

Carmel Café Questions March 18, 2024 MPES

What are your ideas regarding ways to bridge the gap?	Response	What information would help you make a more informed decision when you vote?	Response
Slightly increase class sizes	This can be done to some degree but there are contractual limitations on class size	Don't have the information needed	Please see our budget section https://www.carmelschools.org/groups/15632/board_of_education/budgets__audits
Elimination of redundant positions	The district has been trimming positions over the years so redundancy isn't a factor at this time	Find other Districts with similar problems - what did they do?	Other districts in a similar situation raise taxes, make spending reductions or a combination of things which is what Carmel is doing. These are all planning conversations for the 2024-2025 school year
Add UPK	The district did apply for a grant that would allow a small pilot for Pre-K students next year. We are waiting on approval.	What are the staffing reductions?	The staffing reductions have not been formally made yet and are only possible reductions
Do not cut support staff	Staff cuts are being made to least impact our instructional programs but we do know how important our staff are.	District office reductions?	A line by line list of possible reductions and dollar amounts will be discussed at the March 26 board meeting
Princeton model	This is being considered for either next year or the year after	How sustainable is another 2.5% tax increase?	Since 2017, The tax levy has been less than inflation, in some cases by a lot. The Tax levy from 2021 to present has been .05%, .97%. 1.86% with next year's still being discussed
No more Zonar cards	The district is looking at what removing the program would entail	Why would cutting field trips benefit our students when it's such a minimal cost in the grand scheme? PTO pays for elementary level	This will be a consideration
Consolidate apps to make it easier. One app for all.	Unfortunately there isn't one app that does it all.	What have you done to reduce costs?	The district this year wrote and received several competitive grant in the areas of mental wellness and technology
Bring in dual language in elementary level in order to get grants	There are several long term ideas around how to bring in a dual language program but even with grants, there would be a cost to the district	Would admin cuts put us at unneeded exposure?	Administrators will be tasked with picking up many tasks of from other cuts and fulfill
More effective streamlined - living organism vs. closed system	We are exploring more flexible transportation and other ideas to bring additional efficiencies to the district	Option C - What are the "further cuts"?	All possible reductions are being discussed at board meetings as part of this process

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1.9 million dollars went to public golf course in 22/23. Get \$\$ from that fund.	That funding was not something offered to the school district.	Knowing our money is being funnelled into our kids first	Information about the budget can be found on the district website: https://www.carmelschools.org/groups/15632/board_of_education/budgets__audits
Restructure from the top	This is always an option and will be something that the new Superintendent may wish to explore	Need to be given budget information in a more timely fashion	The budget process starts earlier than in previous years to address this concern.
Approach all bargaining units for change to retirement & benefits	Conversations with Bargaining units are ongoing. The district is focusing on units whose salaries make up the larger portion of the budget	Better advertising and education on what budget is and why	
Combine redundant positions	There isn't much if any redundancy but the district is always for ways to be more efficient.	Projections in what we are planning and why more frequently at BOE meetings	
Re-evaluating and consolidating transportation routes	This has been publicly discussed and is ongoing	Knowing decisions are made morally	
Reaching out to families that don't utilize transportation by April 1 like with daycare standards	This has been publicly discussed and is ongoing	What would the financial savings be if we close one of the elementary schools?	There are many variables to be considered with regard to this that would need to be explored before any potential cost savings could be understood.
Admin contribution to help cut budget	Conversations are ongoing.	In 2020 on the 9-90 form there is \$7.5 million received from contributions. This left a \$4.9 million surplus. What was the \$7.5 million from and where is the \$4.9 surplus?	2020 predates any current district admins being in the current role but any surplus would have gone into district fund balances
Dedicated grant writer	This is a great idea for future years. We have been exploring the idea of using a grant writer as a consultant	How are we looking at redistributing students and staying at cap?	Classes in the K-4 grades are balanced the June prior to the start of the year. Any students who transfer in are first given placement in their home school, and if there is not room, they attend another elementary school.
Add volunteers to clubs, sports, etc.	Volunteers are welcome but the district would also need to follow policy guidelines	Is there a cost saving & educational benefit (some think there is) in having 100% Princeton Plan (K1, 2-3, 4-5). This would allow 5th graders to be in elementary school which many parents support.	Current enrollment does not provide room for the 5th grade to be in the elementaries at this time. However, we are constantly reviewing the enrollment.

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Line-by-line budget specifics	This has been provided to the public	In the audit did anyone internally or through the outside auditor pick up that we would have this problem?	The internal audit report did make mention of a potential issue but the details
Audit - usage/time of staff; Student:teacher ratios & facetime minutes	Our student teacher contact time is measured using the scheuling process to ensure compliance with NYSED regulations and standards and contractual obligations.	Will the district accept freezing salaries for a certain number of years (timeline)?	This would be a negotiated item.
Priority should be given to positions that have direct student contact	Priority is given to maintain student services and support including direct student contact	Parents would like to be on a budget committee to assist in maintaining a sustainable budget.	The Board of Education has a Finance Committee that is open to the public.
What exactly are the reductions - a dollar amount is not stating what/who is being cut	Specific staff members would not be listed but positions and dollar amounts are included in the board presentations.	Who are the administrators versus the Board members?	The following administrators are present at BOE meetings: Joseph McGrath (Superintendent), John Fink (Assistant Superintendent of Business), Lauren Santabarbara (Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction), Elizabeth Kennedy (Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services).
Option B - Add about \$100K from fund balance to stay below the levy and avoid passing a budget rquiring super majority	The district could opt to use all, a portion or none of the fund balance.	Breakdown of expenditure reductions proposed on the slide - "solutions"	The board presenations have those details
Cosortium for benefit savings	This was explored and discussed at the March 19 board meeting	Has there been a decline in student enrollment?	Yes there has been. Further information is available via the PPS presentation
Employees paying more into benefits	This would be a negotiated item	What do we have in place to stop this supt. appt. jobs?	

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Pay/Step freezes	This would be a negotiated item	Explain the district debt and other obligations.	<p>Debt Description Amount</p> <p>Bonds \$ 23,760,000</p> <p>Other Debt - EPC \$ 8,766,365</p> <p>Other Debt - Buses Lease-Purchase \$ 1,205,964</p> <p>Leases Payable \$ 740,652</p> <p>OPEB Obligations \$315,895,184</p> <p>Workers' Compensation \$ 1,538,650</p> <p>Net Pension Liability-Proportionate Share \$ 15,454,703</p> <p>Compensated Absences \$ 6,698,146</p> <p>Total \$374,059,664</p> <p>Under current state statutes, the District's general obligation bonded debt issues are subject to a legal limitation based on 10% of the total full value of real property. At June 30, 2023, the District's general obligation debt was significantly lower than its total debt limit. The District has a bond rating of Aa3.</p> <p>The following response has been provided to the District from the auditor:</p> <p>"They are misunderstanding the districtwide debt and actual debt the District has. The OPEB is not actual debt, it is what the District would have to pay for retirees health insurance if the District was too close. Also, compensated absences and net pension liability would not be paid out in one time. The District's actual debt are</p>
Appointing new positions	This would add to the budget so if considered, it would need to be very strategic		

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Optimize bus routes - saves gas/drivers/OT	We are exploring more flexible transporation and other ideas to bring additional efficiencies to the district		
Minimize Sup. Int. conferences-	These confrences are contractual in nature and service to help our staff stay current on practices.		
Be proactive not reactive	The purpose of the 5 year planning is to assist the district with being more proactive. It has brought a new level of conversation that while difficult will ultimately benifit the district in the long run		
Rezone elementary schools to spread students more equally	This idea was explored at the March 19 board meeting		
Auditorium - revenue source but needs improvements first	This idea was explored at the March 19 board meeting. It woudl require investments in the facility		
Allow PTA/PTO to pay for things they offer to pay for.	Absolutely. We are very appreciative of the PTA/PTOs and welcome their help and support		
Waste audit (pencils, classroom supplies)	This can be done in each buildindg.		
Wage freze & pay more into retirement plan.	This would be a negotiated item		
Cut top paid staff	This would be a negotiated item. The CTA retirement incentive is designed to assist with this.		
Ask teachers/administrators to help plan a wage freeze for the net two years so that teachers don't lose their jobs	This would be a negotiated item		
Combine schools if there is space to eliminate an elementary building	This would need long term planning that included community input		
Charge all non-school groups using school fields & buildings for building use/custodial services, ec.			

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Do not cut busing and sports	The district is exploring all options but will prioritize for minimal impact		
Princeton model	This is still being considered even as a possible long term goal		
Slightly increase class sizes	There are contractual limitations on class size		
Salary Caps	This would be a negotiated item		
Bringing UPK program to bring Federal/State funds	A grant to pilot a program has been submitted.		
Capping or freezing teachers/admin salaries	This would be a negotiated item		
Employees paying into benefits	This would be a negotiated item		