

MINUTES OF THE ANCHORAGE SCHOOL BOARD
REGULAR MEETING OF JANUARY 31, 2007

The Anchorage School Board met in Regular Session on Wednesday, January 31, 2007, 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: John Steiner, Macon Roberts, Crystal Kennedy, Jeff Friedman, Mary Marks, and Tim Steele

Board Members Excused: Jake Metcalfe

Others Present: Carol Comeau, Rhonda Gardner, Leslie Vandergaw, Mike Henry, Patricia McRae, Enid Silverstein, Jerry Sjolander, Eric Tollefsen, Michelle Egan, Robb Boyer, Janet Stokesbary, George Vakalis, William Johnson, Ray Amsden, Pam Chenier, Marie Laule, Johanna Lee, the press, and other interested people.

B. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved by unanimous consent.

C. SCHOOL BOARD COMMENTS

Mr. Friedman noted that the Board has received and reviewed all of the correspondence received from the public regarding the proposed financial plan. He explained that the Board considers all forms of correspondence equally, whether via email, phone calls or formal testimony as will be heard during the meeting.

Mr. Steiner voiced appreciation for the work done on the Financial Plan. He also voiced his frustration with the whole process. He explained that it is, however, a process that we legitimately have to go through because we are required to present a balanced budget and we are required to do it in a specific time frame. He hoped that systemic changes could be made in the future so that the District can have better knowledge of what to expect in terms of revenues earlier in the budgeting process.

Mr. Roberts reported that there will be a Legislative Subcommittee meeting on Monday, February 5, 2007 from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. in

conference room 150. He also noted that several Board members will be going to Juneau later in February to lobby the Legislature. He encouraged everyone to email or call their legislators to voice their support for the Board in their request for additional funding for education throughout Alaska.

Mr. Friedman presented an overview of the budget in response to questions that have been raised regarding the huge increases to the general fund over the last few years. He noted that in the last four years (including this coming year) the general fund has increased by 48.88% or approximately 12% per year. However without the 400% increase in PRS/TRS mandated retirement contribution the general fund has only increased an average of 5% per year. This figure is much closer to what most people would consider a reasonable increase to education funding. That overall 5% includes almost 10% annual increases in Special Education, 69% annual increases in heat for buildings, 11% annual increases in electricity, 27% for fuel, and almost 10% for water and sewer. All of these expenses are beyond the control of the District. When discussing the large general fund increases it is important to understand that the District is doing a very efficient job of providing very good education with staff that deserves better pay and with students who deserve more fully funded programs. There are a lot of programs that are being short-funded because of short-sighted funding levels at the state level.

Ms. Comeau thanked everyone who has sent emails, noting that she was continuing to work her way through the hundreds that she has received. She reiterated that the written testimony is being taken very seriously. She also thanked everyone who has taken the time to email their legislators to emphasize the importance of inflation-proofing the education funding formula. The governor's proposal is much appreciated but still reflects a cut as flat funding does not cover increases to fixed costs within the budget. At a minimum there needs to be forward funding and inflation-proofing to enable the District to stop this terrible exercise of cutting programs at the beginning of the process and then spending months in turmoil asking for additional funding with students, employees and the community upset. She encouraged everyone to stay involved, contacting both legislators and assemblymen.

D. PERSONS TO BE HEARD - FY 2007-2008 Proposed Financial Plan

Mr. Steiner suggested that the Persons to be Heard testimony be given during discussion of the motion on the Proposed Financial Plan as it all pertains to the budget. It was unanimously agreed to proceed in that manner.

E. CONSENT AGENDA

Consent Agenda is attached. **All attachments referred to in memoranda Recommendations are on file in the Superintendent's office.**

ASD Memorandum # 177 - FY 2007-2008 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 2007-2008 Proposed Financial Plan as set forth in the projected revenue and expenditure schedules in the memorandum (Attachment A). The total budget recommendation is \$698,818,817. This includes individual fund budgets currently projected as follows:

	<u>FY 2007-2008 Financial Plan</u>
General Fund	\$ 547,555,803
Food Service Fund	16,322,000
Debt Service Fund	79,206,014
Local/State/Federal Grants Fund	<u>55,735,000</u>
Total - All Funds	<u>\$ 698,818,817</u>

The total of local tax contribution to be requested is \$207,191,972.

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 (BSA) 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: John Steiner
Seconded by: Tim Steele

To approve the Administration's recommendation and authorize the Superintendent to prepare the Anchorage School District's FY 2007-2008 Proposed Financial Plan as set forth in the projected revenue and expenditure schedules in the memorandum (Attachment A). The total budget recommendation is \$698,818,817. This includes individual fund budgets currently projected as follows: General Fund - \$547,555,803; Food Service Fund - \$16,322,000; Debt Service Fund - \$79,206,014; Local/State/Federal Grants Fund - \$55,735,000. The total of all Funds is \$698,818,817. The total of local tax contribution to be requested is \$207,191,972.

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Ms. Comeau reviewed the memo with particular attention to changes from the original recommendations that were presented in the preliminary plan. Since the administrative review last week the District has notified that, because of declining enrollment, the amount of the School Improvement Grant allocation will be reduced from the amount that was budgeted for this current year. Adjustments will have to be made to the current budget for this decrease. At this point, the FY 2007-2008 projection for the School Improvement Grant has not been reduced. In

addition, the updated CPI rate of 3.2% for Anchorage in 2006 is .7% less than the rate used for FY 2007-2008 budgetary planning. The upper limit of the tax cap that the District is eligible for is contingent upon the CPI, population growth and other factors

Ms. Comeau asked the Board to seriously consider not making major changes in the expenditure sections of the budget at this point because there are so many unknowns. Once funding is settled, later in the spring, final decisions will be made. Ms. Comeau pointed out that one change that has been made is the reinstatement of \$280,400 for boy's hockey in the high school program along with the addition of a corresponding increase in revenues. This is done with the clear understanding that a committee will be formed to work out the details of a fee structure for hockey as well as other sports that have outside use of District facilities' expenditures associated with them. The revenue associated with the reinstated expenditures will have to be raised.

Ms. Comeau reminded everyone that the District's enrollment is projected to decline by about 220 students. When that happens there will be less funding and fewer teachers. This has been a trend over the past three years.

Public Testimony on the FY 2007-2008 Proposed Financial Plan

Mr. Jim Curran, West High School librarian, spoke as a representative of other librarians from elementary, middle school and high school to encourage the Board not to make further cuts to the libraries and library program. He spoke specifically in support of the library liaisons. He reviewed the lengthy list of important responsibilities of the library liaisons.

Ms. Dottie Epps, Sand Lake Elementary School librarian, voiced her concern with the funding cut to the library liaison position. She noted that other specialists have a named person as the leader of the respective departments. These include art, physical education, and music. Library Informational Literacy does not have this type of representation. Librarians have been able to receive the support through the library liaison position. Ms. Epps reviewed past accomplishments of the current library liaisons and many of their ongoing projects. She stressed that, in lieu of the fact that District librarians do not have a director to be their instructional leader and to be an advocate for the concerns of the library

program when districtwide decisions are made, it is vitally important that the funds for the library liaison be retained in the budget.

Mr. Steiner asked Mr. Curran whether the library liaison positions are more critical than the library assistant positions. Mr. Curran indicated that, in the best of all possible worlds, he would ask that there be no cuts to the budget at all. He doesn't believe that it would be possible to achieve all that it is required of librarians without the assistants. It would also be impossible to achieve all of those things without the library liaisons.

Mr. Steele asked how the District would coordinate planning and programs without the library liaisons. Ms. Gardner noted that utilizing an advisory committee made up of an elementary supervisor and representatives from middle and high schools was the vision of how this would proceed. Ms. Comeau noted that all of the specifics on this issue have not been worked out. She reviewed her thought processes as she had made these recommendations noting that they are all difficult and terrible choices. It was felt, specific to middle school, that preserving class size had to be prioritized over the library assistant. Everyone is hopeful that this issue can be looked at again in the spring.

Ms. Leslie McNelly, Tudor Elementary School librarian, noted that the District has attempted to focus budget dollars in areas that influence student achievement and contribute to attaining Adequate Yearly Progress. At the same time the District has continued to significantly reduce the K-12 Library Program budget, a department that significantly contributes to attaining those goals. She reviewed the cuts that the program has experienced and the impact that those cuts have had. Each of the cuts, which may appear to be insignificant when looked at individually, reduces the amount of time that a trained, certificated librarian spends with staff and students, helping them to achieve standards, and increases the time spent on clerical tasks. She offered her opinion that the K-12 Library Program has already endured its share of reductions in staffing and support over the previous decade and the suggested cuts in this budget are not absorbable.

Ms. Kerri Geppert, Williwaw Elementary School librarian, explained that a strong library environment is the heart of any school. She reviewed many contributions that librarians and effective library programs make to meet the challenges of No Child Left Behind. Information literacy and technology skills are critical for students in the 21st century. A school library is the ideal environment for students to develop these skills. The

school librarian serves as a resource for staff development efforts as well as teaming with classroom teachers to deliver effective and meaningful instruction. The job of the elementary and secondary librarian is multifaceted. Not only do they plan and teach lessons aligned with grade level expectations and standards, they also have to manage library collections. The focus of their jobs must be on the students. Taking valuable time away from instruction to handle clerical functions is not an effective use of a professional staff of librarians. ASD librarians are the only curriculum area that functions without a director. The library liaison position fills that gap at a very economical expense to the District. Without the library liaison position there is no individual tasked with providing instructional guidance, training, and mentoring to both new and experienced librarians, or advocating for our school libraries at the District level.

Ms. Marks asked whether the reduction in the budget for the library program will have an impact on the goal of students reading by third grades. Ms. Geppert indicated that removing resources which in turn impact the librarian's ability to spend time on instructional tasks would have a negative impact on the goal of developing readers by third grade.

Ms. Suzanne Metcalfe, Dimond High School librarian, reviewed the responsibilities of library assistants in the secondary schools. Extensive research shows that students who attend schools with strong library programs consistently score higher on standardized tests. A certificated librarian with support is what makes a library program strong. The library standards that are taught in the District touch all curricular areas. School libraries bridge the digital divide for students who do not have electronic access at home. The library assistants perform the clerical and administrative tasks that keep the libraries running so that librarians can do their job. Library assistants support librarians and librarians support students and staff resulting in increased test scores. Ms. Metcalfe contended that cutting library assistants will impede the library program at the high school level and devastate it at the middle school level. Hours will be shortened, services will be cut, librarian-led lessons will be reduced, and teacher-librarian collaborations will be decreased. These are all things that school libraries do to contribute to higher tests scores. She pleaded with the Board to consider reinstating the secondary library assistants.

Ms. Renee Wood, South High School librarian, reminded the Board that one of the five recommendations from the Library Advisory Committee is to establish a library director or coordinator at the administrative level to coordinate the efforts of eighty-plus libraries. Librarians are first and

foremost teachers. They have content standards, performance benchmarks, and curriculum that address the needs of today's students to be information literate and lifelong learners. These standards were adopted by the State in 2000 and added to the ten existing curriculum areas. Librarians are the only curriculum area that does not have a coordinator in Curriculum and Instruction to work with other curriculum areas to align both content and performance standards. This is the case even though the library curriculum touches every one of the other disciplines. With quality leadership, professional librarians, and adequately staffed libraries, the District has a tremendous opportunity to attain the NCLB goal of 100% literacy by 2013.

Mr. Steiner asked Ms. Wood to comment on the interaction between librarians and classroom teachers. Ms. Wood noted that the librarian works with every teacher in the building, especially the English and Social Studies teachers. All of the library programs focus on the new technologies, mainly the different avenues by which we are getting information. The job is to figure out how to infuse the core subject areas with literacy skills so that no matter what area the student is working in they are able to find and evaluate the information they need.

Students Joshua, Collin and Katelyn McDonald spoke in support of the Battle of the Books program. They each reviewed their own experience being involved in the Battle of the Books program and urged the Board to save the program. Joshua encouraged Board members to attend one of the Battle tournaments to see how much the students love the program before making the decision to cut the program.

In light of the number of people signed up to testify on the Battle of the Books, Ms. McRae explained that the recommendation does not cut the entire Battle program. She noted that each school has money to pay someone to be the coach at the school. The individual schools can have "battles" and can "battle" each other. This recommendation would only cut funding for the big districtwide competition. Mr. Steiner asked the students whether they would still want to participate in Battle of the Books if there wasn't any big competition to go to. The students indicated that they would still like Battle of the Books it just might not be as much fun.

Ms. Samantha McNelly, currently an ASD freshman, spoke in support of Battle of the Books and explained how the program positively impacted her and other students. She noted that Battle of the Books is as much an academic program as it is a competition, but the aspect of competition

serves as a motivator for many students. Battles of the Books is a program that allows students who are not athletic but still have a competitive edge to compete. All people have a right to show their strengths and if reading is your strength you should be allowed the opportunity to compete in your area of expertise. Samantha indicated her belief that there was no better way for the District to spend the small amount money in question than on a program that helps students academically, encourages students to read worthwhile books, teaches them about competition and shows them how to work hard to get what they really want.

Ms. Alta Collins, Chester Valley Elementary librarian and one of the ASD coordinators for Battle of the Books, asked that the Board reinstate the budget for Battle of the Books. She understood that the addendum will be left in place for the building reps. The recommended budget reduction provides addenda for the District coordinators, pays the District's program registration which is necessary to get the questions for the program, and purchases awards. By far the largest amount goes to fund substitutes for the coaches so that they can run the districtwide tournament. Ms. Collins noted that Battle of the Books is a reading program that is sponsored by Alaska Association of School Librarians and is meant to encourage students to read from a diverse selection of books and then excel and take pride in the fact that they can read. The program reaches regular students, special education students, and gifted students. It encourages them to read for pleasure and to share their favorites with friends. Battle of the Books builds readers and the love of reading leads to higher standardized test scores. In a review of the cost of the program, Ms. Collins noted that the budget comes out to very little cost per each of the close to 6500 students participating in the program. She encouraged the Board to make the investment for our students.

Mr. Steele voiced his concern with the fact that the registration fee is included in the \$15,000 reduction and that without paying the registration there is no way for the individual schools to get access to the questions needed to run Battle of the Books. Ms. Collins noted that many teams write their own questions but registration provides the District access to all of the practice level questions, the district level questions, and gains access to state level competition for district teams. She noted that the cost of registration is about \$900.

Ms. Janelle Larson, Nunanaka Valley Elementary librarian, spoke on behalf of the districtwide Battle of the Books competition. She noted that students benefit from Battle of the Books by being part of a team, learning how to be on a team, learning how to be a good teammate, learning how

to compete and still have fun, and learning how to treat others with respect. Participants come to understand that the real winners are those who know how to persevere and behave with dignity whether they win or lose. The goal of the program is for the children to have fun and learn to enjoy the competition. Ms. Larson asked the Board to take a second look at the Battle of the Books budget and consider the impact that that program has had on the thousands of students who have participated. She also invited the Board to attend the Anchorage Area District Battle of the Books tournament at West High School next week.

Ms. Donna Dart spoke as a parent of a participant in the Battle of the Books. Her own experience involved a special education student who joined a team with two gifted students. She reviewed all of the benefits that her child gained from his participation. Ms. Marks asked whether there are cassettes of the books for non-readers. Ms. Larson noted that the cassettes are very expensive but that there are teachers who record their own cassettes for their students. There are also students that record themselves reading and there are student buddies who help read with other students.

Ms. Linda Julliard, a teacher and coach, spoke in support of Battle of the Books in hopes that the Board would restore funding to its previously level. She noted that Battle of the Books engages boys in a way that she hadn't anticipated when she first became involved with the program. She attributed this to the opportunity it provides to "battle" and compete. She asked the Board to please reconsider restoring the Battle of the Books budget for the benefit of all students.

Russell Gingras, an Aquarian Charter School student explained that he has participated in the Battle of the Books for three years. He reviewed the skills that he has gained by participating in the program. He thanked the Board for providing the Battle of the Books program and asked that they continue to fund it in the future.

Ms. Heidi Tsukada, one of the District's Battle of the Books coaches, testified to our need to glorify readers. She asked how many children would grow up to be professional athletes and yet athletic programs are glorified and supported. By teaching our children to read we have given them endless potential to reach their goals.

Ms. Catherine Jones, principal of the AVAIL program, spoke on behalf of AVAIL in hopes that the Board could be persuaded to reconsider the proposed elimination of the program. She explained that AVAIL is an

acronym for Anchorage Vocational Academic Institute of Learning. The program was established in 1991 to impact the District's dropout rate. It serves a population of students who have tried attending the regular high schools or other alternative schools but who are not able to succeed in these other programs and end up dropping out. Many AVAIL students are homeless, raising families, living on their own, or serving as heads of households. AVAIL is unique in that it is designed to help at risk students return to the educational system, obtain skills for employment, and build self esteem with a strong emphasis on earning a high school diploma. She noted that AVAIL takes a holistic approach to education, focusing on developing life skills, academics, employment skills, citizenship, individualized learning and preparing students to success on the HSGQE. Ms. Jones contended that cutting the AVAIL program would do little to help balance the budget as the staff would all be reassigned to other positions in the District. Cutting the program would, however, significantly impact the students in the program, leaving them with no other options to continue their education.

Mr. Andrew Knoll, an AVAIL teacher, spoke in support of the students in the AVAIL program. He noted that each student has a unique challenge to overcome. Each AVAIL student has tried other high schools and, in many cases, they have tried multiple alternative schools. Mr. Knoll acknowledged that the program does not meet the four year graduation requirements mandated by NCLB because AVAIL accepts those students who are 17 years old and have 0 credits. Mr. Knoll noted that AVAIL really doesn't leave any child behind. Other schools may provide a personal support system such as is found at AVAIL and some might be able to replicate the community partnerships, but the unique downtown location of AVAIL can not be replaced. He asked that the Board carefully exam the program and consider the needs the student population when they make funding decisions.

In response to a question from Mr. Roberts it was explained that AVAIL stresses to the student that they have a personal buy-in into the program and that they are part of a family at the school. For some of the students it is first time that they have been part of a family or felt supported in their lives and with their education. Ms. Jones did not believe that current AVAIL students will be able to make a transition into other alternative programs noting that they will miss the holistic approach and personal touch they receive through the AVAIL program. Many of the other alternative schools in the District have requirements that would be roadblocks to AVAIL students.

Mr. Steele asked Ms. Jones to address the low graduation rate at AVAIL, particularly in light of the fact that, with NCLB, the program is at Level 3. Ms. Jones noted that the program has a plan of improvement which is being followed. She explained that there are currently 20 students that the staff is working closely with and listed many activities in place to help those students meet graduation requirements.

Ms. Amanda Muncey, a new student in the AVAIL program, spoke in support of the program. She noted that she has attempted to complete her education in a number of schools and programs but has never felt that she could be successful until now. She noted that she had applied to SAVE and was denied admittance. She explained that she supports herself and that the program's downtown location near the transit center is very important.

Mr. Traver Pierson, an AVAIL teacher, spoke on behalf of AVAIL students. He felt that the recommendation to cut the program demonstrates misunderstanding of the unique population attending AVAIL and jeopardizes the education of the students who desperately need not to be left behind. He believed that, while a few of the current AVAIL students would integrate into other programs, the vast majority have already tried a variety of educational options and would, in all likelihood, dropout. This is exactly why the program was created in the first place. Statistics show that a high percentage of high school dropouts become non-productive members of society and remain heavily dependent on government programs. Mr. Pierson indicated his belief that the choice comes down to investing in the program today or paying the price in the future. He explained that the mission of the AVAIL program is to put the student first. That mission does not always fall in line with AYP.

In light of the comment from Ms. Muncey that she was denied admission to another alternative program, Ms. Kennedy asked whether AVAIL students have alternatives within the District. Mr. Henry explained that alternative programs run a grad check on students making application. He noted that students will age out of the high schools. If a senior comes into a program after four years with no credits or only a couple of credits the probability of that student being able to pack four years of academics into one or two school years is very small.

Ms. Leslie Fleming, an AVAIL teacher, spoke in support of the students in the AVAIL program. The students don't typically have a parent to support them or encourage them to stay in school. The majority of the

AVAIL student body consists of young people who are homeless or living independently. The schedule at AVAIL allows them to take care of their responsibilities as young adults. The program does not require students to have a job however the flexible schedule allows them to seek and sustain employment. The relationship between staff members and students is unique as staff acts as teachers, counselors, mentors, parents, role-models, and even friends.

Ms. Jo Purnell-Johnson explained that she has been the administrative assistant at AVAIL since the program began. She believes AVAIL to be the best program in the nation of its kind. It is also the shining star of Anchorage School District serving those students that have no hope for a high school diploma. She requested the Board to consider that AVAIL has the location and easy accessibility for these students to get to school and reconsider plans to close the program.

Ms. Danielle Anderson, a former student and graduate of AVAIL, explained that AVAIL is not just a school it is a family and a community. She reviewed her own experience noting that she is now in her second year at UAA. She indicated that without the program she would not have graduated from high school or been able to attend college. Cutting this program will deny students an educational alternative that provides support, belief, and encouragement that they can not get anywhere else.

Ms. Meagan Stewart, a current AVAIL student, indicated that the program has given her the motivation to graduate. The one-on-one attention is very important to her and is not available in other programs. The location is also important, particularly for students who don't drive. She noted that other alternative programs have very difficult requirements that many AVAIL students will not be able to meet.

Ms. Molly Bartels, a teen mother and AVAIL student, indicated that she will be graduating this year. She indicated that she would not be as close to graduation without the program. She noted that it is a half-day program that works well with her schedule. The job requirements that other programs have would make it impossible for her to attend due to childcare issues. Ms. Bartels indicated that AVAIL's use of field trips and educational outings get students more involved and increase their desire to learn. She explained some of the steps being taken with seniors to get them on track and keep them on track for graduation including weekly meetings and written education plans.

Ms. Ana Cubi, a 2006 AVAIL graduate, explained her personal experience in finding and completing the program. She reported that she is now a college freshman and working for UPS.

Mr. Ryan Sharrat indicated that his intention was to speak on the high school budget but, after listening to earlier testimony, felt the need to voice his support for the AVAIL program. On another topic Mr. Sharrat voiced his disagreement with planned teacher cuts.

Mr. Peter Adams, a teacher at the Continuation Program, spoke on behalf of the AEA budget review committee. He believed that the 2007-2008 Proposed Financial Plan represents more of the same misplaced priorities that the District has wrestled with for decades. It made no sense to him that the District plans to cut almost 100 teachers when there is only an estimated 220 student decline in enrollment. Studies show that the most important factor effecting student achievement is a quality teacher in the classroom. If educating all students for success in life is truly the highest priority of the budget then cutting teachers while adding clerical and administrative staff just doesn't make sense. Mr. Adams contended that the District is continuing to choose programs over quality educators. He encouraged the Board to look closely at the necessity of all the additions in the proposed budget before making any cuts.

Ms. Judy Palmer spoke in support of the high school hockey program. She disagreed with the plan to outsource hockey. She reviewed several problems associated with comp teams. The high individual cost of the program is a major problem. In addition, comp teams do not have school attendance or minimum grade requirements. She also reviewed a number of ways that could be used to lower the cost of the hockey program.

Mr. Friedman reminded everyone that the current recommendation is to reinstate the hockey program and keep the program within the District based on the commitment from the hockey community to raise revenues to cover costs.

Mr. Mike Corey thanked the Board for listening to public comment on the hockey program. He appreciated the responsiveness and support. Mr. Friedman voiced his appreciation to the hockey community for not just speaking out against initial proposals. The Board was impressed that hockey supporters came forward with very good suggestions and a strong commitment to help work toward a solution.

Debbie Benson, a teacher in the Freshman Academy at Service High School, spoke in support of funding for the SEL Coordinator position. The Freshman Academy, now in its second year, is seeing statistical improvement in grades and a reduction in behavioral problems. The staff at the Academy attributed much of this success to Vicki Blakeney, SEL Coordinator. Ms. Benson reviewed many of the ongoing responsibilities and activities handled by the SEL Coordinator. She urged the Board and administration to support the position of SEL Coordinator, not only for next year but in all future budgets.

Ms. Sara Lucey, a Bartlett High School senior, explained that she is on the Social and Emotional Learning Steering Committee. Ms. Lucey reviewed several items that have been addressed by the committee. She also explained program activities happening in several of the pilot schools.

The Board went into recess at 8:15 p.m. and was called back to order at 8:30 p.m.

Mr. Friedman introduced Ms. Kittle' Miller, Chairman of *School Bonds Yes!* Ms. Comeau expressed her gratitude to Ms. Miller for taking on this important responsibility. Ms. Miller wanted the public to know that the bond money is separate from the budget, which is what the Board is dealing with at this time. She briefly explained the history of *School Bonds Yes!* One of the goals of the current group is to develop a long term view of bonding issues. She shared the address for *School Bonds Yes!* PO Box 200282, Anchorage, AK 99520.

Returning to the topic of the budget, Mr. Friedman reminded the Board that they will need to address their portion of the budget as they had requested the superintendent not to propose any changes to that section of the plan.

Ms. Kennedy asked whether there are really other options for current AVAIL students. Testimony led her to believe that the District is not really going to be able to handle the needs of those students unless changes are made to other alternative programs. She requested specific information on how the District will address the needs of the unique population served by AVAIL and whether it can be accomplished through other programs already in place. Ms. Comeau noted that one of the major and ongoing concerns with the AVAIL program is their 13% graduation rate.

Mr. Henry noted that when the AVAIL program started in 1991 one of the tracts offered was a GED program which was very successful. Close to 85

AVAIL students have earned their GED through AVAIL. While the program does not have a GED tract anymore the program will accept absolutely anyone at AVAIL. He noted that, of the 52 current students only five have ever been enrolled in any of the other alternative programs in the District. Thirteen of those 52 students have never even attended one of the traditional high schools, much less any of the alternative programs available. AVAIL is one of the safest, nicest places in the world for students because everyone is accepted and cared for. Mr. Henry explained that a diploma is the goal for all students in all of the alternative programs. Graduation plans are prepared for students as they start programs so that they know how many credits they still need to graduate and how many semesters they have to earn them. While AVAIL is not preparing students for GED there are certainly students who will end up with a GED because of the number of credits still needed and the short amount of time remaining for many of the students before they age out of the system.

Ms. Comeau asked Mr. Henry what work would need to be done with other alternative programs to be able to find a place for AVAIL students. Mr. Henry assured the Board that other alternative programs are full of teachers, administrative assistants, and other staff members that love kids. He explained that, of the 52 students currently enrolled at AVAIL, it is predicted that up to twelve will graduate this year and about ten will leave the school without graduating. This leaves about thirty students that the District will need to work with to find another program that fits. The plan is to first do a graduation check to determine where the students are in their coursework. The second step is to introduce AVAIL students to other alternative programs and staff so that they are able to recognize that relationships can be developed with staff and students at other programs.

Ms. Kennedy asked if other programs are as versatile in terms of the amount of time students are required to spend at school in a day. Mr. Henry explained that other alternative programs require students to be on track for graduation. He noted that it is a disservice to the student to know that he needs six classes a day to graduate before he ages out and yet allow him to take only three courses. Mr. Henry clarified that students are not required to graduate in four years they just have to graduate before they age out.

Mr. Steiner asked about the capacity of other alternative programs and whether they would be able to absorb the AVAIL population. Ms. Comeau noted that the students and staff would be able to be absorbed by

other programs. Mr. Steiner also inquired about transportation and location issues. Mr. Henry noted that public transportation is available within a reasonable distance to all of the alternative programs and assistance with transportation costs is also available.

Mr. Steele asked for details about the budget amount for the AVAIL program. It was explained that the \$101,000 includes some addenda, parking, rental, and the administrative assistant position. The principal position is in the McLaughlin budget. The teaching staff budget was moved to the unallocated until it is determined where the staff will be assigned.

Ms. Gardner noted that AVAIL does receive some Title I funding. She added that AVAIL is currently in Level 3 of school improvement in place. This means that they have a school improvement plan. If the school does not make AYP again next year they would go into Level 4 which requires one of several actions. These possible actions include replacing the staff, implementing a new curriculum, decreasing the management authority at the school, bringing in an outside expert, or restructuring the internal organization of the school. If this happens AVAIL would look different than it does today. If the school gets to a Level 5 the District would again be required to take one of several actions including closing the school, replacing all of the staff including the principal or turning the operation of the school over to the state.

Ms. Comeau emphasized the importance of the Board goals in determining the direction that the District has taken in terms of striving for high school diplomas. In order to accomplish that goal there needs to be some expectation that students will attend school regularly. Schools should not be seen as enabling behavior that is not going to help students achieve a high school diploma.

Mr. Roberts suggested that the Board should exercise tough love with the AVAIL program and put them on a year's probation. He believed that the amount of money in question is negligible. He suggested allowing the current student body, most of which have testified on behalf of the program, to have an opportunity to succeed or not succeed on their own merit. If the students are as committed as they seem to be from the testimony then they should be committed enough to improve their graduation rate. He believed that it would be worth the investment to allow the students to determine the future of the program.

Mr. Stiener reviewed the projected total cost savings through the recommendation and asked whether the money could be more effectively used through another program. His logic was that placing AVAIL students into programs with higher graduation rates could result in an overall increase in the number of students graduating and a decrease in the cost per student to achieve that result. Mr. Steiner requested a written response to the question of the graduation rates of other alternative programs and the cost per graduate of those programs compared to the AVAIL program. He suggested that any action regarding the recommendation on the table be postponed until that information was available. He noted that a decision to reinstate the money for AVAIL would necessitate cuts in other areas to maintain a balanced budget and indicated that he is not prepared to make that determination without further information on the cost effectiveness of the program in comparison to other alternatives.

Mr. Steele voiced his concern with this recommendation. He noted that he has always liked alternative programs and believes that alternative programs make this district strong. Mr. Friedman noted his support for taking the time to determine what other areas should be reduced before offering changes to the recommendation on the AVAIL program. Mr. Steiner observed that in order to restore the AVAIL program another area has to be identified for cuts before the budget has to be balanced. In addition he noted that one of the principles of good budgeting is to identify the best return for expenditures.

In response to Mr. Steiner's economic analysis Mr. Friedman noted that some things just can not be measured in dollars and cents. Mr. Steiner agreed that there is value in saving even one student but the question is whether a dollar spent to save these students through this program brings more student education and more benefit to students than the same dollar spent in another way.

Ms. Kennedy began a discussion on the Battle of the Books. She asked how students actually get the books. It was explained that some students purchase their own books but some are provided through the school. Ms. Kennedy noted that Battle of the Books is an after school activity that should be treated like other after school activities and asked whether the District could charge a \$5 participation fee per student, which would cover the cost of the program. Ms. McRae noted that all of the students who participate in the Battle of the Books do not go on to participate at the district level competition. She noted that the budget review team prioritized protecting class size. Although this is a small budget item,

everything adds up. It is important to think about the process that was used to come up with this recommendation.

Mr. Steele questioned whether the spelling bee or the geography bee would also be considered an activity to which an activity fee could be added. Ms. Comeau explained that those events do not require the hiring of substitutes as does the Battle of the Books because they are done through a community organization. Mr. Steele noted that he would not be adverse to a small fee to support Battle of the Books.

MOTION:

Moved by: Mary Marks	To charge all participants in Battle of
Seconded by: Crystal Kennedy	the Books at all levels a \$3.00 fee to help
	support the entire program including
	the districtwide competition.

Ms. McRae noted that Alta Collins, Battle of the Books Co-Coordinator, informed her that it is against the Alaska Association of School Librarians regulations to charge a fee to participate in Battle of the Books. Ms. Comeau asked for an explanation on the regulation. Ms. Collins explained that the Association runs Battle of the Books. She noted that it is their program and districts would not be allowed to participate if they do not follow Association guidelines. Ms. Comeau asked for a copy of the regulation, which Ms. Collins indicated she would send as soon as possible.

The motion was removed from the table pending additional information.

Ms. Kennedy began the discussion on the School Board portion of the budget. She asked for clarification regarding conference fees, legislative lobbying fees, and travel. The budget rolls conference fees and travel together when conference fees do not necessarily involve travel expenses. She sought a clearer understanding of what is being spent on conferences and how much is needed for travel. Similarly, some conference fees are mixed in with travel under the heading of lobbying. She would like to see these items separated out.

Ms. Kennedy noted that the Board has said that every School Board member ought to be able to go out to attend a conference of some sort. If

to Juneau to address specific issues. Ms. Comeau requested that Ms. Kennedy send the specific question to the Board secretary who would then be able to respond prior to the next meeting.

Mr. Steele noted that one of the budget teams recommended reducing the number of account audits done by the District and wondered whether the administration would recommend that as a viable option. Ms. Comeau noted that there is currently a backlog of audits and would not recommend any reduction in that area. Mr. Chad Stiteler agreed that there are a number of audits that need to be addressed soon.

Mr. Friedman turned the gavel over to Mr. Roberts in order to make a motion.

AMENDMENT:

Moved by: Jeff Friedman

Seconded by: Tim Steele

To reduce 100101 School Board budget, line 3410, Contracted Services, by the amount of \$11,000 to eliminate membership in the Council of Urban Boards of Education (CUBE).

Mr. Friedman noted that this was a budget team recommendation and something that has been discussed by the Board a number of times. He noted that he values the Board's membership in organizations but does not feel that we can justify charging students \$3 to participate in Battle of the Books and not address an \$11,000 item.

Mr. Steiner recalled that the Board had discussed this issue last year and one of the concerns at that time was that there was a national affiliate aspect which comes automatically with CUBE. He recalled that it was his understanding that most of these savings would be lost to the cost of maintaining affiliation with NSBA apart from CUBE which was part of the reason this line item was retained last year. He asked whether the administration believes that there is value in having national affiliate status and how much it would cost to maintain that status. He noted that he is supportive of the motion but requested additional information on the true savings.

Ms. Marks spoke in support of CUBE. She believed that this is an important organization and allows a different perspective on issues than the Council of Great City Schools. Having an affiliation with both of those

organizations provides a strong collaboration of ideas. She believed that eliminating this would be a great loss for the District.

VOTE on AMENDMENT :

Ayes: Kennedy, Steele,
Steiner, Roberts,
Friedman,

Nays: Marks

Excused: Metcalfe

ACTION PASSES

AMENDMENT:

Moved by: Jeff Friedman
Seconded by: John Steiner

To reduce 100101 School Board budget, line 3600, Travel Out of District, by \$4,000, bringing the \$12,000 budget amount down to \$8,000.

Mr. Friedman noted that \$4,000 is a somewhat arbitrary amount. He agreed with Ms. Kennedy's earlier discussion that there is a need to look closely at what is being spent. He believed, however, that the issue needs to be looked at from the opposite view. The Board should look at what money is in the budget and make do with that amount. He acknowledged that this amendment will necessitate a reduction in Board travel but believed that is what needs to be done.

Ms. Kennedy noted that this amendment would cut the ability of the Board to attend conferences. She noted that she would rather see the reduction come from the legislative lobbying portion of the out of district travel.

AMENDMENT to the AMENDMENT:

Moved by: John Steiner
Seconded by: Tim Steele

To change the proposed reduction in the 100101 School Board budget, line 3600, Travel Out of District, from \$4,000 to \$2,000 bringing the line item down to \$10,000.

VOTE on AMENDMENT to the AMENDMENT :

Ayes: Steiner, Roberts,
Friedman, Steele
Nays: Kennedy, Marks
Excused: Metcalfe
ACTION PASSES

VOTE on AMENDMENT as AMENDED :

Ayes: Steiner, Roberts,
Friedman, Steele,
Marks
Nays: Kennedy
Excused: Metcalfe
ACTION PASSES

AMENDMENT:

Moved by: Jeff Friedman	To reduce 100102 School Board
Seconded by: Mary Marks	Legislative Lobby budget, line 3600,
	Travel Out of District, by \$11,250,
	bringing the budget amount down to
	\$11,250.

Mr. Friedman noted that this amendment was a budget team recommendation. It will mean that not all of the Board members will be able to go to Juneau. The amendment will make it necessary to focus efforts to make the best use of the time that legislators spend here in Anchorage and to make the best use of electronic communication. Ms. Comeau explained that the budget review team felt that, with constituent meetings here in Anchorage and electronic communication working so well, actual travel to Juneau is not necessary.

Mr. Friedman noted that he was not suggesting that any of the money spent in any of these areas was wasted in the past or not useful. Much has been gained by attending the AASB Fly-Ins, meeting colleagues and discussing issues.

Mr. Steiner noted that, while he supportive of the amendment, there is one critical difference in actually going to Juneau as opposed to meeting with legislators here. The difference is that contact can be made with legislative

staff in Juneau. These staff members can be extremely helpful in exchanging information with the legislators.

Ms. Comeau noted that the annual AASB Fall Conference held in Anchorage is also an excellent opportunity to continue interaction with other school boards across the state.

Ms. Steele noted that there is a lot of advantage in school board members from all around the state uniting to approach all of the legislatures to discuss issues important to everyone. It is a valuable exercise but needs to be weighed against budgetary restrictions.

VOTE on AMENDMENT:

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

Nays: None

Excused: Metcalfe

ACTION PASSES

Mr. Roberts returned the gavel to President Friedman. Discussion returned to the Main Motion as Amended.

Mr. Friedman noted that the process in the past has been to move any reductions in the budget on First Reading to the unallocated fund, indicating that the goal is not to reduce total spending.

Ms. Comeau reviewed the number of items contributing to the budget that remain unknown. These include two unsettled contracts, approval of the upper limit on the tax cap, the CPI, and the five-year population projections.

Mr. Steele noted that he does not like the fact that class size will be increased by 1.5 students and what that does to the teacher population. He doesn't like the fact that progress has been made in summer school remediation programs that will now have to be reduced. These were just a few of several areas that Mr. Steele reviewed which he hated to see facing reduction or elimination.

Mr. Steele commended members of the public who approached the Board in a positive manner to make good suggestions with regards to

restructuring the hockey program. He also commended everyone who has contacted their legislators regarding education funding. He acknowledged the efforts of the superintendent to educate legislators on the need to inflation-proof education funding. He noted that cynicism increases in the community as we go through this process every year. So much time and effort is wasted that would be better spent on our students.

Mr. Steiner provided some explanation as to how the overall budget can increase while the administration is making cuts in so many areas. Everyone acknowledges that the same service will cost more next year than it did this year, yet the number that has to be budgeted to is last year's number. There is a desire to see an adjustment in the funding mechanism for the state that would allow districts to be able to anticipate an adjustment in the funding stream that would be consistent with increases in costs to bring education forward in the following year. This would help eliminate the need to artificially cut only to be able to restore some portion of the cuts later.

Mr. Roberts indicated that, with the new governor and new legislators, he is hopeful for the future of education funding. He indicated that it would be nice to get forward funding for the year ahead. It is very painful to have staff wondering whether their positions will be retained and whether programs will be supported.

VOTE on the ORIGINAL MOTION as AMENDED:

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

Nays: None

Excused: Metcalfe

MOTION PASSES

F. COMMUNICATIONS & SCHOOL BOARD COMMENTS

Ms. Kennedy announced that there is a Policy Subcommittee meeting scheduled for February 8, 2007 at 2:15 p.m. in Conference Room 150. In addition, there will be a brief Executive Session at 4:30 p.m. that day just before the Second Reading of the Proposed Budget scheduled for 5:00 p.m. that evening.

G. ADJOURNMENT

The Regular Meeting of January 31, 2007, was adjourned by unanimous consent at 10:30 p.m.

Jeff Friedman, President

Mary Marks, Clerk

Johanna Lee, Recording Secretary

Date Minutes Approved