



SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 1J, MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON
Special Meeting August 06, 2019

INFORMAL MINUTES

A Special Meeting of the Board of Education came to order at 6:11 pm at the call of Chair Kohnstamm in the Band Room at Franklin High School at 5405 SE Woodward St., Portland, Oregon.

There were present:

Board

Chair Kohnstamm; Directors Bailey, Brim-Edwards, DePass, Lowery, Moore, Scott

Staff

Guadalupe Guerrero-Superintendent

Stephanie Soden-Executive Chief of Staff

Claire Hertz-Deputy Superintendent of Business and Operations

Local Option Levy

An informational slide show was presented. Stephanie Soden provided history and background on the local option levy. Claire Hertz stated that the currently level has funded 757-870 teaching positions between 2015-2019. Currently, it supports 30% of teaching positions. It is estimate that renewal at the current rate of \$1.99 per \$1000 of assessed value would provide a revenue of \$96.1 million which would fund an estimated 800 positions. The staff recommendation is to renew levy at the current rate.

Director Brim-Edwards asked if the intent of the local option levy is for the funds to be used solely for classroom teachers or if it could be used to fund a variety of educators. Ms. Hertz replied that the funds are intended for teachers that support the strategic plan for student achievement. Superintendent Guerrero stated that the funds will be used in direct service to students. Director Moore asked for clarification regarding the funds from the levy being held in the general funds. Ms. Hertz clarified that while the funds are held under the umbrella of general funds they are accounted for separately and are accountable to a public audit. Director Moore asked if there was a rate where the funds would jeopardize the state funds that are received by the district. Ms. Hertz stated that they looked at three of ways to structure the levy and it was decided that the current rate would provide a revenue that would not bring in so much as to jeopardize the state funds.

Student Comment

None.

Public Comment

Maria Valez: Associate director for SUN community program at Latina Network. Works with Latina Network, and schools that are Title 1 and SUN funded. In collaboration with PPS they offer SUN programming to help round the needs. The programs offer positive adult role models afterschool, with a focus on underserved students. The most impactful team members are the classroom teachers, they come with tools and strategies, and relationships that help them to meet students where they are. Appreciates how teachers give a little bit of their lives to students after school. Without them students will suffer. Supports the levy.

Ashley Henry: Executive director of businesses for a better Portland. They came together to provide a platform for businesses to engage civically. They advocated for the student success act. The Message shared was that in order for the businesses to succeed they need an educated workforce. They see the renewal of the levy as important part of that. Encourages the Board to not slow on progress and continue to move forward with levy.

Irina Phillips: Read a letter from Community Budget Review Committee (CBRC). Levy is critical to contain class sizes. It's not enough to meet the minimum funding level identified in the quality education model and recommends to increase the rate to \$2.25 per \$1000, which would hire 109 more teachers. We understand from prior discussions with PPS finance staff and from review of the Piper Jeffery levy projections, it would not require PPS to return money to the state.

Suzanne Cohen: President of PTA. Has the honor of representing all the educators in Portland Public Schools. Oregon has some of the largest class sizes in the nation. Because of the levy Portland has better class sizes than some other districts in the state and would like to thank voters for the support already in place. Class sizes are still not where they need to be. Neighboring states have much smaller class sizes. She supports the levy. Let's not stop advocating.

Lisa Kensel: Oregon PTA Elect. Signed a statement of support in 2014. Asked that the board refer the levy to the voters. The level vital for maintaining class sizes. Number one concern of parents is class size. She is also a parent of three PPS students and couldn't imagine the loss of 1/3 of the teachers. The levy funds the gap and is absolutely necessary.

Scott Overton: Past Oregon PTA president, current auditor and robotic mentor. He has been through this many times, with history of participation, would like to stress reinserting the levy at the current rate. Does not think that PPS has earned the trust of the voters, and if they try to increase the rate it might be met with resistance. Full support from PTA, but encourage to not make it too hard.

Jessica Colby: PPS Parent. Watched Oregon deliberately underfund education. Need levy to do what the state won't. She is with the board. Should not need to strip administration and PTA shouldn't have to ask parents to fund teachers. Losing any positions would be difficult and losing more than 800 would be catastrophic. PPS voters have a history of supporting PPS. If the board thinks that increasing the levy would pass she would support that too.

Roger Kerchner: His family has been affiliated with PPS for 50 years and has always voted for the levy, and encourages the board to renew. Asks that the board be careful in language and show data that the levy funds are being used appropriately. It's been difficult in the past to get the information. All the information is there if it's read carefully, wonder if there is a way to make it abundantly clear that it won't raise any taxes, barring increase in property value.

Peyton Chapman: Lincoln high school principal. Portlanders care deeply about their students and school. Education systems are the best economic driver so it's smart move also. No teacher should have more than 80 students. Other countries follow that model, but PPS high school teachers have up to 180 students. How can teachers build relationships when they have 180 students that they see for an hour a day over 9 months? We need an opportunity to maintain our diverse new hires. Urges the Board to remember that Portland cares about schools, nothing is a more crucial investment.

Brenda Fox: Principal Atkinson, graduated from PPS, and has a daughter in PPS. 70% of Portland in 2014 voted for levy when 2/3 don't have k-12 students and believes that they would again. 29 students in a kindergarten class, which is a lot of little people, with a lot to learn. In middle school when students are coming in behind, with so many students, it makes it hard to get them up to speed. It's important to maintain the level of staffing that we have. PPS has used the money wisely and encourages them to renew.

Thomas Lannon: Community Budget Review Committee. Review a few points that were made. It's not a question of if we renew the levy, we are going to try to review the levy. The question is really what the rate should be. The CBRC really thinks that the rate should be \$2.25 per \$1000 assessed. The last levy passed by 72.4%, and the last two levies had increases. Encourages the board to do something courageous and bump the rate. It's not that big of an increase for a home and will have a big impact.

Adjourned

Chair Kohnstamm adjourned the meeting at 6:55 pm

Submitted by:

Kara Lazcano-Huff, Executive Assistant
PPS Board of Education