

School info on website for financial transparency

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt
Tuesday, 29 November 2011 20:48 -

Financial information for Holyoke School District must be posted online in a downloadable format for free public access.

When the Colorado General Assembly passed House Bill 1036 in 2010, it enacted the “Public School Financial Transparency Act” requiring online financial reports for school districts and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES).

Since the law passed, it has been in front of the Holyoke School District’s budget and facilities committee. Each time a new piece was added to the district website, the committee was given updates, according to Supt. Bret Miles.

Starting July 1, 2010, annual budgets for 2009-10 and 2010-11, financial audit for 2009-10, quarterly financial statements and salary schedules or policies were required to be available online.

Commencing July 1 of this year, accounts payable check registers and credit, debit and purchase card statements were added to the list of required online financials.

As of July 1, 2012, investment performance reports or statements will also be required.

Prior two years’ financial information is to be maintained online until the end of the current budget year.

Financial information for Holyoke School District Re-1J can be accessed by going to the district website at holyoke.schoolfusion.us.

One would then go to the Board of Education line on the left side of the webpage, then to

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Financial Reports at the bottom of that list of options.

Reports are clearly identified in the categories of audits, budgets, cash balance, checklists, credit card statements, quarterly reports and salary schedules.

Supt. Miles pointed out the cash balance is not required, but is something the district chooses to include.

The 2011-12 preliminary budget which was adopted in June will be changed to the final budget after it's approved Dec. 20.

Within the information, Miles noted it will be good for people to be able to see such things as pupil count, fund balances and mill levy records at a glance.

The superintendent has tried to do more comprehensive quarterly financial reports at board meetings. From that discussion, if people are interested in more detail, they can go to the website for that information.

Holyoke will soon be adding a Colorado Dept. of Education 18 report, a document that goes with the audit, said Miles.

One downside of the transparency act is that it's another thing to do in a business office that's already loaded with reports, said Miles. While it isn't an incredible burden, he said it's an added task in ever-increasing state reporting requirements.

Someone could possibly choose to use a small item in accounts payable as an excuse to say why they don't support the school. However, Miles feels this potential undesirable consequence is far outweighed by those who will agree the district is doing a good job with its finances. It gives the opportunity for the district to show what it's doing.

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It's Miles' best hope that the online financial information will be used as a place for people to look to dispel financial rumors.

Supt. Miles said the district is aware something needs to be done differently with the website in general. "We're reassessing that," he added.

He acknowledged the need to make the website more user friendly and easier to find things. The technology committee is looking at that. But for now, the financials are under the Board of Education heading on the front page.

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