capital Reserve, Technology Replacement Reserve, Student Device Replacement Reserve, and the 5-Year Network Infrastructure Plan. Historical budget allocations were provided, along with the increased investment needed in 2023-2024 to refresh outdated teacher classroom laptops and student devices.

Questions and comments related to this agenda item:

- Can't keep devices on network safely; previously held on to devices until they stopped working, but now they become a risk for data breach and ransomware.
- Student to device ratio previously at 4:1 for student devices, but that ratio is no longer effective; current ratio is at least 2:1; need to decide how to sustain and fund
- Is there an advocacy piece needed for technology replacement given the shift to having technology in classrooms?
- Over how many years do we amortize computer technology?
 - Amortize over 5 years
 - Useful life of technology: 5 years for teacher classroom laptops, and 7 years for Chromebooks/iPads
 - Would like to plan for 5 year budget cycle and extend where possible
- Are the costs in 2023-2024 one-time costs or annual costs?
 - There are some one-time costs included, as there hasn't been an annual amount budgeted for the past two years and we are now at end of life
- Do many students bring their own device to school?
 - Can be challenging with different devices, easier to manage if same standard and all can connect to Wi-Fi
- At what age do students use devices in Elementary?

- Varies from class to class; some K classes have no technology, but there is generally more technology in higher grades
- Important to consider other items, such as insurance coverage should devices be damaged or destroyed (family insurance if child's device); having personal items in schools adds complexity

Building Consensus – Small Group Discussions/Share Out

a. Operating Surplus and Operating Reserve

This item was deferred to the March 2, 2023 meeting due to lack of time.

b. Operating Capital Reserves

This item was deferred to the March 2, 2023 meeting due to lack of time.

c. Custodial Services Options

The Committee broke into small groups to discuss the following questions regarding the Custodial Services Options:

- Which is your preferred option? Provide rationale.
- If budget limitations required us to add fewer than 10 custodians, which of the alternative options would you choose? Provide rationale.
- Should the District enforce some, if not all, of the cost-free implementations given the immediate positive impact on custodial workload?

Groups took notes and reported the following:

Which is your preferred option? Provide rationale.

- Option 2: 5am start
 - more undisturbed cleaning time = more bang for buck
 - morale enhancing
 - presence of daytime custodian
 - 50% elementary; use emergency service
- Option 2: 5am start
 - Extra hour significantly increases day custodian's ability to clean without students
 - Workload increase for afternoon shift (as a result of day staff not being able to pitch in) has resulted in significant injury and burnout
- Alternate Option: 5:30am start
 - If they can achieve efficiencies
 - 5 am seems too early
- Option 2: 5 am start
 - Extra cleaning during the day
- Option 2: 5 am start
 - When the school is empty, cleaning is done more quickly
 - In year 2 of the pandemic, there was less funding and everyone started at 5am
 - Ability to start at 5am is new!
 - Unhoused are moved on earlier

If budget limitations required us to add fewer than 10 custodians, which of the alternative options would you choose? Provide rationale.

- +7 afternoon
- +7 afternoon

- Reduction of cleaning square feet is best, but most expensive
- Island average is 25,000 square feet; SD61 is above average
- Pandemic changed need for daytime FTE
- No retirements coming in the current year
- Large workforce = ebb and flow
- Comes down to how much budget needs to be reduced to balance. Need to be aware of cost of burnout, injury, redirecting admin staff to clean waste, facilities impact
- +7 afternoon
 - Only if we can't have 10 custodians
 - Strong preference for 10 custodians
- +3 afternoon
 - Square footage lower than current
 - Not paying \$140K extra for daily cleaned desktops versus 2x week at K-1
 - Only 2-4 districts in Province have daytime custodians

Should the District enforce some, if not all, of the cost-free implementations given the immediate positive impact on custodial workload?

- Agreed to all cost-free implementations; good ideas
- Likely need to have a bit of a discussion first, but need to build consensus
- Support cost-free implementations
 - Central garbage in K-5 helpful
 - Classroom tidy easier in K-5; less likely in Middle and Secondary
 - Pack in pack out lunch helpful
 - Portables being underused is an issue
 - Less spaces allowed for lunch use
 - Take workload down, bring up morale, less sick days when lessened workload
- Support cost-free implementations
 - Room readiness
 - Use kids to help as much as possible
- All cost-free implementations should be enforced
 - Classroom education
 - Limit carpets
 - One garbage can
 - No appliances or furniture

Work Plan

The Committee reviewed the draft work plan for upcoming meetings including music options and building consensus towards making recommendations to the Board.

Questions

The following questions were received by email following the meeting:

- I see that the information about the March 7 open budget meeting has gone out. Can you speak on Thursday about what the BAC's role is at this meeting? Will we be at tables as moderators or participants? Do we need to RSVP to Caroline?
- I would like to propose that the terms of reference or guiding principles be amended to possibly include something along these lines: "That when considering recommendations for cuts (or savings), the Budget Advisory Committee members receive detailed information about the expected impacts that such reductions would have on students, staff, and infrastructure at SD61 schools."
- Can the budget committee receive information about the \$600,000 that was cut from the EA on call budget that may not get added back to this year's budget? (It is my understanding that this is in addition to the \$1.2 million from EA and school assistant positions that have not been filled this year - please correct me if this info is not accurate.) We've heard from VCPAC members that they would like to see a substantial amount of this money reinvested in EA recruitment and retention. It is a big concern of ours that without being able to staff our schools adequately with qualified EAs, we are not meeting the needs of disabled students in our district and are therefore violating their human rights. VCPAC is hearing from parents that their number one issue about the budget issue this year is student support, especially in the areas of EAs and counselling.

Next Meeting: March 2, 2023 6pm-8pm via ZOOM

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:12 p.m.