

## **LWVS Information Session School Budget 2020-21 - Advance Questions**

### **I. Goals and Objectives**

Discuss the goals and objectives of the 2020-21 proposed budget, including:

- specific strategic and institutional priorities
- important themes or noteworthy elements
- educational priorities

Describe your process prior to the development of the draft budget. Did the Board have a target amount for the budget, tax levy and/or tax rate increase?

The Board of Education does not provide District Administration target amounts during the budget development process. The school budget provides the necessary financial resources to operate the School District and to help achieve the goals and objectives of the School District as set forth in the Strategic Plan. Although most new initiatives arise organically after perhaps multiple years of development and cultivation at the teacher level, these and all budget initiatives only appear in a budget draft after thoughtful consideration, deliberation, and discussion by the District's administrative team. These initiatives and ongoing expenditures are measured against the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan. Please reference past budget presentations located on the District's [website](#) to review rationale shared with the Board of Education in the community earlier in this budget process. For more information on the District's Strategic Plan please click [here](#).

Included in Budget Session #1 the District outlined the anticipated accomplishments of the 2020-21 proposed budget. This information can be found on pages 13-16 [here](#).

### **II. Community Involvement**

Identify and discuss how the Scarsdale community has been involved with and informed the budget development process, including:

- the number of community emails the Board has received to date on the 2020-21 budget, and
- the general topics of community interest related to the Budget.

Are there any aspects of community involvement in the process that the Administration and Board hope to change in future years of budget development? Additionally, are there any new

ideas gained from the community listening sessions the Board conducted that will be implemented in the future?

The community's involvement with each annual budget development process actually begins with its approval of the previous budget in May. Through that action, the community confirms values through its verification of the guiding factors and accomplishments of that budget. In November, the Board held a morning forum to receive input on 2020-2021 budget priorities from the community. The Budget Development Calendar includes many opportunities for the community to stay aware of and participate in the development process through April; many meetings are specifically dedicated to the budget, but input is welcomed at any time. At each Board meeting, we remind the public of the opportunity to share thoughts on District matters, including the budget, at the podium or via email to the Board. Many community members take advantage of those opportunities. We have received 17 emails on the 2020-2021 budget to date. Topics of interest include: cell service in neighborhoods, coordination with the Village, the transportation study and transportation in general, SHS auditorium renovations, Safety, Security, and Emergency Management, the security monitors, curricular enhancements and professional development, instructional technology, capital improvement projects, facilities and maintenance, goals and objectives of the budget, the District's Facilities Master Plan, Building Condition Survey, the Roofs and Fields Master Plans, community involvement in the budget development process, the community's and District's fiscal health, air-conditioning plans, Butler field landscape screening, food service, enrollment and staffing in both general and special education classes, non-budget revenues, high school class sizes, reserve funds, the tax cap relationship to capital projects, and additional spaces in SHS (art room 215 and a library quiet space).

The Board may decide to examine community involvement in the budget process at some point, but there is no specific plan at this time. It is something that might be raised during the Board Calendar discussion.

The Board Committee for Community Engagement collected a significant number of suggestions via the two listening sessions. Eventually, the committee will present recommendations to the Board for additional Board and community engagement opportunities. The Board will consider those recommendations and decide upon those to be implemented. The BCCE meeting scheduled for March 19 was postponed, and the new date is still to be determined. The committee's next step will be to confirm the placement of the listening session ideas into three buckets: efforts for the Board, District, or community.

### **III. Community Financial Health and District Fiscal Health (Stuart)**

Discuss how the community's and the District's fiscal health has affected budget choices, including:

- Overall amount of budget and budget-to-budget increase;
- Amount of tax levy and tax levy increase;
- Amount of tax rate increase;
- Amount of assigned and unassigned fund balance;
- Use of prior year surplus; and
- Amount budgeted to enhance educational quality for our students.

The District's budgeting process, as shared in all budget presentations, commences very early in the school year and is informed by all constituencies. Although the District does not practice a true zero based budget, it also does not practice incremental budgeting. Staffing requests and instructional budget drivers are vetted in purposefully planned meetings throughout the fall between Cabinet, Principals, and Administrative Council (District-wide Administrators). Staffing requests are assessed for: educational efficacy, staffing efficiency and alignment with guiding principles of staffing. In addition, all non-instructional departments meet with the Assistant Superintendent for Business and Facilities and the Business Manager to review budget requests. Requests are analyzed based on consistency with the Strategic Plan and overall District goals; consistency with operational standards; and historical spending norms and purchasing efficiencies.

The District's overall and current year financial results also inform the proposed budget plan for the upcoming school year (i.e. budget surplus). While the District does not specifically budget to a target expense budget or tax levy number, factors such as the tax cap levy limit, and overall economic climate are a few of the many considerations in the development of the proposed budget plan.

What are the remaining cost unknowns that could affect the 2019-20 budget surplus and fund balance?

There are currently a number of unknowns due to the Covid-19 outbreak that could impact projected budget surplus and fund balance. Although obviously not ideal at all, current year surplus could be positively impacted from our current model of providing instruction. If our buildings remain closed for an extended period of time, we could expect to see a budget surplus in at least the following areas: utilities, vehicle fuel and safety monitor expenses. A potential risk is certainly in the Health Insurance category both to the current year and moving forward which could impact the District's overall fund balance.

#### **IV. Special Education (Eric)**

Are there any Special Education class organization changes set for the 2020-21 school year? If so, please describe these changes and the reason for their implementation.

There are no organization changes proposed. Current programs will run with sections based on the number of students. The proposed new 8:1:2 program will be housed at Edgewood and the students attending will either be returning from outside placements or entering kindergarteners.

Additionally, demographics indicate increased special education support at SMS & SHS will be necessary as current elementary-aged special education students age through the Scarsdale school system. Could you explain when and how you project to staff SMS & SHS as these needs arise?

We continue to analyse needs in the MS and HS with regards to programs and section numbers. There may be a need to increase staff or adjust programs based on both numbers and individual student/cohort needs.

#### **V. Staffing (Eric)**

In response to the LWVS questions re: the 2019-20 budget's lack of increase in staffing of Guidance Counselors (Deans) at SHS it was stated that due to the general increase in the social/emotional needs of students, re: staff to student ratio, will be reassessed regularly. Could you explain your reassessment of this staffing issue for 2020-21 budget purposes?

The HS administration and Student Services are regularly looking at the student ratio for Deans and at this time we are not recommending an increase.

Could you speak to the projected impact, if any, to the 2020-21 budget of the current contract negotiations? Salaries and benefits of all District employees account for almost 80% of total budget expenses. Estimates have been made for any financial impact associated with newly negotiated agreements for all unsettled contracts and are included in the 2020-21 budget.

#### **VI. Investments and Enhancement (Edgar)**

Outline and describe how the 2020-21 budget supports curricular initiatives and programs included in the Strategic Plan.

- ❑ **Enriches classroom and school libraries through the purposeful infusion of high interest, diverse and engaging fiction and non-fiction texts. (Edgar)**

This budget allows for the resources to enrich classroom libraries and learning spaces through careful audits of our spaces and cohesive integration of new texts across our schools- nonfiction and fiction texts that can act as mirrors (in which all students feel themselves and their families reflected) windows (in which students have an opportunity to see how others live in ways that are both different and celebrated and finally, sliding glass doors (through which students have an opportunity to develop an empathy and understanding with an invitation to learn more.) Beyond supporting our District goal of "Belonging and Inclusion", enrichment in this area has research-supported academic and cognitive benefits through an emphasis on rich access, choice, reading volume, and pleasure reading.

- ❑ **Provides materials and curriculum resources to explore and critically examine exemplary math programs. (Edgar)**

This budget will provide the funds needed to engage in a thorough and collaborative process to pilot math tools, technology resources, and scopes to update our current math program at the elementary. The need arose in the best way, through collective analysis of instructional leaders and the District-wide math committee's intent on matching our math tools with our evolving and researched understanding of how deep and flexible mathematical understanding is most effectively taught.

- ❑ **Improves and expands authentic global opportunities through travel, hosting and virtual experiences. (Thomas)**

This budget helps to fulfill the goals of international travel and hosting of students and educators in the furtherance of language acquisition, cultural understanding and competencies, and performance and service opportunities. It also continues to use the Global Learning Alliance as a mechanism for international research and benchmarking 21st century student dispositions and competencies for responsible global leadership, plus it extends this work through new partnerships with Chile and South Africa. It also includes digital engagements that will further develop and scale global student partnerships through online platforms (like Level Up in 7th grade) and explore opportunities to expand VR in classrooms to visit distant lands with a zero footprint.

**❑ Continues the District's commitment to providing technology and STEAM experiences to all students and expands the 1:1 device program at the Middle School to 8th grade. (Jerry)**

This budget pays for District data and application support handled by the Data Services team (Infinite Campus, finance, food services, Human Resources, Transportation, and Facilities) and provides desktop hardware and computer software support for administrators, psychologists, counselors, secretaries, custodians, Central Office, the cafeterias, bus compound, and the grounds and maintenance buildings. It also includes funds to support the District's network and server infrastructure, phone system, computer hardware, audiovisual equipment, as well as cable TV productions and audiovisual support and pays for mandated and essential services, including our Website, Internet Filtering, and Library Technology. As well, it supports the four-year computer replacement cycle and hardware projection outlined in the Board-approved Technology Plan and pays for subscription databases, software, and apps. In addition, this budget allows upgrades of the technology for STEAM and pre-engineering programs at the HS, and allows us to continue the one to one programs (gr. 3-8th). Finally, it supports the adoption of the ISTE (International Society for technology and Education) standards by providing our students with digital learning tools and on-line experience (simulations) that will enhance our curriculum, assessment and instruction.

**❑ Expands the implementation of the Next Generation Standards and the scaling of successful instructional models. (Edgar)**

Materials continue to be needed to support the next generation implementation as it moves up and across our curriculum. Most specifically, 4th grade will receive direct support in the Science 21 curriculum. There has also been expressed interest in explicit support, through learning opportunities and models, for secondary science, math, and social studies to prepare the way for our engaged students as they enter middle and high school. As I've mentioned, engagement with NextGen standards for students and teachers invites innovation and creative adaptation and calls for experimentation, authentic inquiry models, and student-centered pedagogy to be explored, encouraged, assessed, and as appropriate, shared and/or scaled.

**❑ Supports the researching, exploring and creating of new garden models, biomechanical innovations and sustainability projects through collaboration across community and Schools. Edgar**

We have been expanding the meaningful integration of garden expectations into the elementary school curriculum. We are also looking to further use gardens and biomechanical innovations to engage students in a real-world application of science, wellness, and sustainability principles. And while we've created some cohesion in the last year in learning outcomes, we are looking to explore additional opportunities through committee visioning, site visits, and garden and sustainability projects.

## **VII. Capital Maintenance and Plant Improvement Budget**

Briefly discuss the history of the SHS auditorium renovation as it relates to past years' budgets. Who has been involved in the planning process up until this point? Who will be involved going forward?

After not being included in the final bid scope of the 2014 Bond, the District included some improvements in subsequent budgets including LED ceiling (house) lighting and a new sound board. We also addressed other less costly safety issues.

We have heard from the following groups in addition to the Administration, department leaders architects and consultants -

1. All Performing Arts music ensembles (bands, orchestras, choirs)
2. All theater classes and drama club members
3. All Studio Theater Tech class members
4. Student government representatives
5. Athletics department representatives
6. PTA parent representatives (through their leadership)
7. FMA parent representatives (through their leadership)

It is not currently planned to solicit additional input.

Discuss where we are in the completion of projects associated with both the 2014 and 2018 bonds.

All projects that were bid out as part of the 2014 Bond have been completed and closed out. In regards to the 2018 Bond, the status is as follows:

- Heathcote Roof - completed
- Greenacres Additions and Renovations - Due to be completed in late August 2020
- High School Roof - summer 2020
- Edgewood and Fox Meadow mechanical fresh air and boiler installations - summer and fall 2020

- High School Dean Field - summer and early fall 2020
- HS ADA and water mitigation issues - summer 2020
- Heathcote, Quaker Ridge and MS ADA issues and MS gym wall replacement
- Other work will continue in summer 2021 and summer 2022

Describe efforts included in the 2020-21 budget related to Air Conditioning and Cooling Spaces.

The District is in the process of exploring both traditional and innovative cooling solutions with the assistance of an energy service provider such as ConEdison Solutions with a focus on providing additional cooled spaces with an eye towards sustainability. Status – Alternative methodologies are being studied and considered that will best provide both solar and LED lighting solutions. Installation of elementary gymnasium ceiling fans included in the 2020-21 plant improvement budget.

Explain any additional priorities reflected in the funding allocated to this budget line.

### **VIII. Beyond the Budget**

Discuss any revenues and expenses that are not part of the Budget document (example: food service, gifts from PTAs, Maroon and White and the Scarsdale Schools Education Foundation).

The general fund “budget” is the budget which is subject to approval by District voters and is the budget that is supported by the budget document. The particular items that are mentioned are not included in the general fund budget and are accounted for in other funds.

### **IX. Advocacy for District Values in the State and Federal Landscape (Pam/Alison)**

Does the Board currently have a process in place for advocacy on the state and federal level?  
What are the important issues that the Board would want to advocate for in relation to Scarsdale Schools?

On a local level, what are the issues that the District and the Village need to collaborate on in the 2020-21 year?

One of the Board's goals is to participate in legislative advocacy impacting public education. The New York State School Boards Association is our eyes and ears in Albany. Board members stay up to date through regular communications from NYSSBA including Key Issues, Advocacy Alerts, and webinars, and we visit their Advocacy and Legislative webpage at our convenience.

In addition, the Westchester Putnam School Board Association provides us with similar guidance and coordination of advocacy efforts. WPSBA and the Lower Hudson Education Commission (LHEC) have an advocacy agenda based on current NYS issues and the Executive Budget. Board members attend webinars, workshops, forums, and meetings offered by these groups throughout the year. Often, local and regional legislators or their representatives attend these events so that Board member comments can be received directly. Otherwise, draft resolutions or web-based surveys are methods provided to the Board and their members as additional methods to reach out to Albany.

Generally, NYSSBA advocacy issues are focused on Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment; Employee Relations; Federal Issues; Local Management and Budget; School Governance and Authority; School Health and Safety; and State Aid and Budget. More specifically, WPSBA and the Scarsdale Board of Education have recently focused on the last area: State Aid and Budget. We follow NYSSBA's testimony, budget analysis, and budget recommendations. WPSBA and LHEC hold a forum following the release of the Executive Budget (with regional House and Senate representatives) to talk about the Regional Cost Index, Compliance Mechanisms, Funding Flexibility for Pre-K programs, Limiting Schools as Polling Places, Foundation Aid, Funding Obstacles, Special Act School District needs, Local Decision-Making, and Mental Health and Student Safety. In response to the Executive Budget, the Scarsdale School Board's efforts, via a letter to the Governor, tend to focus on the ways school funding needs to be adequate, equitable, and predictable. We sent a letter last year, and we still plan to do the same this year.

The District and the Village continue to examine ways to collaborate; some are ongoing, and others come up on an as needed basis. The District works with the Village on Safety, Security, and Emergency Management concerns. We collaborate on the use of shared spaces, including buildings and fields. We look for ways to share services. Departments communicate regularly and when immediate concerns arise. We meet with the Village Trustees as full boards twice a year, and leadership of the Village, District, and both boards also meet twice a year, or as needed.