

MINUTES OF THE ANCHORAGE SCHOOL BOARD
SPECIAL MEETING OF JANUARY 26, 2006

The Anchorage School Board met in Regular Session on Thursday, January 26, 2006, at 5:05 p.m. in the Board Room, at the Anchorage School District Administration Building. President, Jeff Friedman, presided.

A. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, FLAG SALUTE, Jeff Friedman Presiding

Board Members Present: Tim Steele, Mary Marks, Jeff Friedman, Crystal Kennedy, Macon Roberts, and John Steiner. Jake Metcalfe joined the meeting by telephone.

Others Present: Jan Christensen, Enid Hunter, Mike Henry, Patricia McRae, Jerry Sjolander, Leslie Vandergaw, Janet Stokesbary, George Vakalis, Ray Amsden, Michelle Egan, Larry Wiget, LTC David Jones, William Johnson, Johanna Lee, the press, and other interested people.

B. AWARDS/RECOGNITIONS/PRESENTATIONS

Mr. Friedman explained that a group of Russian principals is visiting the District. Ms. Mary Bristol noted that the principals are here in conjunction with Civitas. This program provides and encourages experiences for educators both in Russia and in the United States that increase their knowledge of civil society. She introduced Ms. Svetlana Sokolova from Vladivostok, Ms. Tatyana Zheltova from the Sakhalin Islands, Svetlana Pozyomina from Kamchatka, and Ekaterina Borisova from Magadan. Ms. Sokolova explained that this visit is important as it allows them to share opinions and have discussions about the educational systems both in the United States and in Russia. It was noted that the group will be spending some in-depth time with principals at a number of schools in the District.

C. SCHOOL BOARD COMMENTS

Ms. Marks reported that she will be in Washington, DC next week and will miss the second reading of the budget.

Ms. Comeau noted that there will be a joint work session with the Assembly on the proposed school bonds tomorrow, January 27, from 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. at City Hall.

C. PERSONS TO BE HEARD NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Ms. Dawn Will, the parent of a District high school student, addressed the Board in support of the seminar program. She asked that the Board consider re-funding the Socratic Seminar Program. She attested to the positive benefits of the program, including the way the curriculum inspires creativity, encourages critical thinking, supports teamwork, and enhances the development of a bold civic conscience. She voiced her appreciation to the Board and the Administration for having provided the program and her sorrow that the funding was cut last year. Mr. Steele asked for clarification on whether the money that had been cut from this program was money for professional development and training. Ms. Comeau noted that the high school education division has continued to support this program even though line item funding was eliminated. Mr. Henry explained that there was a \$40,000 reduction in the Paideia funding. The money was from contracted services and had to do with training opportunities. Principals were told that they could certainly continue to request funding in support of those programs. Mr. Henry noted that he has received substantial requests this year and has funded every one of the requests through unallocated funds. While there is no longer a line item in the contracted services for this program, it is certainly being funded through unallocated high school resources. In response to another question, Mr. Henry assured Mr. Steele that the programs are not at risk and, in fact, are thriving and growing.

Mr. Marty Decker, a teacher at Chugiak High School, extended his appreciation for maintaining the Socratic Seminar/Paideia programs. He felt that it was important to assure long term continuation of the programs by re-establishing a line item in the budget for them. Mr. Decker reviewed several unique features of the Seminar Program, including the fact that they do not use text books. They use primary source materials. The curriculum is flexible and progressive and, therefore, frequently requires the purchase of new resources and materials. He noted that his students had to purchase their own book materials this year. The line item funds are important in order that these programs have the assurance that they are being supported with funds that will provide the materials for them. He explained that the funds are used not only for the purchase of materials, but also for providing training for seminar teachers and for parent and adult coaches. He strongly believed that the money needs to be there for long-term permanence, development, and encouragement of the alternative learning program that has nearly 1,000 students involved across the District.

Ms. Kennedy asked Mr. Decker to explain his understanding of program funding this year and his specific concerns for future funding. She also asked him to comment on program training and teacher turnover. Mr. Decker explained that they had been operating since the beginning of the year under the impression that no money was available for the program. Traditionally, training has been offered to both current and new program teachers on an annual basis. Training has also been available for middle school teachers. Mr. Decker noted that several things, such as developing new curriculum, the volume of reading required to find supporting materials for the curriculum, essay writing, large hands-on projects, and out-of-school experiences, all of which take a great deal of time and energy, contribute to staff burn-out leading to teacher turnover.

Ms. Comeau noted that there is obviously a need for better communication. The high school division is committed to working with the principals at seminar schools in order to support these programs and this information needs to be communicated to seminar staff.

Mr. Roberts questioned whether tests scores are higher for seminar students. If so, he wondered whether that should be attributed to the type of students attracted to the program or to actual program contents and methods. Mr. Decker explained that the program is not an accelerated program and that there are many special education students and resource students in the programs. He indicated that the program reflects the general student population. So he believed that it is not that the program draws higher caliber students, but that students in the program are surrounded by an environment which brings them to a higher level.

Ms. Comeau noted that there is no question that this is a valuable program. The issue is that cuts had to be made in the budget and hard choices had to be made. Mr. Steiner explained that he understands that budgetary needs for the seminar program are not necessarily consistent year-to-year or school-to-school. He noted that when there is a line item in the budget for a particular amount there is a perception that the program has to spend that amount. One of the benefits of having the money in an unallocated account is that it allows the administration to determine where the needs are and distribute the money appropriately. On the other hand, approved programs such as the World Discovery Seminar at Chugiak High School, should not go wanting. Mr. Steiner suggested that allocating some of the unallocated funds might be warranted given that the funds are being used for the seminar programs anyway. The difficulty is determining how much to allocate to the program. He also suggested that, to the extent that a student in the

seminar class would otherwise be in a regular program class, some of the funds that would go to curricular materials to support that student in the regular program could be allocated to the seminar program. Mr. Decker reported that the amount that had been received by the World Discovery Seminar was \$35 per student per year. He supported the idea of building a line item in the budget so that the teachers and students in the seminar programs know that the program has long term solidity and that the program is not at the whim of any particular individual's support or lack of support. Ms. Comeau noted that Mr. Henry works with all of the principals to determine how resources are allocated within their schools. Mr. Henry explained that the unallocated funds in the high school division are unallocated because it is often difficult to determine what the needs will be in the variety of programs within the various schools. That money is allocated through requests made by the high school principals. Funds are not offered to individual teachers or programs or department chairs. Administrators at all of the high schools were notified at the beginning of the year that even though the line item was cut, there were funds available to support these programs. Mr. Henry indicated that he would be looking into the apparent communication issue with Chugiak High School.

Mr. Ehren Will, a student in the World Discovery Seminar program at Chugiak High School, related his experience in the program. He credited the program for helping him develop a strong work ethic and a broader understanding of the world. He explained how the program offered him an alternative means of learning and provided him a great opportunity to succeed. Mr. Friedman added that any program that inspires a student to testify at a school board meeting speaks for itself.

Ms. KJ Farley, a certified Paideia coach and the parent of two District students, testified that the seminar budget needs to be a line item in order to facilitate planning. Program training needs to be done at the beginning of the year and needs to be planned in advance. Coaches also need to be lined up at the beginning of the year. Ms. Farley explained that the annual Seminar Symposium also needs to be planned in advance. She stated that the program has been funded for over 20 years and she encouraged the Board to re-fund the program.

Mr. Chad Sant, a seminar teacher at Service High School, voiced his relief that there is certainty that the program is not at risk. He also voiced his belief that the Board will support the programs now and in the future. He indicated that it didn't make any difference to him whether the support

came in the form of discretionary funding or a line item in the budget, as long as the program continues to be as solid as it has been over the years.

Ms. Linda Berg, the parent of a World Discovery Seminar student at Chugiak High School, indicated that she was glad to hear that there is support for the seminar program. She would like to see specific funding restored to allow for planning. She related how seminar parents are able to see their students become mature adult thinkers through participation in these programs.

Mr. Friedman reviewed the history of budget cuts over the past several years. He noted that the Board and the Administration would love to add funds to a number of areas. He encouraged everyone to contact their legislators because their decisions have a huge impact on District funding issues. Mr. Steele particularly encouraged students to share their feelings and concerns with their legislators.

Ms. Kathy Bell, the school nurse from Lake Hood Elementary School, and Ms. Gail White, the school nurse from Goldenvue Middle School, addressed the question of why the District employs Registered Nurses (RNs) rather than Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs). Ms. Bell began by explaining that the education and preparation of an LPN does not prepare them to work independently. She also explained that, by law, an RN is accountable for assessing the patient care situation. If the task is done by an LPN in a school setting an RN would also have to complete an assessment, causing a duplication of service. RNs in the schools provide acute, chronic, episodic, and emergency health care. Ms. Bell reviewed the extensive list of responsibilities of the school nurse. The American Academy of Pediatrics as well as the National Association for School Nurses have determined that the minimum qualifications for the professional school nurse in a District setting similar to ASD should include licensure as a Registered Nurse and a baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university. Ms. Bell noted that the school nurse works to promote the health of children and youth by facilitating the development of comprehensive school health programs, insuring a medical home for each child, and integrating health, education and social services at the community level.

Mr. Steele commented that the Board had received an email that indicated that the level of nursing necessary in schools should be looked into. He voiced his belief that RNs are needed in the schools and that they are a great asset to their schools.

Mr. Roberts questioned whether there are enough RNs for each school in the District. Ms. Bell noted that there are currently no LPNs employed by the District. There is an RN at each school although some schools have less than a full-time RN, depending on the school needs and student population. Mr. Steiner commented that when the issue first came up, it was suggested that taking temperatures and applying bandaids does not require an RN certification. He indicated that he is persuaded that the responsibilities of a school nurse could not be accomplished by someone with less education or certification.

Ms. Marks voiced her appreciation to the speakers, noting that the Board values their work. She also noted that the teachers and the students value their school nurses as well.

Ms. Comeau recognized all of the school nurses in attendance and thanked them for the incredible job they do for our students and our schools.

Ms. Julie Maker, principal at Goldenview Middle School, reiterates the value of the RNs in the District. Ms. Maker listed several of the important roles filled by RNs including being on the front line in interpreting medical records, acting as the liaison between the school and the student's physician, working on the IEPs to establish accommodations, and developing health care plans. Ms. Maker reminded everyone that several of the schools have been established as Emergency Shelters for the community and that, in the event of a disaster, the school nurse is likely to be the highest qualified medical person on site.

Mr. Glen Nielsen, principal at Denali Elementary School, voiced his support for RNs in the schools. He explained how important having an RN has been to his students and staff. The nurse's assistance is particularly important for students with IEPs. Ms. Marks questioned whether Mr. Nielsen has a part-time or full-time school nurse at Denali Elementary School. Mr. Nielsen indicated that he now has a full-time RN, but he has worked in situations where there was not a full-time nurse. He strongly advocated for full-time nurses in all District schools. Ms. Marks questioned what happens when students need medication or other nursing care and the nurse is not on duty at the school. Mr. Nielsen explained that RNs are qualified to provide training to other staff members to provide certain services, such as dispensing medication, to children. Mr. Friedman noted that part-time nursing coverage in schools is another issue that our legislators need to hear about as an example of what school districts are forced to do because of funding shortages.

Ms. Kennedy voiced her appreciation for the conversation and the discussion that has resulted from the questions being asked by board members. She questioned whether there is an issue regarding the certification of nurses who are providing training in terms of No Child Left Behind and Highly Qualified Teachers. Ms. Comeau clarified that there are no conflicts or issues with No Child Left Behind requirements because they address core subject areas and health is not included on their list of core subjects. However, RNs would be considered “Highly Qualified” because of the education required for licensure.

Lt. Gardner Cobb spoke in support of the Youth Reception Center. He noted that the Center is a good program that provides a stop-gap in the juvenile justice system and is worthy of continued funding. He explained that when the police take a juvenile into custody for situations where incarceration is not indicated they attempt to locate a parent or relative to take custody of the child. When the police are unable to locate a responsible adult, for whatever reason, the children can end up at the police station or in the back of police cars for extended periods of time. This was a problem for years until the Youth Reception Center was opened. Lt Cobb referenced the statistics on the program. He noted that one of the real values of the program, in addition to providing a safe place for juveniles, is that assessments are made of the underlying problems resulting in the behavior that brought the juvenile to the attention of the police. The juveniles are then referred to other programs to assist them in becoming better citizens and better students. The statistics indicate that approximately half of the juveniles taken to the Youth Reception Center over the last few months attend the Anchorage School District.

Mr. Will Hurr, who works at the McLaughlin Youth Center, noted that this program has really been a nice collaboration between ASD, the Anchorage Police Department, the Division of Juvenile Justice, Covenant House and the Municipality of Anchorage. Members of this group have all been working together to identify funding sources. The children served by the Youth Reception Center are those who often fall through the cracks, not quite fitting the bill for the various programs available in the community. Part of the original conversation behind this program was to provide a central place to assess the needs of the children and get them headed back in the right direction. Ms. Deirdre Phayer, executive director of Covenant House, added that this service can be provided to the community only through the support of many groups and she urged the Board to continue to support this partnership.

Mr. Metcalfe questioned whether there is more of a need for this program now than there has been in the past. Lt. Cobb noted that he believes there is a greater need now, explaining that over the last few years all public agencies have been hit with funding reductions, so restrictions increase. When that happens, it results in more kids for which no resources can be found. In addition, the youth population within the city is growing so the need continues to grow. Mr. Metcalfe questioned whether the police department has seen an increase in the number of families in crisis. Lt. Cobb responded that it was his perception that the level of violence in juvenile crime seems to be increasing but he was not sure that, per capita, juvenile crime is rising in the city. He did indicate with some confidence that the severity of problems, when they do come to the attention of the police, is greater. Mr. Metcalfe asked what other resources are available for District students if this program is eliminated. Ms. Phayer responded that the Youth Reception Center is not a duplication of service and unfortunately not many options are available beyond this program.

Mr. Roberts asked what the average length of stay is at the Center. Ms. Phayer reported that the average length of stay at the Covenant House Crisis Center is 14 days. Juveniles taken to the Youth Reception Center stay anywhere from a few hours to becoming intakes into Covenant House.

Mr. Steiner questioned whether grant funding from the District covers all of the expenses for this particular program or if it is only a piece of the overall funding. Ms. Phayer explained that the annual budget for the Crisis Center at Covenant House is just about \$1 million, so the money from ASD is only a piece of the funding needed. She added that the Center is open and fully staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Mr. Steiner commented that it is important to note that of many of the juveniles who end up at the Center are ASD students. So there is a direct link between the District and the Center. Mr. Steiner believed that this funding is a valid use of public funds, particularly given that the District provides only a small piece of the overall funding while a significant number of juveniles served by the program are ASD students.

Ms. Comeau noted that there is clearly a need for this program in this community. The collaborative support of the Youth Reception Center means that no one entity has to carry the entire bill. The new term is "braiding resources" and the idea is that when a community comes together and identifies a problem, all of the players need to contribute to the solution. Ms. Comeau noted that she believes the program is worthy of District funding because our students are benefiting from the services it

provides. When Covenant House assesses the needs of a student and is able to get them hooked up with an appropriate referral, the student comes back to the District healthier than they were when they left. She indicated her hope that the Board will continue to support the Youth Reception Center.

Ms. Kennedy reported that she would be touring Covenant House tomorrow, January 27, and invited other board members to join her.

Mr. John Kito, president of the Anchorage Principals Association (APA) and principal at William Tyson Elementary School, reported that the APA continues to support the superintendent in the current budget process. He noted he wanted to make a statement about the importance of assistant principals and the role they play in the schools. He explained that with all of the additional curricular responsibilities, as well as accountability issues, it becomes very important to be able to address these issues with a full compliment of personnel. He asked the Board to reconsider and put the assistant principal positions back into the budget. Mr. Kito also spoke in support of school nurses, listing many of their responsibilities and how they benefit the District.

Mr. JP Tarbath, a teacher in the seminar program at Service High School, thanked the Board and the administration for the support the program receives. As an economics teacher, Mr. Tarbath voiced his understanding that we live in a world of scarcity and, at the same time, a world of unlimited wants. Acknowledging those facts, he sympathized with the Board as they work to develop the budget. He urged the Board to restore seminar funding as a line item on the budget. Mr. Tarbath asked the Board to consider the benefits that would be derived from stability in planning. He noted, for example, the ability to plan for and pay coaches who are essential to the success of the program. Mr. Steiner requested clarification on the role that coaches play in the program. Mr. Tarbath explained that coaches help directly with the students, allowing more adult interaction in small group discussion.

Ms. Lynn McNamara, the South Central Representative for the Alaska Association of School Librarians and the librarian at the Polaris K-12 School, addressed the Board to urge the restoration of library aides positions. Mr. Steele noted that the Board had received comments indicating that, due to the increase in technology, libraries are not used as much as they used to be, particularly at the high school and middle school levels. Furthermore, it was suggested that resources may be able to be reallocated to the elementary level. Ms. McNamara responded that, in her

experience, libraries continue to be well utilized at the upper grade levels. This is especially true since the libraries are often where the technology is located.

Mr. Steiner noted that the e-mail referred to by Mr. Steele indicated that there was less need for library aides in the high school level, despite the larger number of students, because of the way the resources are used. Ms. McNamara discussed the difference between elementary and high school librarian responsibilities. Mr. Steiner noted that it has been suggested that there is a need for a Districtwide director for library services. He asked whether the speaker felt there is a greater need for a director position or for additional aides in the schools. Ms. McNamara indicated that a director would provide the level of continuity that is missing in the District, so she is strongly in favor of that position. She further noted that a districtwide director would then be able to make the case for keeping library aides in the budget.

The Board went into a ten minute recess at 6:55 p.m.

Mr. Friedman called the meeting back to order at 7:10 p.m., noting that Mr. Roberts had left the meeting due to illness. All other members remain present with Mr. Metcalfe joining by phone.

D. CONSENT AGENDA

ASD Memorandum #180 - FY 2006-2007 Proposed Financial Plan (First Reading)

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board approve and authorize the Superintendent to prepare the Anchorage School District's FY 2006-2007 Proposed Financial Plan as set forth in the projected revenue and expenditure schedules in the memorandum (Attachment A). The total budget recommendation is \$607,436,756. This includes individual fund budgets currently projected as follows:

General Fund	\$ 466,126,541
Food Service Fund	15,000,000
Debt Service Fund	77,310,215
Local/State/Federal Projects Fund	49,000,000
Total - All Funds	<u>\$ 607,436,756</u>

The total of local tax contribution to be requested is \$190,816,153.

It is further recommended that the School Board authorize the Superintendent to adjust the budget expenditure ceiling and the above tax amount in accordance with any adjustment to the base student allocation approved by the Legislature and Governor or to any changes in Charter Schools, enrollment adjustments, State approval of debt retirement projects, and the upper limit of the local tax cap.

ACTION:

Moved by: Crystal Kennedy
seconded by: Tim Steele

To approve ASD Memorandum #180, FY 2006-2007 Proposed Financial Planning on First Reading.

Ms. Comeau explained that the Board is moving from the Preliminary Budget to the Proposed Budget. New information is coming in every day on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rate. She called attention to the notation (on page 2 of the memorandum) that indicates the CPI adjustment results in an increase of local tax revenues of \$663,833 and has not been included in this memorandum pending confirmation by the Municipality of Anchorage Office of Management and Budget. The administration purposefully does not want the Board to expend those resources at this point in time.

Ms. Comeau also reminded the Board that this budget is based on the Governor's recommended budget. Another addition to the memorandum (on page 5) indicates that the administration is carefully monitoring the State's "Bring Our Children Home" initiative. It is projected that sixty students would qualify for an ASD education if they are brought home in the next school year. Those students are not included in these projections but they will have intensive needs and be very expensive students to educate. This situation also reinforces the need to revisit the issue of having more than one count period for special education students. This is important so that as students come in to the system during the year there is a mechanism to access additional funding. Ms. Comeau noted that Attachment B shows the increases and decreases in revenue, and Attachment C shows the summary of the major budget expenditure increases and reductions by department.

Ms. Kennedy questioned whether there is an increase in the number of students qualifying for the Gifted Program. Ms. Merri Kae Vanderploeg

indicated that there is a significant increase. She noted an increase has been seen at the elementary level over the last two years and those students are now moving into the middle schools, which is the reason for the recommendation to increase the middle and high school allocations. Ms. Vanderploeg explained that there has not been an increase in the number of FTEs in the mentorship program for at least the last seven years while the District has added two high schools during that time. She explained that part of the Six-Year Plan for the Gifted Program is to meet the needs of underachieving high school students: those who are identified as gifted but who are not finding success in AP programs or honors classes. In response to a question from Ms. Comeau, she explained the need for an additional kindergarten teacher and a teacher's assistant for the IA program at Rogers Park Elementary School, noting that the program has seen a significant increase in numbers. Last year, there were 26 students in a combination K-1 class. Ms. Vanderploeg explained the difficulty faced trying to meet the needs of gifted students in combination K-1 classes, particularly when class size is large. Ms. Comeau explained that the Gifted Program is no longer part of the Special Education budget.

Mr. Steiner commented on the number of suggestions that had been received from the public. Ms. Comeau acknowledged that numerous suggestions had been received from people who took our invitation to make suggestions on the budget very seriously. She reported that the administration is looking very closely at those suggestions. For example, several people have encouraged the administration to look at the current middle school model. While the model is thought to be very effective, Ms. Comeau acknowledged that there are some serious issues with flexibility of scheduling and elective opportunity. There is a recommendation in the proposed budget to reduce one planning period for middle school elective teachers which should increase elective opportunities for students. Another suggestion under review is looking at the role of teacher experts in the District and whether they are being appropriately utilized. She thanked everyone who spent the time to come to the community hearings and those who had very thoughtfully made comments and suggestions.

In reference to the seminar programs, Mr. Steiner requested Ms. Comeau's thoughts on the notion that if unallocated funds are available for that program now, whether it would be appropriate to segment some foundational amount, averaged across all of the schools that have such a program, as a separate line item in the budget. Ms. Comeau explained that she strongly believes that school administrators need to meet with their faculty, look at the student data, identify their priorities and analyze the needs within those programs. She does not believe that it is necessary

to establish a line item for the program in each school just to have it there. In any particular year, one school may have greater needs than others. It is the responsibility of the high school division to prioritize the needs at all of the schools. For that reason, she felt that designating the funds as unallocated is more appropriate in order to make sure that the schools are able to defend their requests. Mr. Steiner clarified that he was thinking of a Districtwide line item which would continue to be allocated to the individual schools through the high school division. Ms. Comeau noted that the needs of the seminar programs change from year to year. She reiterated that she believes that it is better to have the money designated in an unallocated account with a clear understanding that the schools need to bring their issues forward at the beginning of the year. In addition, she strongly believed that students should not have to pay for their learning materials and assured the Board that she and Mr. Henry would be following up on the earlier report about that situation.

Mr. Henry explained that it would be a misconception to believe that by having money in a designated line item it is somehow protected from budget cuts. He noted that the program had been a designated line item which was eliminated last year. He did believe, however, that people would feel more secure with line item recognition but noted that there is no protection in that designation. He would support a line item in the budget just to recognize those programs and identify that there is money set aside for them every year.

Mr. Steiner requested information as to the base amount that will predictably be needed by these programs every year be provided before the Second Reading of the Proposed Budget.

Mr. Steele thanked the public for their comments and suggestions. In light of some of those comments, he asked where the District stands in terms of efforts to improve energy efficiency. Ms. Comeau reported that the administration had met with representatives from Siemens on that issue. The District is committed to launch an initiative with all schools and departments to increase the focus on turning off the lights, the computers and other electronics when leaving classrooms and offices. Mr. Vakalis reported that, over the years, many companies have approached the District with ideas on ways to save energy. In addition, the District has a certified energy auditor on staff. He explained that there are programs on the computer system that can identify high energy usage by individual schools. The system also allows the District to make assessments within schools as to the cause of high energy usage. He reviewed several ways that the District has impacted energy use, such as

changing out ballasts and light bulbs, replacing windows, and requiring energy efficiencies in construction projects including equipment, insulations and even the way projects are sited. Mr. Vakalis noted that the District is always willing to listen to suggestions and to try to make improvements. He assured the Board that he is looking at any means possible to save money in the energy arena.

With no further questions from the Board, Mr. Friedman called for budget amendments.

Ms. Marks thanked the staff for their outstanding work on responding to questions from the Board.

MOTION TO AMEND:

Moved by: Mary Marks
seconded by: Crystal Kennedy

To amend the proposed budget to raise the musical instrument user fee from \$35 to \$40.

Ms. Marks explained that playing a musical instrument involves making sacrifices. She further noted that families, regardless of income, find a way to get those items that are important to them and that there is more involvement by the student and the family when such sacrifices are made. Ms. Kennedy asked whether it is possible to make the fee payable by semester so that students who do not want to continue after one semester would not incur the cost of an entire year. Ms. Comeau noted that an installment payment plan can be looked at to see what impact it would have on the music department staff. In response to an earlier discussion, Ms. Comeau stated that payment arrangements could be made to assist families who can not afford to pay the fee at one time. Ms. Jean Lenoir noted that providing a semester payment option would create additional work for both the administrative assistant and for the teachers and would cut into instructional time. Ms. Kennedy questioned whether there are payment options or waivers available for those who truly cannot afford the fee. Ms. Lenoir explained that, while there is not a formal plan for waivers, the Music Department has been able to identify the needs and make waivers available when necessary.

Mr. Steiner requested a historical review of the musical instrument fees. It was reported that the fee has gone from \$10 six years ago, up to \$15 last year, and to \$25 this year. He also asked the value of the instruments that students are able to use for a year for that fee. Ms. Lenoir explained that instrument costs range from about \$200 for flutes to \$1200 for tubas and

string basses. Ms. Comeau noted that there is a reason to charge a fee and she believed that it invests the students and the families in using District property. Mr. Steiner asked how many instruments are going out and how much of an impact a \$5 increase per instrument will have on the budget. The increase will amount to about \$3,500 per year.

Ms. Kennedy wondered whether there are lease-purchase options for musical instruments available in the community. It was reported that most of the music stores in town offer rent-to-own programs. Costs for these programs vary depending upon the instrument, ranging from about \$25 per month for flutes to a significantly higher cost for cellos and similar instruments. Ms. Marks stressed the importance of being accountable and responsible for a particular instrument as a unique and meaningful learning opportunity. Mr. Steiner questioned whether the superintendent believed that this suggested increase would harm the program. Ms. Comeau did not believe that the increase would be detrimental to the program and supported the amendment to raise the fee to \$40 a year.

VOTE on AMENDMENT:

Ayes: Steiner, Kennedy, Friedman
Metcalf, Marks, Steele

Nays: None

Absent: Roberts

MOTION PASSED

INTERIM MOTION:

Moved by: Tim Steele
seconded by:

To instruct the superintendent to spend an extra effort on recovering instruments and other debts owed to the District.

Mr. Steele explained that he made this motion in light of the amount of money reported in uncollectible debt. Ms. Comeau stated that the point is well taken, but she noted that the staff members with outstanding instruments or books work very hard to make sure that all of those items are collected. The motion dies for lack of a second.

Mr. Friedman passed the gavel to Ms. Kennedy in order to make a motion.

MOTION TO AMEND:

Moved by: Jeff Friedman
seconded by: John Steiner

That the District not renew its membership in CUBE and that \$6,750 be transferred from the School Board budget line 3410, contracted services, to line 1099, non-departmental budget.

Mr. Friedman explained that he values the District's membership in national organizations but does not think that we benefit as much from the Council of Urban Boards of Education (CUBE) as we could if the money was used in another way. This change would not mean that members could not attend the national conference. He noted that the CUBE fee also pays for membership in the National School Board Association. Ms. Comeau reported that there is a way to retain membership in NSBA if the decision is made to drop CUBE membership. During discussion a discrepancy was identified between the budgeted amount for CUBE and NSBA membership and the actual current cost. After verifying the information, Ms. Comeau clarified that membership in NSBA and CUBE together is \$10,500. If CUBE membership is dropped, renewal in NSBA would be \$7,250. So it would be necessary to add around \$1000 to what is in the budget in order to maintain the NSBA membership.

Ms. Marks reminded the Board that she had originally brought up the issue when she requested information regarding the comparative benefits between CUBE and the Council of Great City Schools. She stated that, after reviewing the information, she is not convinced that the District should discontinue their membership with CUBE. She felt that the relationship the District has already established with NSBA is important. She indicated that she would not be supporting the amendment.

Ms. Comeau explained that the governance structure of the Council of Great City Schools is made up of half school board members and half superintendents. It is governed jointly, with the presidency rotating each year between board members and superintendents.

Mr. Metcalfe stated that he would not be supporting this amendment and that he felt we need to be in both organizations. Mr. Steiner questioned whether there is a premium cost to attend NSBA conferences for nonmembers. Ms. Comeau confirmed that the nonmember rate would be higher. Mr. Steiner explained that he tends to support the motion to drop

out of CUBE but hesitates due to the loss of relationship with NSBA. He requested specific information as to the additional cost of attending conferences should the District drop out of NSBA altogether. He would prefer to get additional information before voting on the motion. Mr. Steele stated that he would not be supporting the motion, explaining that he believes there is value to CUBE membership and that he definitely did not support leaving NSBA. Mr. Steiner stated that he will not be supporting the motion, reserving the possibility to revisit the question at the next reading after reviewing the information about the additional conference costs for nonmembers. Mr. Friedman commented that, if the decision was made to continue membership in these organizations, he hoped board members would take full advantage of the opportunities afforded by membership in these organizations.

VOTE on AMENDMENT:

Ayes: Friedman
Nays: Steiner, Kennedy,
Metcalf, Marks, Steele
Absent: Roberts
MOTION FAILED

Ms. Kennedy returned the gavel to Mr. Friedman. Mr. Friedman noted that an adjustment is required in order to bring the budget into balance given the new information on the CUBE membership fee. Ms. Comeau noted that the logistics in balancing the budget with the new information would be worked out before second reading. Ms. Laule suggested that the additional income from instrument fees be added to the unallocated funds on the expenditure side in order to show a balance on this reading. The Board approved this action by unanimous consent.

VOTE on the MAIN MOTION with the new total of funds \$466,130,041:

Ayes: Steiner, Kennedy, Friedman
Metcalf, Marks, Steele
Nays: None
Absent: Roberts
MOTION PASSED

Ms. Comeau requested that the Board forward any questions or additional requests for information to her by tomorrow, January 27.

I. PERSONS TO BE HEARD ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

J. COMMUNICATIONS & SCHOOL BOARD COMMENTS

Ms. Marks noted that she would appreciate the opportunity to join the Second Reading of the budget via telephone next week as she will be in Washington, DC.

Mr. Steele noted that there are a number of items that he would like to be able to add back into the budget. He recognized that the priorities, even though they were difficult to make, were necessary for a balanced budget. Ms. Comeau explained that one of the most important things that can be done is for the Board to use the information regarding the cost of the cut items when talking to legislators. The legislators want to know what the District wants and what the cost would be.

K. EXECUTIVE SESSION - PERSONNEL/FINANCE/NEGOTIATIONS
LITIGATION

L. ADJOURNMENT

The Special Meeting of January 26, 2006, was adjourned by unanimous consent at 8:15 p.m.

Jeff Friedman, President

John Steiner, Clerk

Johanna Lee, Recording Secretary

Date Minutes Approved