

School authorizes use of \$130,000 from reserves

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

Minor changes from the Holyoke School District Re-1J preliminary budget were noted at the Dec. 11 school board meeting when the final budget for 2013-14 was approved.

The largest change is with the fund balance, which was adjusted to \$130,000, down \$20,000 from the preliminary budget.

The board authorized the use of \$130,000 from the beginning fund balance for general instructional costs for educational purposes.

After a review of budget changes, board members adopted the 2013-14 budget and approved total appropriations of \$7,865,020.

The 2012-13 audit report that had been presented Dec. 3 was also approved at last week's meeting.

The projected ending balance in 2013-14 is \$1,267,733, which is just slightly above the \$1.2 million threshold established by the board.

Budget appropriations for 2013-14 were adopted as follows:

General Fund \$5,674,671

Bond Redemption \$547,850

Construction \$613,548

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Food Service \$238,000

Trust and Agency \$423,621

Pupil Activity Fund \$367,330

Total Approp \$7,865,020

Superintendent Bret Miles explained that the appropriations resolution includes an extra \$200,000 over the budget, which is done because of Colorado Department of Education reporting.

For example, in the 2012-13 budget, the district planned to spend \$200,000 out of the fund balance but ended up spending \$210,000 due to revenue shortfalls and accruals performed by the auditor.

If the district had appropriated it to the dollar, they would receive a letter from CDE and then have to explain why they spent more than appropriated.

By increasing the appropriations resolution \$200,000 over the budgeted amount (up to \$330,000 from \$130,000 for 2013-14), they're in a better position with their CDE reporting in the event they're not right on budget. Miles pointed out that this strategy is endorsed by the auditor.

While the drop in student count is covered this year with averaging, in making changes for the

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final budget, Miles pointed out that it still needs to be taken into account with other budget decisions.

Having seen the outcome of Amendment 66 and the governor's preliminary 2014-15 budget, Miles said both instances call for some conservative decisions at this time.

Revenues from the preliminary budget are up slightly in the miscellaneous grants due to new state grants received, including READ Act grant, library grant and a couple of others.

Miles also pointed out that local revenues increased, which means state revenues decreased, and that adjustment is shown in the final budget. A few expenditures were adjusted, as well.

Miles told the board that at this time, he's recommending to suspend the search for another building secretary and a second elementary ESL teacher. "I feel this is a good choice, considering what we are looking at in terms of the governor's preliminary budget."

"I would expect that we could have a new position on the chopping block by April if school finance isn't changing or if our pupil count isn't suddenly on the rise," he added.

Mill levy approved at 38.755

A total mill levy of 38.755 mills for property tax year 2013 was approved at last week's board meeting.

This includes 27 mills for the general fund, 7.5 mills for the voter-approved override, .005 mills for abatement and 4.25 mills for bond redemption.

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The assessed valuation for Holyoke School District as certified this month took a 17.5 percent hike from a year ago.

Total assessed valuation for the district is \$59,716,306, up \$8,910,824 from a year ago.

The Phillips County portion accounts for a majority of the district's assessed valuation. That portion increased 21.2 percent. The Sedgwick County portion of the assessed valuation increased 9.4 percent and the Yuma County portion decreased 10.1 percent.

Other business

In other business at the Dec. 11 meeting, the school board:

—acknowledged a gift from Annette Balog for significant start-up funds for the HHS/HJHS Student Councils' weekend backpack program.

—noted the next regular school board meeting will be Tuesday, Jan. 14, with a board retreat set for Wednesday, Jan. 15.

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