

Audit shows school fund balance at \$1.4 million

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

Holyoke School District Re-1J ended the 2012-13 year with a fund balance of \$1,397,733, according to the audit report presented by Scott Szabo at the Dec. 3 school board meeting.

The audit by Lauer, Szabo & Associates, PC was scheduled for the Dec. 11 board meeting agenda for approval.

Szabo cited at last week's meeting that the 2012-13 year began July 1, 2012 with a beginning fund balance of \$1,608,464. The audit showed a loss of \$210,731, which was very close to the budgeted loss of \$200,000.

A series of graphs and charts were reviewed, outlining the changes the district has gone through over the past four fiscal years.

Showing gradual drops in the general fund balance, the chart showed a fund balance of \$1,688,262 at the end of the 2008-09 year, dropping to this year's \$1,397,733.

In the CPA firm's unqualified opinion, Szabo stated that the financial statements of the district are fairly presented in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the U.S.

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Student demographics reviewed

Student numbers for 2013-14 were reviewed and explained by Superintendent Bret Miles at last week's meeting.

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The actual number of K-12 students in the district this year is 568, which is down 23 from last year's count.

The certified count, which tabulates kindergarten students as half-students and includes preschool special education students, is at 593 for 2013-14, down from 630 last year. The funded full-time equivalent is 563.5.

The good news is that by using a three-year average of certified funding counts, the averaged pupil count is 587.5 for 2013-14, compared to 587.7 last year.

Miles said the student demographics note that 50 percent of the population is non-white, which is the highest percentage ever for the Holyoke School District.

Forty-six percent of the students qualify for a free or reduced-price meal, which is down 3 percent from last year.

Additionally, Miles pointed out that 25 percent of the students are English Language Learners, which also marks the highest percentage ever for the district.

Citing implications from the summary, Miles said that even a slightly lower pupil count, along with the negative factor, presents budget challenges going forward.

He also pointed out that student achievement goals are more difficult to achieve when students are impacted by poverty and are learning a second language.

With optimism, Miles said there's no reason to lower goals. They'll just need to continue to adjust strategies and resources for the student population.

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Other business

In other business at the Dec. 3 meeting, the Re-1J board:

—accepted the resignation of elementary school paraprofessional Lisa Davis.

—adopted a revised bank resolution with changes in approved signatures following the recent change in board officers.

—scheduled a board retreat for Wednesday, Jan. 22.

Holyoke Enterprise December 12, 2013