Finances, policy and construction were among the topics reported at the April 17 meeting of Holyoke School District Re-1J Board of Education.

With the School Finance Act finally under way in the legislature, Supt. Bret Miles said the district is beginning to get a sense of impact to the local budget.

At this time, Miles said it appears they could experience a flat year. Flat funding means the same amount per pupil for base funding throughout the state. Factors such as at-risk student population or rural settings may still be adjusted.

The most current run from the Dept. of Education shows Holyoke with a very slight increase under this flat funding scenario.

Miles said when he came to Holyoke three years ago, the district received $7,606 per student, and this year the district has received $6,780.

Even without losing pupils, the district is behind over $480,000 of where it would be with flat funding for the past two years. As a result, Miles is encouraged by the current situation and will organize the budget and facilities committee to start making budget decisions.

The school board will then review the budget priorities and adopt their own budget parameters May 1. That will lead to a preliminary budget presentation June 5 and final budget adoption June 19.

Miles outlined the following eight recommendations which he will present to the budget and facilities committee for their discussion this week:

-—step increases for all employees.

-—protect staff from eliminating positions, only considering such a move through natural attrition.

-—maintain technology implementation schedule.

—stay flexible with capital project budget down to $120,000 if need be.

—mandatory PERA increases.

—monitor class sizes.

—do not let the fund balance fall below $1.2 million.

—make health insurance a top priority for spending so individual employees do not see an increase that negates the step increase or makes the net salary go backwards.

In further financial discussion, Supt. Miles referred to the third quarter financial report for January-March, noting both revenue and expenses are tracking as expected.

He said it appears the district will be under budget at the end of the year June 30. “By all indications, this year’s budget has positioned us well for another year of no increases,” added Miles.

Construction planned

Construction projects in the school district are gearing up for the summer, and Miles outlined several projects possible because of the BEST grant and mill levy override dollars which are targeted for critical repairs.

The roof project contract is complete, and an onsite meeting is set for May 10 to set up work to start when school is out.

BCER has been selected as the engineering firm for the boiler, electrical, fire alarm package, and White Construction Group was named CMGC (construction manager/general contractor).

Miles noted White Construction reps were to be here April 18 to walk the buildings and lead asbestos inspection of the elementary boilers, a sub-contractor mandatory pre-bid walkthrough was set for April 24 and May 9 will be the review of sub-contractor bids.

Decisions were to be made last week on proposals from PC Telcom and Computers Etc. on the Internet and from Computers Etc. only for security upgrades.

Other improvements will include lighting upgrades, gym rooftop unit and several restroom upgrades in the elementary and JR/SR High.

Later decisions will be based on funding available for elementary classroom doors, other restroom upgrades, locker room upgrades and science lab upgrades.

Miles said they’re ready to share the construction budget with First Pioneer National Bank to finish up the finance agreement.

Grading policy to return for vote May 1

Appreciation was noted for leadership team members who met on a Friday afternoon in order to take a look at the board's April 3 meeting input on the district's grading policy.

The leadership team's proposal was reviewed for implementation in the upcoming school year. The grading policy and regulation will be up for first reading at the board's May 1 meeting.

District Attorney meets with school districts

Mandatory reporting requirements was the topic of the April 11 meeting that Holyoke School District organized with District Attorney Bob Watson and schools from across N.E. Colorado in the 13th Judicial District.

Supt. Miles told the local board last week the meeting with the D.A. was very positive and resulted in a summary the district will use to make changes to current procedures.

Miles said they have good information to move forward and will definitely meet the expectations of the judicial system.

Many who attended remarked they were given a clearer indication of how to handle mandatory reporting requirements. Some expectations were different than how most have been operating in schools for years.

D.A. Watson emphasized when school officials should report incidents. The reporting should come before a determination is even made as to whether a school investigation will occur.

Guidelines for the district's reporting responsibility will be outlined clearly in the handbook so parents are aware reports will be made to social services or the police before an investigation is even started in the school district.

Miles pointed out two attorneys from Caplan and Earnest attended the April 11 meeting with Watson. Caplan and Earnest represents many districts in this area and across the state.

They were able to ask questions and seek additional clarification which will be helpful as they advise school districts according to the expectations in the 13th Judicial District.

Miles said he is grateful Watson responded to the district's invitation to hold the meeting. Miles added he heard from several other administrators who attended who found it to be a great first step in understanding the expectations and working together to protect students.

Input received from student focus groups

Supt. Miles shared information from focus groups with students in grades 7-12.

Miles and a couple of board members met with five groups of students who were selected to bring diverse groups in for input. He reported good dialog about finals exemption, after school center, rules, grading policy, random drug testing, spring break and more.

Kim Killin said it was a good opportunity for board members to explain things to the students. In general, Miles noted they were pleased to hear students say they like to go to school here.

There was brief discussion at the board meeting about expanding this to elementary students in the future.

Classified staff employment approved

Employment for classified staff members for the 2012-13 school year was approved at last week's board meeting.

It was noted teacher contracts and classified staff notices of employment will be prepared when the actual salary/wage figures are finalized. Classified staff was approved as follows:

Teacher aides Tracey Cordova, Leticia Penzing, Veronica Nuñez, Sarah St. Martin, Aydaly Juarez, Christene Strecker, Terri Biersdorfer, Tancy King, Nancy Pillard, Christy Shafer, Debra Drees, Jeannette Knutson and Michelle Gregg.

Custodians Brian Adams, Guadelupe Montes-Alveraz, Darcy Garrison, Jack Garrison and Maria Montes.

Secretaries Tammy Kroeger, Brenda Krueger and Lori Thompson.

HR/payroll clerk, Joan Price; budget and finance director, Sharon Thompson; district technology coordinator, Perry Ingram; maintenance/repair, Stan Kreider; grounds, Dusty McConnell.

Transportation, Robert Jacobs, Mark Groshans, Fletcher Hinck, Dave Johnson, Scott Murray and Kimberly Young.

Other business

In other business April 17, the Re-1J board:

-—accepted the resignation of Scott Dille as head HS volleyball coach.

—proclaimed May 8 Teacher Appreciation Day.

—approved second reading of Policy IMB on teaching about controversial/sensitive issues and IJOA on field trips.

—heard from board member Linda Jelden about the Healthy School Summit she and teacher Kate Shoemaker attended recently.

Jelden said they will be sharing information with the district's wellness committee with the intent of focusing on one or two projects for next year.

Holyoke Enterprise April 26, 2012