

WINDSOR UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Community Conversations/Town Hall Meeting Feedback – November 14, 26, and 27, 2018

Sustaining and Building Our Fiscal Health for WUSD

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The following questions came out of the sessions held on November 14, 26, and 27, 2018. These conversations/meetings were held to review our projected budget (and the required, ongoing costs to public school districts that are more than ongoing dollars coming in). We are continuing to add to this list and will update and send reminders (of updates) on a regular basis.

Revenue Enhancements

1. *What attendance obstacles exist? How can we target supports to address specific obstacles?*
We currently have been awarded a grant (Keeping Kids in School) that provides a Case Manager, 3 days per week. This case manager is looking at patterns for absences and providing direct support to families whose children have attendance issues. We are finding that some families have limited transportation, parents who are ill, family issues where other adults are depended upon to get kids to school, etc.
2. *Can a Saturday School program help recapture attendance \$?* We are looking into this. It is being piloted at Windsor Middle School now.
3. *Where do our revenues come from?* The majority of our revenue comes from a combination of property taxes and State funding. We also receive specialized funding from the Federal Government.
4. *Would a conversation about school start times impact families (help or hinder)?* We can look into this. Start and end times have to include enough instructional minutes (as required by the California Department of Education) and consider our transportation (bus) routes needed to get students to and from school.
5. *Is the declining enrollment a reflection of rising housing costs?* That could be a factor. We will have an analysis done and reported out by February to see what the trends in our enrollment and reasons for any changes.
6. *Would another bond help?* Bond measures are generally proposed and voted upon to make improvements to facilities and provide one-time money for school and district improvements. These are not typically for ongoing costs (like salaries, and ongoing programs, for example).

7. *Is the Windsor community “becoming grey” and aging up (less children)?* We will have an analysis done and reported out by February to see what the trends in our enrollment and reasons for any changes.
8. *Can we capture revenue by solar parking lots?* We can potentially save on energy costs by installing solar and are beginning that process now.
9. *Can we generate additional money with outside vendors on campuses (example: Starbucks in the quad)?* It is against Education Code to have outside entities solicit our students on campuses.
10. *How can we get vineyards to sponsor Windsor schools and programs?* We have Board policies regarding corporate sponsorships and endorsements. We will be reviewing those policies in the near future and determine next steps.
11. *How do we maximize ADA with current students enrolled and with bringing in new students?* We are looking at ideas at this time and planning to implement some incentive programs, pilots (based on success in other districts) for attendance. Bringing in new students is a goal for us, as well. We are looking at doing more marketing of our innovative programs and services to attract more students into the spaces we have available for them.
12. *Can there be more equitable allocation of funds through grants (example: many WHS classes don’t have basic supplies)?* Good point. We will look into this.
13. *VAPA K-12 – How will it be supported (grants, school board allocations, etc.)?* We currently have a Board-approved VAPA plan that is being phased in over a course of 5-6 years. We are currently in Phase II and will be moving into Phase III next year. We have hired a VAPA consultancy that is keeping our implementation moving forward, beginning at the TK – 2nd grade levels. We also have school representatives at each school (TK – 2nd) who are working with the consultants on workshops, ideas, and curriculum integration.
14. *Can we get local celebrities and connections to contribute money?* We will continue to look at this. We are most grateful to a celebrity chef (Guy Fieri) who has already donated \$25,000 to our culinary arts program expansion into the middle school.
15. *Can we raise sales tax?* A public school district cannot go after revenues through a sales tax, unless it was voted on through a county measure.
16. *Are there other ways to provide academic intervention and reduce identification for Special Education services?* Yes. We are currently providing more training for teachers with teaching methods proven to reach more students at their level and reduce the amount of referrals for Special Education assessment and services.

Expenditure Adjustments (staffing, etc.)

17. *What is the current elementary school classroom size? Is there room for consolidation?*
Elementary classrooms can accommodate over approximately 32 students.
18. *How much would it save if we got rid of contractors/consultants?* We will calculate this. There are some contractors necessary for specific projects (such as bond construction management, as one example).
19. *What financial effect does District Office turnover have on expenses?* We need to clarify what this question is asking. If this is referring to staff changes at the district office, when employment ends in a position (for any reason, retirement, resignation, etc.), it is common to hire a new individual to fill the position who may start at or towards the beginning of the designated salary schedule, thus creating less of a cost.
20. *Is there a detailed list of expenses to share?* We will take time to gather this information and share.
21. *What are the benefits policies for D.O. Staff and Board members?* District Office staff (employees) and Board Trustees are eligible for the same benefits as other District employees.

Expenditure Adjustments (elementary reconfiguration of MWE as a TK-2 and BES as a 3-5)

22. *Would portable buildings be used? What is the cost? What about space lost to portables?*
23. *How would we accommodate drop off at Mattie and Brooks with more students?*
24. *Could we do staggered dismissal at the two elementary sites?*
25. *Are bathroom facilities accommodated for more kids?*
26. *Where will classrooms for an additional grade at Mattie and Brooks be placed?*
27. *Where will the additional students eat? Extended lunches, or?*
28. *Traffic flow – Has there been an analysis of how increased population will impact neighborhood traffic flow?*
29. *Will there be staggered pick up times?*

Questions 22-29 These questions cover the topics that would all be worked out, after Board approval, in the planning process that will take place from January through May prior to implementing the change. A general operational timeline sample was shared previously and will be re-presented and published if the Board approves the reconfiguration.

30. *What benefits would come from a sale of WCE?* The main benefit to selling would be the cash that would be realized but most likely we could only use that cash for capital projects, not for general operations such as salaries.
31. *What type of magnet program would Windsor want?* This is a good question. We are asking attendees at these meeting to give us ideas (like STEM, STEAM, VAPA, etc.).
32. *How can the sites absorb the new students? More classroom spaces?* We used to have as many students on the MWE and BES campuses that we would with each getting a new grade level.
33. *Will Brooks be able to absorb the room? Larger kids, less space – where will they play?* We used to have as many students on the MWE and BES campuses that we would with each getting a new grade level.
34. *Will we need more portables?* Possibly but it should only be temporarily at Mattie until the new classroom are built in 19-20.
35. *Can Brooks use park space for playground? Recess time? P.E. Activities?* We will approach the Town of Windsor if the Board approves the reconfiguration.
36. *What will happen to the WCE staff? Which positions would go away?* Teachers, instructional support staff, yard supervision staff, and custodial staff would likely follow the students. Positions such as administration and office/clerical staff would likely be eliminated, one of the large cost savings to reconfiguring our elementary program.
37. *Why buy another property if we are reconfiguring/restoring...?* The property was included in the list of priorities that the community voted on for the Bond Measure however, as with all items, this is open for discussion.
38. *Will Mattie have a computer lab?* The plan is to provide all technology resources (including a lab and/or technology cart) that are currently provided at WCE and needed at MWE.
39. *How much will we save if we sell the D.O. and move it to WCE?* There is no savings from this move, it is merely a way to consolidate space and gain capital revenue from selling the current DO building.
40. *How much will adding more portables to the elementary cost if we relocate campuses?* We will try to do it with as few portables as possible. The costs would be one-time (not ongoing) and would consist of moving district-owned portables from WCE to the new site. Cost of approximately \$150,000 per portable.
41. *If only 24 (TK-3) per class, what happens in years of excessive growth?* When we reach the required maximum average of 24 students (ADA) for grades TK through 3rd, we increase our staffing.

42. *Where will the extra classrooms fit? What is their cost?* The plan is to use existing classroom space that is currently used for non-classroom purposes or that are empty. See question 40 above for information on possible portable use.
43. *Will class sizes for grades 4-5 stay the same?* Yes, at this time the maximum class size, agreed upon in the collective bargaining agreement with our teachers is 30 students.
44. *Can we combine school districts to eliminate or reduce district personnel?* That has been explored throughout the county. It would definitely be a cost-saving measure but it has to be agreed upon by all Districts involved. So far the couple of times that it has been attempted in Sonoma County the smaller Districts involved did not want to participate in the merger.
45. *Will there be any consideration at some point for TK-5 feeder schools?* We will bring this idea to the Board for future consideration.
46. *If we transfer teachers to new sites, how will classrooms be assigned? What is the projected cost of portables?* This will be part of the January through May planning process mentioned above. See Question #40 re portables.
47. *What steps will be taken to prevent deficit spending in the future?* The first step is to do what we are doing now – finding ways to eliminate ongoing costs. It is an ongoing process for school districts especially when revenue growth is low and unavoidable expense/cost increases exist. We must be diligent in making sure that we are fiscally responsible with public funds. There are short-term solutions such as the re-configuration of our elementary schools but there are also long-term solutions that take time to explore and implement such as adjusting benefit plans, restructuring interventions to decrease Special Education costs or increasing attendance to boost revenue.
48. *Will the current Board wait until the new Board is seated before making a decision about closing any campus?* This will be discussed with the Board on December 4.