

Budget approved with \$144,000 deficit

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

Approving \$6,424,561 in total appropriations, Holyoke's Board of Education adopted its 2010-11 preliminary budget Tuesday, June 15.

Budget figures reflected a deficit of \$144,028, acknowledging the district realizes expenditures are that much more than revenues. Board members authorized spending \$144,028 out of the beginning fund balance for general instructional costs for educational purposes.

Total appropriations for 2010-11 were down \$1.25 million from the 2009-10 appropriations. In the past several months, board members have held extensive discussion pertaining to budget approach with the reduction of state funds.

The following appropriations for the adopted budget were approved for 2010-11:

General Fund \$5,228,911
Bond Redemption 435,850
Food Service 194,800
Trust and Agency 260,000
Activity 305,000
Total Approp. \$6,424,561

Supplemental budget for 2009-10 adopted

Increases in the school district's food service fund and non-expendable trust scholarship fund were noted for last year's budget. As a result, supplemental budget appropriations were approved, as required.

Supt. Bret Miles explained the requirement for the board to note if more money is spent in a fund than was budgeted last year.

Budget approved with \$144,000 deficit

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

Additional funds from the national school lunch program and school breakfast program were received after last year's budget was finalized. The appropriation for the food service fund was increased by \$25,000 to \$213,800 at last week's meeting.

More scholarship money, in the amount of \$85,000, was taken in and spent, increasing the non-expendable trust scholarship fund to \$333,000 for 2009-10.

Bond/mill levy override contemplated

Still in debate is the question as to whether the school district should seek a bond or mill levy override election in November.

They must notify the Phillips County Clerk by July 23 if they intend to place an item on the ballot. The actual wording must be completed by Sept. 3.

Supt. Miles will put together a couple of focus groups prior to the board's July 17 retreat. These community groups will be asked what evidence they need to be shown to convince them there is a need for a bond or mill levy override election.

From that input, the board can then decide if they have that evidence or if they should just drop discussion for this year's election timelines.

Miles said it is his opinion if the district does choose to go for a bond election, it's essential to tell the people what they're buying.

Suggested talking points include details on what's happened with student count and number of

Budget approved with \$144,000 deficit

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

employees, as well as increases in health insurance, Public Employee Retirement Association (PERA) and fuel.

From the Colorado Dept. of Education website, Miles said comparison of average teacher salaries from 2002-09 show five districts have gone backwards, and Holyoke is one of those.

Jeff Tharp said he feels a duty to advocate for education and students. Through his work on the budget and facilities committee, he sees the need to at least investigate a mill levy increase.

Linda Jelden reiterated Supt. Miles' comment from a previous meeting when he noted it is now a matter of doing less with less. The vision of where the district is going with that is significant, she added.

Dan Kafka agreed, adding it's not just about making a budget work, it's about long-term vision.

Kim Killin said she would like to see what focus groups have to say. She added it seems the community would be more apt to give the nod to things that will be around awhile, like infrastructure and technology. She said she would feel more positive about a mill levy override that goes into something concrete.

Jon King said he would like to go for a mill levy override and approach the best wording possible for that.

Kafka pointed out the ballot issue can involve several questions that phrase what the additional moneys are going to buy.

Miles noted three areas people can identify with are personnel, technology and capital projects.

Budget approved with \$144,000 deficit

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

Kafka noted options that could be considered: mill levy override in general operations, mill levy override for specific capital needs or a bond election for capital needs.

By the July 17 retreat, Kafka said they'll try to have input from at least a couple of focus groups, as well as information on how questions might be worded on the ballot.

Suggestions on capital needs will be up for consideration, and the timeframe for getting on the ballot will be reviewed, as well.

This will be one of many items on the retreat agenda and will return to the July 20 board meeting for further discussion.