

**2022 Levy Development Committee  
Official Minutes – December 14, 2021**

**The meeting started at 5:45 due to heavy traffic**

**ATTENDANCE**

In attendance: Laura Ni, Nicole Jacobs, Nigar Suleman, Rachael Cox, A.J. Taylor, Lisa Reeder, Shannon Mayo, Toni Hunter, Laura Burnett, Heather Barker, Peter O'Donoghue, Janet Kelly, Claudia Huzar, Rachel Auffant, Cortney Eldridge, Kristi Hammond, Meg Iyer, Jonathan Koshar, Erica Stephens, Korista Smith-Barney, Katelyn Shriber, Kathy Keegan, LeAnn Tuupo, Michelle Caponigro, John Gardiner, Jeff McGowan, Ashley Landes, Sean Martin, Erin Connolly, Lauren Bartholomew, Dawn Peschek, Laura Berry, Chris Bruno, Scott McKorkle, Dana Rundle, Martin Buckley

**WELCOME AND AGENDA**

Dr. Almy welcomed the committee and thanked them for travelling with the heavy traffic. He directed the group to a list where the committee was broken into small discussion groups of 6-7. He mentioned that the committee will be breaking into these small groups 2-3 times during the meeting tonight. After a brief review of the agenda, he directed the committee to the minutes from the December 2 meeting asking them to take a few minutes to review.

**REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES FROM PRIOR MEETING**

**A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes from the December 2, 2021 Levy Development committee meeting.**

**By a show of hands, the motion was unanimously approved.**

**REVIEW CHARTER AND CHARGE OF THE COMMITTEE**

Mr. Turney directed the committee to the charter. He reminded the committee that the goal is to send a recommendation to the superintendent on the proposed content, total cost and tax impact of three separate levies: Educational Programs and Operations Levy, Transportation Levy and a Capital Levy which includes technology, capital infrastructure and critical repairs. He also reviewed the parameters of the committee of which the aim is to keep local school taxes stable while providing essentials to ensure the Issaquah School District has all the resources possible to meet its mission and Ends student learning goals. In addition, the District needs to safely and efficiently maintain facilities and property according to state and District use standards and schedules.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FROM PREVIOUS MEETING AND TAX RATE**

Mr. Turney shared with the committee some additional materials that were requested at the meeting on December 2.

He explained our three comprehensive High Schools are in different jurisdictions. The city of Issaquah and King County were unable to provide SRO staffing for Issaquah High and Liberty High and so the district is now providing security at those buildings. The city of Sammamish is currently able to provide an SRO at Skyline. We are able to use current SRO dollars to fund all SRO staffing. Ultimately, we would like all the High Schools to have a similar model and will be working toward that goal.

Mr. Turney continued to review the list which includes custodial maintenance cost for our buildings, which is roughly 1.5% of our 353-million-dollar budget.

Dr. Almy explained the list comes from a variety of sources; our community, our schools, the community and the Superintendent. All costs not funded by the state or federal government is levy funded. We are also required to fund legally required special education services when not fully covered from other sources. Our community and School Board long asked for 7 period days rather than the 6 period days covered by the State. This list is an illustration of what we have spent in the past and how we will spend in the future. It takes into consideration values of our school board, community and superintendents. As far as taking things on and off the list, this is a function of the district. The focus for the committee should be: are the items reasonable, the cost reasonable and the tax rate is understandable.

Dr. Almy updated the committee that at the last board meeting, the School Board voted to place the levies on the late April 2022 ballot. He reminded the committee that the EP&O Levy Springboard is a full authority levy, we cannot increase the dollars amount as it is at the maximum.

Mr. Turney explained what would happen with the items on the list if the levy were to fail. He shared that he does not solely make the budget decision, that it is a process that the district would have to determine. The largest cost to the district is labor, so cutting cost often means cutting people. Most likely it would be a mixture of program and staffing. Potentially this could increase class size. The district would most likely make those increases in grades 4-12 as the state provides a financial incentive for lower K-3 staffing.

Mr. Turney directed the committee to the RCW which explains transportation efficiency. The districts' operation must meet a 90% efficiency rating utilizing efficient routing and capacity of vehicles. He pointed out there is a balance between a comfortable bus route with plenty of seating and an optimal busload that results in less transportation spending.

A committee member stated they could see the prioritization of the line items and how the district makes those decisions, but that they would like to make adding line items a part of the recommendation. Possibly adding dyslexia as a line item for example. Is there a way that the committee can also recommend some additional items to show how important they are to us? Dr. Almy

responded it was possible, that we could vote as a committee to add an addendum. Mr. Turney also noted that if a line item were added, another would need to be removed to offset costs.

A committee member added that is we were only adding as an addendum, if we can't change the contents of the Springboard, that they feel a disconnect

A committee member was curious about other budget items, like dyslexia screening. Are they captured on another budget? And what about class size? We are hearing a lot about that from the community. Dr. Almy responded that we currently fund two initiatives from levy dollars PBSES (Positive Behavior Social Emotional Support) and MTSS (Multi-tiered Systems of Support) that have a direct impact on classroom management. And again, un-funded special education services. These are included on the levy budget as well as the general budget.

Mr. Turney reminded the group we will revisit this topic again later in the process.

Mr. Turney began the discussion on tax rate. He directed the committee to the combined tax rate slide. The slide shows the tax rate for the next four years. He mentioned that bonds are part of the conversation, but not what we will be talking about tonight. Our goal is to maintain a stable tax rate of 3.56 over the years 2023- 2026. This shows it broken down into puzzle pieces that add up to the total number.

Mr. Turney directed the committee to the historic tax rate graph. The number for 2022 is a known 3.39% since we have been provided the assessed values. Future dates are projected as we do not yet have all the data. Again, the goal is to keep the rate a stable 3.56.

A committee member wanted to clarify that while the EP&O Levy is at full authority and cannot change, the other two levies as presented could be made higher? That the district is using historical data on what has previously passed. And that you are trying to keep the same historical tax rate. Mr. Turney responded yes, our goal is to keep the tax rate stable while asking for maximum authority on the EP&O Levy. We could ask for more on the other two levies.

#### **GROUP DISCUSSIONS AND REPORT OUT ON TRANSPORTATION LEVY**

The committee was directed to break into their small assigned groups to discuss the Transportation Levy. They were reminded this \$3 million is for the purchase of buses, not the operating expenses.

The committee broke into small groups to discuss for 8 minutes

The committee then shared their comments.

A committee member asked in 2018-22 how much state funding did the district receive? Dr. Almy agreed to follow up with that information later

A committee member stated that in 4 years, it is going to seem ridiculous that we have not implemented any electric buses. Wondering what the environmental impact might be? The interest in electric buses was seconded by another committee member. Ms. Xaudaro indicated the district has researched and will continue to gather information on feasibility. Mr. Turney also stated some smaller districts, like University Place, have made some electric bus purchases. That we may be able to learn more from talking with them. Also, the Department of Ecology may be providing grants in the near future that could offset the cost between gas and electric

A committee member stated that in theory, we may have a perfect system to support electric since the routes are same each day. Mr. Turney agreed, that we are making the first steps toward electric.

A committee member asked what would happen if there was money left over from the bus levy? Mr. Turney stated that would be unlikely, and that we typically keep a few million as a cushion to aid with cash flow issues as the state reimbursements can be slow.

A committee member asked if there was an appetite to increase the levy ask so we could fund electric, and what next steps would be for that. Mr. Turney responded that the committee can propose adding those amounts.

A committee member asked if they could see what the increased levy amount would translate into tax rate wise. Mr. Turney responded that they would need to return with that information.

A committee member asked how long it would take to convert the entire fleet to electric based on the depreciation cycle. Mr. Turney stated it would take approximately 5 years.

A committee member asked how we could finance the electric charging infrastructure. Mr. Turney replied could possibly do another bond, levy or maybe grant.

A committee member asked if the district has seen the prices on electric busses decreasing. Mr. Turney responded that in the past 4 years there as not been much of a decrease.

A motion was made and seconded **to approve the Transportation Levy as presented.**

The committee continued to discuss the motion

A committee member asked if the bus capacity could be lower, is there a way to change the levy springboard to achieve this. Mr. Turney responded that the springboard as presented is actually an increase to our fleet and therefore would give us the ability to make these capacity adjustments.

A committee member asked if we can increase the small bus fleet, or make other changes in the ratio of larger to smaller busses. Mr. Turney responded that at this time the mix is illustrative and adjustment decisions will be made at the time of purchase.

A committee member asked for the rationalization for just replacing busses rather than increasing. Mr. Turney replied that the springboard increases the fleet by 20, which is also needed for the new school. It does give additional capacity.

A committee member asked what the fleet size will be in 2026? Mr. Turney stated it would be 195

A vote was taken on the motion. **By a show of hands, the vote was 31 in favor and 4 not in favor to approve the springboard proposal as presented.** (note: one committee member left the meeting prior to the vote)

Dr. Almy reminded the committee that we do a final vote at the end to see if everything passes as presented.

A committee member asked if there was more opportunity to vote to add more notes? That as a committee, there is not much time for comment and this might be how things get passed without additional information incorporated

The committee adjourned at 6:50 for a brief break.

The committee reconvened at 7:00.

#### **GROUP DISCUSSIONS AND REPORT OUT ON EP&O LEVY**

Dr. Almy shared that prior to the third meeting the technical team is going to discuss what mechanisms can be put in place to facilitate more conversation to allow the committee to alter the list as presented. We will move on to the next agenda item and return to EP&O discussion at our next meeting.

#### **SPRINGBOARD FOR CAPITAL LEVY AND QUESTIONS**

Mr. Turney reminded the committee that the Capital Levy is divided in two parts: Technology equipment and support to provide modern educational tools and then the other is Critical Repairs and Capital Infrastructure. Projects that are essential to maintaining safety and foundational standards and can also include completing planned school projects. We are going to talk about these separately.

Mr. Turney directed the group to the technology proposal for years 2023-2026. Items in blue are what we are currently funding, dollars needed to pay for what we are already doing. Items in green are critical enhancements we would like to add to the proposal. He went into further detail on some of the critical enhancements: The need to add another staff position for Web Communications. This person would increase our ability to maintain the district and school websites and monitor trafficking. Also, we need another Public Record Request staff position to handle our increased numbers of requests. This addition would be more technical in nature, pulling emails and data mining to support existing staff. The next item, One to One, moves our district to a new model in how we deliver technology in the classrooms. Ms. Eggers will go into this in more detail later. We also have a need to replace and modernize audio systems in the schools, provide hotspots for low income students and provide teacher training and support for new technology.

Mr. Turney introduced Diana Eggers, Director of Educational Technology.

Ms. Eggers directed the committee to the power point presentation on technology. She stated the district goal is to shift from pockets of integration to universal digital learning experiences throughout a student's K-12 journey. She stated that currently our classrooms are dependent on shared devices such as laptop carts and personal machines.

Ms. Eggers shared that rather than the students engaging in passive consumption, the newly adopted standards would provide students engaging digital experiences to learn technology and use technology to learn. That students would actively be using, coding and designing. The technology would enable peer collaboration as well. We currently have some tools for creativity and innovation, such as ALEXS and I-Ready, we would continue these and expand. In addition, we need to teach students to not only learn existing technology but create learners who can embrace new technologies as they are developed.

Ms. Eggers used the analogy of the three-legged stool to show how we can successfully move to a Universal Digital Learning Experience: Equipment, Professional Development and support. You need all three.

Ms. Eggers continued that equipment would include teaching stations, such as desktop, document cameras and additional cable/port for laptops. Enhancements to the classroom would include audio amplification and charging considerations. She shared that student to teacher ratios would be Kindergarten: 3 to 1, First-Second Grade: 2-1, Third-Fifth Grade: 1-1 in class and then Middle and High School: 1-1 take home. She elaborated at the younger ages we see students engaged in small group work in the classroom. In the higher grades we envision a take home program. We have recently been piloting a Middle School take-home program and that has given us valuable insights on student needs and wants. Also, we want to be able to provide mobile hot spots for our low-income students.

Ms. Eggers moved to the next leg of the stool, Professional Development. Training teachers so that they can effectively integrate technology use in the classroom.

Ms. Eggers explained that currently we do provide technology professional development for our teachers. At this time, while it is paid, it is optional. We are looking for a way to see if we can add more professional development, and possibly make that mandatory. That requires a conversation with our teachers and coming to a mutually acceptable Collective Bargaining Agreement. Ideally, we introduce a topic to the entire group and then utilize our TOSA's (Teachers on Special Assignment) who are training and curriculum specialists, to train, share, develop, collaborate, reflect and ultimately support the technology. We would also like to create a lab so that we can model what an integrated classroom would look like.

Ms. Eggers provided the committee with a timeline of what an elementary school year would look like. Establishing routines is already done in September. This would be a time for staff to assign devices and the initial introduction of the machine. Moving though the year we would explain selecting the tool appropriate to the learning task and then moving into critical thinking with research and evidence-based argumentation. Lastly, the year would conclude with producing for an authentic audience.

Lastly the third leg of the stool includes support. Support would include teacher Instructional Support, Online Access Support which provides support for teachers, students and families with access to online textbooks and tools and then Support with hardware, software and network issues.

Ms. Eggers concluded with emphasizing the shift from pockets of integration to universal digital learning experiences throughout a student's K-12 journey.

Mr. Turney directed the committee to view the slide showing the technology rates and amounts for the four-year technology levy.

Moving on to the Critical Repairs/Capital Infrastructure levy, Mr. Turney introduced Tom Mullins, Director of Capital Projects. Mr. Mullins shared a list outlining the most necessary repairs and improvements. He explained that keeping our buildings in good repair and the amount for completing HS #4 make up the majority of the list. Items on this list include ovens and coolers for Food Service, strategic uses of portables, ADA accommodations, student furniture, and security items to name a few. He also mentioned that our Holly Street Campus creek bank was severely eroded during a flood. The District has been working with FEMA, the City of Issaquah and Army Corp's of Engineers to repair. Also included is the remodeling cost to Holly Street to house an early learning center. We must also pay for unfunded mandates from the state such as the new lead testing bill and HB 1257, the clean building standard.

Mr. Turney continued with a brief overview of projects completed from the 2016 Bond Measure. He then shared the revised project cost for HS#4 and how the district landed on the \$44 million that is now included in the 2022 Capital Levy. Originally projected cost was \$120 million for HS #4. We now have to factor in 6 years of inflationary increases and unforeseen cost increases which include additional permitting costs, parking garage requirement, street improvements and general supply chain costs. Also included are the cost of completing the design and pad for Elementary #17. While we are not building Elementary #17 at this time, completing these items now is a cost savings for later.

Mr. Turney stated that the revised project cost was now \$198 million. We currently have \$154 million in resources for this project, monies initially slated for HS#4 and Elementary #17. The needed deficit is \$44 million.

A committee member requested more detail on how the \$36.6 million in inflationary increases was derived. Mr. Turney shared they calculated the cost escalation was specific to construction. Mr. Mullins mentioned they calculated a 4.5% escalation over 6 years, 2017-2022.

A committee member asked why we are choosing a levy versus a bond for the additional funds? Mr. Turney responded that the preference is to pay for the increases now given the amount needed to complete the project and ability to keep the tax rate stable. Levy dollars would be collected and used in the near term. Bonds are typically utilized when the amount needed is substantially larger and payment of the debt pushed out into the future.

A committee member asked why we are including an additional \$15 million for Elementary #17 pad, thought this was already accounted for. Mr. Turney stated that since we pulled the entire \$34 million elementary #17 proceeds into available resources, we needed to account for this amount.

Mr. Mullins confirmed for a committee member that only the cost of design and pad completion are included, not completion of elementary #17.

A committee member asked if the three levies are separate or together? Dr. Almy responded that the community will vote on them each separately.

A committee member asked if there were unforeseen construction costs, is it possible the district would use technology funds? Possibly using them to such an extent that technology projects could not be implemented? Mr. Turney responded that they live in their own separate budgets. The answer is no, technology funds would not be used for building repair and construction.

A committee member questioned why safety is only \$100k? Mr. Turney answered that the district has already invested in many safety features such as building vestibules, emergency buttons, additional fencing and locking perimeter doors. In addition, we have invested in mental health counselors, risk assessments, tip lines and other safety measures. These dollars are to repair and replace existing safety technology like cameras and card readers

A committee member asked where software costs are listed. Ms. Eggers responded it a line item, listed on the technology levy sheet

A committee member asked how they derived the numbers for \$36.6 million in inflationary increases. Feels that nationally the rate is 5% but that Washington State may be closer to 2.5%. Mr. Turney stated for this model, the district used 4.5%

A committee member asked if are investing the dollars we have already collected from prior bonds and levies? Mr. Turney replied we are restricted in our ability to do that. We must keep proceeds in the King County Investment Pool which provides very low returns. We do accumulate some interest and we use to pay for other projects. Those numbers are not included.

Mr. Turney offered to bring some additional data regarding the \$36.6 million in inflationary increases and how the number was derived.

The committee broke into small groups to discuss for 7 minutes

The committee then shared their comments

A committee member voiced concern that the HS#4 budget will still not be enough or on time.

A committee member questioned the \$36.6 million in delays and how this will impact children.

A committee member is also concerned about the costs and delays, but not a huge surprise. Is also concerned about future delays.

A committee member commented that while the levy is a tough sell, technology is something the community wants. Feels that messaging will be key in passing the levy.

A committee member stated that \$44 million should potentially be a bond and it is hard to swallow. Looking to the future will we have to ask for more to complete the school. And on the technology levy, the one-to-one, is it true one-to-one or can some bring their own? Is software included?

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00pm