

**Lake Benton #404**  
**Budget Planning Meeting Summary**  
**March 24, 2010**

Members Present: T. Schwing, R. Rudebusch, V. Becker, L. Prosch, M. Smith

Visitors: Cara Bressler, Laura Krog, Janell DeVries, Amy Nibbe, Alissa Christianson, Donnita and Steve Bennett, Darcy Miller, Kathy Vondracek, Kelli Larson.

The Lake Benton Board held a budget discussion session to talk about the financial issues faced by all school and local governments in the area. Highlights of the meeting included:

- Without any new funding from State, Federal or local sources combined with the salary and benefit increases, the district looks to be short about \$50,000 for next year. Student numbers are predicted to increase by a few and other fixed costs should remain nearly the same. Superintendent Woelber gave a target of a minimum of \$30,000 to look for in reductions for next year. Woelber cautioned that the district needs to demonstrate fiscal responsibility by staying ahead of the declining trends and not let the losses compound while “hoping” for an increase in revenue. By 2014 the district will have the geothermal project and the tower project paid in full and that will be a yearly savings of \$60,000. Woelber commented that the district is doing well and there is no need for alarm but we cannot get complacent because tougher times may yet come. Woelber then presented a list of suggestions for the group to discuss.
  - I. Shift responsibility of transportation supervisor to the building Principal.
  - II. Increase fees for the fitness center by \$5 a month. The school's center has the lowest rates in the area. As the fitness center continues to grow it will serve 2 purposes. First, it will continue to upgrade equipment and provide the members with small town fitness excellence. Secondly, the fitness center being part of community education will help support our preschool program which does not get near the funding it takes to run it.
  - III. There were many great things shared about our preschool program and the consensus was to do everything we could to keep the current investment in our area youngsters readying for Kindergarten. There was consensus to recommend raising the fees a small amount while keeping it the lowest priced in the area. There was also a question about a “rebate” or incentives to have families that start in preschool remain in LB elementary for the duration.

- IV. Superintendent Woelber suggested the district could reduce his time back to once every other week instead of once a week. He commented on Principal Nielsen's strengths while also stating his desire to not fall back to one individual to carry the weight of the district and community.
- V. A recommendation for reduced time in music was brought forward. Lake Benton has the highest cost per pupil in music instruction in the area. At the same time LB elementary may have the best program in the area. Music brings the community in to the building and gives the elementary students a pipeline to go out into the community. It was recommended to keep this reduction as a last resort and work to shift other necessary projects / duties needed in the district to the instructor.
- VI. All schools in the Nation discuss upcoming retirements and possible incentives to those at that stage. The board was open to the suggestion whenever that time would come.
- VII. Reducing the "specialist" in the physical education department was discussed. All elementary teachers as part of their training are licensed to teach their own class in physical education. It is difficult in a district this size to find a teacher specifically trained in physical education. Mr. Woelber suggested various options such as a Para professional assisting the teacher in physical education as well as the elementary teachers having a retired "Master" physical education teacher assist them with lesson planning and daily routines. This option of reducing seemed more favorable than reducing music or preschool.
- VIII. Superintendent Woelber also expressed his desire to keep options open of renting out space for an office or other community need. "The school is the nicest, safest, most accessible building in the community, and with a separate outside entrance it could be a way to generate revenue without affecting the education of students.

The board will have another budget meeting on Wednesday April 14<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. at the school. They will follow up on these items and discuss any other possibilities before the formal recommendations are made at the regular meeting April 21<sup>st</sup> at 7:00 p.m.

Submitted by Clerk Roger Rudebusch